



Truth

On Tough Texts

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Does Jude Quote from Pseudepigraphal Literature?

Jude 6, 9, 14-15

IN OUR LAST TWO ISSUES, WE EXAMINED the identity of the “sons of God,” as referred to in Genesis 6:2 and 4, and the bearing that Jude 6 has upon this question. We also mentioned the origin of the view that teaches that the “sons of God” were fallen angels who intermarried with human women, namely, that Jude based his text on Pseudepigraphal literature. As mentioned there, Pseudepigraphal (false writings) books were those books rejected by everyone as being part of the canon of Scripture. These books claim Biblical authors, but are full of religious fancy and magic from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100.

With that in mind, as scholars have studied the Epistle of Jude, the question has often been raised whether Jude is actually referencing such literature in verses 6, 9, 14, and 15. Incredulously, the tendency has actually been to lean in the direction of the affirmative—that Jude, indeed, relies heavily on this literature.

In this article, therefore, I wish to submit that Jude does *not* quote, refer to, or otherwise rely on Pseudepigraphal literature. In a very real sense, this issue lies at the very core of the whole debate about the identity of the “sons of God.” Are we to think that an inspired writer actually relied on pagan literature? Is that what Bible believing Christians should defend? For those readers who still lean toward the “Fallen Angel Theory,” or who are still undecided on the whole issue, I pray that what follows will demonstrate the serious consequences of viewing Jude as in any way relying on pagan literature.

Jude 6

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

Since we dealt at length in the last two issues of TOTT with the question of what angels are being referred to here, we will not repeat that material. What we are concerned with here is that some believe that Jude is, as one commentator puts it, “making use of the APOCRYPHAL *Book of Enoch*” (emphasis added).

The first thing we must note about the above statement is the use of the word “apocryphal.” The *Book of Enoch*, as well as the *Assumption of Moses* (which we will encounter later) are *not apocryphal* books. They are *pseudigraphal* books. There is, in fact, a *vast* difference between the two. Rene Pache provides a good summary of the Apocrypha:

The word Apocrypha is the name given to the Jewish religious books of obscure origin (*apocrypha*, meaning “secret, hidden”); these were late books (between the second century B.C. and the first, or even the second century after Christ), which were never included in the Hebrew canon. They had no place in the Masoretic text and were not interpreted by any Targum [Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament]. According to the general opinion of the Jews, the prophetic voice died with Malachi. After that, which they called “the seal of the prophets,”

they estimated that no other inspired writings appeared. Josephus declared this expressly (*Against Apion* I. 8); and even the book of I Maccabees stresses it (9:27; 14:41).¹

While the Apocrypha is considered to have some historical value (especially I Maccabees), as a whole it is not reliable enough to be considered authentic Scripture. Even in light of the evidence, the Roman Catholic Church canonized the Apocrypha at the Council of Trent (1546) “in an obvious polemic action against Protestantism.”²

This brings us to the Pseudepigrapha (literally, “false writings”). Here is an excellent summary by one scholar of Biblical Introduction:

The Pseudepigrapha books are those books which are distinctly spurious and unauthentic in their overall content: While they claim to have been written by Biblical authors, they actually express religious fancy and magic from the period between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. In Roman Catholic circles these books are known as the Apocrypha, a term not to be confused with an entirely different set of books known in Protestant circles by the same name . . . ; although at times Protestants have referred to these same books as the “wider Apocrypha,” or “Apocalyptic Literature.” Most of these books are comprised of dreams, visions, and revelations in the apocalyptic style of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah.³

The same scholar adds that these books are those that were “rejected by all”; that is, no one would seriously contend for their authority.⁴

So, there is a great difference between the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. The former has *some* value while the latter has *none*. It is, therefore, erroneous to say Jude is “making use of the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*,” when, in fact, the book in question is *pseudepigraphal*, not apocryphal.

Why then would Jude base his writing on such mystical and obviously pagan literature? As we pointed out in our previous studies, the “Fallen Angel Theory” of Genesis 6 was first recorded in the *Book of Enoch* and some believe that Jude is referring to that book. As we observed, the Greek *archē* is used for “estate” and means “sovereignty, dominion, or elevated position.” One Greek scholar says, “*Archē* is used in the *Book of Enoch* (12:4) of the watchers (Angels) who have *abandoned the high heaven and the holy eternal place* and defiled themselves with women,” which is supposed to lead us to believe that one Greek word that happens to be used in both places “proves” that Jude is quoting the *Book of Enoch* (a book which has been proven to be full of

magic, mysticism, and pagan beliefs). Wow! That is quite a leap, indeed!

Some teachers argue at this point that there is no difference between saying that Jude refers to the Pseudepigrapha and Paul quoting some heathen poets. Now, Paul did indeed do that; he quoted Aratus (Acts 17:28), Menander (I Cor. 15:33), and Epimenides (Tit. 1:12). Basically, this would be like a preacher today saying that a statement by Shakespeare illustrates a Biblical principle. That would be a valid illustration. But may we submit: it is far different to say that Shakespeare *illustrates* a Biblical principle than to say we shall base our *interpretation*, or even our *writing*, of Scripture on what Shakespeare said. When Paul quotes a Greek poet, he does not base truth upon what the poet said; rather he merely illustrates God’s Truth. But to say that Jude quotes a pseudepigraphal book, and to say he bases what he writes on that information, is to say that Jude *bases* Truth on what some pagan wrote.

May we also submit, it does no good at this point to say, “Well, God just controlled how much material Jude quoted.” As we’ll see later, *the damage to inspiration has already been done*.

Jude 9

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

It has been conjectured that the story of Michael contending with the Devil is taken from the pseudepigraphal book *Assumption of Mosis* (i.e., *Moses*). Origen (c. 185-c. 254) has been credited with being the first one to offer this view. He maintained that a book was in existence in his time called *The Assumption of Moses*, but commentator Albert Barnes brings out a devastating observation:

There can be no reasonable doubt that such a book as Origen refers to, under the title of *The Assumption of Moses*, was extant [in existence] in his time, but that does not prove by any means that it was extant in the time of Jude, or that he quoted it. There is, indeed, no positive proof that it was *not* extant in the time of Jude, but there is none that it was; and all the facts in the case will be met by the supposition that it was written afterwards, and that the tradition on the subject here referred to by Jude was incorporated into it.⁵

In other words, there is no way of knowing exactly when this pseudepigraphal book was penned. Some insist that Jude quoted from this book, *but who is to say that this unknown author didn’t quote from Jude?* Moreover, as Barnes points out, there is more reason to believe the latter than there is the former.

Jude 14-15

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Once again, some maintain that Jude here quotes from the *Book of Enoch*. But let us compare the above quotation (KJV) with that of the *Book of Enoch*:

Behold he comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon them, and destroy the wicked, and reprove all the carnal, for everything which the sinful and ungodly have done and committed against him.(1:9).⁶

While one writer makes the ridiculous statement, “Jude quotes almost verbatim” from the *Book of Enoch*, who can honestly say that those two are the same? Commentator Maxwell Coder points out a serious difference:

It is interesting to note that the unknown writer of the [pseudepigraphal] *Book of Enoch* revealed his ignorance of the truth by making Enoch say: “[He comes with ten thousands of his saints] to execute judgment on them . . .” Jude knew better than this. His epistle does not contain the error that the Lord will come to visit judgment on His people.⁷

We should also add that, like verse 9, there is no proof that this spurious book even existed in Jude’s day. In fact, as William MacDonald submits in his excellent *Believer’s Bible Commentary* (quoting William Kelly):

[The *Book of Enoch*] has every mark of having been written subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem [and therefore after Jude’s Epistle was written], by a Jew who still buoyed himself up with the hope that God would stand by the Jews.⁸

As with verse 9 there is far more reason to think that the *Book of Enoch* was copied from Jude than vice versa.

“How, then, would Jude have learned of this ancient prophecy?” one might ask. *By verbal inspiration!* And to even *ask* such a question demonstrates one’s doubt of that very doctrine and his reliance upon human reason.

It should be crystal clear, therefore, that saying Jude quoted from the *Book of Enoch* is not only an “unwarranted assumption,”⁹ but that it’s also a statement that leaves one in a completely indefensible position. The facts simply do not warrant such a view.

Correlation

Finally, perhaps one might wonder, “Why take the time and space to argue pseudepigraphal origins in Jude’s writing? Why is this a big deal?”

The reason is this: *To allow the view that Jude quoted from the Pseudepigrapha does damage to the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture.* We are not saying that those who hold the pseudepigraphal view are deliberately trying to undermine inspiration. On the contrary, this view is held by some solid evangelical teachers. But we must maintain that this view “waters down” or, at the very least, detracts from supernatural, verbal inspiration. Proponents of this view at times seem to try and “harmonize” these false books with inspiration by offering a caution such as this:

It should be noted that Jude’s use of this quotation from the Book of Enoch [referring to Jude 14-15] does not vouch for the reliability of the entire *Book of Enoch*. The same is true of . . . *The Assumption of Moses* from which Jude may have taken the information about Michael contending with Satan. This specific information is accurate, but Jude’s use of it does not guarantee the reliability of the rest of the book.

The first problem with such a statement is that the information given in these pseudepigraphal books is *NOT* accurate. Second, even if the information were accurate, who would (or could) trust these books anyway, especially an inspired writer?

At any rate, the statement above, and others like it, is a compromise for the sake of “being scholarly.” At first appearance the “pseudepigraphal view” *seems* scholarly; it appeals to the logical mind. But on close examination, this view is *not* scholarly, rather a compromise of Scripture.

Furthermore, we submit that the aforementioned quote presents an *inconsistency in inspiration*. If God has given all other Scripture by revealing to the writer what He wanted written, then why did God allow the writer to quote from books that are mystical and clearly pagan in origin? These books contradict and violate Scripture at every turn. Why would God want to allow His Perfect Word to be based on such literature? We ask again, is this really what we want to defend?

We offer this analogy: a particular statement from the *Book of Mormon* might be true, but an evangelical writer would hardly quote from it. Why? Because of association! We would in no way want to associate ourselves with apostasy. Likewise, we cannot fathom God associating Himself with these mystical, apostate writings. We’ll end with these words from Maxwell Coder:

Those who love the Word of God and trust it implicitly need not fear that any attack upon Jude will succeed in showing that he took any part of his epistle from such a volume.¹⁰

From whence, then, did Jude get his information?
FROM GOD!

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In The Next Issue: *Where Has Our Discernment Gone? (Eph. 4:14)*

NOTES

¹ Rene Pache, *The Inspiration And Authority Of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 171-2.

² Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction To The Bible, Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 269.

³ Ibid, p. 262-3.

⁴ Ibid, p. 262.

⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes On The New Testament*, One Volume Edition (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 1974), p. 1516..

⁶ Ibid, p. 1519, quoting Chapter 2 of *Biblical Repository*, Vol. 15, p. 86.

⁷ Maxwell S. Coder, *Jude: The Acts Of The Apostates. Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 91.

⁸ William Kelly, "Lectures on the Epistle of Jude," *The Serious Christian*, Vol. I (Charlotte, NC: Books for Christians, 1970), as cited in William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 2343.

⁹ Coder, p. 85.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Q and A

with Pastor Watson

Q: Just want to express my thanks for the papers of TOTT. As you are aware, our day is colored with either totally wrong interpretations of great Scriptural truths or those that are just partially right. It is indeed a very dangerous time of deception (Matt. 24:4).

There is one verse (in Rom. 12:2) I am seriously looking at: "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." My question: Is Paul referring to three degrees of spiritual reality, or is he using three words to define one thing—or both? **EC in Tennessee**

A: Thanks so much for the support and question. We cherish every letter we receive.

I'm not sure what you mean by "three degrees of spiritual reality," but the phrase in question is, of course, the last one in the verse and is, therefore, Paul's conclusion concerning the thoughts of verses 1 and 2.

So, what is the result of (1) presenting ourselves entirely to God, (2) not being conformed (molded) to this world, and (3) being transformed by the renewing of our minds by the Word of God? The answer is clear: these three things equip us to know the will of God, that is, as

John Gill writes, "not the secret will of God, which cannot be searched into, proved, and known, till time and facts discover it, but the revealed will of God, both in the law, as in the hands of Christ." In other words, by these three things we will know the will of God as revealed in His Word.

In the context of your question, then, Paul is "defining" one thing: how to know God's will. As one writer puts it, "Only by such sanctifying renewal is the Christian made sufficiently sensitive to 'prove' (discern) the behavior that is God's will in each situation" (*The Reformation Study Bible*). William MacDonald puts it very well in his excellent *Believer's Bible Commentary*: "Here, then, are the three keys for knowing God's will. The first is a yielded body, the second a separated life, and the third a transformed mind."

Further, Paul wants us, therefore to rest assured that God's will is always "good" (*agathos*, a broad term meaning benevolent, profitable, useful, beneficial, excellent, virtuous, and suitable), "acceptable" (*euarestos*, pleasing and pleasant), and "perfect" (*teleios*, complete, mature, full grown).

The Finality and Sufficiency of Scripture

Here, I believe, we have too often made the mistake of not taking seriously the doctrine we profess. If Scripture is the inscripturated revelation of the gospel and of God's mind and will, if it is the only revelation of this character that we possess, then it is this revelation in all its fullness, richness, wisdom, and power that must be applied to man in whatever religious, moral, mental situation he is to be found. It is because we have not esteemed and prized the perfection of Scripture and its finality, that we have resorted to other techniques, expedients, and methods of dealing with the dilemma that confronts us all if we are alive to the needs of this hour. . .

It is not the tradition of the past, not a precious heritage, and not the labours of the fathers, that are to serve this generation and this hour, but the Word of the living and abiding God deposited for us in Holy Scripture, and this Word ministered by the church. And we must bring forth from its inexhaustible treasures, in exposition, proclamation, and application—application to every sphere of life—what is the wisdom and power of God for man in this age in all the particularity of his need, as for man in every age. There will then be commanding relevance, for it will be the message from God in the unction and power of the Spirit, not derived *from* the modern mentality, but declared *to* the modern mentality in all the desperateness of its anxiety and misery.

John Murray, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 1, pages 21-22 (emphasis in the original).

Truth must be spoken however it be taken. – John Trapp

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This monthly publication is intended to address Scriptures that have historically been debated, are particularly difficult to understand, or have generated questions among Believers. We hope it will be an encouragement and challenge to God's people to carefully examine and discern Truth. Periodically, we will also include book reviews of popular books, for much that is published today demands discerning reading. While the positions presented here are based on years of careful Biblical research, we recognize that other respected men of God differ.

If you have a question that perplexes you, please send it along so that we might address it either in an article or in our "Q & A" section. Other comments are also warmly welcomed.

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