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JUDE'S ENOCHIAN APOCALYPSE

Lucian Lopez, O.S.B.

Abstract - Jude's was an apocalyptic imagination much like that of the writer of Revelation, but he had no need to write his own apocalypse. In his brief epistle, written sometime before 62 CE, Jude revealed that the apocalyptic imagery fueling his own mythos was none other than that of Enoch and various other ancient stories of the Hebrew people.

Jude's writing of his epistle was for the purpose of addressing a problem in his community, which he identified immediately as "intruders." Who were these intruders, and what did Jude say about them? In verse 4, Jude described them as "godless persons, who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." In verses 5-16 Jude conjured allusions to well-known biblical stories that pitted the good against the bad, and described the punishment that came to the wicked, including his well known quote from Enoch:

"Enoch, of the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied also about them when he said, 'Behold, the Lord has come with his countless holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict everyone for all the godless deeds that they committed and for all the harsh words godless sinners have uttered against him'."²

Jude's inclusion of Enoch and other allusions to Old Testament and pseudepigraphical texts aid us in identifying the *kind* of wickedness Jude attributed to his intruders. In verse 5 Jude described those who were "once saved" from Egypt, and the destruction of those who "did not believe." In verses 6 and 7 Jude referred to the intruders as those who "deserted their proper dwelling," alluding to the fallen angels. He compared them to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah who "indulged in sexual promiscuity and practiced unnatural vice." In verse 8 Jude referred to "dreamers," who "defile the flesh, scorn lordship, revile glorious beings." Jude also specifically addressed the inappropriate behavior of the intruders at the Eucharistic table in verse 12, calling them "blemishes on your love feasts," and condemning the way in which they "carouse fearlessly and look after themselves." The following poetic imagery in verses 12 and 13 illustrated that these people were more than troublesome, but described them as "waterless clouds," and "fruitless trees;" physically present but ultimately useless. They were inauthentic members of the community.

From the above statements, a great deal may be said about these intruders already. They were disruptive in the assembly, "party crashers," and insincere in their presence in the community. The intruders, compared to Enoch's fallen angels and the inhabitants of Sodom, may have been engaging in scandalous sexual immorality because of their falseness.³ The message of Christianity had not truly reached them, and this was exhibited by their inconsistent behavior. Various scholars have speculated as to who these intruders could have been historically. There is evidence that, beyond the organized Christian community, there were also so-called "itinerant charismatics" in the early Church, prone to mooching, and making "claims of authority and receiv[ing] free meals and hospitality."⁴

One theory identified these intruders with the disciples of Paul, whose preaching of "freedom from the law" was often misiden-

tified with such itinerant charismatics who preached a “libertine” interpretation of the Jesus event. Such an explanation highlights Jude’s association with apostles such as James in Jerusalem, who emphasized Jewish ethnic identity and kinship ties with Jesus himself.⁵ Jude’s provenance among the Jewish community of Palestine may also be evidenced by his use of the Aramaic version of Enoch.⁶

Jude began his letter stating that he wished to “encourage you to contend for the faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones.”⁷ In his conclusion, he once again repeated, “remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸ This was Jude’s ideal, an emphasis on a *fides quae creditur* in danger of being subverted by intruders.

Whoever these intruders may have been, they represented nothing less than the cosmic forces of evil from of old that fueled the ancient primordial conflicts present as salvation history was set in motion. As evidence of the scope of this conflict, Jude employed an apocalyptic literary technique, typical for this era in Christian literature.

By verse 4 of his epistle, Jude set the apocalyptic scene by referencing “intruders, who long ago were designated for this condemnation.” Packed within this small phrase is an immense eschatological vista which presupposes a time beforehand, one of prophecy that bears significance for all time, the present where these mysterious “intruders” are working some kind of evil, and a cosmological punishment – that of “condemnation” at some foreshadowed end-time. Three eras are identified that come together in one. This is the scope of the apocalyptic imagination.

Jude’s epistle was written in a period in history when apocalyptic literature was at its height in the West. There is no doubt that apocalyptic imagery peppers the entirety of the New Testament, from some of Jesus’ more cryptic sayings in the Gospels about the end times, Gehenna, and even some of his parables that discuss the sepa-

ration of the wheat from the chaff, sheep from goats, being thrown out of wedding banquets, and many others; to sayings of other epistolary authors such as Peter and Paul. Not only among early Christian sources of late antiquity, but Jewish and Pagan authors had been utilizing apocalyptic literature to address contemporary political issues since antiquity.⁹

Jude, however is distinct from Revelation in that Jude did not propose a new apocalyptic literature. By utilizing a midrash technique, that is taking classic apocalyptic texts and applying them to his present circumstances, much like the pesher method of Qumran, Jude appropriated Enoch, a well-known apocalypse that would have resonated with his readers, lending more authority to his comparisons, and perhaps a dire tone to his exhortation.¹⁰ Most likely Jude cited Enoch from memory,¹¹ and his community would have found the text not solely applicable to their situation, but “it was written about them, to them, and for [them].”¹²

Enoch itself was a collection of books that may have been written over the course of a few hundred years throughout the intertestamental period.¹³ It is not clear to how much of the totality of this book Jude may have been exposed.¹⁴ Much has been said about Enoch’s prevalence in the early Church because of the facility with which it lends itself to a Christological hermeneutic. Old Testament scriptures were first utilized by early Christians as proofs of Jesus’ being the Messiah, but later the reverse was the case – Old Testament texts were valid insofar as they could be interpreted Christologically.¹⁵ Enoch would have been one of these which would have enjoyed a temporary prevalence because of its strong Christological imagery.¹⁶ Other than by Jude, Enoch was utilized by late antique authors such as Barnabas, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.¹⁷

For Jude, to accept Enoch was to intimately appropriate the cosmology of Enoch as part of his mythos. To suggest that Jude (and

his community) adopted Enoch as part of a coherent cosmological narrative has implications on a close reading of the entire epistle itself!

By reading Jude's epistle in light of the overall story of Enoch, I wish to suggest that the sin of the famous intruders was, in Jude's imagination, an echo of that found in Enoch. These intruders were first and foremost a *presence*, weeds sown among so much wheat. This presence put the believer at risk of being led astray from the simple, orthodox "faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones,"¹⁸ "spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁹ Jude's theology was one of preservation.

In verse 4 Jude identified these "intruders," and his conclusion summarized their sin as "causing division," living "according to their own godless desire," and that they "live on the natural plane, devoid of the Spirit."²⁰ In Enoch, it is *angels* that have intruded upon the "natural plane" among mortals, and that "revealed secrets to the sons of men and have seduced the sons of men to the commission of sin."²¹ Much like the story of the Deluge in Genesis, Enoch singled out Noah as the only one who was "pure and good, free from the reproach of discovering secrets" and thereby free from the judgment which would come upon the angels (intruders) and those that had been seduced by them. Noah was an apt representation of Jude's community, a faithful minority that persisted despite the presence of subversive elements.

In Enoch, humanity was thriving blissfully in its ignorance of many things that it did not need to know. One fateful day, the angels noticed the attractiveness of mortals and decided, at one surreptitious meeting at Ardis, on mount Armon,²² to give in to their desires and have carnal relations with the inferior species. This was not all, however. Various angels then taught the mortals terrible things they should not have known – things beyond what God ordained, ultimately destructive, but things that incited the mortals' greedy passions.

These things included sorcery, divination, astrology, the making of weapons of war, even methods for creating jewelry, cosmetics, and other adornments of vanity.²³ These events ushered in a new era for humanity – a world of magic, and warcraft. But even more dramatic, it was an era of monsters and strange creatures, as the offspring of the angels and humans began to spread about the earth.²⁴ These Nephilim, as they were called, were often described as great giants, the heroes of old.²⁵

The Ancient of Days, or Lord of Spirits, as God was often called throughout the book, would not allow this to continue. Enoch was swept up in a vision²⁶ and taken to the four corners of the earth where he himself received great knowledge about the construction of the cosmos (the gates of wind and water at the four directions), various metaphysical planes of existence, as well as, and more significantly, the punishments that would be exacted upon the various angels, often referred to as “stars.”²⁷ Among the many beings Enoch encountered, including the archangels Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and Phanuel, he met a mysterious Son of man that abided near the throne of God, “whose countenance resembled that of a man,” but “full of grace, like that of one of the holy angels.”²⁸

Finally Enoch met Noah, whom he had been searching out and finally found in his seclusion at the ends of the earth.²⁹ Enoch then revealed to Noah the destruction that was to come to rid the earth of this evil, destroying mortals and their angelic offspring alike, but that Noah would be spared because of his righteousness.³⁰

The intruding angels had not corrupted Noah, and he was thus worthy to escape the Deluge. In Jude’s community, the intruders “added on to,” confused, and corrupted the simple and important message “handed down by the apostles.” For this reason the intruders could not be taken lightly. Nevertheless, Jude did not explicitly exhort the community to expel the intruders. What he said about them was that their judgment would come, an approach similar to the

narrative of Enoch as well as Jesus' parable in Matthew 13 about the weeds sown among the wheat.

Jude employed use of various Old Testament allusions in verses 5-16 to further illustrate the sinfulness of the intruders, and the kind of punishment they would incur. It is here, utilizing the Enochian hermeneutic, that these passages may best be understood.

Jude compared the intruders to "waterless clouds," "fruitless trees," "wild waves," and "stars of gloom," in verses 12 and 13, a direct allusion to Enoch 2.1-5.5 and 80.1-8.³¹ In verse 11, Jude introduced three significant allusions that require more unpacking, as these intruders are said to "follow the way of Cain," "abandon themselves to Balaam's error for the sake of gain," and, utilizing the prophetic perfect tense, Jude stated that the intruders "perished in the rebellion of Korah."

Cain, perhaps the most familiar of the above personages, was the first man to kill according to Genesis. Instinctively, one might interpret Cain's sin as that of murder. But among the many sins Jude listed against the intruders, murder was not one of them. The intruders were scandalous fornicators, heavy partiers, and insincere. If the story of Cain is to be interpreted within the narrative of Enoch, where would this man Cain have learned how to kill his brother – especially if he was the first person to ever kill another? Cain would have been one of the very first to have been approached by an intruding angel and taught how to use weapons, perverting an ordinary farming tool to a lethal end. Taken in this context, Cain's sin as mirrored in Jude's community, was not that he murdered, but that he was influenced – seduced, into ungodly behavior by one that intruded into the divine order.

Balaam³² was a prophet of Israel during the period in which the Israelites had escaped from Egypt and were engaged in campaigns to conquer the land of Canaan. Messengers from the Canaanite king Balak, "experts in divination,"³³ were sent to him to persuade him

to curse the Israelites and call off their successful assaults, which he was persuaded to attempt until God corrected him and he repented. Here again, Balaam is emblematic of the one seduced by outside forces in order to thwart God's plan, beings identified with divination and the occult – evil immediately associated with the Nephilim. Also significant in Balaam's story is that he was unable at first to discern the presence of the angel that hindered his path. Jude said of the intruders in his community that they "revile glorious beings," and they "revile what they do not understand and are destroyed by what they know by nature like irrational animals."³⁴ The sins of Jude's intruders, much like Balaam, included an inability to discern spirits as a consequence of their sinfulness.³⁵

Korah³⁶ rebelled against Moses as the Israelites were encamped before entering the land of Canaan. He was of priestly lineage and his squabble with the Israelite community began over ritual details, but principally jealous of Moses' and Aaron's power and authority. For punishment, the earth opened up and swallowed Korah and all those that rebelled against Moses. Korah himself became the "intruder" in Moses' community, along with Abiram and Dathan, inciting great numbers of Israelites to rebel against Moses. Perhaps it is enough to identify this as Korah's sin, and the destruction that befell him as parallel to the apocalyptic destruction that awaited both the intruding angels in Enoch and Jude's own intruders.³⁷ It may be interesting to note, however, that a few chapters earlier in 13 and 14 of Numbers, the spirit of rebellion was originally kindled when a group of scouts reconnoitered the land of Canaan and returned with a report that Canaan was inhabited by Nephilim, the dreaded offspring of mortal and angel. A sense of despair infected the people of Israel, and they cried that they would never successfully be able to overtake such formidable foes.

The purpose of Jude's epistle was to convey the urgency of the situation in which his community found itself – the fact that they

harbored intruders in their midst. By utilizing apocalyptic imagery from Enoch, Jude placed these intruders within a narrative of salvation history in which the good and righteous had to survive with evil elements among them. But his epistle offered hope that the evil ones would meet with retribution, and in the meantime the good must be on guard lest they succumb to the influence of these evil intruders. Jude employed use of various images from scripture and pseudepigraphical texts for which he made no distinction. In fact, one could say that Jude's own imagination concerning the spiritual life and the cosmos was informed by the cosmology of these texts, including Enoch. With a better understanding of Jude's use of certain scriptural allusions, one can more keenly envision the context in which his exhortations would have resonated for his community. Through the application of an Enochian hermeneutic to Jude, one can better appreciate the way in which Jude envisioned the enemies of his community, his use of apocalypse as a literary device, as well as shed light on some of his more obscure Old Testament allusions.

Notes:

1. Simon J. Joseph, "'Seventh from Adam' (Jude 1:14-15): Re-examining Enochic Traditions and the Christology of Jude." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 64, Pt. 2 (2013): 464. Simon J. Joseph is Adjunct Professor of Religion at California Lutheran University in Los Angeles.
2. Enoch 2, as cited in Jude 1:14-16
3. Joseph, "'Seventh from Adam,'" 465.
4. *Ibid.*, 465.
5. *Ibid.*, 466.
6. *Ibid.*, 472.
7. Jude 1:3
8. Jude 1:17
9. The *Syballine Oracles* were perhaps one of the best examples of an amalgam of Jewish-Christian-Pagan apocalyptic literature, predominantly "of Hellenistic Judaism

adapting a well-known form of pagan prophecy for its own needs.” Parts of this text have been attributed to early Christian authors, and are also vividly reminiscent of passages in the Revelation. Hans-Joseph Klauck, “Do They Never Come Back? Nero Redivivus and the Apocalypse of John.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 63 (2001): 686, 690.

10. Nicholas J. Moore, “Is Enoch Also Among the Prophets? The Impact of Jude’s Citation of I Enoch on the Reception of Both Texts in the Early Church.” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 64, Pt. 2, October (2013): 502. Nicholas J. Moore a University of Oxford, Faculty and Theology Alumnus. He specializes in the Letter to the Hebrews and serves as assistant curate in the Church of England.

11. *Ibid.*, 504.

12. Cory D. Anderson, “Jude’s Use of the Pseudepigraphical Book of 1 Enoch.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* Vol. 36, No. 2 Summer (2003): 52-53.

13. Moore, “Is Enoch Also Among the Prophets?,” 501.

14. *Ibid.*, 501.

15. *Ibid.*, 505.

16. Enoch was eventually rejected for reasons “including its absence from the Hebrew Bible, its use by Manichaeans, and its alternative explanation of evil.” Simon, “‘Seventh from Adam,’” 471. It may be significant to note that Enoch situates the fall of the angels in an antediluvian time-frame, where as late antique Christian authors, beginning with Justin Martyr, implied that the fall could have taken place before the fall of man, implying that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was indeed the satan.

17. Joseph, “‘Seventh from Adam,’” 470.

18. Jude 1:3

19. Jude 1:17

20. Jude 1:18, 19

21. Enoch 63: 1

22. Enoch 7

23. Enoch 8

24. Enoch 7:11

25. Genesis 6:4

26. Enoch 12

27. see Enoch 17-37.

28. Enoch 46: 1

29. Enoch 64: 1-2

30 . Enoch 64:10.

31. Moore, "Is Enoch Also Among the Prophets?," 503.

32. See Nm Ch. 22

33. Nm 22:7

34. Jude 1:8,9

35. Balaam is one of the more enigmatic Old Testament characters to be featured in the New Testament. Though he ultimately repented and won God's favor, he is alluded to in 2 Peter 2:15, Revelation 2:14, and of course Jude 1:11 as an example of wickedness. In each instance the exact nature of his error is slightly altered.

36. see Nm 16