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# The Primordial Edenic Tongue

## Or Why Animals Speak at Midnight on Christmas Eve

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The first chapter of the *Book of Genesis* implicitly refers to the faculty of speech as the ultimate divine attribute, and God's discourse is equated with the act of Creation. Each of the six narrative units building the biblical *Hexaemeral* cluster is anchored by the formulaic expression "God said".[1] In the accounts about the First, Second and the Third Day this clause is supplemented with the stock phrase "and God called/named [it/them]", while in the accounts about the Fifth and the Sixth Day – with the divine blessing "Be fruitful and multiply". Thus, having separated the light from the darkness, God calls them *Day* and *Night* and in this way establishes the temporal framework of the Universe [Gn 1: 3–5]; by naming the Firmament *Heaven*, God sets apart the strata of celestial realm [Gn 1: 6–8]; by calling the dry land *Earth* and the gatherings of the water surrounding it as the *Sea*, God demarks the terrestrial and marine landscapes [Gn 1: 9–10]. Yet this is when and where – in the middle of the narrative about the Third Day – the divine taxonomy ends. The account about the creation of vegetation does not mention naming of plants; no astronyms are attested in the account about the creation of heavenly luminaries on the Fourth Day; in a similar manner, the accounts of the creation of animals of the air, waters and earth remain silent about their taxonomy. This task – the naming of "living creatures" – is to be accomplished by Man, who is yet to be fashioned in God's image in the last, Sixth Day of Creation. But how exactly does Adam become a speaking being?

The conjecture that the faculty of speech was not only a divine but also a human attribute constitutes one of the fundamental lemmata of biblical anthropology; this concept is firmly embedded in the storyline of *Genesis* 2. Indeed, the earthborn man, who was fashioned as a carnal vessel of God's Spirit, was endowed with voice; the very first deed described in Adam's *vita* is the taxonomy of animals – an act which is accomplished through his verbal/vocal activity [Gn 2: 19–20].[2] Still, the issue of glottogenesis remains somewhat vague in the canoni-

1 Cf. Gn. 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26.

2 In some parabiblical sources (e. g. Flavius Josephus' Judean Antiquities [1: 35]), animals are named by God, not by Adam; see the discussion in Feldman, Louis/Mason, Steve, Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary (Ed. by Steve Mason), Vol. 3: Judean Antiquities

cal text; in a tantalizingly elliptic statement it is declared that, having formed the first human being (= Gr. *ἄνθρωπον*; Lat. *homo*) from dust from the ground (Lat. *humus*), God "breathed the breath of life" into him,[3] after which "the earthborn one" becomes a living — and, supposedly, speaking – creature [cf. Gn 2: 7].[4] Yet some apocryphal sources bring further clarity to the matter, by maintaining that God inhaled "the breath of life" into man's *mouth*, thereby bestowing the faculty of speech. One such case is presented by *The Book of Watchers*,[5] which is part of a

1–4. Translation and Commentary by Louis Feldman, Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill 2000, 14, note 63.

3 In the Masoretic text and in the Vulgate, the breath of life is inserted into man's nostrils ("And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"), whereas in the LXX – into his face. According to Flavius Josephus' Judean Antiquities [1:59], after his having fashioned humanity from the dust from the earth, God "injected breath and soul into him"; see Feldman/Mason, Flavius Josephus, 13. Further on the tripartite composition of man, consisting of body, spirit and soul (with reference to Plato's trichotomy), see the discussion in: ibid., note 59. See also the next note.

4 Aramaic exegetical tradition further elaborates on this concept and adds an important dimension to the ontological question of whether there is a causal link between "the breath of life" and linguistic/verbal intelligence (that is, the faculty of speech). In *Targum Onkelos* it is clarified that "the breath of life" blown by God into man's nostrils was in fact "the living soul", which "was for a speaking spirit in man". A similar concept is attested in *Targum Neophiti* ("And the Lord God created Adam (out of) dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living being endowed with speech"); see McNamara, Martin, The Aramaic Bible (Vol. 1A: *Targum Neofiti* 1: *Genesis*. Translated, with Apparatus and Notes by Martin McNamara), Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press (A Michael Glazier Book) 1992, 72. The same is true for the anthropogonic account in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan/Targum Yerushalmi* [Gn 2:7]; it is rather elaborate, but the basic idea – of the ontological link between "the breath of life" and linguistic/verbal intelligence – remains the focal point of the narrative: "And the Lord God created man in two formations; and took dust from the place of the house of the sanctuary, and from the four winds of the world, and mixed from all the waters of the world, and created him red, black, and white; and breathed into his nostrils the inspiration of life, and there was in the body of Adam the inspiration of a speaking spirit, unto the illumination of the eyes and the hearing of the ears." (Quoted after https://www.sefaria.org/Targum_Jonathan on Genesis.)

5 The literature on "the Watchers myth" (along with "the Shemihazah and/or the Asael myth") is vast. For a concise survey of scholarly discourse on the topic see the recent publications of the following authors (in alphabetical order): Annus, Amar, On the Origin of the Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions, in: Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha 19 (2010), 277–320; Bergsma, John, The Relationship between *Jubilees* and the Early Enochic Books (*Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers*), in: Boccaccini, Gabriele/Ibba, Giovanni, Enoch and the Mosaic Torah. The Evidence of Jubilees, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2009, 36–51; Bhayro, Siam, The Shemihazah and Asael Narrative of *1 Enoch* 6–11. Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary with reference to Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Antecedents, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2005; Crone, Patricia, *The Book of Watchers* in the *Qur'ān*, in: Ben-Shammai, Haggai/Shaked, Shaul/Stroumsa, Sarah (eds.), Exchange and Transmission

much larger corpus, known among specialists as *The First* (*Apocalypse of*) *Enoch* [*1 Enoch*].[6] Thus, while contemplating the destiny of the fallen angels (i. e. "the

across Cultural Boundaries. Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean. Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 2013, 16–51; Nickelsburg, George W., *1 Enoch* 1. A Commentary on the Book of *1 Enoch* (Chapters 1–36; 81–108), Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2001, 7, 12–13, 165–201; Reed, Annette Yoshiko, Heavenly Ascent, Angelic Descent, and the Transmission of Knowledge in *1 Enoch* 6–1, in: Boustan, Ra'an/Reed, Annette Yoshiko (eds.), Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004, 47–66; id., Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity. The Reception of Enochic Literature, New York/Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2005; Sacchi, Paolo, *The Book of the Watchers* as an Apocalyptic and Apocryphal Text, Henoch 30/1 (2008), 9–26; Stuckenbruck, Loren T., The Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: the Interpretation of Genesis 6: 1–4 in the Second and Third Centuries BCE, in: Auffarth, Christoph/Stuckenbruck, Loren (eds.), The Fall of the Angels (Themes in Biblical Narrative, Jewish and Christian Traditions 6), Leiden/Boston: Brill 2004, 99–118; id., The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Ethics and Theological Anthropology, in: Konradt, Matthias/Schläpfer, Esther (eds.), Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjüdentum und im Neuen Testament. Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen. Internationales Symposium in Verbindung mit dem Projekt Corpus Judaeo-Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti (CJHNT) 17.–20. Mai 2012, Heidelberg (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, Vol. 322), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014, 163–176; id., The Myth of the Rebellious Angels. Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014, 12–35, 43, 47–48.

6 Composed in the c. third century BCE, *1 Enoch* survived in full only in Ethiopic, but there are also extant Aramaic fragments from Qumran, along with a number of Greek and Latin excerpts. The corpus of *1 Enoch* was first published by Charles, Robert H. (ed.), The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English: With Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books (Vol. 2), Oxford: Clarendon Press 1913, 163–277. See also Isaac, Ephraim, 1 Enoch, in: Charlesworth, James H. (ed.), The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (Vol. 1), Garden City, N. Y./Doubleday 1983, 5–90; Knibb, Michael A., *1 Enoch*, in: Sparks, Hedley F. Davis (ed.), The Apocryphal Old Testament, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1984, 184–319; Nickelsburg, George W., *1 Enoch* 1. A Commentary on the Book of *1 Enoch*, 2001. Further on Enochic traditions (with special emphasis on *1 Enoch*) see Greenfield, Jonas/Stone, Michael, The Books of Enoch and the Traditions of Enoch, Numen 26: 1 (1979), 89–103; VanderKam, James, Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition (CBQ Monograph Series 16), Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America, 1984; id., Biblical Interpretation in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*, in: Charlesworth, James/Evans, Craig (eds.), The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 14; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 2), Sheffield: JSOT Press 1993, 96–125; id., The Interpretation of *Genesis* in *1 Enoch*, in: Flint, Peter W. (ed.), The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation (Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature), Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans 2001, 129–148; Collins, John J., The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK: William Eerdmans $^{2}$1998, 43–84, 177–193; Knibb, Michael A., Which Parts of *1 Enoch* Were Known to *Jubilees*? A Note on the Interpretation of *Jubilees* 4.16–25, in: Exum, J. Cheryl/Williamson, H. G. M./Clines, David J. A. (eds.), Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J. A. Clines, London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2003, 254–262; Reed,

Watchers"), Enoch testifies that he not only conveys God's *narratio* as revealed to him in a mystical vision, but he converses "with the tongue of flesh and with breath which the Great One has given to men in the mouth, that they might speak with it and understand with the heart," since "he has created and appointed men to understand the word of knowledge" [*1 Enoch* 14: 2–5].[7]

The same idea is attested in a cluster of vernacular anthropogonic accounts surviving in parabiblical oral traditions. According to these types of legends, after having crafted man in his own image and likeness and appointed him to be the master of the Universe and the sovereign of "every living creature that moves on the ground" (cf. Gn 1: 26–28), the Creator blows the breath of life into Adam's mouth, thus vivifying him, and transforming him not just into a "human being" originating from the dust of the ground, but into a "speaking creature."[8] In this way Adam's tongue is defined as a divine product originating from the Holy Spirit; as such it is claimed to have emanated directly from the lips of the Creator. Thus the primordial Adamic language is equated with the language of Creation. Man and God shared the same tongue.

Annette Yoshiko, Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity. The Reception of Enochic Literature, New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005; Schäfer, Peter, The Origins of Jewish Mysticism, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2009, 53–76; Boccaccini, Gabriele/Ibba, Giovanni, Enoch and the Mosaic Torah. The Evidence of *Jubilees*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2009; Kvanvig, Helge S., Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical and Enochic. An Intertextual Reading (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 149), Leiden: Brill 2011; Stuckenbruck, Loren, "The Book of Enoch: Its Reception in Second Temple Judaism and in Christianity", Early Christianity 4 (2013), 7–40. After the discoveries of Qumran it has been suggested that some sections of *1 Enoch* (i. e. the earliest manuscripts of *The Astronomical Book*) may be dated to the end of the third/beginning of the second century BCE; see the discussion in Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination, 25–84. For a general survey of the literature on Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions, see Stone, Michael, Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature, in: Lemke, Werner E./Miller, Patrick D./Cross, Frank Moore (eds.), *Magnalia Dei*, the Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright, Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1976, 414–452; id., Scriptures, Sects and Visions. A Profile of Judaism from Ezra to the Jewish Revolts, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1980; Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination; Stuckenbruck, Loren T., The "Angels" and "Giants" of Genesis 6:1–4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation. Reflections on the Posture of Early Apocalyptic Traditions, Dead Sea Discoveries 7: 3 (2000) [special issue: Angels and Demons], 354–377; Yarbro Collins, Adela, Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism, Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill 2000; Himmelfarb, Martha, Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1983; id., Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993; id., An Apocalypse: A Brief History. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2010.

7 Quoted after Knibb, *1 Enoch*, 200.

8 See the discussion in Badalanova, Florentina, The Bible in the Making. Slavonic Creation Stories, in: Geller, M. J. et. al. (eds.), Imagining Creation. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2008, 208, 274–275 (text 2.2.23).

Furthermore, the canonical account about the Edenic phase in the life of the first people (cf. Gn 3: 1–6) implies that it was not only human beings who were endowed with the faculty of speech, but also animals; indeed, it was the cunning words of the Serpent, who was able to converse with woman, that triggered the Fall. Then again, the subsequent discourse between God on the one hand, and Adam, Eve and the Serpent on the other (cf. Gn 3: 9–19) may be construed only on the assumption that all parties involved shared the same language, or else they would not have been able to comprehend each other's words. The underlying subtext of this storyline is anchored by the salient presupposition that, in the prelapsarian Eden, God and all living creatures – either human beings, or animals – used to speak one and the same language and conversed with each other. The language of God was identical not only with that of the human race, but also with that of animals – all dwelling side by side in Paradise. This concept is further explored in Flavius Josephus' *Judean Antiquities* [1: 40–41]:

"God, then, ordered Adamos and his wife to taste of the other plants but to abstain from that of wisdom, telling them in advance that if they touched it, ruin would result from it. At that point in time when all the creatures spoke the same language, a serpent, living together with Adamos and his wife, felt jealous at the happiness that he thought would be theirs if they obeyed the instructions of God."[9]

Parabiblical sources maintain that this state of affairs – the heavenly discourse between God, humankind and animals – ends when Adam and Eve transgress by trespassing God's command of tasting the fruit of the "tree from the midst of the Garden of Eden". Thus, according to the *Book of Jubilees*,[10] the animals were

9 I am following L. Feldman's translation of the text; see Feldman/Mason, Flavius Josephus, 15–16.

10 *The Book of Jubilees* was composed roughly in the same period as *The Book of Watchers* (that is – the third century BCE); like the *1 Enoch*, it survived in full only in Ethiopic. For the earliest English translations of the Ethiopic version see Charles, Robert H., *The Book of Jubilees*: or *The Little Genesis*, London: Adam and Charles Black 1902; id., Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, 1–82; Charles, Robert H./Box, George H., *The Book of Jubilees*, or *The Little Genesis*, London/New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge & Macmillan 1917. For further translations and editions of the *Jubilees* corpus, see Wintermute, O. S., *Jubilees*, in: Charlesworth, James H. (ed.), The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (Vol. 2), Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 35–142; VanderKam, James C., *The Book of Jubilees* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 510–511, Scriptores Aethiopici 87–88), Louvain: Peeters 1989. For a description of extant textual sources, and analysis of parabiblical traditions attested in *Jubilees*, see Albani, Matthias/Frey, Jörg/Lange, Armin (eds.), Studies in the *Book of Jubilees*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1997; VanderKam, James C., Textual and Historical Studies in the *Book of Jubilees* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 14), Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press 1977; id., Enoch Traditions in *Jubilees* and Other Second-Century Sources, Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 13: 1 (1978), 229–251; id., The *Jubilee*s Fragments from Qumran Cave 4, in: Trebolle Barrera, Julio/Vegas Montaner, Luis (eds.), The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid, 18–21 March, 1991 (Vol. 2), Leiden/New York: Brill & Madrid: Universidad Complutence, 1992, 635–648; id.,

deprived from the faculty of speech exactly on the day when the first people were expelled from Paradise:

"[a]nd he made for them garments of skin and he dressed them and sent them from the garden of Eden. And on that day when Adam went out from the garden of Eden, he offered a sweet-smelling sacrifice – frankincense, galbanum, stacte and spices – in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day he covered his shame. On that day the mouth of all the beasts and cattle and birds, and whatever walked and moved, were stopped from speaking because all of them used to speak with one another with one speech and one language. And he sent from the garden of Eden all the flesh which was in the garden of Eden and all the flesh was scattered, each one according to its kind and each one according to its family, into the place which was created for them [*Jubilees* 3: 26–30]."[11]

This ancient parabiblical narrative appears to have generated an elaborate cluster of vernacular offshoots which, in turn, shaped some key-components of traditional belief systems of medieval European Christendom. The tale of "all the beasts and cattle and birds" becoming mute after the expulsion from Eden is converted – through the prism of popular Christian exegesis – into another one, the recounting of which turns the ancient fable inside out. This in turn engenders the legend of animals regaining the faculty of speech at Christmas Eve. Embedded in these types of *Folk Bible* narratives is the notion that the birth of Christ cancels the Fall, identified as the ultimate cause for the expulsion of "all living flesh" from the Edenic garden, and for the transformation of animals from speaking beings into mute ones. The Holy Night is therefore perceived as a glimpse of primordial Paradise – the domain of talking animals, mutually conversing with humans. The logic is transparent. Nativity revokes the Fall. Paradise is regained anew. The Edenic state of affairs is restored – albeit for an instance – each and every Christmas Eve, when the hitherto speechless beasts proclaim the birth of Jesus. While in the narrative of *Jubilees* [3: 29–30] "all the flesh was scattered, each one according

*The Book of Jubilees*, Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001; VanderKam, J. C./Milik, J. T., The First *Jubilees* Manuscript from Qumran Cave 4. A Preliminary Publication, in: Journal of Biblical Literature 110: 2 (Summer 1991), 243–270; Stuckenbruck, Loren T., *The Book of Jubilees* and the Origin of Evil, in: Boccaccini, Gabriele/Ibba, Giovanni, Enoch and the Mosaic Torah. The Evidence of *Jubilees*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2009, 294–308; Himmelfarb, Martha, *The Book of Jubilees* and Early Jewish Mysticism, in: Boccaccini, Gabriele/Ibba, Giovanni, Enoch and the Mosaic Torah. The Evidence of *Jubilees*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2009, 384–394; Kugel, James L., A Walk Through Jubilees: Studies in *The Book of Jubilees* and the World of Its Creation, Leiden: Brill 2012. For a concise survey of publications on *The Book of Jubilees,* see Bachmann, Veronika/Oliver, Isaac W., *The Book of Jubilees*: A Bibliography (1850-Present), in: Boccaccini, Gabriele/Ibba, Giovanni, Enoch and the Mosaic Torah. The Evidence of *Jubilees*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2009, 441–468.

11 Quoted after Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 60.

to its kind and each one according to its family, into the place which was created for them", in medieval Christian legends, animals gather together next to the newborn Infant, and glorify Him in their pristine heavenly tongue. The argumentation is straightforward indeed: if animals lost their ability to speak at the time of the Fall, then this ability is to be restored when the Fall is reversed.

As folklore studies show, one of the most widespread legends of Catholic (and Protestant) Europe is that of animals regaining the faculty of speech at midnight of Christmas Eve; furthermore, according to these types of tales, the animals were the first who proclaimed the Nativity of Christ – not the shepherds nor the Magi. The New Testament narrative of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (along with that of the *Adoration of the Magi/Kings*) is graciously transformed into the *Annunciation to the Beasts* – an episode which has become a common subject of medieval folk legends and Christmas carols.[12] According to these types of "Folk Gospels", the animals gathered in the stable next to newborn Infant on Christmas Eve converse in Latin (of course!), the *lingua sacra* of *Pax Catholica*. The rooster is reported to have crowed exactly at midnight, "*Christus natus est*!" ("Christ is born!");[13] then the raven questioned: "*Quando*?" ("When?"), and the crow responded: "*Haec nocte*!" ("This night!"); the ox asked: "Ubi?" ("Where?"), and the lamb answered "Bethlehem"; finally the ass advocated: "*Eamus*!" ("Let's go!").[14] The motif of "Animals speaking to one another at Christmas" (StTh B251.1.2) is likewise attested in English Christmas carols,[15] probably paralleling illuminated Latin manuscripts. In the

12 In his Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, Stith Thompson classifies the motif, *Animals speak to one another at Christmas* as B251.1.2; provided in Thompson's compendium is also bibliographic survey of folklore narratives in which the motif is attested. See also B251.1 (*Animals rejoice at Christ's birth*); B251.1.1 (*Animals worship Infant Jesus*); B251.1.2.2 (*Cows speak to one another on Christmas*); B251.8 (*Animals observe sacred revelation*); B251.10. (*Animals lick Christ-child*).

13 In Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature it is designated as B251.1.2.1. See also the discussion in Schwarzbaum, Haim, Studies in Jewish and World Folklore, Berlin: Walter De Gruyter 1968, 175; provided there is a concise bibliography on the subject.

14 See also Crump, William D., The Christmas Encyclopedia, Jefferson, North Carolina/London: McFarland & Company 2013, 282.

15 One such case is "The Friendly Beasts" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cZm7RGlY2Y], which is still part of traditional Christmas carols repertoire. See also the modern remake of the lyrics by Alice V. Stuart [http://www2.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/A_Christmas_Fable_ (Huub_de_Lange)]: What crew the cockerel // On Christmas morn? // It crew *Christus natus est*! // Loudly *Christus natus est*! // Gladly *Christus natus est*! // Christ, the Christ is born! // *Quando, quando*? quacked the duck. // When, O when? cried she. // *In hac nocte*, croacked the raven, // Humped upon a tree, // *In hac nocte, in hac nocte*, // This very night, quoth he. // *Ubi, ubi*? lowed the cow, // Where? she asked of them. // *Ubi, ubi*? None could tell, // Till a little lamb // Baa'ed out bravely, high and clear, // Bleated, *Bethlehem*. // Joyfully the donkey's voice // Answered lambkin so: // *Eamus*! said the ass's bray, // As all Christian men now say // *Eamus*! Let us go.

introduction to his *Songs of the Nativity* (published c. 1884 in London) William Henry Husks writes, that

"in an old print (at the head of a sheet of carols published in 1701) representing the stable at Bethlehem with the Holy Family, figures of an ox, a cow, a sheep, a raven, and a cock are introduced, having labels with Latin inscriptions in their mouths, which are thus explained; "The cock croweth *Christis natus est* (Christi is born); the raven asketh *Quando?* (When?); the cow replieth, *Hac nocte* (This Night); the ox crieth out, *Ubi? Ubi?* (Where, where?); the sheep bleatheth out, *Bethlehem*."[16]

Furthermore, the motif of a cockerel proclaiming the Nativity at midnight on Christmas was likewise included by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* (Act 1):

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long.
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad.
The nights are wholesome. Then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is that time."

Remarkably, the same motif – of the cockerel singing *Christis natus est* at midnight on Christmas – is manifested in the famous designation of the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve as the "Mass of the Rooster" (*Missa del Gallo*), a telltale term which is one of the hallmarks of Roman Catholic Christmas celebrations among Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities worldwide. On the other hand, the "Mass of the Rooster" is without doubt a product of a much more intricate mythopoetic system – that of vernacular Christianity of medieval Europe, in which the ritual template of traditional winter solstice festivals is amalgamated with the image of Jesus Christ as "the Sun of Righteousness."[17] Under the same token, Christmas Eve is identified – not metaphorically, but quite literary – as "sunrise" which, according to popular belief, is to be proclaimed by the roosters. And so it is. This is also why only on Christmas Eve the cockerel crows at midnight, but not at sunrise. Christ-

16 See Husk, William Henry (ed.), Songs of the Nativity (Being Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern, Several of Which Appear For the First Time in a Collection; Edited with Notes, by William Henry Husk), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015, viii (first publ. in London: J. C. Hotten, 1884, viii). See also https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Images/Husk/william_henry_husk.htm. The iconographic thesaurus of these types of images could have been further influenced by *Habakkuk* 3:2 ("In the midst of the two beasts wilt thou be known") and *Isaiah* 1:3: ("The ox knows its owner, and an ass, its master's manger"). See also Figs. 1, 2, 3.

17 The appellation "Sun of Righteousness" is attested in *The Book of Malachi* [4:2] ("But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings"). It is also part of the thesaurus of Catholic and Protestant Hymns, and of Christmas carols.

mas Eve is conceptualized, within the framework of the *Folk Bible* oral corpus, as a symbolic heavenly crack of dawn, while "the Sun of Righteousness" is given birth here on earth. Then again, the motif of the roosters saluting the rising Sun is one of the most widespread in folklore traditions of adherents of Abrahamic faiths worldwide. It is also found in some parabiblical sources. Thus, according to *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (or *3 Baruch*),[18] when "the angels are opening the 65 gates of heaven, and light is being separated from darkness," the Sun enters his chariot. At the same time, the gigantic bird called Phoenix, who sustains itself by eating "heavenly manna," flies under the Sun, screening its rays and protecting the earth from being consumed by its fire; it spreads its wings and proclaims, "O giver of light, give splendor to the world!" Thus the Phoenix awakens the cockerels on earth, and they begin calling out, knowing that the Sun is rising.[19] The motif of roosters/birds saluting the Sun is employed in some other parabiblical compositions, such as *The Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch* (or *2 Enoch*),[20] erotapocritic writings (*Questions and Answers*), and others. This detail further supports the argument that the "Mass of the Rooster" – albeit being such an idiosyncratic type of Vigil – reflects processes of cross-cultural transmission and dissemination of parabiblical traditions shaping the multifaceted profile of medieval *Pax Christiana*.

But let us return to the parabiblical narrative of *Jubilees* [3: 27–30], since it was this account which has prompted the current discussion about the deprivation of the faculty of speech among animals. Significantly, the narrative unit about the transformation of animals from talking beings into the mute ones[21] is presented together with the unit of the post-Paradise phase, when "all living flesh" was scattered over the extra-Edenic domain.[22] The comparison between the two-folded storyline of *Jubilees* 3: 28–30, and that of *Genesis* 11 (concerning the termination

18 This composition survived in Greek and Slavonic redactions. Further on *3 Baruch*, see the discussion in Kulik, Alexander, *3 Baruch*: Greek Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 2010.

19 See Gaylord, H. E., "*3 Baruch*", in: Charlesworth, James H. (ed.), The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (Vol. 1), Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday 1983, 670.

20 The narrative is part of Enoch's testimony in which the Sun's trajectory is described within the celestial landscape of the Fourth Heaven: "In the 8th hour of the night, 400 angels bring the wreath along and crown [the Sun] with it; and the elements called Phoenix and Chalcedra break out in song. Because of this, all birds clap their wings, rejoicing at the Light-giver and singing with their voices, *Here comes the Light-giver and gives light to its / His creatures*!"; see Badalanova Geller, Florentina, The Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch: Text and Context (Max Planck Preprint 410), Berlin: Max Planck Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte 2010, 41.

21 Cf. *Jubilees* 3: 28–29 ("On that day the mouth of all the beasts and cattle and birds, and whatever walked and moved, were stopped from speaking because all of them used to speak with one another with one speech and one language"); quoted after Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 60.

22 Cf. *Jubilees* 3: 29–30 ("And he sent from the garden of Eden all the flesh which was in the garden of Eden and all the flesh was scattered, each one according to its kind and each one

of primordial linguistic homogeneity),[23] displays some important similarities between them. While in *Jubilees,* the episode of animals losing the ability to converse triggers the episode about their dispersion over the earth, so in *Genesis* 11 the confusion of the primordial tongue spoken by "the sons of men" was a result of their failed initiative to construct the Tower of Babel, after which the participants in this futile act were scattered "over the face of all the earth". It is obvious, that the narrative unit presented in *Jubilees* [3: 28–30] encapsulated traditions that were likewise assembled into the Biblical Tower of Babel account. Hypothetically, they both belong to a protobiblical narrative template concerned with the ontological question of glottogenesis.

But the Babelian confusion of speech is followed by yet another, reversal phase, when the hitherto lost common tongue is recovered among mankind. It commences with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, whereby the ultimate unity of discourse is restored for human beings, with the Apostles being bestowed with a universal language understood by all (*Acts of Apostles* 2: 3–11):

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

Thus a new linguistic homogeneity – that of Pax Christiana – is achieved, with the exploits of the Apostles of Jesus being its ultimate vehicle.

according to its family, into the place which was created for them"); quoted after Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 60.

23 On interpretative strategies hitherto employed in the analysis of the Babel's Tower narrative see, for instance, Kugel, James L., The Bible as It Was, Cambridge, MA/London: Belknap/Harvard University Press 1997, 121–130; Smelik, Willem F., Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013; Sherman, Phillip Michael, Babel's Tower Translated. *Genesis* 11 and Ancient Jewish Interpretation. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2013.