Saints Above, Gods Below: Thoth, Enoch, and Religious Transformation in 3rd-5th Century C.E. Egypt

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Abstract

While scholars have often compared Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, to Enoch, the Old Testament patriarch named the "scribe of righteousness" in esoteric Judaism and early Christianity, their analyses have often been cursory or uncritically conducted. A deeper analysis of both textual and iconographic evidence demonstrates that while these two figures were similar, their conceptions in the practices of traditional Egyptian (TER) and Coptic Christian institutions were quite different. Examining the spiritual and ideological principles embodied by Thoth and Enoch's representations reveals critical disparities in the structural and ethical conceptions of TER and Coptic Christianity. These differences speak to a transforming Egyptian worldview that elevated the relevance of religious identity in everyday life, creating new ways to build community and an atmosphere intolerant of ideological difference. This new mindset intensified and enhanced sectarian conflict and violence based on religious identity, which characterized Late Antiquity in Egypt.

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Introduction

In the 9th century C.E. philosophical treatise *A'lam al-nubuwwah (The Peaks of Prophecy),* Abu Hatim al-Razi wrote this: "They say that the Hermes [the Greek name for Thoth] who is mentioned among the philosophers is [the same figure as] Idris; meaning, his name among the philosophers is Hermes, but in the Qur'an he is Idris…His name in the remaining revealed scriptures is Enoch."[1] Compacted into this single line are centuries of religious conflict, negotiation, and transformation that continue to create and inform scholarly argument today—and to produce valuable insights into the nature of belief across space and time in antiquity.

The 'remaining revealed scriptures' mentioned by al-Razi here refer to the Old Testament Book of Genesis, which contains only a single line mentioning the antediluvian patriarch Enoch. The seventh descendant in the line from Adam, Enoch "walked with God, and he was no more; for God took him."[2] This lone verse eventually sparked an widespread movement, beginning with an esoteric Judaic cult following traditionally dated to between the 3rd-1st century B.C.E..[3] Deeply rooted in gnostic ideas and mystical literature, the Enochic tradition carved itself a significant place in both Judaism and early Christianity, and eventually in Islam as well.[4] While Enochic materials were especially significant to students of alchemy, astrology, and other magical sciences, they were also broadly integrated into early Christian culture and theology—

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[1] John C. Reeves and Annette Yoshiko Reed. *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Vol. I: Sources from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* Oxford University Press (Oxford), 2018: 276.
[2] Gen. 5.21-24.
[3] GWE Nickelsburg. *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1-36, 51-108*. Fortress Press (Indianapolis), 2001: 1. Annette Yoshiko Reed. *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity*: *The Reception of Enochic Literature.* Cambridge University Press (Cambridge), 1973: 3.
[4] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1, 82-83. Reeves, *Enoch from Antiquity*, 1-3.

especially in Egypt, where scholars have found compelling evidence of continued popularity even after interest in the Enochic corpus had declined in the European and Mediterranean contexts.[5]

Iconographically, monastic material sources heavily emphasized one specific role of Enoch's, the "scribe of righteousness"—this association can be found in various contemporary texts as well.[6] First among them is the *Book of Enoch* (*1 En.*), authoritatively translated by G.W.E. Nickelsburg.[7] *1 En.* is an apocryphal text likely with esoteric Jewish origins; a compilation of several texts involving the divine revelations and heavenly journey afforded to the patriarch, it is most famous for the story of the Watchers, fallen angels who transmitted forbidden knowledge to humans and mated with human women to produce the corrupt nephilim, or Giants.[8] Other important Enochic works include the *Encomium on the Four Bodiless Living Creatures* attributed to John Chrysostom, the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, the *Testament of Abraham*, and an unnamed Enoch Apocryphon relating a decidedly Coptic conception of the judgment scene.[9] These sources expand on functions associated with Enoch, specifically affording him a role in the judgment of the soul and as a warrior, fighting the Antichrist alongside Elijah at the end of days.[10]

Broadly speaking, similar associations can be found for Thoth in various sources from the Ptolemaic and Greco-Roman eras (though with significant differences as well). Much evidence

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[5] Reeves, *Enoch from Antiquity*, 12.
[6] Marguerite Rassart-Debergh, "Paintings: Dayr Apa Jeremias." *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia Vol. III*. The Gale Group, 1991. Originally from the Jewish sapiential tradition, which was a literary theme focused on divine wisdom revealed to a chosen human. B.A. Pearson. *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt*. T&T Clark International, 2004: 146.
[7] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1-2.
[8] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 7-8.
[9] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 144-151, 170-177.
[10] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 144-151, 170-177.

concerning Thoth is material in nature, mainly from the funerary context—J.G. Griffiths' analysis of a Late Antique funerary shroud is but one example of these iconographic sources.[11] That said, a good number of textual sources for Thoth emphasize his esoteric, sapiential, and scribal role (including in the judgment) as well. Richard Jasnow's translation of the *Book of Thoth*, a fragmentary initiation text used in the scribal center of Egyptian temple complexes known as the "House of Life" is one critical example.[12] The *Book of Thoth* elucidates several associations for Thoth's role as scribe and overseer of mystical knowledge, and also gives important insight into the organization and conceptions of Egyptian temple scriptoriums.[13]

Other mythological accounts from Egyptological sources emphasized Thoth's role as a peacemaker, advocate, protector, and sometimes as a malicious entity.[14] The final source base for more syncretic, esoteric associations and background for Thoth was the Hermetic corpus, made up of the revelations of a mysterious philosophical figure named Hermes Trismegistus (thought to be an amalgamation of Thoth and the Greek Hermes, sometimes associated with Enoch as well).[15] Garth Fowden has the authoritative collation and commentary of these obscure sources, which will be the main edition consulted here.[16]

In the past Enoch has been portrayed as a parallel to, inheritor of, or symbolic imprimatur for Thoth and the pre-Christian culture he represented—and with good reason, as the literary record shows ample evidence of appropriation and even abject crossover between the two

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[11] J. Gwyn Griffiths. "Eight Funerary Paintings with Judgment Scenes in the Swansea Wellcome Museum." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* vol. 68, no. 1 (1982): 228-252.
[12] Richard Jasnow. "The Book of Thoth." *Religion Compass* vol. 11 (2017): 1.
[13] Jasnow, "Book of Thoth," 1.
[14] Martin A. Stadler. "Thoth." *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich et. al. Los Angeles, 2012: 1-2, 5, 11.
[15] J. Gwyn Griffiths. "Review: The Egyptian Hermes." *The Classical Review* vol. 38, no. 2 (1988): 293-294.
[16] Griffiths, "Review," 294-295.

figures.[17] However, it is arguable that the significance of these instances has been both overestimated and uncritically analyzed; too often is the idea that Thoth and Enoch were essentially the same character waved off as self-explanatory.[18] On the other hand, there are also scholars who dismiss these similarities without properly analyzing the discrepancies.[19] Finally, the similarities and differences in the portrayals and conceptions of Thoth and Enoch are not often analyzed on a deeper level, one that acknowledges how the transformations therein reflect the changing worldviews and mindsets of Late Antique Egyptians. In fact, this speaks to a larger problem in the base of scholarship—there are as yet too few studies willing to engage deeply with regional, indigenous religious identities and influences, in this case specifically with traditional Egyptian religion (TER).[20]

The characters of Enoch and Thoth present an excellent case study to take an inclusive and critical approach to integrating TER into the study of religious evolution in Late Antique Egypt. Three fundamental questions provide the basis for this approach: In what ways were the popular associations for and portrayals of Thoth and Enoch similar or different? What concepts and ideas were embedded within the representations of each ideologically and culturally, and what were their implications? And finally, when placed in the appropriate social and historical contexts, what do the continuities or transformations thereof yield for our understanding of the changing lived religious landscape of the time?

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[17] Reeves, *Enoch from Antiquity*, 254.
[18] David Frankfurter. "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories" in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* ed. James C. VanderKam and William Adler. Fortress Press (Minneapolis), 1996: 164, 188.
[19] One of the foremost authorities on early Egyptian Christianity, B.A. Pearson, makes one and only one brief reference to Thoth's similarity to Enoch, claiming that they are "not quite analogous" in the judgment scene; TER does not appear again in the work. Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 170.
[20] Going forward I will use "traditional Egyptian religion" (TER) to describe the polytheistic, pre-Christian religion associated with Pharaonic temples and customs in order to avoid the pitfalls associated with terminology like "paganism" or "pagan religion."

Comparing the representations and associations embedded in the figures of Thoth and Enoch demonstrates that while there were some continuities, there were also many evolutions and changes in their respective roles, character qualities, and ideological themes. These transformations were a reflection of changing on-the-ground perceptions and understandings of religion and fundamental existential ideas. These narrative and conceptual changes were mirrored in real life as well; ultimately, the shifting dynamics revealed by the comparative approach influenced Late Antique Coptic Christians to seek and define community in new and different ways, creating connections between people on a broader scale.[21] At the same time, these changing ideas of spirituality caused priorities to shift in a way that fueled intra-religious conflict and solidified hard lines of identity as well.

Previous scholarship has hinted at these ideas, but in most cases, has either misinterpreted or not fully addressed them. Moreover, questions and themes other than these seem to have an elevated importance in the academic literature, and have been much more comprehensively covered by scholars of Late Antique religious studies, Second Temple Judaism, classical philology, and more. Among these are issues such as the origins of *1 En.* and other parts of the Enochic corpus, the translation of and commentary on Enochic sources, and some elements of

[21] The label "Copt" has been applied ambiguously, with both ethnic and religious connotations. It is often used to refer to the population of native Egyptians who practiced Christianity after the Muslim conquest of the 7th century; on the other hand, it can also denote the period of time between the 3rd-7th century C.E. generally, even though Christianity did not become a majority religion until the middle of the 5th century.[21] A modified version of the former definition that straddles the line between ethnic and religious identification will be most appropriate for this study—in fact, this is one example of how positioning TER (and other non-Christian religions) more firmly in the literature can help add nuance to the conversation. This study will focus not on "Copts," but on "Coptic Christians"—i.e. the population of native Egyptians who laid claim to both a Christian identity (with broad ecclesiastical and theological similarities distinct from those of the growing European, Byzantine, and Eastern Orthodox traditions) *and* a heritage and culture steeped in the practice and environment of TER. This focus acknowledges both the ethnic and religious dimensions of "Coptic" people, recognizing diversity while acknowledging fundamental similarities in belief, background, and organization.

reception and cross-cultural transmission.[22] Through these efforts scholars have generally dated the compilation of *1 En.* (made up of separate texts composed as early as the 3rd century B.C.E) to around the 1st century B.C.E.—Annette Yoshiko Reed argues that the Books of Enoch were likely composed in Jewish priestly scribal circles, naturally elevating Enoch's role as the scribe of righteousness.[23] Scholars have also gained insight into some of the relevant literary and theological themes of these texts, centering generally on antique millennialism[24], ascent and heavenly journey motifs,[25] and apocalypticism.[26] Reflected in these ideas are patterns of intertextual borrowing, as well as indications of some indigenous continuities and a marked resentment towards dominating influences (e.g. Roman and Arabic conquest and rule).[27]

In addition, the current scholarship on early Christianity is disadvantaged by a strong textual bias. Most of the available primary sources are literary or documentary—sacred texts, theological commentaries, magical texts, etc. As such, much of the current scholarship on early Christianity primarily concentrates on only a few approaches and areas of analysis. Éric Rebillard, social historian who has written on ideas of religious identity and intersectionality, describes this limited focus as the "linguistic or cultural turn," in which scholars either

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[22] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch,* 111-122. James C. VanderKam. "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs, and Enoch in Early Christian Literature." in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity,* ed. James C. VanderKam and William Adler. Fortress Press (Indianapolis), 1996: 33-101. Reed, *Fallen Angels,* 1-23. Frankfurter, "Legacy," 186-189. Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 153-201.
[23] Reed, *Fallen Angels,* 61-66.
[24] Millennialism refers to the belief in the imminent coming of God's Kingdom on Earth, in which all persecutors would be defeated and followers of Christ would live in prosperity for 1000 years. Timothy Weber. "Millenialism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* ed. Jerry L. Walls. Oxford University Press (Oxford), 2007: 365.
[25] Referring to Enoch's tour of the different dimensions and realms of heaven before ending up at the highest level, a common theme in other antique literary works. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch,* 37-41.
[26] Apocalypticism refers to the genre of biblical literature that involves divine revelations concerning the end of days or cosmic knowledge to a human recipient. Bill T. Arnold. "Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* ed. Jerry L. Walls. Oxford University Press (Oxford), 2007: 32.
[27] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 37-56. Frankfurter, "Legacy," 132, 143, 196-200. Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 91-92.

deliberately do not examine texts as reflective of social realities, or "ignore that this is not a straightforward process."[28] A review of some of the foremost literature in this field confirms this appraisal. While there is vast (and excellent) scholarship on change and significance in linguistics, grammar, word choice, and literary constructs and motifs, relying almost solely on such evidence and analyses has created major gaps in the field.

Three authors in particular exemplify this: H.J. Lawlor (late 19th-early 20th century), J.T. Milik (mid 20th century), and James VanderKam (1970's-90's). Literature from the late 19th-early 20th centuries was dominated mostly by translators and philologists, H.J. Lawlor being the prime example.[29] While mainly focused on translation and commentary, Lawlor sometimes incorporated aspects of social history in his approach—his 1904 *Hermathena* article attempted to assess the reception of the *Book of Enoch* in the Egyptian Church, arguing that although the Enochic corpus enjoyed great popularity in its earliest years, changing theological and political priorities reduced its status in the upper Church echelons to one of grudging acceptance.[30] Lawlor maintained that this reluctant engagement indicated that though the scriptures had fallen out of favor with Church elites, "its credit was as high as ever among the heretical [Gnostic][31] sects, and its popularity with the general body of less learned orthodox Churchmen diminished but little."[32]

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[28] Éric Rebillard. *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity: North Africa, 200-450 CE.* Cornell University Press (Ithaca; London), 2012: 1.
[29] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 111-112.
[30] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 112. Lawlor, H.J. "The Book of Enoch in the Egyptian Church." *Hermathena*, vol. 30, no. 30 (1904): 182.
[31] Early 20th century literature often reflects the polemical biases of the available sources that describe gnostic and other forms of Christianity outside of what we understand to be the "mainstream" or the strain that would develop into the modern Catholic Church as heretical or twisted in some way. It is important to note that there was not one Christianity from the start, but that several regionally and ideologically defined forms competed for the title of "orthodox."
[32] Lawlor, "Book of Enoch," 182.

The corpus of Enochic literature (and its scholarly commentary) expanded greatly with the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scroll (Qumran) fragments of *1 En,* by J.T. Milik in the mid-20th century.[33] Primarily concerned with *1 En.*'s relationship with Christianity, Milik argued that the Book of Genesis may have epitomized material found in the *1 En.* and/or the *Epistle of Enoch*.[34] Milik also looked at cross-cultural influences on the Enochic texts, arguing for a Mesopotamian origin or influence on the mythical and narrative aspects of *1 En.*, for example in the famous story of the Watchers and nephilim (the corrupted offspring of angels who mated with human women).[35]

Drawing on (and far outselling) Lawlor's original approach to cataloguing citations of Enochic works in the early Christian texts (now with a greatly expanded base of sources), James VanderKam's article cataloging citations of *1 En.* and Enochic motifs in early Christian literature upheld many of his predecessor's conclusions. For example, VanderKam traced the evolving appraisal of *1 En.* in the writings of the Egyptian patriarch Origen, whose earliest writings were deeply admiring of Enochic traditions—yet within his lifetime, Origen eventually dismissed the works entirely as non-canonical folly.[36] Overall, VanderKam argues that Enochic works and motifs enjoyed high status among Egyptian theologians in the 1st-3rd centuries C.E., but that their popularity fell off after the beginning of the 4th century except in specific but persistent roles.[37]

All three of these sources reflect a bias toward elite perspectives that obscures our understanding of the thoughts and beliefs of contemporary, active lay practitioners. The insights provided by all three authors are valuable—they speak to the significance of the Enochic corpus

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[33] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 115. Milik, JT. "The Dead Sea Scrolls Fragment of the Book of Enoch." *Bib,* vol. 32 (1951): 393-400.
[34] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 118-119.
[35] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 122.
[36] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 59-60.
[37] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 100-101.

to early Christian theology and to the deeply interconnected literary and cultural nature of the ancient world. However, primarily using textual or documentary sources creates gaps in our understanding of those "extra-textual realities."[38] Literary and documentary sources from this period inevitably carry inherent biases in content and representation. Generally speaking (especially in the cases of Lawlor and VanderKam, who focus on theological and exegetical treatises from Church Fathers), the perspectives enumerated by written sources from this time elevate an upper-class perspective, often written by politically dominant Church elite and literati intellectuals.[39] Moreover, sources from influential clergymen like Origen and Irenaeus (who famously wrote *Against Heresies*, a critical source for early Christianity) were often polemical in nature, which can bias the picture of religious diversity in favor of "orthodox" domination.[40] Taken together, these factors create a skewed and incomplete view of the forces and processes involved in the development of the religion, a point which VanderKam himself acknowledges.[41] Centering material evidence in its fullest cultural context serves to combat this, levelling the playing field for representing the interests and understandings of ancient laypeople.

It is also difficult to avoid conscious or unconscious bias in the study of religious history, especially with earlier 20th century secondary sources; if the examination of pre-existing traditions is not left out entirely authors often treat traditional "pagan" polytheistic religions as stepping-stones to monotheism, and can portray these beliefs as somehow inadequate or less fulfilling than Christianity.[42] Indeed, one of the greatest consequences of the previously

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[38] Rebillard, *Many Identities*, 1.
[39] David Brakke. *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity.* Harvard University Press (Cambridge), 2012: 3-4.
[40] Brakke, *The Gnostics*, 3-4.
[41] Brakke, *The Gnostics*, 34.
[42] Sanders, Seth L. "Enoch's Imaginary Ancestor: From Ancient Babylonian Scholarship to Modern Academic Folklore." *Journal of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2018): 155-157. For relevant examples in Early Christian studies pertaining to Near Eastern Mystery cults in Greece and Rome, see Franz Cumont.

discussed narrow textual analysis, and more broadly the apparent hyper-focus on comparisons with other Abrahamic traditions, is the denial of religious agency to the ancient or antique believer that only obscures our understanding of their embodied, lived realities. Emphasizing primarily the views and actions of the Alexandrian theological elite can paint a picture of the laity as moved primarily by the machinations of the upper classes, and does not give due consideration to how individuals may have constructed and negotiated changing religious principles or characters internally, especially in the context of the transition from polytheism to monotheism. B.A. Pearson's work provides a clear example of this flaw—while undoubtedly one of the foremost scholars of Late Antique Studies, his approach is not without shortcomings.

Pearson's focuses mainly on the Judaic and Platonic influences on Christianity and "Gnosticism" (defined as a separate religion) in antique Egypt (with special regard to Alexandria).[43] There are positives and negatives to Pearson's approach. Pearson does incorporate elements of material culture analysis, especially with his approach to how religion was embedded into the Alexandrian landscape spatially and geographically; furthermore, Pearson reconstructed and translated the fragments of a central source to the Coptic Enochic corpus, known as the "Coptic Enoch Apocryphon" (CEA).[44] Originally published by W.E. Crum, Pearson's edition of the manuscript is now considered authoritative, and is a critical source in establishing the markedly Egyptian characterization of Enoch as a scribe in the judgment (an

The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism. Chicago: Open Court, 1911. Jaime Alvar and R. L. Gordon. *Romanising Oriental Gods: Myth, Salvation, and Ethics in the Cults of Cybele, Isis, and Mithras*. Brill (Leiden; Boston), 2008.

[43] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 1.

[44] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 100-111, 153. Pierpont Morgan Library Coptic Theological Texts 3, folios 1-9.

important area of overlap with Thoth) as opposed to the broader, traditionally Jewish conception of the "scribe of righteousness."[45]

However, Pearson discusses those parallels quite narrowly, concentrating primarily on analyzing the CEA within the context of other early Christian, Jewish, and Gnostic treatises.[46] This tendency combined with Pearson's deeply literary approach arguably causes him to underestimate (or at least pass over analyzing) both TER influences and the penetration of the ideas contained within the text. For example, in discussing the possible cultural origins of the conception of the judgement as a "weighing of souls" in the CEA, of TER he writes only that "In ancient Egyptian literature and iconography, of course, the idea is central."[47] Throughout the article Pearson continues to make only offhand references to the great influence of Pharaonic traditions on early Christianity without developing these ideas any further even in the case of this markedly Egyptian text (which he himself acknowledges is unique) in favor of analyzing the CEA alongside other early Christian and gnostic homilies and apocryphal texts.[48] Ultimately Pearson concludes that the CEA "certainly expresses a genuinely Egyptian spirit, and it is therefore surprising that no parallel can be found in Coptic literature…In summary, the Enoch apocryphon…presented here must have been a most interesting and unusual text."[49]

Arguably, a more accurate assessment would find no parallels in Coptic *Christian* literature, as there are plenty of examples of Coptic TER parallels in literature and iconography (which Pearson acknowledges exist but does not fully discuss). Yet Pearson satisfied himself

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[45] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 161-162.
[46] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 170-176.
[47] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 172.
[48] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 172, 174 (ft. 80), 176. Pearson does refer his reader to other sources and scholars in his footnotes, but himself makes very few substantive attempts to analyze the TER dimension, instead choosing to highlight how the theme of the psychostasia shows up in medieval Ireland despite being responsible for the authoritative translation of this particular manuscript.
[49] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 176.

with only one line addressed to a reader who might see the parallels in the depictions laid out in the CEA, writing,

> One point needs clarification: Enoch, as we have seen, is the heavenly scribe in the judgment. But the actual writing of the record is no doubt envisioned as taking place prior to the judgment of the individual, during each person's lifetime. Thus, Enoch's role in the judgment is not exactly analogous to that of the god Thoth in the Egyptian conception of the judgment scene, for Thoth records the *results* [sic] of the weighing of the soul.[50]

Here, Pearson at least acknowledges that there were differences in the representations and conceptions of Thoth and Enoch, although the example he chooses is rather shallow. More important, however, is the fact that the implications of this disparity were not discussed any further. It is possible that such an analysis was simply not within the scope of Pearson's approach or expertise—regardless, the fact that neither he nor almost anyone else has elected since then to examine and explain the significance of this single line is demonstrative of the undervalued nature of TER evidence in the study of Coptic Christianity in Late Antiquity.

While Pearson's reconstruction, translation, and analysis of the CEA do reveal invaluable insights into the Coptic conception of Enoch, his choice not to substantively include TER in his study coupled with faults in his methodology and source base illuminate a serious gap in the predominant scholarly approach. Conversely, analyzing more fully the parallels and transformations of the Christian and TER perceptions of Enoch and Thoth in their roles as "scribes of righteousness," especially within a material context, adds to our understanding of information penetration in the ancient world while giving proper respect to the lived experiences of individuals of the middle and lower classes. This more balanced perspective will create a more accurate picture of the broad-scale processes of religious transformation, structurally and socially.

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[50] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 170.

Likely these narrow focuses stem in part from rigid disciplinary lines and a lack of crossover between areas of scholarly inquiry, which in turn has likely inhibited a substantive comparison of the roles of Enoch and Thoth so far. To be fair, the extremely broad literature of Egyptology might also be accused of insularity—scholars tend to stick to examinations of the rich and longstanding Pharaonic traditions and myths sometimes at the expense of other groups. Even within that field, however, Thoth is not a greatly analyzed figure. Martin Stadler notes the possibly prohibitive nature of his extensive involvement in mythology and religious institutions since the earliest periods of Egyptian history.[51] In his bibliographic review, Stadler notes only five monographs on Thoth, most prominently by Patrick Boylan (1922) and Claas J. Bleeker (1973).[52]

Both Boylan and Bleeker attempt comprehensive overviews of Thoth's many appearances in myth and ritual, identifying key roles and themes associated with the god. Among these are his capacities as a lunar deity, as a mediator and peacemaker, and as the god of writing, knowledge, and social order.[53] The two studies together are complementary, and demonstrate a consistent issue in Egyptological studies—the vast span of time and body of sources (both textual and material) make it incredibly difficult to pin down a singular role or character for any Egyptian god, let alone Thoth, whose mysterious and contradictory origin stories and ambiguous nature made him such a perfect figure for the development of esoteric traditions and intellectual movements. Arbitrary disciplinary lines and periodization have arguably complicated matters here—Egyptological scholars certainly have plenty to study within one tradition, let alone across

[51] Stadler, "Thoth," 1-2, 5, 11.
[52] Stadler, "Thoth, 11-12.
[53] Patrick Boylan. *Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt: A Study of Some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford University Press, 1922: 62-76, 88-98. Bleeker. *Hathor and Thoth*, 114-136.

fields. However, the lack of interdisciplinary analysis obscures insights in both fields, and needs to be addressed.

Recent years have seen an increasing number of authors attempting to bridge this gap, in terms of both cross-disciplinary approaches and the inclusion of material evidence. As an example of this progress with regard to theoretical approaches, Éric Rebillard's 2012 book *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity: North Africa, 200-450 CE* applies principles of sociological and identity theory to the Late Antique North African context.[54] By utilizing developing ideas of "groupness," he highlights the ways in which multiple identities in occupation, religion, age, and gender (for example, "fisher" vs. "Christian" vs. "young") might have intersected in daily life, taking precedence in an individual's psyche according to situational context.[55] Analyzing religious change in this way demonstrates the ways in which identities and beliefs were negotiated and sustained moment by moment, and works towards breaking down the perception of premodern religious groups as monolithic, unchanging, or inevitable.[56]

Similarly, Sabine Huebner's *Papryi and the Social World of the New Testament* (2019) addresses the limitations of textual evidence (Scriptural or theological/spiritual) by reconstructing social conditions of Late Antique Egyptians through the examination of papyrological evidence, often epistolary, the contents of which are often barely if at all explicitly related to Christianity or other religious expression.[57] Not only does this approach reorient analysis away from Roman or Alexandrian educated elites, it also allows scholars to gain an understanding of everyday social structures and hierarchies (physical and mental) and make

[54] Rebillard, *Many Identities*, 3-5.
[55] Rebillard, *Many Identities*, 3-6.
[56] Rebillard, *Many Identities*, 3-6.
[57] Sabine B. Huebner. *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament*. Cambridge University Press (Cambridge), 2019: 2-8.

reasonable conclusions about the transformation and employment of Christian identity and belief in these contexts, making excellent use of a highly underutilized resource.[58]

These advances have penetrated the modern scholarship on Enoch as well, though not without flaws. For example, David Frankfurter staunchly advocates including TER customs and concepts in the analysis of early Christianity, writing, "Church historians are hard-pressed to admit that Egyptians—ordinary Egyptians—already had 'a' religion that was entirely life- and community-sustaining..."[59] Frankfurter takes an anthropological approach to religious evolution in his 2018 book *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Words in Late Antiquity* by referencing Lévi-Strauss' idea of *bricolages*, or the continuous recombination of significant symbols into new meanings with old cores, Frankfurter identifies continuities and differences in practice pre- and post-Christianity in terms of *agency*, *gesture*, and *landscape*.[60] Through this lens, Frankfurter finds that in many ways elements of TER (especially those related to community, e.g. festivals, households charms and rites, etc.) remained relevant, and were formed the basis of a uniquely Coptic Christianity.[61] By focusing on Egyptian culture and society, Frankfurter also pays due consideration to the lived and embodied aspects of religious transition, which he argues happened differently depending on the individual's place and goal in the community.[62] This approach gives Coptic Christian actors and spaces real agency, and also incorporates embodied structures and actions by examining physical gestures and environments,

[58] Huebner, *Papyri*, 2.
[59] David Frankfurter. "Native Egyptian Religion in its Roman Guise." *Numen* vol. 43, no. 3 (1996): 303.
[60] David Frankfurter. *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity*. Princeton University Press, 2018: 15, 20.
[61] Frankfurter, *Local Worlds*, 20.
[62] Frankfurter, *Local Worlds*, 6.

bringing a deeper and more compelling dimension to Frankfurter's analysis of the transition out of traditional Egyptian religion.[63]

Finally, John C. Reeves and Annette Yoshiko Reed's 2018 book *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* makes critical strides towards integrating evidence and sources from different periods, addressing an explicit need for easier access to Enochic sources across religions, historical disciplines, and times.[64] Containing both translations of and commentaries on Enochic texts and inscriptions from the earliest days of their inception to the Middle Ages, Reeves' book is an invaluable resource especially for those scholars interested in more integrated analyses of the Enochic corpus. Moreover, as the authors argue, the presence of Enochic traditions in so many contexts and cultures is a clear indicator of the closely intertwined literary and cross-cultural dimension of the ancient world at large.[65] Together with Frankfurter, these three authors are an example of how modern scholarship is working to rectify the isolated and somewhat flawed approaches of the past.

However, this is not to say that these most recent studies are without their flaws. Arguably, the works of Frankfurter, Reeves, and Reed—while extremely valuable and necessary insights—overemphasize continuities in their mission to display the ongoing relevance of TER and other ancient, religio-cultural influences. Frankfurter's 1996 article "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories" provides a clear example of this problem. In it, Frankfurter delves into far deeper analyses into the connections between Egyptian priestly literature and Enochic texts (among others) than Pearson did, highlighting more

[63] Frankfurter, *Local Worlds*, 20.
[64] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity,* 4.
[65] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity,* 254.

effectively shared characteristics, i.e. their preoccupation with the power of writing and the literary techniques that equated secret knowledge with prestige and authority.[66]

To be sure, these are plausible and reasonable comparisons that reveal much about the specific Egyptian direction of apocalyptic development; however, there is little to no discussion of the elements that were *absent* from these conceptions. Sometimes, Frankfurter's language and the brevity of his analyses especially of the comparisons between Thoth and Enoch come across almost as uncritically as did Pearson's. For example, on the Egyptian priestly influence on Christian apocalyptic literature, Frankfurter wrote,

> It would therefore seem that Christian apocalyptic writing involved not only Greco-Egyptians inspired by the power and authority of Jewish apocalypses but also members of the Egyptian priesthood familiar with native concepts of revelation and sacred book, with forms of oracular and revelatory writing, and with presenting ancient ideas in the new genres of the Greco-Roman world. It would be this sort of milieu, for example…that would *appropriate Enoch to mask the god Thoth as originator of writing and divine scribe* (emphasis added).[67]

On the monastic and scribal elements of Enoch, Frankfurter further wrote, "But it is clear that by the Coptic period Enoch had also *inherited the role of the Egyptian god Thoth in the latter's dual capacities of scribal culture-hero and scribe of the judgment* (emphasis added)."[68]

While both examples demonstrate pertinent examples of similarities and parallels between Thoth and Enoch, the comparison is conducted somewhat shallowly. In fact, despite making multiple references to Enoch's "inheritance" of a preexisting idea, Frankfurter does not analyze a single source specifically characterizing Thoth's preexisting scribal depiction in literature or in iconography. Material, ritual, and mythological sources indicate a broad spectrum of contradictory and complementary roles, spheres of influences, and functions associated with

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[66] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 142-143, 147.
[67] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 149-150.
[68] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 188.

Thoth.[69] If the basis for the comparison and supposed syncretization of Thoth and Enoch is based primarily on their scribal roles (and to a lesser extent their judgement roles), then a great deal of those extant functions and qualities must have been elided over time, none of which were addressed in Frankfurter's essay.

Moreover, Frankfurter's language of "appropriation," "masking" and "inheritance" forcibly presents religion as static, implying that certain qualities, archetypes, or concepts either had to be passed down or were inevitably going to be transferred. Reeves falls into this trap as well. Reeves argues for a broadly homogenized ancient world with shared cultural and religious characteristics, which is certainly true on some level—however, overstating those similarities creates an assimilationist perspective on the ancient world that overlooks many of the differences as either superficial or inconsequential.[70] The concept of "theological onomasiology" referenced here by Reeves (or the distinctly ancient habit of identifying foreign religious characters with the names of one's own) is already being called into question in Classical studies, particularly with the case of *interpretatio Romana*—as Clifford Ando argues, calling the god of one culture by the name of another cannot only be interpreted philologically, but must on some level represent an internally negotiated comparison of their symbolic and iconographic elements as well as of their character qualities.[71]

Regardless, Reeves takes his homogenizing approach to Enoch one step farther, writing,

> By identifying Enoch with the respectable figure of Hermes Trismegistus, the latter figure's well-known accomplishments in the fields of theological speculation, science, civil engineering, and medicine *received a biblical imprimatur* which at the very least would encourage further efforts toward advancing these and allied disciplines by religiously responsible Jews and Christians. Assimilating Enoch to the

[69] Stadler, "Thoth," 3.
[70] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 254.
[71] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 254. Clifford Ando. "Interpretatio Romana." *Classical Philology* 100, no. 1 (2005): 41, 45.

> enigmatic qur'anic prophet Idris dispels any lingering doubts about the prophetic credentials of the biblical forefather and supplies the latter figure with a much needed curriculum vita.[72]

Reeves' language is problematic in a few ways. His phrasing here suggests a conscious motive or agenda for the association of Enoch with similar figures from other eras, painting "advancing scientific disciplines in a religiously responsible way" as the *goal* rather than the *byproduct* of religious negotiation and transition. In doing so, Reeves somewhat deprives ancient religions, especially ancient polytheistic religions, of their place as lived, embodied systems in which people grew and believed. This approach turns figures like Enoch and Thoth into stock characters and flat symbols that could be applied and reapplied as necessary rather than "real," internally perceived and constructed beings that quite literally inhabited the earth, differed across regions and cultures, and played fundamental roles in the lives of everyday people.

This is not to say that Frankfurter and Reeves have not done important work to recover ancient religious agency in many ways. Frankfurter especially shows a particular dedication to demonstrating the lived realities of this transitional period and has gone a long way in deconstructing narratives of "conversion."[73] But by only covering continuities and not changes, modern scholars are deprived of the fullest picture of ancient religious development and transformation. Comparing the two traditions in their fullest context demonstrates that religious influence has always gone beyond the explicitly theological to address and shape the way we perceive the world and our place in it. Logically speaking, a system with multiple divinities must necessarily operate differently from a system with just one; the case of Thoth and Enoch clearly exemplifies every part of this dialectic transformation—rather than a correction of the previously

[72] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 254.
[73] Frankfurter, *Local Worlds*, 7.

enumerated scholarly works, its implications add a dimension of complexity and nuance to the excellent work that already exists.

Failing to recognize and fully analyze this process of internal and external comparison and negotiation deprives us of critical insights into the nature of religious transformation in the Late Antique period. It may certainly have been that Enoch did "inherit" one of Thoth's functions; however, the evidence demonstrates that it would have been one among many. If not—if there was a reason why that particular element survived above others—that is itself deserving of a more critical and comprehensive analysis. As Fowden wrote, "The late antique 'dynamic' [directionally evolving from polytheistic to monotheistic] was not, then, inevitable, but neither was it the product of mere chance."[74]

Withholding due consideration from the mechanisms and ideas involved in this dynamic immobilizes our conceptions of religious development by presupposing an endgame when in fact, as Frankfurter himself argues, the transition from TER to Christianity was negotiated through multiple, ongoing interactions at different levels. On the other hand, examining these processes in the sphere of iconography and TER as a belief and as a system rather than purely as an expression of cultural identity[75] empowers the ancient person and adds fluidity to the history of Late Antique religious transition.

The comparative analysis that follows will demonstrate that as this transition occurred, the flexible and malleable perceptions of gods and divinity (and by extension the landscapes,

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[74] Garth Fowden. *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity,* Princeton University Press (Princeton), 1993: 9.

[75] Defining Christianity in *Christianizing Egypt*, Frankfurter wrote, "This book starts from the position that 'Christianity' describes not a cultural or religious accomplishment or 'identity' but an ongoing process of negotiation…this book is about how people in the various *social worlds of home and shrine*…constructed Christianity…" It follows that he would define TER similarly, although he did not do so explicitly in the book. Frankfurter, *Local Worlds*, 6.

natures, and fundamental qualities they embodied) would gradually be lost to more concrete notions of the same, informed by a worldview that believed strongly in absolute theological and ethical truths. When placed in the greater socio-historical context of the 5th-7th centuries, the processes and consequences of this transition can arguably be said to have contributed fundamentally to the rapid Christian communal and monastic expansion, conflict, and intrareligious differentiation characteristic of this period of Egyptian history.

Chapter 2: Constructing Community: How Humans Create(d) Gods and Saints

Around the 7th-8th century C.E., an anonymous monk carved an invocation into a stele in the Wadi Sarga of the Lycopolite nome (Middle/Upper Egypt): "Apa S[ ]re., our father Moses, *Apa Enoch the Scribe*, Apa Jeremias…God watch over our workshop. Have mind of us, the brethren of this [ ]. Amen." [76] Calling upon several saints in a local liturgical order, this inscription was the only one discovered at the site to reference the biblical Enoch.[77] This invocation was carved into stone by an unknown hand, from an unknown monastery, for an unknown purpose; what scholars *do* know is that this appellative for Enoch—that of the scribe—was used to describe Enoch in the Coptic Christian world to a degree exceeding that of any other. Previously this phenomenon has been partially attributed to the deep influence of Thoth, master and patron of the scribes who reigned supreme in Egyptian society, on the Egyptian culture and psyche, which greatly valued writing generally. However, a closer examination indicates that just as gods and saints moved and influenced men, men created and transformed the images of their sacred beings as well.

The fact that both Thoth and Enoch are prominently designated as scribes has naturally been the greatest cause for their association and assimilation both in the past and in the modern scholarship. Thoth is typically given the appellates "divine scribe" or "scribal god"; similarly, one of Enoch's biggest functions in sapiential Judaism and then early Christianity was as the "scribe of righteousness."[78] This overlap has certainly been noted and capitalized upon both in

[76] W.E. Crum. *Wadi Sarga: Coptic and Greek Texts from the Excavations Undertaken by the Byzantine Research Account.* Hauniae (Gylendalske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag), 1922: 80.
[77] As opposed to actual human monks named Enoch. Crum 36, 80.
[78] Stadler, "Thoth," 1. Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 146. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 52, 65. The sapiential tradition refers to the literary and theological theme that focuses on the revelation of divine wisdom from God to a chosen human. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch,* 52.

antiquity and in the present, and especially in Hermetic lore.[79] Several scholars have also noted the significant relevance of this epithet specifically to the Egyptian context. On this point, Reeves and Reed went so far as to write,

> In other words, the title "scribe of righteousness" is meaningless apart from the "Egyptian" narrative setting provided in *T. Abr.* 11.1-10. The attributes and role accorded to Enoch here are largely identical to those of the god Thoth in the *Book of the Dead* Ch. 182 (note the popular hermetic assimilation of these two figures! [sic]) and point toward the eventual assimilation of Enoch and Graeco-Egyptian Hermes in late antique esoteric currents of speculative lore.[80]

The key word here, however, is "largely." It is clear that from the Egyptian monastic and material evidence that Enoch's function as a scribe was one of (if not his most) popular role—however, it was far from his only one. A few other functions specific to the Egyptian context can be found in several antique texts, for example in *1 En.* and the Coptic Enoch Apocryphon (CEA). The same can be applied to depictions of Thoth; while his scribal role was certainly prominent in sources like the *Book of the Dead* (BD) and the *Book of Thoth,* both sources do reference him in other aspects as well.

A review of these and other texts and visual evidence suggests that not only are there subtle differences in the scribal associations assigned to Thoth and Enoch, at no point in time is either figure restricted to a single function or role. There is nothing to suggest that the primacy of Enoch's role as scribe or his connection with Thoth in that regard was somehow inevitable—moreover, a close reading of both textual and visual sources indicates that while several other interpretations of their functions and connections could have been made, they either were not to a significant degree or were outsold over time. A fuller comparison of the occupations of each figure reveals a more complicated story of assessment and negotiation that is reflective of the

[79] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity,* 254.
[80] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity,* 46-47.

social and religious context in which it occurred—specifically that of Egyptian coenobitic monastery complexes, where Enoch was a particularly significant figure.

Comparing the scribal roles of Thoth and Enoch demonstrates that ancient believers (whether of TER or Coptic Christianity) were not merely influenced by static, preordained archetypes or cultural concepts. Rather, people actively participated in continuously generating those functions and their representations by prioritizing certain aspects of Thoth and Enoch's characters textually and in iconography. A broad review of evidence for both figures reveals a wide range of potential associations and aspects many of which fell to the wayside as Thoth and Enoch's scribal role was elevated specifically by TER temple institutions like the House of Life and Christian coenobitic monasteries. This prioritization was not random, but served a similar purpose in these similar institutions. The qualities associated with their scribal occupation and character, namely seclusion, diligence/productivity, and collaboration, validated and reinforced the communal identity that defined and upheld both organizations.

Whether taken up consciously or unconsciously these actions and processes had consequences for the conceptions and legacies associated with Enoch and Thoth. While these institutions were basically similar, their structures manifested quite differently—these differences actually pushed the scribal qualities and characters of Thoth and Enoch apart in some respects. Overall, while there is no way to know how directly the House of Life's model influenced the monastic prioritization of Enoch's scribal capacity, it is arguable that the success of coenobitic organizations in proliferating the one function associated with Enoch that would reify their particular form of monasticism and identity retroactively highlighted the uses and representations of Thoth that echoed their own, which could be picked up and assimilated or used as further corroboration. Continually perpetuating these cycles of validation and promotion

demonstrated by the promulgation of *Thoth's* scribal association in texts and culture specifically in the Roman and Coptic period context. Looking at Enoch, Thoth, and the similarities and differences in their scribal representations emphasizes the agency and extra-textual needs of affirmation and identity of antique believers, and speaks to the depth of human involvement with the construction and reconstruction of religious imagery, symbolism, and ideology.

Visual evidence of Enoch attests best to the Coptic Christian focus on the scribal role—the extant monastic evidence is almost solely concerned with the scribal element of Enoch's functions. The majority of the pictorial and epigraphical evidence on Enoch from Egypt comes from two places: the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, founded at Saqqara, and the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit.[81] Enoch had special significance as a patron saint to both complexes, and in nearly every extant image was portrayed with scroll or book in hand.[82] Figs. 1A-C are pictures taken during the early 20th century excavation of the monastery at Saqqara by J. Quibell of niche paintings of Enoch (among other figures) observed in Chapels D and F.[83]

[81] Marguerite Rassart-Debergh. "Jeremiah, Saint: Christian Subjects in Coptic Art." *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia Vol. II*. The Gale Group, 1991. *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 149.
[82] Rassart-Debergh, "Christian Subjects." Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 149. See figs. 1A-C.
[83] J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1906-1907. With a Section on the Religious Texts, by P. Lacau.* Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale (Egypt), 1908: 82-83, 209, 211.

Fig. 1A. Wall niche in Monastery of Apa Jeremias Chapel D, East Side. Enoch far right.

Fig. 1A displays a wall painting of the Virgin and two saints. This image was painted into a small niche on the east side of Chapel D—this eastern placement was standard in the monastery complex, and shows up in both chapels and private oratories.[84] Enoch is painted to right of the Virgin Mary, holding a scroll—he is haloed and portrayed with wings, young and with full, curly hair. In Fig. 1B below (reproduced via sketch in 1C), Enoch is the second from the right, depicted as an old man with a long white beard. He is flanked by two monks, one of whom holds a codex, while Enoch himself carries a scroll or cloth with an unknown Coptic phrase on it. Here, Enoch is also depicted wearing half-boots, usually reserved for archangels in the monastery at Saqqara—this could reference Enoch's prominent angelic connection discussed in *1 En.*, and could also indicate a special status afforded to Enoch as a patron saint of the complex.[85]

[84] Rassart-Debergh "Christian Subjects."
[85] Rassart-Debergh, "Christian Subjects."

Fig. 1B. East side of Monastery of Apa Jeremias' Chapel F.

Fig. 1C. Sketched reproduction of 1B.

Finally, although images were unavailable, Pearson reports painted images of Enoch in the cells of two monks, cells 1725 and 1727—in the latter, Enoch holds a copy of the Book of Life.[86] This singular focus is echoed at Bawit, where "Enoch always appears as a monk clothed

[86] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 149. Rassart-Debergh lists 5 more cells in her article on both Jeremias and Enoch, but without pictures it is unclear whether she was referring to images of just Enoch, just Jeremias, or both together.

in a tunic and long mantle and carrying a calamus (quill pen) and scroll."[87] This is despite his counterpart, Apa Jeremias, playing a double role at Bawit, sometimes portrayed a prophet and sometimes a monk—only Enoch's occupation is whittled down so specifically.[88]

Enoch appeared in various other roles in the Coptic Christian and broader regional/religious context—however, they were far less emphasized than his scribal role, especially in material evidence. For example, some texts conceive of Enoch as a "witness" or warrior against the Antichrist, again a distinctly Egyptian postulation that Thoth embodied in some ways as well.[89] This episode was contained in the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Elijah*, based off the passage in Revelations 11 that prophesied the appearance of two witnesses to battle the Antichrist at the end of days.[90] *The Apocalypse of Elijah* identified the two witnesses as Elijah and Enoch, along with a virgin named Tabitha, though other texts assign their identities differently.[91] Pearson noted that this appearance of Enoch was also significant to the Egyptian context, as it was echoed in the CEA, where Enoch's sister Sibyl (a uniquely Coptic tradition co-opting the Roman prophetess as a virgin saintess) tells him of two others who will be witnesses alongside him, and be taken up by God.[92] Thoth occupies a similar position in both mythology and iconography--in funerary papyri, Thoth "pronounces his annihilating judgment on the enemies of Re, Osiris, and Horus…It is Thoth, too, who combats Seth …and his followers and who imposes on Seth the humiliating punishment of having to carry Osiris on his back."[93]

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[87] Rassart-Debergh, "Christian Subjects."
[88] Rassart-Debergh, "Christian Subjects."
[89] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 165.
[90] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 165.
[91] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 165.
[92] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 165.
[93] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 137-138. In the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, the two named deities fight over who would be more appropriate to succeed Osiris as king of the gods. They go through various trials in which Seth, a trickster god of chaos and Horus' uncle, employs underhanded tactics to trip Horus

Also notable is that Enoch and Elijah's method of fighting the Antichrist was heavily oral—they were portrayed as scolding him continuously for four days, and "As the words were spoken, they prevailed over him…"[94] This strongly echoes Enoch's role in *1 En.,* where he reprimanded and scolded the Watchers on God's command until they cowered in fear.[95] BD 182 expounds on this theme with regards to Thoth, "whose words triumph over violence;" in other chapters, references were made to the "might of the words of the utterances of the god Thoth."[96] This conception was echoed the Ptolemaic Jumilhac Papyrus, a religious text documenting various myths and legends of the Egyptian gods, where Thoth defended Horus against Seth with magic formulas presumably spoken aloud—Bleeker notes that in general Thoth acted through the metaphorical and magical "word," both to fight the enemies of Ra and in some myths even to create the world.[97] And yet, these conceptions are rarely mentioned or portrayed in other Coptic textual or material sources. Rather, in the monastic evidence Enoch is only ever depicted holding a scroll, codex (typically the Book of Life, where he recorded the deeds of souls), or reed pen—the scene in which he chastised the devil was clearly not a popular iconographic representation.

A final that went fairly underexploited was Enoch's role as chronographer or giver of secret knowledge.[98] George Syncellus, the Byzantine chronographer, notably used figures reported by Enoch to calculate his version of the age of the world.[99] In early Jewish writings especially, Enoch's instruction at the hands of angels was emphasized as the source of his

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up. Horus turns these tricks back on his uncle each time, humiliating and injuring him, until the gods eventually vote (with the advocacy of Thoth and others) to make Horus king.

[94] *Ap. El.* 4:7-16.

[95] Bleeker, 136.

[96] BD 182. E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day: An English Translation with Introduction, Notes, Etc*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd. (London), 1898: 76.

[97] Bleeker, 137. Stadler, "Thoth," 6.

[98] *1 En.* 8:1-4.

[99] William Adler. "Berossus, Manetho, and 1 Enoch in the World Chronicle of Panodorus," *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 76, no. 4 (1983): 419-442.

otherworldly knowledge, which he supposedly passed down to humanity—these subjects included astrology, time-keeping, metallurgy, and antique precursors to alchemy.[100] Enoch was even credited with the invention of the arcane arts and sciences on occasion, "presumably due to his own acute powers of observation."[101] Thoth occupied this same role in the Egyptian conception—this was to the extent that Fowden wrote, "And of the occult powers latent in all these aspects of the cult of the gods, Thoth was the acknowledged source."[102] Egyptian and Church Fathers like Origen, Clement, and Irenaeus wrote on this as well, for example commenting on secret names of stars hidden in the pamphlets called "Enoch" (likely referring to partial copies of *1 En.* or other Enochic texts).[103] That the references to Enoch by these authors were so concerned with the proliferation of secret knowledge coupled with their gradual disillusion with Enochic texts and traditions indicates an elite disconnect with monastic and lay conceptions; the epigraphical evidence and the monastic images previously discussed hammer home the scribal role alone.

The only place this crossover was brought out in the fullest was in the Hermetic lore, which was highly syncretic and esoteric.[104] In 1st century B.C.E. Alexandria and beyond, Fowden notes that Thoth/Hermes' greatest association was that of an astrologer, also the area of greatest interest for Hermetists.[105] However, aside from the literary similarities in the *Kore Kosmou* (a Hermetic text dating to the 2nd-3rd cent. C.E.), most available sources explicitly identifying Enoch with Thoth-Hermes come from after the Arab invasion, or the 9th cent. onwards—in fact,

[100] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 58.
[101] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 58.
[102] Garth Fowden. *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind.* Princeton University Press (Princeton), 1986: 22-23.
[103] Origen, *In Numeros homilia*, 28.2.
[104] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 254.
[105] Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 161.

most of the sources given by Reeves and Reed in their sourcebook on this point are works of Islamic mysticism.[106] Fowden also acknowledges that Thoth "most owed his popularity with ordinary people" to "his role as guide of souls and judge of the dead."[107] Moreover, there is again no evidence iconographically for this aspect of Enoch's in the Coptic monastic context.

It is clear from this evidence that Enoch's role as a scribe, specifically engaged with the writing and recording of words and deeds, was his most popular conception in the Egyptian context, despite the potential for several other functions by himself and in conjunction with Thoth. Mentions of Enoch as a scribe or performing acts typically undertaken by a scribe permeate the text of *1 En.*, and in fact the appellate "scribe of righteousness" seems to stem from a purely Egyptian origin.[108] Reeves and Reed argued that the epithet was actually added to *1 En.* from Egyptian compositions, especially from the apocryphal text *The Testament of Abraham*.[109] Rather than being a reference to Enoch's own moral character, the scribe of righteousness writes down the good and bad deeds of mortal men, to be used at the time of their judgment.[110] In fact, Enoch was not merely a scribe—one of his earliest appearances in the *Book of Jubilees* described him as "the first among men born on earth to learn to write and to acquire knowledge and wisdom."[111] *Jubilees* goes on to describe his achievements, including writing down the "signs of heaven" in order to give men knowledge of the seasons and the first "testimony" warning humanity of the end.[112]

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[106] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 275.
[107] Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 23.
[108] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 46.
[109] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 46.
[110] Reeves, *Enoch in Antiquity*, 47.
[111] *Jub.* 4:17.
[112] *Jub.* 4:17-19.

Similar conceptions existed for Thoth, who was thought to have invented hieroglyphics and the art of writing, and to have "made different the tongue of one country to another."[113] His status as the creator of words is well-attested not only in Egyptian mythology but by Hellenistic sources and histories as well—Plato's *Phaedrus* records one account of this, as does Diodorus Siculus in the Roman period, writing, "The one most highly honoured by him was Hermes, who was endowed with unusual ingenuity for devising things capable of improving the social life of mankind. It was by Hermes…that the common language of mankind was first further articulated, and…that the alphabet was invented."[114]

One small distinction in these examples demonstrates that while writing in both cases was a divinely dispersed gift, Thoth and Enoch did not truly possess equal standing in its transmission to humans. While Thoth is attributed the *invention* of writing and language, Enoch is the first to *learn* the art of writing from others, be it from God or angelic instructors. In the *Encomium on the Four Bodiless Living Creatures,* typically attributed to Pseudo-John Chrysostom, Enoch explains, "I rejoice today since God transformed me and gave me the penholder of salvation and the tomes which were in the hand of *the angel Mefriel, scribe of old*."[115]

This gap indicates a disparity in the inherent divinity of Thoth and Enoch—Thoth was a god unto himself, while Enoch was a man raised to a higher position for the fulfillment of the works of a higher power. This affords Thoth a power all his own, as one god among many with their own spheres of influence; by contrast, Enoch serves as a conduit for knowledge attributed to a singular divine authority. Highlighting these differences attests to the emphasis on hierarchy

[113] Bleeker, *Thoth*, 140.
[114] Plat., *Phaed.*, 14.274c-375b. Diod. Sic. 1.16.
[115] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 147.

built into the monotheistic structure of Coptic Christianity, in which absolute knowledge and power were monopolized by one figure alone; systemically this conception of Enoch's emphasized order and structure, as opposed to the more individualistic, elemental inclination evinced by Thoth's conception in TER. By equating and assimilating the two figures as later believers did, the more autonomous qualities of Thoth were elided—they focused solely on the *results* of the two figures' interactions with humans rather than the process.

Arguably, Thoth and Enoch had significantly more potential for crossover in a different role—that of mediator or messenger. This theme is carried through significantly in *1 En.*, especially in the infamous story of the Watchers. Chapters 6-11 of *1 En.* make up the "Book of the Watchers," in which several angels fall from grace through their lust for human women.[116] Through their mating terrible Giants, also known as Nephilim, terrorized the earth for several years until the four Archangels interceded on behalf of God.[117] Following several passages in which God instructs each of the angels to cleanse the earth and bind the Watchers through separate missions, *1 En*. transitions to Enoch's perspective.

The role Enoch plays in this story is interesting for several reasons—most importantly, while "scribe" is the title most explicitly attached to his role here, his actual function comes across as slightly more than that. Enoch is first called upon by the Archangels to speak to the Watchers, to let them know that they would have "no peace or forgiveness."[118] In Chapters 13-14, Enoch brings the message to the Watchers, and is in turn actually commissioned to write a petition addressed to God and the archangels asking for a pardon, which he was to recite before the Lord Himself.[119] In response, God sends visions to Enoch that constituted a reply to the fallen

[116] *1 En.* 6:1.
[117] *1 En*. 6:3-5, 9:1.
[118] *1 En*. 12: 3-4.
[119] *1 En*. 13:1-4.

angels, denying their petition—Enoch assembles the Watchers and tells them of his visions, ultimately scolding them into submission.[120] It is significant here that Enoch was willing to carry messages for both parties up until God delivered the "final word."

Within the text, Enoch is titled explicitly as "scribe" in various forms three times (once self-described), and engages in the act writing three times as well.[121] However, the actual events of the story assign Enoch a function that goes beyond simply recording words spoken. Instead, Enoch actions more closely line up with those of an arbitrator. In Chapter 12, Enoch is essentially engaged to "serve" the Watchers with a judicial indictment; in Chapter 13, he writes and brings back a counter-petition asking for leniency, and in Chapter 14 delivers the final verdict, recited in the presence of the accused. Nickelsburg also points out the "strong juridical overtones" in the language and grammar of the Hebrew text.[122] That Enoch would agree to write down and recite a petition from the Watchers, the source of iniquity in the text, is itself notable—in some ways it suggests a sense of neutrality and mediating appeal which Nickelsburg writes is answered thusly: "An angry God has commissioned him to announce his judicial reprimand against the fallen watchers."[123] It is only after this final command that Enoch settles firmly against the Watchers, telling them, "You will be petitioning and making supplication…but you will not be speaking any word from the writing that I have written."[124] That Enoch's neutrality lasted only until the Lord pronounced His judgment further evidences the supreme authority and position of God in the Coptic Christian structure.

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[120] *1 En*. 13:8
[121] *1 En.* 12.3-4, 13.4, 14.4, 14.24, 15.1.
[122] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 249.
[123] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 249.
[124] *1 En*. 14:7.

The heavily judicial connotations of this episode are incredibly reminiscent of the role played by Thoth in the *Contendings of Horus and Seth* and in the myth of Osiris' reanimation. Much of Thoth's ritual actions in TER involve Thoth playing the messenger or go-between, acting as an advocate by reading aloud or speaking on behalf of someone.[125] Just as Enoch did, Thoth shows an ability to empathize with both parties, to a point. When Horus and Seth battle for supremacy in the *Contendings*, Thoth intervenes neutrally—he identifies himself as "the one who separated the two brothers (or companions)," and he heals both of their injuries.[126] BD 18 and 20 reference to an incident in which Thoth vindicated Osiris on trial by speaking words on his behalf—ostensibly this advocacy is executed by Thoth reading aloud a petition written on Osiris' fitness as king, just as Enoch recited the petitions of the angels and Watchers.[127]

Despite echoing culturally embedded notions of Thoth as a peacemaker and judicial influence, the deeper readings of Enoch's ability to play messengers and to arbitrate between parties were not expanded upon in iconography or literature in the Coptic Christian period. Furthermore, though both cases have juridical overtones, there is a distinct nuance in the way a verdict is reached in each case. In *1 En.*, God acts as both judge and jury, making a set decree with no hope for appeal—in the TER context, however, all the gods engage in debate and rhetorical persuasion; their decision relies more on the consensus of various chaotic personalities, amongst whom Thoth is influential for his ability to speak and to reason on behalf of Horus and Osiris. One observes a tendency toward extremes and absolutes that runs throughout the Coptic Christian literature on Enoch's scribal conception, one that simply is not present in the looser, more fluid representation of Thoth in TER.

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[125] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 125-126.
[126] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 126.
[127] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 135. BD 18, 20.

Other texts of an Egyptian provenance and visual evidence from monastic contexts double down on the portrayal of Enoch as a scribe as well, especially those on Enoch's role in the judgment. The short recension (B) of the *Testament of Abraham*, which is further differentiated into Greek and Coptic versions, is an excellent example of this.[128] In this text, Abraham watches "the scribe of righteousness" Enoch participate at the trial of a woman accused of murdering her daughter to conduct an affair with her son-in-law; Enoch recites her sins from his book after she lies, denying the accusation.[129] In both versions, Enoch is posited as a witness and scribe before the court of judgment—in other words, his only function in the heavenly structure is to write down the doings of each human soul for reference in their trial, and then the results of their judgment.[130] The actual judging is done by someone else—by Abel in the Greek version, and significantly by God in the Coptic.[131] *The Testament of Abraham* makes clear once again that in the Coptic Christian world, supreme authority lied not with the angels or humans raised up by God, but in God himself.

The Greek recension B actually went so far as to restrict his function by heavenly mandate *and* personal preference in the following conversation between Abraham and the archangel Michael:

> Abraham said, And how can Enoch bear the weight of the souls, not having seen death [himself]? Or how can he give sentence to all the souls? Michael said, If he gives sentence concerning the souls, it is not permitted; but Enoch himself does not give sentence, but it is the Lord who does so, and he has no more to do than only to write. For Enoch prayed to the Lord saying, I desire not, Lord, to give sentence on the souls, lest I be grievous to anyone…[132]

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[128] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 170.
[129] *T. Abr.* B.10. While Enoch is only called forth after the soul lies in the Greek version, he participates from the beginning in the Coptic. Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 170-171.
[130] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 170-171.
[131] . Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 179-171.
[132] *T. Abr.* B.11.

That Enoch's autonomy as a scribe is restricted and that he moves primarily on command is another theme in Coptic literature—for instance, it in the *Martyrdom of Apa Anub,* the *Apocalypse of Paul,* and the CEA.[133] This is not at all the case for Thoth, whose role both as a scribe and in judgment went far beyond rote recording. Textual and epigraphic evidence makes it clear that Thoth acted as more than a secretary when it came to human lives—he also "exercised the office of criminal judge."[134] For example, Bleeker references an epigraphic confession from a man who lied under oath, which implied "that Thoth punished perjury so severely that is was discernible to all."[135] Once Thoth abandoned his neutrality in the battle between Horus and Seth, BD Spell 19 indicates that "Horus is also declared the heir of his father, apparently under the tacit assumption that Thoth used his influence decisively in this matter."[136] BD 182 especially makes reference to Thoth's position as a judge and protector of what is right and true, writing, "I am Thoth…who trieth the right and the truth for the gods, the judge of words in their essence, whose words triumph over violence."[137] As Stadler noted, "To conclude…that Thoth is a divine but subaltern secretary who receives orders rather than acts through his own power overlooks the weight that the other deities assign to his juristic assessments."[138]

On top of reemphasizing the more communally decided conceptions of justice and judgment in TER as opposed to the top-down structure of Coptic Christianity, comparing the *Testament of Abraham* with the foregoing associations for Thoth also reveals interesting disparities in the personalities and character traits associated with both figures. Thoth displays an unshakeable confidence in his ability to discern right from wrong, and he is mostly upheld

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[133] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 169-170, 197. *Ap. Paul* 20.1-2.
[134] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 138.
[135] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 138.
[136] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 136.
[137] BD 182.
[138] Stadler, "Thoth," 8.

(though not always) as a just god dedicated to fairness and truth by humans and other gods alike. Enoch, on the other hand, comes across differently in his wish "not to be grievous" to anyone.[139] It is possible that Enoch had some sympathy for the sinful humans who would be consigned to punishment by the judgment—more likely, however, this characterization betrays a lack of confidence in Enoch's ability to accurately evaluate sin and virtue, both from himself and from the divine authority. Enoch and the heavenly judges are conceived of as trying to prevent an overly strict, unforgiving assessment of human actions that could lead them to eternal punishment, whereas Thoth is constructed and portrayed having absolute faith in Truth and in his ability to ensure a fair judgment—while in both cases the ultimate decisions rest with divine figures, the Enochic conception in the *Testament of Abraham* imposes a hierarchy on understanding, undermining the human ability to appraise truth and virtue in the face of Divine wisdom and capability.

Returning to material evidence here underscores the broad associations and variability of Thoth's functions in TER, demonstrating just how far the field of iconographic representation would have to be narrowed to support a direct equivalency between Thoth and Enoch. To be sure, one of the most consistent and popular representations of Thoth was in his role as scribe in the judgment, an example of which is pictured in Fig. 2A. Fig. 2A is taken from the Hunefer Papyrus recension of the *Book of the Dead*, with an illustrated vignette of the judgment scene; Thoth can be observed in the center of the image with a piece of papyrus and reed pen in hand, ready to mark down the results of the weighing of the heart.[140] It is important to note that in the Ptolemaic and Greco-Roman periods, the *Books of Breathing* emerged as the more popular, common funerary texts—however, scholarship indicates that they were closely related, with the

[139] T. Abr. B.11.
[140] Stadler, "Thoth," 4.

Books of Breathing being condensations of "theologically significant" parts of the *Book of the Dead* and containing many of the spells and vignettes significant to the portrayal of Thoth in the judgment analyzed here.[141] While some of the following images are not themselves contemporary, they best capture the spirit of the iconographic portrayals of judgment that were carried through the Greco-Roman period.

Fig. 2A. Hunefer Papyrus of BD 125—Thoth pictured recording results of psychostasia in ibis-man form. Ca. 1300 C.E. Papyrus London BM EA 9901, 3.

The similarities between this funerary portrayal, which would have been abundant through to the 2nd and 3rd cent. C.E., and the depictions of Enoch in our monastic sources is undeniable and significant. However, just as Thoth did not have one role, he was also displayed in several forms that changed over time, corresponding to trends in art and style. An equally popular iconographic trope of Thoth in the judgement has him not as an anthropomorphic ibis-man with reed and quill, but as a baboon (one of his other animal manifestations) seated atop the

[141] Foy Scalf. "The Death of the Book of the Dead," in *Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt.* University of Chicago Press (Chicago), 2017: 142-143.

scale of Ma'at[142], as shown in a mummy's breastplate from the Ptolemaic period pictured in Fig. 2B. Egyptological scholars note that while both portrayals of Thoth were popular funerary archetypes, the portrayal of the baboon atop the scales actually grew in popularity during the Ptolemaic era and then persisted into the Greco-Roman—rather than being a static collection of iconographic archetypes, funerary art was still evolving even this late in Egyptian history.[143] This representation in no way indicates a scribal conception, and yet the scribal comparison between Thoth and Enoch persisted strongly.

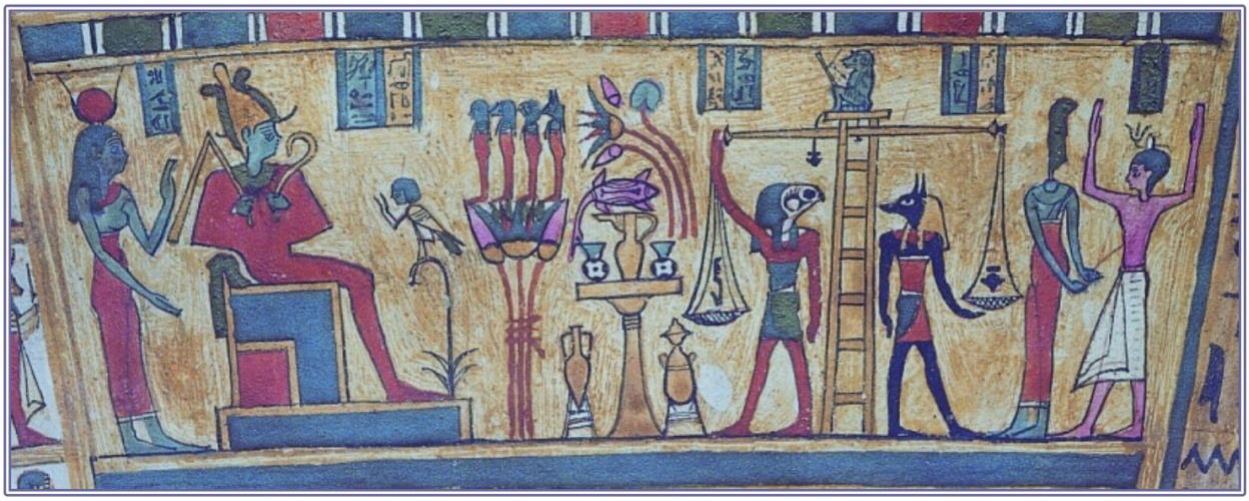

Fig. 2B. Ptolemaic mummy breastplate depicting scene of judgment, Thoth pictured as baboon atop scale. 3rd-1st century B.C.E. Antikensammlung des Martin von Wagner Museums der Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg A 201.

[142] The scale of Ma'at was used in the judgment to weigh the "heart" (or soul) of the deceased against the feather of Truth—if the scale balanced, the soul was pure and allowed to pass on to the afterlife. If not, the deceased's heart was devoured by the monster Ammit. Rita Lucarelli. "Gods, Spirits, and Demons of the Book of the Dead," in *Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Foy Scalf. University of Chicago (Chicago), 2017: 132.
[143] Griffiths, "Funerary Shroud," 237.

Fig. 2C. Panel from Greco-Roman funerary shroud. British Museum Eg. Inv. 26543.

In his study of a funerary shroud for a Greco-Roman woman likely of the 2nd cent. C.E., J. Gwyn Griffiths noted that in the panel showing the weighing of the heart Thoth appeared twice, once as the baboon on top of the scale and once as the ibis-man, this time not only recording the outcome but taking part in the act of measurement itself alongside Horus—actively participating in the judgment in a way that Coptic texts blocked Enoch from doing.[144] On the ongoing innovation of TER funerary art Griffiths wrote, "It is significant that the grouping of Thoth and Horus in this function…occurs in the Roman era, and not apparently before that."[145] Overall, the textual and material comparison indicates that despite there being so much room for overlap (and for that matter, so much room for difference), Coptic Christians really only emphasized the scribal overlap between Enoch and Thoth—to call Enoch a syncretic "mask" for Thoth when so many aspects of his character and iconography had to be elided to make that contention stick seems far-fetched, especially when their scribal duties and conceptions were not completely analogous as well.

Why, then, was Enoch's scribal position so heavily emphasized in the Coptic Christian context? The preceding evidence indicates that it cannot solely be because of overriding influence from portrayals of Thoth, as he did not have a single role for universally applicable to

[144] Griffiths, "Funerary Shroud," 236. T. Abr. B.11.
[145] Griffiths, "Funerary Shroud," 237.

Egyptian society either. The key lies rather in the institutions and organizations that created and proliferated the scribal connotations of Thoth and Enoch, respectively the TER House of Life and Coptic coenobitic monasteries—their needs and actions drove these iconographic constructions and transformations instead of the other way around. Arguably, the values associated with the art of writing (particularly as a scribe copying sacred and ritual texts) in the cases of both Thoth and Enoch symbolically validated and reminded TER scribes and monks of their identities and goals, providing necessary affirmation and enforcing a group identity defined by a specific function and/or character qualities. By the same token, the different ways these structures engaged with writing and with hierarchical organization differentiated some aspects of Thoth and Enoch, forcing their images gradually apart.

Institutional and structural similarities and differences underpin this interpretation of the evidence. The Monasteries of Apa Jeremias and Apa Apollo were *coenobitic* monasteries, which in some ways bear a resemblance to the goals and ideals of the TER temple institution known as the House of Life. The origins and functions of the House of Life are shrouded in mystery—aside from vague inscriptions and references to it starting in the Old Kingdom period, scholars have little insight into its full role in Egyptian religion.[146] Every significant TER temple had its own branch of the House of Life housed somewhere in its complex.[147] Scholars in the past have posited it as a kind of college or school for scribes, although the latest literature refutes the assertion that the House of Life ever had a formalized educational structure like that of a modern university.[148] For the most part scholars are content in viewing it as a scriptorium attached to

[146] Jasnow, *Conversations,* 43.
[147] Jasnow, *Conversations,* 43.
[148] Jasnow, *Conversations,* 43. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 141.

major temples with a strong scribal function and ritual authority, especially for the cult of Osiris.[149]

Moving forward to Late Antiquity, the invention of coenobitic monasticism is attributed in the Coptic tradition to Pachomius, a Christian ascetic of the fourth century.[150] According to Pachomius' *Life,* supposedly written by his original followers to preserve his legacy, Pachomius was inspired by a vision to create a new model of monastic life different from that of St. Antony, who wandered the desert in isolation and practiced extreme self-sacrifice to prove his devotion to God (known as *anchoritic* or *eremitic* monasticism).[151] Pachomius chose to create a community conducive to group living, where large numbers of monks could devote themselves to ascetic purposes, eventually bonded through kinship language (e.g. Father, son, Brother, etc.) to create a strong sense of community and loyalty.[152] Arguably, the values and ideals embedded in the organizational structure of coenobitic monasteries are what explain the process behind the winnowing of Enoch's functions. Scholars have argued the split between the anchoritic and coenobitic structures was not based on theological or ideological conflict, but on differing ideas of how best to achieve the "aims and traditions of ascetic life."[153]

For Pachomius, the most effective way to achieve these monastic goals for the largest amount of people was in a community built on the concept (in principle) of complete equality, and moreover one that was built specifically to induce a singular focus on religion and devotion

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[149] Jasnow, *Conversations,* 43, Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 141.
[150] Ewa Wipszycka. *The Second Gift of the Nile: Monks and Monasteries in Late Antique Egypt*. University of Warsaw (Warszawa), 2018: 189.
[151] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 202.
[152] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 203. Philip Rousseau. *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian.* University of Notre Dame Press, 2010: 31-32.
[153] Rousseau, *Ascetics,* 35.

in all aspects of life.[154] This was achieved through an emphasis on *productivity* and a daily routine that incorporated prayer at all times. Coenobitism was differentiated from anchoritic and sarabaitic forms of monasticism through this emphasis on diligence and production—and of course, manuscript copying was a traditional and "typical" monastic craft, just as it seemed to heavily define the function of the House of Life.[155] To some it may seem obvious that the members of such institutions would adopt the scribal aspects figures like Enoch and Thoth as "mascots," so to speak—this assumption has likely influenced the modern scholarship's tendency to ignore the many differences in their conceptions. However, this approach paints this process as unthinking, and devalues the lived experiences of the scribes and monks who created these material sources with their own hands; it deprives antique believers of their full agency in perpetually sustaining and elevating these scribal aspects over time, and modern scholars of full insight into the changing structural and theological ideas evinced by the iconography and positioning of Thoth and Enoch in each institution.

With regard to portrayals of Enoch, their overwhelmingly scribal persuasion has been established—but their placement is equally telling. The representations of Enoch in Chapels F and D speak to their status as patron saints of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, as do the various funerary inscriptions and graffiti recorded by Quibell (which were formulaic in nature and featured Enoch as one of the first names invoked).[156] However, Quibell and Pearson also noted

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[154] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 204. Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom. *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt: An Archaeological Reconstruction*. Cambridge University Press (Cambridge), 2017: 182.
[155] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 500. Sarabaitism was a controversial third form of monasticism seemingly referring to a class of monks who would wander to various towns and cities, begging or becoming the spiritual teachers of rich patrons in exchange for donations or room and board. Monica J. Blanchard. "Sarabaitae and Remnuoth: Coptic Considerations," in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity Language, Literature, and Social Context, Essays in Honor of David. W. Johnson.* Catholic University of America Press, 2007: 55, 57.
[156] Quibell, *Excavations,* 57. Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 150.

the existence of painted images of Enoch within private cells.[157] Theorized in terms of embodied space, scholars find "ample evidence to illustrate that monks understood their domestic quarters and homes as residences."[158]

Within the world of the coenobitic monastery, where monks were expected to throw away worldly ambition and live an austere life in search of salvation, "The room of the monk…is not an oratory or anything more unusual…but it appears that the actions or performances carried out within the room transform it into something more."[159] For two monks to have devoted time (or if not they themselves, then the money necessary to pay an artist) putting Enoch up on the walls of their cells indicates a personal attachment that goes beyond simple patronage or shallow identification. Rather, the *choice* to prioritize scribal depictions of Enoch (or in the case of the House of Life, depictions of Thoth) consciously or unconsciously made over time by coenobitic monks and monasteries was not merely the inevitable association of a divine figure with the same occupation—it was a symbolic way of validating their own unique existence. This practice indicates an ideation and admiration of a greater figure who served as a role model and example to his human counterparts.

As stated, a TER parallel with the tradition of Thoth supports this as well. The connection between scribes and community is mirrored across time— in Egypt specifically, the corresponding example lies in the existence of the "House of Life," a temple institution with a special focus on mastering the art and ritual function of the scribe.[160] Its initiation text the *Book of Thoth*, available in several fragmentary attestations, echoes some of the same patterns

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[157] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 149.
[158] Hedstrom, *Landscape,* 127.
[159] Hedstrom, *Landscape,* 131.
[160] Richard Jasnow and Karl-Theodor Zauzich. *Conversations in the House of Life: A New Translation of the Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth.* Harrssowitz Verlag (Wiesbaden), 2014:, 45, 47.

identified with the Coptic representation of Enoch as well. In his commentary, Jasnow writes that "[the House of Life] has traditionally been described as the scriptorium attached to major temples, and there is little doubt that the scribes …did compose and copy many different kinds of literature."[161] While to a lesser extent than the Coptic Christian context, this initiation text does highlight and emphasize Thoth's function as the master of sacred writing and divine scribe in nearly every line—for example, one line Thoth as "their [sacred words] herdsman who makes for them sustenance. They are so quiet as to place themselves by him. The document is a nest. The book are its nestlings. That is, t[hey are] in his shade."[162]

The House of Life was not an exclusively scribal institution—it served several functions in ritual, scholarship, and magic as well.[163] Still, the *Book of Thoth* does display a pronounced elevation of the scribal connection between Thoth and words/writing that mirrors the narrowed function of Enoch in the coenobitic monastic context. Both institutions were ascetic in nature—they were cloistered, with a heavy intellectual and devotional focus. On top of being physically separated, they emphasized an ideological separation from the outside world as well, and regarded productivity as an integral aspect of their structural character not only practically but spiritually. A dedication to divine service in their own unique way—through ritual and magical scribing in the House of Life and in constant meditation and copying religious texts in coenobitic monasteries—drove their existences and particular institutional formats. The similarity of environment and purpose between these two institutions further supports the idea that elevating the scribal role in the conception of Enoch and Thoth was not chance or offhand sympathy, but a validation of the purposes and systems they embodied.

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[161] Jasnow, *Conversations*, 43.
[162] *Book of Thoth* 244.
[163] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 141.

Broader structural and cultural themes embedded in the ideology of the House of Life and of coenobitic monasteries further support this assertion. For example, the master-disciple relationship has been noted as central to the conception of Egyptian monasticism, and is reflected in the main characters of the *Book of Thoth's* discourse, posited between a Master and a Student as well; in the coenobitic form specifically, interconnection to the extent of fusion at the spiritual level was emphasized in ascetic discourse, for example from one Apa Isaiah of Scetis:

> If your brother is working with something and breaks what he is making, do not say anything to him unless he says to you. "Please teach me, brother," and then if you know but do not tell him, it is to your <spiritual> death [sic].[164]

Part of this emphasis on togetherness surely had to do with Pachomius' goal to bring as many to salvation at once as possible, and partially to the need for peace and harmony in an enclosed group of ascetics. But part likely also had to do with the need for *cooperation* as it related to productivity, both practically and theologically—no monk could or should do any part of his work completely alone, just as Enoch performed his role as a scribe in conjunction with other members of the heavenly court at all times. This functional and spiritual interconnection was not only theoretical—some argue that it was literally built into the coenobitic landscape. This comes through in the case of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias especially, which archaeologists identify as "the most complete representation of a purpose-built coenobitic community excavated in the 20th century."[165] Notably, according to the floor plan there are no spaces for private kitchens, bathrooms, or storage.[166]

The communal aspect of both coenobitic monasteries and the House of Life was particularly significant in the elevation of the scribal role of Thoth and Enoch, which was not

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[164] Jasnow, *Conversations*, 18, Rousseau, *Ascetics*, 19-20, Wipszycka, *Second Gift*, 359.
[165] Hedstrom, *Landscape,* 236.
[166] Hedstrom, *Landscape,* 235.

something that could be conducted alone. Coenobitic monasteries were not as isolated as they portrayed themselves in literature—evidence suggests that their asceticism was of the moderate persuasion, and that their isolation was less extreme than that of anchorites.[167] However, they were also the only real way for those who felt both the ascetic impulse (desire to remove oneself from society in the pursuit of a higher spiritual calling attested in both anchorites and coenobites) *and* a need for community and purpose defined through a craft, for example writing or manuscript copying, to access the materials, connections, and knowledge necessary to do so. Moreover, there was a heavy emphasis on labor in Pachomius' model for coenobites that is echoed in the *Book of Thoth,* where several sections are dedicated to making sure the initiate understands the difficult and tiresome work ahead of him in chores and studying.[168] Lines 312-313 of the *Book of Thoth* emphasize community as well, exhorting the initiate to respect and seek knowledge from his senior scribes as well.[169] Emphasizing the divine roots and difficulty of such crafts served to justify and validate the existence and identity of coenobitic monks and monasteries, and to promulgate a sense of community through shared hardship and experience.

Similar processes were undertaken by anchoritic monks that underscore the significance of these appropriations and negotiations in the establishment of a monastic identity. Frankfurter notes the popularity of names such as Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, and Ezekiel among the anchoritic monks of the 5th-6th centuries, who famously wandered Egypt preaching and casting out demons—often they claimed special powers or visions given by gods.[170] These figures featured in apocalyptic traditions as revelatory visionaries, and Frankfurter argues that the monks who took these names co-opted them as "a real claim to the *natures* of these prophets," defined by

[167] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 344, Hedstrom, *Landscape,* 236.
[168] Jasnow, *Conversations*, 87.
[169] *Book of Thoth* 312-313.
[170] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 181.

their visionary powers.[171] However, Frankfurter is much more cautious in attributing the same phenomenon to the name Enoch, whose scribal role was so heavily emphasized—the only example associated with visionary powers he identifies was that of Apa Enoch of the Theban monastery of St. Epiphanius.[172]

In fact, Frankfurter writes that there was "sparse evidence for anchorites' 'being' Enoch or channels for the prophet" despite the strong visionary trends and tropes in *1 En.* and other texts previously examined.[173] In a similar vein, this narrowing of potential divine parallels was reflected in the TER conception of kingship—there was a reason Egyptian kings more often styled themselves as earthly incarnations of Horus, righteous warrior and son of Osiris, rather than as the administrator and scribe Thoth.[174] Just as the warlike and dominant character of Horus fulfilled the identity and image-based needs of Egyptian kinds the coenobitic emphasis on the scribal role of Enoch based on everyday labor, learned wisdom, and productivity answered the needs of that community and its unique approach to devotion and monasticism. Just as the names of Elijah and Ezekiel were identity-affirming for the ostentatious anchorites and their exorcisms, the elevated image of Enoch the divine scribe served to reinforce the legitimacy and validity of the coenobitic monastic model.

At the same time, differing ideologies and needs were reflected in subtle differences between Enoch and Thoth's characters, for example Enoch's more restricted capabilities and lack of autonomy in comparison to Thoth. Coenobitic monasteries were notably hierarchical; despite the theoretical emphasis on absolute equality, they were strictly organized into minute

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[171] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 181.
[172] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 180.
[173] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 187.
[174] Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche. *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 B.C.E. to 395 C.E.* Cornell University Press (Ithaca; London), 2004: 201.

categories of precedence and work affiliation.[175] While not always faithfully followed, strict rules were necessary to keep order in such close quarters—as such, coenobitic monasteries were typically overseen (especially in the earlier centuries) by a charismatic leader who required submission from his constituent monks.[176]

Pachomius' life was a good example of this—he was described as "often heavy-handed in dealing with the brothers…The brothers accepted his authority without much grumbling—their submissiveness was a result of their conviction that Pachomius' power was sanctioned by God."[177] The leaders of coenobitic monasteries claimed authority from these special powers, in some ways positioning themselves as envoys for God's infallible power and status—on the other hand, the brothers showed their devotion through submission and productivity, as part of a system in the same way that Enoch fulfilled his duties in service of a greater system and not on his own judgment.[178] This stands once more in opposition to the conception of Thoth, who retained complete autonomy and mastery over words and writing in the House of Life initiation text. The *Book of Thoth* further posited Thoth as directly revealing knowledge to each initiate through the mouths of the masters who embodied him—rather than concentrating knowledge into a single source, divine wisdom in the House of Life was disbursed among members of various seniority with Thoth as a binding force rather than a servant or role model.[179] This fluidity to the boundaries of human and divine embedded in the case of Thoth (and in TER generally) eventually disappeared in the Coptic Christian understanding of Enoch at least partially because the organizational structures of their respective scribal institutions differed in

[175] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 356-357.
[176] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 207.
[177] Wipszycka, *Second Gift,* 207.
[178] T. Abr. B.11.
[179] Jasnow, *Conversations,* 47.

needs and design. In the coenobitic conception, every monk had his place, which was focused on devotion, service, and productivity—all qualities that would have been validated and reinforced by the idolization of Enoch in his less autonomous, more systematized Coptic scribal role. Ultimately, it was structural differences in the institutions and disparities in their members' ideologies that produced and sustained those character conceptions actually pushed their conceptions apart (with consequences for overall ideology that will be discussed later on).

What is even more significant is the way the similarities between Thoth and Enoch as scribes and the way they were promoted by their human constituents retroactively affected the way Thoth was perceived. Clearly the pre-Christian context for Thoth enjoyed a broad variety of aspects and associations afforded to Thoth in the TER context, including his relevance to time, magic, and judicial knowledge and reputation. However, as Christianity grew in popularity, spawning monasteries rapidly from the end of the 3rd century C.E. to the 5th century C.E., the changing conceptions of Enoch (motivated both by institutional needs and cultural influence) redefined the role of Thoth as one primarily associated with writing and being a scribe.

Writing on the Hellenistic and early Roman Periods, Fowden argued, "it was to his role as guide of souls and judge of the dead that Thoth most owed his popularity with ordinary people."[180] However, analyzing the records of the 2nd-3rd century C.E. Egyptian Patriarch Clement, Frankfurter described Thoth as "the scribal god," contending that, "Thoth had thus become by the Roman period the primary pseudonymous authority for diverse priestly texts, imbuing them with a kind of ultimate antiquity and secrecy."[181] The appearance of Christianity

[180] Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes* 23.
[181] David Frankfurter. *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance.* Princeton University Press (Princeton), 1998: 240. It is entirely possible that Frankfurter did not mean that this was the *only* extant role for Thoth at the time—however, his language indicates that it was the primary one, and his emphasis on the scribal crossover of Thoth and Enoch in this and other pieces is indicative of Thoth's most relevant

in the interim between these two periods, as well as the solidified scribal conception of Enoch one can see emerge by the 4th century C.E., cannot be overlooked in this transformation—in other words, the points of commonality that fueled the assimilation of Thoth and Enoch were not simply inherent to their characters, but were generated and elevated by human thought and religious innovation.

Overall, a comparative analysis of Thoth and Enoch's shared scribal roles reveals strong similarities as well as many significant differences. These differences especially—in the singularity of focus on Enoch's function as a scribe, on the gap the degree of freedom each figure had, and in the ways they were depicted and internally constructed in various religious texts and institutions—reveal the deep connection between representation (in literature and iconography) and identity. The primacy of Enoch's role as a scribe was by no means inevitable—rather, it arose as a function of religious transition and negotiation driven by the motivations of Coptic Christians and followers of TER alike. By elevating Enoch's scribal function, coenobitic monks validated and legitimized their model and view of ascetic and monastic life. In doing so, they highlighted corresponding associations in the TER tradition of Thoth, actively *creating* a basis for comparison and assimilation that would influence the development of syncretistic traditions for centuries to come.

Moreover, analyzing the material culture and iconography of TER, which lasted well into the Roman period and the early period of the Coptic papacy, demonstrates that the preexisting religion was not static—there was no one conception or portrayal of Thoth that stood out from all the rest in a such a way as to make his equation with Enoch inevitable, and vice versa. This is not to say that similarities and influences from the TER tradition concerning Thoth did not at all

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conception contemporarily and in Frankfurter's own perspective. The retroactive effect may reach farther forward than is contained within the scope of this paper.

influenced the construction of Enoch—the existence of the psychostasia in the Egyptian tradition specifically and the various intertextual crossovers in Egyptian Jewish, gnostic, and Coptic Christian literature noted by previous scholars are a testament to this.

What is significant is the fact that as Bleeker wrote, "A myth is always polyvalent and interpretable."[182] It is an inherent characteristic of polytheistic religions that there should be multiple, often contradictory versions of events, personalities, and functions attached to the gods—Thoth is no exception to this. To some extent, this is replicated in early Coptic Christianity, as seen by the amount of apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts relating to Enoch. However, variation in the Enochic tradition when material and literary evidence are combined does not approach the level at which is existed for Thoth. A question then remains: why did this tolerance of multiple and contradictory functions lessen over the year, especially in Coptic Christianity? A further comparative analysis of the associations for Thoth and Enoch in the broader socio-religious world of Late Antiquity, fraught with internal conflict and self-definition, will demonstrate both the influence of political and theological concerns and the intractable repercussions of the society-wide transition from polytheism to monotheism in the 5th-7th centuries.

[182] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 127.

Chapter 3: Changing Times, Changing Minds: Ideological Evolution and Social Upheaval, 3th-5th Centuries C.E.

At the very end of the 4th century, Rufinus of Aquileia translated the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* from Greek into Latin.[183] Centuries later, this most famous translation of his also represents his only foray into monastic hagiography.[184] The *Historia monachorum* was an antique travelogue, written by an unknown monastic pilgrim who visited several Desert Fathers and sites of sacred significance—in one chapter, the author described his encounter with Apa Apollo, the founder of the monastery at Bawit, just south of the great city Hermopolis Magna.[185] Apa Apollo recounts an extratextual tradition in which the fleeing Holy Family[186] came to Hermopolis.[187] Upon the young Savior entering a traditional Egyptian temple, the idols of

[183] Andrew Cain. *Inquiry about the Monks in Egypt*. Catholic University of America Press, 2019: 11.
[184] Cain, *Inquiry,* 11.
[185] Cain, *Inquiry,* 103.
[186] The flight of the Holy Family refers to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph's escape from persecution across the Middle East, which spawned several oral and written anecdotes about the various places they visited. Alin Suciu. "'Me, This Wretched Sinner:' A Coptic Fragment from the Vision of Theophilus Concerning the Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt." *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 67, no. 4 (2013): 436.
[187] Cain, *Inquiry,* 103.

several gods housed there tumbled to the ground and shattered into pieces.[188] Incidentally, Hermopolis Magna was also the a stronghold of worship and the cult center for Thoth (named for his Greek equivalent, Hermes), and had been since ancient times—at least until the end of the 4th century C.E., when Rufinus committed account this account to paper (or papyrus).[189] In some ways this tradition epitomized the Late Antique Christian approach to TER, polemical and intent on displaying the power of God against stereotyped abominations of idol worship. But on a deeper level, this small anecdote represents a changing social and religious reality, and the end of an era.

The previous chapter established how the images of Enoch and Thoth, while basically similar in some ways, drifted apart as new religious institutions and concepts emerged in Late Antique Egypt. Conversely, the differences that were created between the two figures from this period tell their own story about how the thought patterns and actions of Late Antique Egyptians changed over time. With the growing strength and popularity of Christianity, the Egyptian religious landscape saw a rapid shift towards the new religion, driven by the charismatic and dynamic personalities of monks like Apa Apollo and others in the *Historia monachorum*.[190] With this transformation came significant shifts in thinking and perception, which naturally influenced the lives and actions of Egyptians at the time.

Comparing the emerging differences in the characters and personalities of Thoth and Enoch provides an excellent window into these shifts, and reveals a few key points. Firstly, despite occupying similar roles in reinforcing the communal identities of the House of Life and coenobitic monasteries respectively, the nature of Thoth and Enoch's actual positions within the

[188] Cain, *Inquiry,* 103.
[189] Cain, *Inquiry,* 12.
[190] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 164.

organizations and the nuances of their "interactions" with their human members shifted—Enoch's connection to Coptic monks was less personal and less embodied than that of Thoth's. Looking to their respective roles in the judgment, Enoch became markedly harsher and quicker to judge than Thoth was. This lack of flexibility was, however, compensated by an absolute assurance of Enoch's righteousness, which was directly opposed to the more ambiguous nature embodied by Thoth and other TER gods. On a deeper level, these changes illustrate shifts in the worldview and mindset of Coptic Christians at the time, as their conceptions of things like the nature of death and the purpose of religion transformed, becoming ever more central to their everyday lives. The differing degree of severity in the judgment roles of Thoth and Enoch indicate that the idea of death arguably became more permanent and therefore more significant than that of the TER conception, where death represented more a continuation of life than a momentous event of physical and spiritual separation. Similarly, as ideas of sin and virtue became increasingly attached to internally generated beliefs and actions rather than social relationships and transgressions, divinity became authoritative and judgmental rather than a natural force that worked alongside people for better or worse.

In each realm, the worldview of Coptic Christians seemed to swing towards "absolutes"—an absolute divide between the human and the divine, and an absolute divide between good and evil. The cognitive transformations encapsulated by the comparison between Thoth and Enoch, which can in part be attributed to the shift from a polytheistic religion to a monotheistic one, help to explain the schismatic and fraught landscape of early Christianity as TER and other traditions began to fade in popularity.

While monastic beliefs and conceptions of Christianity were not identical to those of the laity, evidence indicates that their influence over mainstream ideology and society was strong.

The 4th century C.E. saw a number of rapid and intense social, political, and religious transformations, from Constantine's rise to power patronage of Christianity to the banning of "pagan" cults by Emperor Theodosius in 391 C.E.[191] This was an era characterized by schism—the Arian schism (named for its founder, Arius) was the first of these, over "the identity of Christ the Son in relationship to God the Father."[192] The debate over whether Jesus was a separate, subordinate figure created by God or a being of essentially the same substance (*homoousios*) became a broadly popular one with real consequences for the leadership and structure of the growing Coptic Church.[193] In the fight for grassroots support between Arius and his orthodox rivals, Alexander and Athanasius, ascetic monasteries constituted a crucial battleground, demonstrating the power monastic authorities had over popular theology and political allegiance.[194] The continued contact and exchange between coenobitic monks and their surrounding villages, as well as the important part monasteries played in the formation of the Coptic Orthodox Church during the 4th-5th centuries C.E. would have granted them significant influence over the spiritual mores and beliefs of the laity—over time, it is not unlikely that some of their ideas and conceptions would have spread out to the common people.[195]

On the one hand, the changes in the monastic prioritization and conception of Enoch as primarily a recording scribe who did not move on his own accord (as opposed to Thoth, who was an independent actor) demonstrated how human action and needs shaped the characters and images of similar sacred beings differently in both TER and Coptic Christian contexts—

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[191] Stephen J. Davis. *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity*. American University in Cairo Press, 2004: 57. Peter Parsons. *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: The Lives of the Greeks in Roman Egypt.* Phoenix, 2007: 384-385.
[192] Davis, *Coptic Papacy*, 47.
[193] Davis, *Coptic Papacy*, 51-52.
[194] Davis, *Coptic Papacy*, 54.
[195] Hedstrom, *Landscape*, 236 Davis, *Coptic Papacy*, 54. Brakke, *Gnostics*, 136-137.

however, one can also observe more fundamental changes in the nature of religious belief and cognition from these differences as well. Subtle differences evident in Thoth and Enoch's material portrayals indicate that their respective scribal institutions, the House of Life and Coptic coenobitic monasteries, viewed the actual "participation" of Enoch and Thoth in their organizations differently—specifically, House of Life scribes and initiates seem to have viewed Thoth as present and fully involved with each member as an individual in an educational capacity, while there is no such evidence for coenobitic admirers of Enoch.

For example, the monastic images of Enoch reviewed previously (as well as epigraphical evidence from various coenobitic sites) were far more static and less engaged with the viewer than those of Thoth. Reviewing depictions of Christian subjects in Coptic art, Marguerite Rassart-Debergh noted that images of Enoch ere always painted (not carved) in the eastern niches of several oratories in the Monastery of Apa Jeremias—from her description of a young, curly-haired man in monastic dress carrying a codex as the standard, likely these portraits resembled a combination of Figs. 1A and 1C (pictured below):

Figs. 1A (cropped) and 1C.

A probable depiction of Enoch in a private cell or oratory may have assumed the pose of Enoch (center) in 1C with the physical appearance of the figure in 1A, minus the wings. This iconography was typical across coenobitic imagery whether in a cell or in a chapel—inscriptions were similarly formulaic, appearing to follow an order of precedence in the Monasteries of Apa Jeremias and Apa Apollo alike in which Apa Enoch was often on the higher end.[196] It is also extremely interesting to note that in the Monastery Apa Jeremias, St. Jeremiah (the founding saint of the complex) was portrayed twice with a square halo, which indicated a still-living saint, whereas Enoch was only ever portrayed with a round halo (presumably indicating a deceased

[196] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 150. Rassart-Debergh, "Paintings."

saint).[197] Enoch's monastic depictions positioned him as a solitary object of admiration, removed from direct human interaction—a conception which was not replicated in the TER context.

Conversely, Thoth's presence both iconographically and in the text of the *Book of Thoth* indicates that his presence and active involvement in the lives of his disciples was very much felt, at least symbolically if not literally. Fig. 2D shows a notable example of a New Kingdom statuette depicting a scribe holding a papyrus on his lap, sitting at the feet of Thoth.

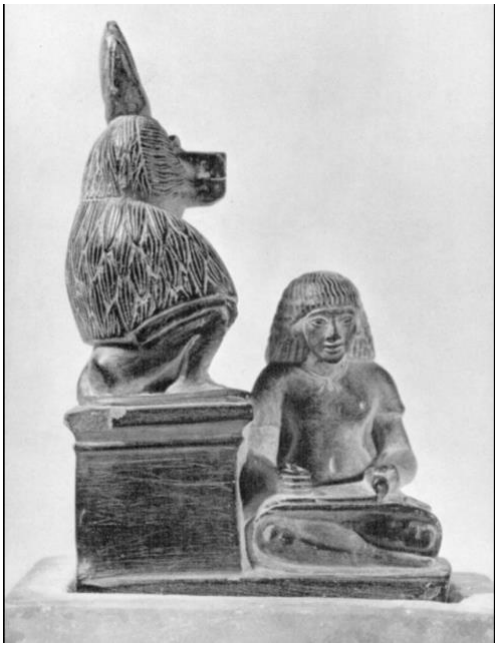

Fig. 2D. New Kingdom statuette of Thoth as baboon with disciple at his feet. 18th Dynasty, 1550-1292 B.C.E. Cairo: Mus., Egyptian; JE 59291.

Several examples of this type of statue pop up in the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom—they ostensibly represented the relationship between the student (scribe) and the master (Thoth, god of scribes). While these particular statues far predate the Coptic Christian era, the spirit they embody was upheld through to that time by the *Book of Thoth*, which survived into the Ptolemaic

[197] Rassart-Debergh, "Christian Subjects."

and Roman periods. The novice scribe is displayed as learning directly from the god himself, a marked difference from the monastic portrayals of Enoch.

Scholars have further posited that the *Book of Thoth,* an initiation text for the House of Life, may have been "performed" or recited between a novice and an instructor as a kind of sacred drama.[198] The format of the text supports this—it is presented as a dialogue between "The-one-who-loves-knowledge" (the initiate) and "The-one of-Heseret" or "The-one-who-praises-knowledge" (the master), who is actually Thoth.[199] The initiation process, then, is a one-on-one conversation between the student and the master, which create a sense of personal connection between the novice scribe and Thoth—and perhaps more importantly between the master and Thoth as well. In assuming the role of Thoth, the initiator embodied the character and powers of the god himself—this speaks to the fluid and chaotic boundaries between the human and the divine so characteristic of TER (and of polytheistic faiths generally) which were not carried over to the perception of Enoch in later years.[200] Previous scholarship has epitomized TER thusly: "…there was no gulf between these two realms; the gods were present and alive in their temples, and it seems that people felt the reality of this presence…"[201] The example of Thoth in the House of Life's initiation ritual demonstrates how human deeds generated and communicated that presence—through their own actions and reactions, people created and sustained a personal relationship with the gods that involved elements of learning, guidance, and in some cases transcendence.

On the other hand, monastic portrayals of Enoch in inscriptions and especially in cell wall paintings display a diametrically opposed conception of the lines between humanity and

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[198] Jasnow, *Conversations,* 45.
[199] *Book of Thoth,* 20, 25. Jasnow *Conversations,* 30-31.
[200] Dunand, *Gods and Men,* 292-293, 339.
[201] Dunand, *Gods and Men,* 340.

divinity. As Frankfurter has previously stated, "The continued copying of books of Enoch may have a context different from that of Coptic apocrypha in the names of prophets and post-diluvian patriarchs. There is *sparse evidence for anchorites' 'being' Enoch* or channels for the prophet…"[202] Not only was the role of Enoch not typically taken on by priests or monks, the anchoritic tradition of embodying and channeling saints itself (while common) was not a formalized part of Church institutions but a spontaneous phenomenon driven by the charismatic personalities of those lone ascetics.[203] Unlike Thoth, Enoch was not embodied or physically present in the monastic landscape—not just because he simply did not exist there, but because people *chose* through the lenses of their institutions and understandings of ideological and religious concepts not to *create* him there. Instead, Frankfurter posits the that the continued copying of Enoch served as a basis for literary inspiration, implying "that Coptic monks maintained an Enochic 'tradition' of apocalyptic composition, interpreting it to reflect their own interests in Enoch as an eschatological scribe."[204]

What Frankfurter is describing here is actually a fundamental change in the "meaning" and perception of words rather than a direct inheritance of Thoth's "dual capacities of scribal culture-hero and scribe of the judgment."[205] To be sure, in the cases of both Thoth and Enoch the art of writing was a sacred and invaluable gift to humanity from a higher power—but the way words were perceived and applied clearly differed across contexts. In the embodied nature of the Thoth dialogue, words were *spoken aloud* as well as written down. Moreover, the *Book of Thoth* capitalized significantly on the pictorial and phonetic dimensions of hieroglyphics and the Egyptian language, often likening written characters to "birds," "reeds in the sea," and "animals"

[202] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 187.
[203] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 185, Frankfurter, *Roman Religion*, 20.
[204] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 188.
[205] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 188.

which needed to be "trapped" by their hunters—namely, the scribes.[206] In the TER conception, the words themselves were works of magic—but in the growing Enochic purpose, the information they conveyed (the "sins and righteousness of each person") was the more important part.[207]

One can observe from this comparison several transformations and differences in the role of the "scribe" across the TER and Coptic Christian contexts. One is the crystallization of scholarship as a priority over magical or supernatural action—by focusing on literary composition and written theological or devotional discourse, coenobitic monks put themselves in a passive, observational position concentrated on one's inner life rather than an active role in sustaining society. This points to the development of a different kind of seclusion than that experienced by the House of Life; where coenobitic monks were in close contact with the outside world but mentally isolated in their single-minded devotion to God and their monastic brothers, the House of Life was likely quite isolated from physical people but very much involved in the rituals and processes of administrating Egypt. This idea of isolation is key—not only did it cognitively separate monks from laypeople in some ways, it also manifested in an increased rigidity of the boundaries between humans and God.

The monastic representations of Enoch in comparison to the conceptions of Thoth's place in the House of Life evident from the *Book of Thoth* most clearly display this stringent separation. In the Monastery of Apa Jeremias Enoch was typically depicted in a static, standing pose with a halo and a codex—this iconography emphasizes his sacred status, and, not to put too fine a point on it, a "holier-than-thou" quality to him as a saint and right-hand man of God in the judgment. Enoch was positioned in these monastic cells as a role model—his costume was that

[206] *Book of Thoth* 264-265, 352.
[207] T. Abr. B.11.

of a fellow monk, but whatever egalitarian ideals coenobitic monasteries were founded on, in no way could he be considered an equal to a single, typical monk in Saqqara. Instead, Enoch's portraiture in the monastic contexts was patristic and affirming—unlike Thoth, Enoch "blessed" and "watched over" the scribes and monks from on high rather than teaching them personally. Coptic monks literally looked up to him not only as a symbol but as a far-removed individual, a flesh-and-blood man made more by God's grace, as opposed to a concept—Thoth's chaotic and mysterious nature comparatively lent itself more easily to interpretation, allowing for personalized, lived connections between the god and each of his human scribes. In making Enoch an icon worthy of admiration, Coptic coenobitic monks engendered an ontological difference between Enoch and themselves. The transformations in the scribal conceptions of Enoch and Thoth demonstrate fundamental ideological shifts in Egyptian understandings of divinity that are obscured by a syncretic or surface level comparison of the two figures—specifically, that Coptic Christians came to perceive the divine as unimpeachable and greater than the human realm.

This had shift had wider consequences, affecting and intertwined with other religious and ideological transformations of the Late Antique Period—differences in Thoth and Enoch's personalities in the judgment evince this. Where Thoth was broadly speaking a just and flexible deity, willing to hear out and even advocate for the dead, Enoch's characterization in Coptic Christian was notably harsh and unforgiving. The CEA speaks to this aspect of his personality most clearly, and its "genuinely Egyptian spirit" indicates the either the idea's origin in or specific relevance to the Coptic context.[208] The CEA paints a picture of an Enoch who was quick to judge and needed to be reminded to show mercy in writing down the deeds of mankind. For

[208] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 176.

example, fol. 1 recto reads, "If [Enoch] sees them in all their iniquities which they do, he will write them immediately, and your [God's] entire image will go to perdition."[209]

Enoch was also admonished, possibly by his "sister" Sibyl (the Roman prophetess, who is sometimes attached to Enoch in the Coptic tradition) that he "should not write their sins against them hastily, but you should put the reed on the penholder…"[210] Enoch's response told of a safeguard that God appears to have put in place to ensure a merciful judgment: "Has God, [then], not taken an angel in heaven and [placed him]…If he sees the sins drawing down (the balances) more than the good deeds, he takes his rod which is in his right hand, and [he] sets it upon…"[211] In the CEA God designated an angel who holds a rod to stand with Enoch at the scales—should that angel see that the sins are piling up against the deceased, he would place his rod on the opposite end and draw it back to a neutral position to counterbalance Enoch's list of evil deeds.[212] Not only was the scale of Ma'at unimpeachable within the TER conception, Thoth regularly granted protection to and advocated for the deceased in the psychostasia (or weighing of the heart).[213] One can extract two things from this shift—that the nature of death was such that Coptic Christians wanted to avoid being judged impure and impious after they had passed, and that they did not believe they had any real power over the outcome of the judgment.

On the surface, the TER psychostasia did resemble the one reflected in the CEA, as Enoch and Thoth acted as scribes for the dead—the centrality of this concept to the Egyptian mindset certainly indicates some conscious or unconscious transfer occurring there. Moreover, in the scholarly comparison of Thoth and Enoch, Pearson was one of the only authors to note a

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[209] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 195. This line is paralleled only by a similar line describing Abraham in the *Testament of Abraham*.
[210] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 163, 197.
[211] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 197.
[212] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 197.
[213] Ani Pap. BD 1, 125.

difference in their conceptions, writing, "But the actual writing of record is no doubt envisioned as taking place prior to the judgment of the individual, during each person's lifetime. Thus, Enoch's role…is not exactly analogous to that of the god Thoth…for Thoth records the *results* of the weighing of the soul."[214] Pearson was not entirely wrong—but by brushing off the comparison as a simple point of clarification, he passed over a deeper significance to the transformations of their roles with regard to the dead. A clear example of this lies in BD 125, which describes the scene of the judgment in which the deceased gave the "negative confession," professing to the 42 judges of the underworld that he had not done various wrongs while living; in vignettes, Thoth was present during this scene.[215] Additionally, the Nu Papyrus recension features the deceased making and address to the gods—in order to progress to the afterlife, he is questioned by Thoth on the status of his purity; after answering satisfactorily, Thoth introduces the deceased to Osiris to progress.[216]

Once again, material and pictorial evidence lends credibility to the assessment that Thoth was more concerned with fairness than Enoch was. Beginning in the Ptolemaic and continuing into the Greco-Roman Periods, one of the most popular portrayals of Thoth was as a baboon sitting atop the scales of Ma'at, as pictured in Figs. 2B and 2E.[217]

[214] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 170.
[215] Nebseni Pap. BD 125.
[216] Nu Pap. BD 125.
[217] Griffiths, "Funerary Shroud," 237.

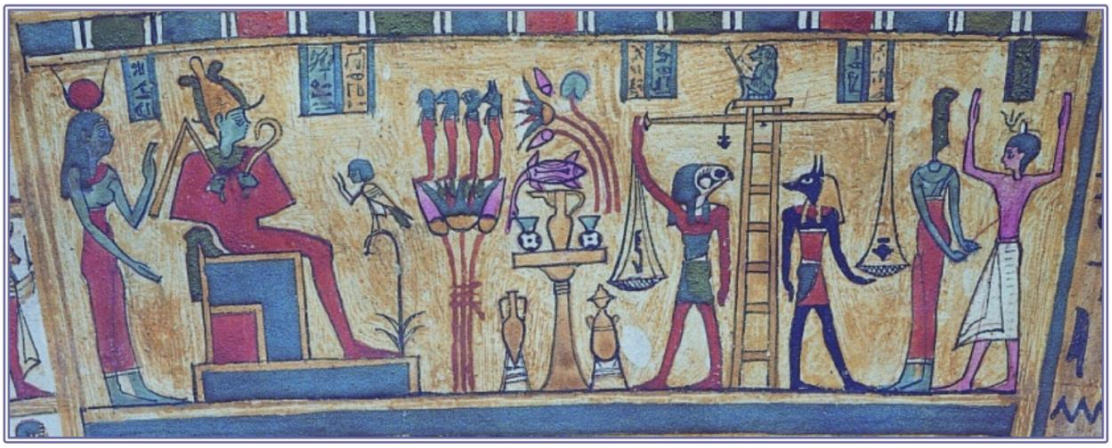

Fig. 2B. Ptolemaic mummy breastplate depicting scene of judgment, Thoth pictured as baboon atop scale. 3rd-1st century B.C.E.

Fig. 2E. Coffin panel displaying psychostasia. 30 B.C.E.-295 C.E. BMFA.1989.75

This portrayal does not show Thoth in his most popularly conceived role as a scribe in the judgment, but he is still involved. By portraying Thoth on top of the central pivot of the scale, pre-Christian Egyptians literally made him an integral part of the balance—he guaranteed the accuracy of the scale. Thoth's iconography was not limited to script alone, but demonstrated his responsibility in protecting the process of the judgment and balancing the scale of Truth—he

ensured that the deceased would receive a fair and accurate trial. Coptic Enoch, meanwhile, did not share this concern or the ability to participate directly in the active judging of the deceased.

That the TER deceased has a voice in his judgment is extremely significant, as was the fact that Thoth was responsible for ensuring the fairness of the test—he affords the dead person mercy and consideration without prompting, even protecting him from evil, where Enoch had to be reminded by heavenly forces to show leniency. The TER conception afforded humans a measure of agency that did not exist in the Coptic Christian context—Thoth's capacity in ensuring a fair trial and issuing protection implies that humans were inherently worthy of such consideration. As one author characterized the negative confession, "Here, it was not a matter of a repentant sinner confessing all his sins so that he might be pardoned, but rather a matter of declaring with the confidence of an innocent person that the list of sins…had not been committed by him."[218] Enoch, on the other hand, nitpicked—he was constantly watching over the actions of men, noting down each little indiscretion to the extent that divinity had to put measures in place to ensure leniency.

One judged sinful was headed for gruesome punishment; *1 En.* and the *Testament of Abraham* spoke vividly to the horrors that awaited impure people after death—it stands to reason that one would be more concerned with preventing such an eternal fate under those circumstances.[219] This evolution illuminates a common misconception applied to the purpose and central values of TER—that "Egypt had always been preoccupied with the afterlife."[220] In reality, the Egyptian idea of the afterlife continued much as real life did.[221] Although certainly

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[218] Dunand, *Gods and Men,* 181.
[219] *1 En*. 22.10-13. T. Abr. B.12
[220] Parsons, *Sharp-Nosed Fish,* 384.
[221] Emily Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt.* Cambridge Univeresity Press (Cambridge), 2011: 120.

something to be feared and mourned, "it was always others whom this punishment threatened."[222] Finally, a significant passage of the *Epistle of Enoch* speaks to a growing concern with the internal lives and beliefs of people—in an exhortation on the consequences of "true and false religion," Enoch warns that those who "alter the true words and pervert the eternal covenant" would be subject to punishment.[223] By definition, this sin cannot result merely from an action, like stealing or littering in a holy place—it requires malicious or contrary thoughts, and at its most extreme could apply to those who misunderstood the Word (or were tricked into following a bad interpretation, as priests and bishops would claim of each other in the various schisms of the 4th-5th centuries).[224]

While TER culture certainly had elaborate rituals and myths concerning death, the comparison between Egyptian judgment scenes demonstrate that dead or alive, the pre-Christian Egyptian person was his own entity with his own value which guaranteed right to a fair trial, so to speak. However, in the Coptic Christian conception people were fighting an uphill battle from the start—their judge had a quick pen, and therefore ideally much of their lives would be spent trying to prevent an unfortunate death. The differing attitudes of Enoch and Thoth towards sin and the process of the judgment demonstrate the opposite conclusion: where TER made room for people to be concerned about life, death came to be perceived as more immediate, significant, and threatening in Coptic Christianity.

From another angle, this transformation speaks also to a change in the perception of the "purpose" of religion, or perhaps more accurately of how people related to divinity. The harsh characterization of Enoch did not only exist in the CEA, but in some of the other texts previously

[222] Dunand, *Gods and Men,* 183.
[223] *1 En.* 98.2.
[224] Davis, *Coptic Papacy,* 52-53.

discussed as well. In the *Encomium of the Four Bodiless Living Creatures* attributed to Pseudo-John Chrysostom, a "human-faced creature" cries out to Enoch, "Do not hurry to write down the sins of the children of humankind, but be patient a little and I will call the archangel Michael and he will implore the Father of mercy together with me."[225] Here, the archangel Michael himself is the designated counter to Enoch—this is especially interesting as later on in the text, the Savior explains that Enoch was chosen to replace Mefriel (the angelic scribe of old) specifically because he was human and "might take into account the weakness of people of flesh and blood."[226] Clearly, Enoch did not take this admonishment fully to heart—instead, angelic intervention was still necessary to ensure salvation. Finally, two magical texts confirm this characterization in the popular context—one describes a wounded deer who cries out, "Enoch the scribe, don't stick your pen into your ink until Michael comes from heaven and heals my eye!"[227] Another, which appears to be a curse, asks God to bring about the "vengeance of Enoch" on several unknown persons.[228] This is not the say that Thoth never appeared as a vengeful or harsh god, as he certainly did; however, literary and iconographic evidence shows that the mainstream conception of him was far more even-handed and encouraging than the Coptic Christian idea of Enoch seemed to have been.[229]

While Thoth was a broadly conceived god with many aspects, he was significantly associated with order and equity.[230] In some ways this may have been due to inherent differences in the way people perceived the purpose and powers of gods in TER—as is characteristic in polytheistic religions, there was a greater transactional element and a fairly utilitarian view of

[225] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 168.
[226] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 148.
[227] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 168.
[228] Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt,* 169.
[229] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 138.
[230] Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes,* 23.

deities, paying homage to those who appeared to provide a benefit and discarding those who did not.[231] In the judgment, Thoth often acted as an advocate and was called upon frequently in the *Book of the Dead* to "vindicate" and guide the soul of the deceased.[232] BD 1 of the Ani Papyrus reads, "Ra commanded Thoth to make Osiris victorious over his enemies; and that which was decreed [for Osiris], Thoth did for me."[233] Thoth is here conceived as protecting the deceased from his "enemies" with words of power—this is a stark contrast to Enoch, who was pleaded with in a magical text to wait a little before consigning the deer to death.

The magical text concerning the deer is especially interesting in how the formula positioned the caster in relation to Enoch—if the caster was to be associated with the deer, he was essentially begging Enoch for his life. This puts the still-living caster in a subordinate position to Enoch, leaving him very little power. When living pre-Christian Egyptians engaged with Thoth, however, they did so from a very different place. Ptolemaic letters written to Thoth by commonplace people in Demotic are the best evidence of this—overall, those texts demonstrate a real belief in Thoth's wisdom, eloquence, and equanimity in judgment of matters in the living world and the afterlife.[234] More significant in this context, however, is the fact that the writers engaged transactionally with Thoth—in one example, a complainant who lost his job asks the god to give it back to him, or "there would be no other man (like me) to do good for the ibis," (or to pay his sacred animals attention and homage).[235] An earthier example promised

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[231] Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes,* 81.
[232] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 146-147.
[233] BD 1.
[234] Kata Endreffy. "Reason for Despair: Notes on Some Demotic Letters to Thoth," in *The Horizon: Studies in Egyptology in Honour of M.A. Nur El-Din* ed. Basem Samir El-Sharkawy. American University in Cairo Press (Cairo), 2010: 241.
[235] Kata Endreffy. "Business with Gods: The Role of Bargaining in Demotic Letters to Gods and Graeco-Roman Judicial," in *Commerce and Economy in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the The Third International Congress for Young Egyptologists,* ed. A. Hudecz and M. Petrik. Oxford University Press (Oxford), 2010: 50.

Thoth one kite of silver per month if the writer's father was cured from illness.[236] Conversely, the deceased had no power to influence Enoch in the judgment, although in some cases God, Jesus, or the archangel Michael might intercede on their behalf.

In Coptic Christianity, therefore, humans were entirely reliant on the mercy and all-seeing judgment of the divine—divine figures were authoritative ones with absolute control over the fate of men, rather than forces capable of being influenced or with a duty to humans themselves. In the transition from TER to Coptic Christianity, "divinities" broadly defined turned from service-based beings to existences who subjugated and evaluated humans with absolute authority on the basis of their worthiness to enter an ephemeral heaven, judged by their metaphysical standards. The difference in the attitudes of Thoth and Enoch (Thoth=flexible, Enoch=rigid) in their scribal roles and in the judgment reveals a completely changed power dynamic built into the religious mindsets and structures of Coptic Christians.

To some, a question that may spring from this revelation might be this: why would people abandon their culturally inherited TER traditions, which were in some ways more flexible and less concerned with death and punishment, for a religion which required total submission and supplication to a God with high standards and a strict, unforgiving scribe? The answer comes from the other major difference in the characters of Thoth and Enoch—their respective levels of "righteousness." In the tradeoff between the stern Enoch and the just Thoth, Coptic Christians gained a guarantee of Enoch's benevolent nature that was not available for Thoth (or for any other TER god).

Despite his overall reputation for fairness and equity, Thoth was not universally and consistently conceived as an inherently benevolent deity. Pyramid text 1271 referred to Thoth

[236] Endreffy, "Business," 49.

"coming in his evil gait;" moreover, BD 175a contended that Thoth first introduced mortality to humans as a means of control and subordination when they rebelled against the sun god.[237] Mythologically this ambiguous nature becomes even more apparent—over the course of Egypt's long history, Thoth was portrayed both as a just arbitrator and as a destructive, vengeful god depending on the time and context.[238] In one story from as late as the Ptolemaic Jumilhac Papyrus mentioned earlier, Thoth was accused by another god of "having stolen from the offerings [to other gods] and of having disturbed the cosmic order"—this despite Thoth's common conception as "the origin of cosmic order and of religious and civil institutions."[239] On the other hand, Enoch was always portrayed as righteous and benevolent. Folio 9 recto of the CEA confirms this appraisal, saying, "God looked down upon you, and he saw you to be an elect one, and removed from every evil."[240] *1 En.* further backs this, giving Enoch the appellate "righteous scribe;"—in every way, Enoch's beneficent nature was guaranteed, even in the face of his characteristic quickness to judge others.[241]

Read one way, Enoch's close but subordinate position in relation to God suggests rigid hierarchy and doctrinal obedience—in this light, however, it could also be construed as an indication of absolute faith and trust on either side. Thoth's ambiguous personality and the flexibility he displayed in hearing the requests of humans in exchange for favors speak to another characteristic of TER, that "the gods were mighty beings who could bring both blessing and calamity to man."[242] Pre-Christian Egyptians had to live carefully as well, but in different ways—they navigated a world of ambiguous and uncertain forces that could turn as easily to evil

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[237] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 117, Stadler, "Thoth," 10.
[238] Stadler, "Thoth," 10.
[239] Stadler, "Thoth," 10, Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes,* 22.
[240] CEA fol. 9 recto lines 2-8.
[241] *1 En.* 12.4.
[242] Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth,* 117.

and chaos as to good and order. The TER gods may have been "monstrous" amalgamations of man and animal, with mysterious powers and chaotic, larger-than-life energies—but in many ways, they were far more "human" than the saints and angels of the Christian God. Thoth and his cohorts were fallible and changeable; while generally benevolent, they were capable of wanton destruction and harsh punishment as well. Enoch, on the other hand, was human physically but far from it in spirit. Enoch could be trusted (and was trusted by God himself) to stand in the right. His stern and unyielding stance on the sins and virtues of men stemmed from an absolute knowledge of and dedication to good that totally justified his lofty position, and ameliorated the sense of moral and spiritual separation between the righteous scribe and the weak, imperfect human beings he watched over. Humans modelled their relationship to God on the kind demonstrated by Enoch and other saints—the guarantee of the Christian God's absolute goodness and righteousness at all times would have made their total dependence on His mercy far more palatable, and perhaps even desirable given the historical context of the time.

Scholars like Frankfurter and Reed have commented significantly and thoughtfully on the social and political milieu that birthed the apocalyptic trends and dire character of Late Antique Christianity and Judaism.[243] Frankfurter, for instance, notes the "particularly ruthless economic exploitation during the Roman period" as a contributing factor to the "urgency of oracles and religious sectarianism manifest in this period," and notes similar dissatisfaction with Roman imperial rule as motivating millennialism in nearby Asia Minor.[244] What is often overlooked is how the ideological and cognitive transformations discussed here may have themselves motivated political and religious conflict, rather than purely being expressions or results of the same.

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[243] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 143, Reed, *Fallen Angels,* 161.
[244] Frankfurter, "Legacy," 132, 143.

The contrasts in the conceptions of Thoth and Enoch, two overtly similar and often associated religious figures, are not merely reflections of a turbulent environment—they speak to the changing worldviews and internal structures of the antique Copts. The increasing separation between the human and the divine, and the authority which that afforded the supernatural sphere (and those who could "channel" it); the rigid and high standards upheld by Enoch the scribe, not solely defined by social relationships and external actions but by one's internal life and spirit as well; the loss of agency and power in the relational dynamic between people and the divine; and the belief in the unmitigated righteousness of God and his heavenly followers all point to two major transformations in mindset that would have facilitated the schismatic and conflicted religious landscape (and perhaps might even have extended even into the socio-political sphere). Firstly, that religious identity and belief came to be of greater importance in the day-to-day life and self-perception of the antique Egyptians, and secondly that external perception whether in the social or supernatural sphere came to a greater degree to be defined in terms of "absolutes."

The first of these transformations, the growing importance of religious identity is easily observable from the various transformations between Enoch and Thoth. As previously discussed, it is not unthinkable that the looming specter of death and torment for a sinner would induce an increased concern for factors and actions that may affect the outcome, especially in the face of a scribe with a sharp eye and an unforgiving pen. In the midst of that insecurity, and with the contents of one's internal life also under supernatural scrutiny, it is not unimaginable that one might express fear, disgust, and/or outrage for sectors of society that appeared to "alter the true words and pervert the eternal covenant," on top of having an increased concern for making sure one's own ideological path was the right one.

Irenaeus, for example, wrote one of the most polemical treatises on Valentinian Christians near—more than simply being a refutation of their beliefs, however, Irenaeus actively portrayed those with alternative interpretations as enemies.[245] He wrote, "Such are the adversaries with whom we have to deal, my very dear friend, endeavoring like slippery serpents to escape at all points."[246] As in the *Epistle of Enoch*, Irenaeus did not simply accuse the Valentinians of evil deeds, but of a fundamentally malicious (or misguided in the case of some) alignment with perverted religious beliefs; simply thinking like a Valentinian was enough to gain censure. Furthermore, his language addressing the reader as a "very dear friend" played on several layers of identity, pre-assigning the reader the "correct" religious alignment *and* drawing him into association with Irenaeus, creating a social obligation and sense of loyalty based on a shared religious identification.

Writing at the end of the 2nd century C.E., Irenaeus was one of the earliest examples of this trend towards the elevation of religious identity, and the phenomenon would only grow from there. Athanasius employed many of the same rhetorical tactics in his treatise against Arius, writing of Arian thinkers, "For that their authors went out from us, it plainly follows…that they *never thought nor now think with us*."[247] Athanasius took issue not just with those openly committing sin, but those who simply thought differently. Moreover, it is clear from Athanasius' writing that he believed these identity disparities threatened the greater Christian community; he argued that the rise of the Arian heresy was a harbinger of the Antichrist, and that the Lord promised destruction and woe unto those who misinterpreted his words, "for to turn away from the Word of God…is to fall to what is nothing."[248] These harsh attitudes towards the thoughts

[245] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 2.3.
[246] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 2.3.
[247] Athanasius, *Against the Arians,* 1.1.
[248] Athanasius, *Against the Arians,* 1.1, 2.7.

and deeds of men mirrored Enoch's unforgiving scribal conception perfectly—religious identity became tied to fate after death, and therefore came to *matter* on a far greater scale than in TER. In comparison, none of the 42 negative confessions of the TER psychostasia addressed "religious" or doctrinal affiliation, simply requiring that the deceased had not desecrated or stolen from holy temples.[249] As another example, part of Athanasius' strategy to appeal to ascetic nuns in the Arian schism was to explain how his Nicaean doctrine validated humanity's ability to lead a virginal life, which underpinned their approach to salvation—his strategy to gain their political support rested on his doctrine's ability to reinforce the practices that affirmed their religious identity and actions.[250] Just as the monastic portrayal of Enoch was meant to validate coenobitic monks' path to their monastic ideal, sectarian conflict emerged from the need to validate one's own religious identity and path.

Extant evidence and scholarship has made clear that "until the end of the 4th century C.E., religious life [in Egypt] seems indeed to have been characterized by what we could call a 'nonconflictual coexistence' of faiths."[251] Strictly speaking, if people with religious beliefs as diverse of Christians and practitioners of TER could coexist peacefully for four centuries, there is no real reason that schisms in Christianity would inevitably be unmanageable to the extent that they were. It is the rigidifying transformations and ideological shifts stemming first from monastic portrayals of Enoch and their spiritual, structural implications explain that at least part of what motivated this conflict likely came from the changing worldviews and mindsets of the Coptic people in this realm—with religious identity emerging in importance and relevance, it

[249] Nebseni Pap. BD 125.
[250] Davis, *Coptic Papacy,* 58.
[251] Dunand, *Gods and Men,* 339.

follows that identity conflicts would as well, just as they had previously based on regional or local origins or differing political goals.

Moreover, Enoch's character in comparison to Thoth's indicates a growing tendency to think in absolutes. The submission of Coptic Christians to their doctrine was based upon their belief in the absolute power and righteousness of God; sinners, on the other hand, were unequivocally condemned to eternal suffering. Enoch's at times overly-long record of sins could be erased, but only through the express permission or interference of the divine. In fact, many of these transformations could be more broadly attributed to the transition from a polytheistic religious structure to a monotheistic one. For better or for worse, polytheism is not only accepting of but expects multiple interpretations and contradicting evidence, precisely because the mindset it requires is fundamentally different from a monotheistic one. There was a marked loss of nuance or flexibility in the characters of religious beings and earthly doctrines, especially those pertaining to leniency for the dead and to the gods' openness to negotiation.

In many ways, this speaks to the inherent differences in the way people perceived the purpose and powers of gods in TER—as is characteristic in polytheistic religions, there was a greater transactional element in which humans worked with deities rather than being administrated by them, implying in some ways an essential value to their existences.[252] In his iconographic manifestations as an ibis or baboon, Thoth could be more accurately characterized as a "force" than a "being." However, Thoth was just and fair; he was also malicious at times, and stole from other gods—in other words, he was humanly fallible. Enoch, conversely, was especially significant because he was physically human, but spiritually superior and infallible. Being recognized and raised up by a greater power, Enoch was then absolutely loyal to that

[252] Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 81.

singular existence from which everything stemmed—there was no room for flexibility in that relationship. The worldview implicit in a polytheistic structure, then, is inherently accepting of difference (though not disorder)—on the other hand, the monotheistic Christian worldview may have tolerated disorder but would not accept difference.

Historically, one can see the possible applications of such a mindset to the creation of the chaotic, sectarian environment of the 4th-5th centuries C.E. The Arian schism and all those that followed would not have been so historically significant if there was not a drive for overarching unity, which scholars have demonstrated was felt deeply by patriarchate and orthodox Coptic thinkers.[253] Athanasius' writing underscores the idea that this drive for unity was itself motivated by a belief in the absolute unity of God—against the Arians he wrote, "For, behold, we take divine Scripture…and set it up as a light on its candlestick, saying:— Very Son of the Father, natural and genuine, proper to His essence, Wisdom Only-begotten, *and Very and Only Word of God is He.*"[254] Just as coenobitic monks modelled their institutional relationships on the hierarchical, unified system that tied Enoch and God together, it makes sense that Athanasius and the Coptic Patriarchs who subscribed to the same ideology would seek to recreate the same universal structure on Earth, manifested in the push for a single, orthodox structure. In the coming years, the use of that rhetoric and its eventual success (thanks in no small part to the monastic power cultivated by Athanasius and others) reinforced the legitimacy of the "absolute" paradigm of the Christian God's power. The cognitive adoption of this focus on theological and moral extremes justified the drive for unity in the Coptic Orthodox Church in the minds of coenobitic monks, Coptic Church Fathers, and the laity alike, and contributed to its sustenance throughout Coptic history.

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[253] Davis, *Coptic Papacy*, 49.
[254] Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 3.9.

On the one hand, the argument could be made that with the political unification (however shallow) of Constantine's reign and the rapidly increasing relevance of religious affiliation, a natural ability and drive to make bonds and connections between peoples on a larger scale might have emerged. For example, a shared religious identity united Western Church Fathers like Jerome, Irenaeus, and Tertullian with Egyptian ascetics, engendering a real admiration for their dedication and devotion to God that eventually spread to Europe as well, ultimately regardless of regional or ethnic stereotypes, rivalries, and language barriers. On the other hand, this drive for unity (based as it was on the belief in absolutes) was also intolerant of difference. In a world where the consequences for bad behavior extended far beyond life, and where the divide between "good" and "bad" was cast in black and white, it is no wonder that theological and ideological schisms would take on such magnified significance. The religious transformations, interpretations, and schisms of this era were not only results or metaphorical expressions of social and political turmoil—they were generated by the thoughts and actions of people, and reflect an evolving theological and metaphysical mindset that informed the way people evaluated themselves and others. As a real, embodied dimension of life, these religious transitions were not just effects but also causes as well—they generated a perfect ideological storm for the social, political, and economic factors of the era as Western Rome dissolved and the Byzantine Empire strengthened to ignite the fierce debates, conflicts, and schisms that so characterized Late Antiquity.

Conclusion

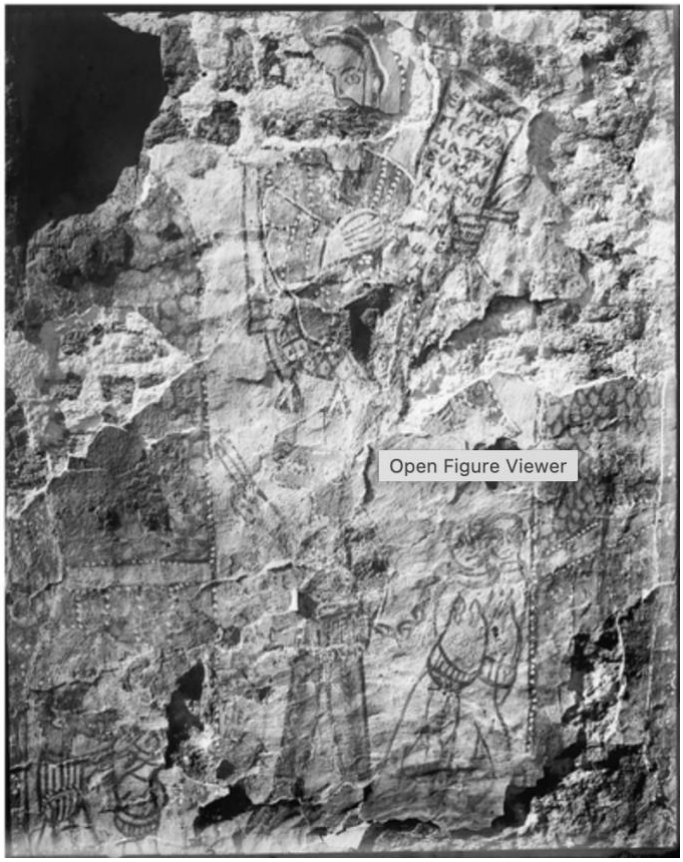

Fig. 1D. 10th-11th century wall painting of Enoch from church/monastic complex in Tebtunis.

Hermes Trismegistos predicted in the *Corpus Hermeticum* that "leaving the earth, the gods will return to the sky, and they will abandon Egypt"—and certainly by the 10th-11th century, when a group of monks from a monastic complex in Tebtunis (located in the Fayyum region of Middle Egypt) decided to decorate the walls of their church, any connection the Coptic people had to Thoth and TER had virtually vanished.[255] The monks chose a grim and gloomy subject—the punishment of various sinners, guilty of fornication, prostitution, and other such ignoble deeds.[256] Off in a corner, presiding over the tortuous images of sinners being attacked and eaten by snakes and having their souls devoured by demons, was painted Enoch sitting on a throne, a

[255] Dunand, *Gods and Men,* 340.
[256] Zellmann-Rohrer, "The Woman," 297.

copy of the Book of Life in hand as he observed the punishments of Hell. Apparently, the monastic conceptions of Enoch from the material evidence of the 3rd-5th centuries—of a remote, inhumanly perfect, strict, and unyielding scribe of righteousness—not only persisted through to the medieval period, but intensified significantly.

In his article examining and discussing these images from Tebtunis, C.C. Walters wrote a short paragraph on the portrayal of Enoch:

> The scribal qualifications and duties of Enoch are well-attested. In the *Book of Jubilees* he is described as "the first among men…who learnt writing and knowledge and wisdom," while in the *First Book of Enoch* he appears as "Enoch the scribe, the scribe of righteousness. ***It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that he should be called upon, like Thoth before him, to record man's final judgment.***[257]

In reality, nothing about religion and human life is so simple. Neither Enoch nor Thoth appeared fully formed as scribes of the judgment from the aether—rather, the accumulation of human engagement, repetition, and action proliferated and perpetuated this function for both figures. The elevation of the scribal roles for Enoch and Thoth were driven by human needs, which were arguably the most "universal" concept discussed in this study. Reinforcing Thoth and Enoch's connection to writing and to the scribal occupation textually and iconographically affirmed and validated the temple scribes and monks who followed them, legitimizing the institutions they worked and lived in. However, although both parties had a common need—the approbation of their identities—fundamentally their institutions were built differently and based on differing ideological concepts, which caused the scribal *and* judgment aspects of Thoth and Enoch's characters to change and drift apart.

These changes were both reflective of and influential on the cognitive and ideological structures which underpinned Late Antique Egyptian society and were crucial in creating the

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[257] C.C. Walters. "Christian Paintings from Tebtunis." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 75 (1989): 201-202.

sectarian conflict—the belief in absolutes, which simultaneously made Christianity appealing (as opposed to the capricious, whimsical gods of TER) and Christians intolerant of difference, and the increased relevance of internally generated religious identity in deciding one's fate after death. The iconographic and ideological changes reflected by the disparate personalities of Thoth and Enoch—one forgiving, one stern—restructured the internal worlds of the people as well; now religious difference was a threat instead of a non-issue. Given the horrors of Hell in which the monks of Tebtunis believed, it is unsurprising that both they and the people of five centuries earlier would take these ideas seriously.

Ultimately, comparing Thoth and Enoch in this way underscores and provides several insights into the nature of religious transformation and its relationship to human action. Firstly, it highlights the fluid, constantly evolving nature of all religions. It would be a mistake to think that humans are bound to repeat the same cycles and patterns, or to uncritically reuse the same character types and conceptions over and over. In both cases, the institutions where Thoth and Enoch found their primary homes were what generated their conceptions, and their differing structures drove the two scribes apart in subtle but important ways. If nothing else, this comparative analysis demonstrates that faith does not dictate men, but rather that men dictate faith—our actions, desires, beliefs, and exigencies influence and alter the nature of what we believe and how it manifests physically and spiritually on an individual and community-wide level. It is safe to conclude that in some ways, Thoth and Enoch master our fates; but in others, *we* master *theirs*.

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