

Enoch's Date in Limbo or Some Considerations on David Suter's Analysis

Michael E. Stone

First, allow me to thank David Suter for a clear, balanced and sensible analysis of the arguments for the date of the *Similitudes*. I gladly confess to being in overall agreement with his summary that the *Similitudes* were written either "towards the turn of the millennium" or "in the late first century C.E.". This excludes any extraordinarily early date or such a late date as Milik suggested. He would place the work in the third century CE.¹ I myself would probably tend to accept the date "towards the turn of the millennium", but hesitantly.²

David has given a clear presentation of the types of arguments adduced for the various dates. I would like, not to innovate anything much over what Jonas Greenfield and I wrote so many years ago, but to share with you some musings emerging from David Suter's analysis.

The first thought that occurred to me is that the dating of the *Similitudes* is such a central issue for only one reason: the title Son of Man and its occurrence in the Gospels.

¹ J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, especially chapter 3. His views were first aired in detail in J.T. Milik, "Problèmes de la littérature hénoclique à la lumière des fragments araméens de Qumran." *HTR* 64 (1971): 333-378.

² My own analysis of this issue, written together with the late J.C. Greenfield, is published in J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone. "The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the *Similitudes*." *HTR* 70 (1977): 51-65; reprinted in M.E. Stone, *Selected Studies in the Pseudepigrapha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition*. *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha*, 9. Leiden: Brill, 1991, 198-212.

This is very clear, for example, in Professor Sacchi's paper circulated for this meeting, and it is clear from David Suter's presentation of the scholarly consensus. One might play the mental game of: how would we approach this question if the title had not been used in the Gospels or, alternatively, if the Gospels were not the canonical writings of Christianity? Naturally, the transformation of the Hebrew / Aramaic expression and its application to a redeemer figure is a totally legitimate object of scholarly investigation. Yet, perhaps, the attempt to reach chronological precision would not have been followed so zealously on the basis of such flimsy evidence, had the term not occurred in the Gospels.³ This amount of energy is not expended on the dating of the *Testament of Job*, *Paralipomena Ieremiou* or *Greek Baruch*. Has it been fruitful? I wonder.

The question of the Parthian invasion that seems to be mentioned in 56:5-8 is a case in point. If the reference to the Parthians and Medes is a real historical reference, then 56:5-8 give us an anchor in a specific event of 40 BCE which then becomes the date *post quem* for the *Similitudes*. I tend to think that this is the case, at least in general terms.⁴ True, as Michael Knibb remarked, the Parthians were a major opponent, perhaps the major opponent, of the Roman Empire for some centuries. So, could this reference have been just to the Parthians as a stereotypical enemy, likely to come and wreak havoc in accordance with this or that eschatological expectation? This Enoch reference and *Sib. Or.* 4:124 and 5:438 are the only mentions of the name "Parthian/s" in Charles, and one of those is a toponymic. I am not familiar with other symbolic references to the Parthians, though there may be a couple. Still, Rome, once it was on the scene, was the great and

³ The fact that the title occurs in the Gospels, of course, caused scholars to give priority to the study of this issue, but the results of that study may well have been the same.

⁴ See already Greenfield and Stone, "Enochic Pentateuch," in *Studies*, 205-206.

stereotypical enemy. So, probably weight should be given to the specific reference to the Parthians and Medes,⁵ though this is not completely decisive. As I remarked long ago, "it may be futile to try to seek detailed historical references, for the use of biblical verses and the contrast between sinners and the elect in [56:] v 8 clearly marked the section 56:5-8 not as objective history but as highly subjective interpretation of history."⁶ So I remain somewhat sceptical, but tend to accept this event.

As for King Herod at Callirrhoe, supposedly referred to in 67:4-13, if the date in the latter part of the first century CE is accepted on the basis of 56:5-8, then it may well be that Herod is referred to in 67:4-13.⁷ On its own, however, that passage can be given no significance for dating.

The absence of the destruction of Jerusalem does seem significant in a work predicting so much woe, but one can surely find works written indubitably after the destruction that do not refer to it (e.g., *Test. Abr.* as far as I remember). So much for explicit historical references.

The second main issue I wish to address is the absence of the *Similitudes* from Qumran, which scholars have taken very seriously. Suter remarks that Sacchi and Boccaccini "explain the absence of the parables from Qumran not as an accident of history but as the consequence of the parting of the ways between Enochic Judaism and Qumranic Essenism." Greenfield and I remarked in 1977 that the absence of a document from Qumran *proves* nothing, certainly nothing about its date.⁸ The Book of Esther is not

⁵ On the expression "Parthians and Medes", see Greenfield and Stone in *Studies*, 205.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207, comparing Josephus, *Antiquities* 171-73; *War* 657-58.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

there, nor 2 Chronicles, but for a fragment. It seems doubtful whether the absence of a work reflects ideological or theological incompatibility between the views of the Qumran sect and the authors of the work.

Here I must add that just because a work has not been identified at Qumran, we cannot proclaim that it did not exist there. Simple consideration of the number of unidentified fragments, running into the thousands, renders such an assertion implausible. Many, many works have simply not been identified. In general, the rule should be that absence from Qumran proves nothing. Positive evidence, i.e., the presence of a work there, is probative. Sacchi asks, “why all Apocrypha (i.e., Pseudepigrapha) written after 100 BCE are lacking in the Qumran library”? Indeed, the absence of such works is intriguing, (it bears, for example, on *Ps. Sol.*, the present form of *TMos*, *LAB*, and some others). Whether the supposed parting of the ways of Enochic and Qumranic Judaism is the explanation, is another matter. I just do not know. Equally, we could also ask why non-sectarian writings preserved only at Qumran are not transmitted in other Jewish and Christian channels.

The question of the provenance of the *Similitudes* within Jewish society of the Second Temple period is still debated. David Flusser observed many years ago, that the *Similitudes* even if known, would not have been acceptable to the sectaries of Qumran because of the manner in which the sun and moon are treated in chapter 41; their tasks and roles are equal — the sun does not receive the special place afforded it in the various Qumran writings.⁹

⁹ J.C. Greenfield. *Prolegomenon to reprint of H. Odeberg. 3 Enoch*, New York: Ktav, 1973, xvii-xviii. Nathaniel Schmidt remarked that there seem to be no Byzantine quotations of the *Similitudes* and no surviving Greek text. He uses this to support the view that no Greek

If any weight is given to Flusser's observation, the work did not originate in the Qumran sect, a view not contradicted by its absence from identified Qumran works (but note my *caveats* above about this argument). Greenfield and I noted that the type of terminology used by the work has an "in-group" or sectarian character, seeming to hint at a distinct social context. Yet it is difficult to do more than speculate about the identity of that (sectarian?) context. The spread of Enoch traditions through many streams of Second Temple period Judaism, yet the differences between the various texts dealing with Enoch, signal to us that we are dealing with a phenomenon widespread in time and place. I have in mind such diverse texts as Ben Sira 44:6, the grandson's translation of that, Pseudo-Eupolemus,¹⁰ *Testament of Abraham* and Slavonic *Enoch*. I am presently engaged in a study of Enoch traditions in early Armenian literature, where very distinct and characteristic material is transmitted.¹¹ The spread of the *Book of the Giants* to Manichean circles is another indication of the broad familiarity with Enochic materials.¹²

translation ever existed and that the Ethiopic was made directly from Aramaic. See Nathaniel Schmidt. "The Original Language of the Parables of Enoch." *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of W.R. Harper*. Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908. 329-49. The issue is discussed in Stone, *Studies*, 207-208 (= Greenfield and Stone, "Enochic Pentateuch," 60-61.

¹⁰ See also the remarks of B. Z. Wacholder. *Eupolemus: A Study of Judaeo-Greek Literature*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1974, 74-77.

¹¹ Compare already the remarks by W. L. Lipscomb. *The Armenian Apocryphal Adam Literature*. University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies, 8. Atlanta: Scholars, 1990, 99-101, who gives some fascinating preliminary indications. The matter is, however, much more complex.

¹² It is not *ad rem* to survey this issue here, but I must mention John Reeves' excellent work (John C. Reeves. *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmology: Studies in the Book of the Giants Traditions*. HUCM 14. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1989) and not pass over in silence the brilliant pioneering paper of W. B. Henning. "The Book of the Giants." *BSOAS* ii (1943): 52-74

A number of papers have mentioned 4 Ezra 13 in connection with the development of the Son of Man (SM) ideas and some seem not to accept (or at least act as if they do not accept) my analysis of this chapter, first published in my doctoral thesis in 1965 and reworked and restated in a number of writings since that date.¹³ Of course, they are allowed to do that, but I beg your indulgence in rehearsing those arguments, not because of a love of my own ideas, but because they seem to be particularly germane to our topic. In the writings referred to, I proposed the hypothesis that a pre-existing description of an expected cosmic human figure, whom we call the SM, was taken over by the author of 4 Ezra who, treating it as a symbolic vision, wrote an interpretation to it.¹⁴ This was demonstrated by detailed textual and literary arguments. It is relevant to our discussion here in Camaldoli that the first part of the chapter, i.e., 13:1-11, a pre-existing piece of literature dealing with the SM, was treated by the author of 4 Ezra (c. 95 CE) as a symbolic vision to which he needed to write an interpretation.

and already his essay "Ein Manichäisches Henochbuch." *SPAW* (1934): 27-35. The Qumran connection was recognized and first documented by J.T. Milik. *Turfân et Qumran. Livre des Géants juif et manichéen*. Tradition Und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt. eds. J. Jeremias, H.-W. Kuhn and H. Stegemann. Göttingen, 1971.

¹³ The thesis was submitted in 1965 but only published after the conclusion of my *Hermeneia* Fourth Ezra: M.E. Stone. *Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra*. Harvard Semitic Studies, 35. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989. The analysis of chapter 13 was taken up again in M.E. Stone. "The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra." *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*. ed. J. Neusner. Leiden: Brill, 1968, 295-312, and most recently in M.E. Stone. *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*. *Hermeneia*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990, 381-407.

¹⁴ In fact, the term "son of man" is found neither in the vision nor in the interpretation. I have argued, however, that it is most reasonable to hypothesise that this human figure was the anticipated SM.

The warrior "man" of the vision is described using ancient cosmic symbolism of the epiphanies of God, particularly his epiphanies as warrior. The interpretation suppressed the cosmic dimensions of the "man" and treated him as a symbol that needed explanation, just like the lion in chapter 12 or Baruch's light and dark waters. Moreover, the elements that the interpretation adds in the course of its presentation of the redeemer figure are precisely those that have close connections with the rest of 4 Ezra.

The implications of this analysis for our present concern are the following.

- (1) The vision section of chapter 13 is older, but we do not know how much older, than 4 Ezra. If the identification of the "man" in this vision with the SM is accepted, then the vision should be treated as a separate source featuring this figure, quite distinct from the interpretation offered by the author of 4 Ezra. It cannot be treated as a product of the late first-century author of 4 Ezra, nor should it be exegeted in light of that book.
- (2) It seems to us that the interpretation could only have treated the man of the vision as a symbol at a time when the SM concept no longer dictated its own meaning, at least in the circles that produced 4 Ezra. After all, the interpretation plays down or removes all the special, cosmic features of the man. This implies that, at the end of the first century CE, the expected eschatological human figure was no longer readily recognized.

To conclude, I would add, as David Suter did, that there is something to be said for establishing a relative typology on the basis of development of religious ideas. Certain of our number do exactly this with the SM. The establishment of such a developmental series involves all sorts of presuppositions, which must be anchored in textual and literary

critical study. The treatment of the SM in the interpretation of 4 Ezra is typologically later than the *Similitudes*, or than the Gospels. Is the difference to be explained chronologically, assuming a more or less direct genetic relation, or is it to be explained by social (or even geographical) differences?

The date of the *Similitudes* remains in limbo, then, as David Suter rightly remarks, but in my judgment we will not be far wrong if we put it in the latter part of the first century BCE or somewhat later. What sort of Judaism the *Similitudes* represents is a different mystery.