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## The Canonization of the Epistle of Jude in Relation to the Rejection of the Book of Enoch

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## Background

The canon of scripture is an issue of perennial importance within the Christian Church. For the purposes of this work, the term “canon of scripture” will be defined as “the Books which were officially received as containing the rule of the Christian faith.”<sup>1</sup> However, Christianity has historically been divided regarding the question of which books should be received. For example, within the fourth session of the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546), the Roman Catholic Church anathematized anyone who rejected books of the Apocrypha, such as Tobit, Judith, Esther, Baruch, or I and II Maccabees.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, the Protestant *Westminster Confession of Faith* (A.D. 1646) rejected the books of the Apocrypha from their canon of Scripture.<sup>3</sup> However, the books of the Apocrypha are not the only disputed works amongst Christians.

Denominations within the Orthodox branch of Christianity have also been known to accept additional texts that have not been accepted by either Roman Catholic or Protestant Denominations. For example, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church canon includes, “46 books of the Old Testament and 35 books of the New Testament that will bring the total of canonized books of the Bible to 81.”<sup>4</sup> One text within this denomination’s Old Testament canon is the pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch (also known as 1 Enoch).<sup>5</sup> Historically, the Book of Enoch is

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<sup>1</sup> F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 279.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Alois Buckley, tran., *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Soho Square: George Routledge and Co., 1851), 18-19.

<sup>3</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 1:3.

<sup>4</sup> Aymero W. and Joachim M., eds., “The Bible,” *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order*, 2003, <https://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/canonical/books.html>

<sup>5</sup> Daniel C. Olson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 904.

known to have “enjoyed a high reputation among the early Christians.”<sup>6</sup> Biblically, the Book of Enoch is even explicitly referenced within the canonical epistle of Jude (Jude 1:14-15).<sup>7</sup> It is with this citation of the Book of Enoch that many Christians have historically questioned the canonicity of Jude’s epistle as well.<sup>8</sup> The question becomes why was the Book of Enoch left out of the Roman Catholic and Protestant canon, whereas the epistle of Jude was accepted? What this work aims to show is that while the text of 1 Enoch that was cited within the Epistle of Jude may have been authentically prophetic, this is not necessarily representative of the entire work. Hopefully, this will be shown by first considering the biblical and historical aspects of the issues of inspiration and canonicity in general. The biblical and historical arguments for the Book of Enoch in particular are also considered. These biblical and historical arguments will then be compared and contrasted with biblical and historical considerations for the Epistle of Jude. Finally, a summary of the findings will be provided in light of the stated thesis.

## **Inspiration and Canonicity**

### **Biblical Considerations**

One of the quintessential passages that deals with the issue of inspiration can be found in the Apostle Paul’s second epistle to Timothy. Paul states that “All Scripture is God-breathed” (II Timothy 3:16a, NIV).<sup>9</sup> Here the word for “God-breathed” is θεόπνευστος (II Timothy 3:16a, SBLGNT). Aida Besancon Spenser writes that “God-breathed is a composite of two words:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> This passage of Jude has been shown to correspond with 1 Enoch 1:9. See Olson, 904.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas P. Halton, tran., *Saint Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, Logos Bible Software (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999) 11.

<sup>9</sup> All Scripture is from the New International Version (2011) unless otherwise noted.

‘God’ and ‘to breath forth’ (pneō).”<sup>10</sup> Spenser goes on to explain that “Pneō is often used literally of winds that blow, such as winds that blow down a house or a ship.”<sup>11</sup> The degree and manner of this imagery of “breath” and “wind” therefore appears not to be a subtle breeze, but rather a movement of power. The force of which enables the Scripture’s audience to utilize these texts “for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (II Timothy 3:16b-17). This explanation of the utility of the Scriptures, however, does not quite fully explain the inspiration process.

For that, the next essential passage to understanding the concept of the inspiration of Scripture is found in the second epistle of Peter. Peter writes that:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (II Peter 1:20-21).

The Greek word here for the phrase “carried along” is φερόμενοι (II Peter 1:21, SBLGNT). Here φερόμενοι means “to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action.”<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, B. C. Caffin compares the usage of φερόμενοι in II Peter with the storm that would ultimately shipwreck the Apostle Paul (Acts 27:13-44).<sup>13</sup> As will hopefully be shown, this idea of prophecy not having its origin within humanity is an especially important one in considering the Book of Enoch and its relationship to the epistle of Jude.

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<sup>10</sup> Aida Besancon Spenser, *A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 130.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains: Introduction & Domains*, Second, vol. 1 (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), 464.

<sup>13</sup> B. C. Caffin, *The Pulpit Commentary: Epistles of Peter, John & Jude, The Revelation*, vol. 22 (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), II Peter 1:21.

## Historical Considerations

Having first considered two of the main biblical teaching on inspiration a brief historical understanding of canon formation is also in order. Bruce Metzger writes that “The recognition of the canonical status of several books of the New Testament was the result of a long and gradual process.”<sup>14</sup> During this process several important documents would emerge. The first of which was the Muratorian Canon (also known as the *Muratorian fragment*). According to Michael J. Kruger, the Muratorian fragment is a canonical list which “affirms the scriptural status of twenty-two of the twenty seven New Testament books, including all four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen epistles of Paul, 1 and 2 John (and possibly 3 John), Jude, and Revelation” as early as c. A.D. 180.<sup>15</sup> Noticeably absent from this list are such works as Hebrews, James, or I and II Peter.<sup>16</sup> However, the fragment does appear to explicitly reject additional works such as the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistles of Paul to Laodicea and Alexandria, and other various Gnostic and Montanist works.<sup>17</sup>

The second historical document of note is that of the Gelasian Decree (also known as the *Decretum Gelasianum*).<sup>18</sup> Originally thought to be the work of Pope Gelasius I (A.D. 492-496), from which it derives its moniker, some scholars now believe this work to have been completed in the early 6th century.<sup>19</sup> F. F. Bruce explains that the Gelasian Decree “gives a list of biblical

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<sup>14</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, Kindle (New York, NY: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1997), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books*, Kindle (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), Chapter 6.

<sup>16</sup> Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, chapter 6.

<sup>17</sup> Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary*, 1126.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

books as they appeared in the Vulgate, with the Apocrypha interspersed among the others.”<sup>20</sup>

What is important to note is that the Epistle of Jude is included as canonical within both of these historical lists, whereas the Book of Enoch is not.<sup>21</sup> So what is it about the Book of Enoch that lends itself to not making these lists?

## **The Book of Enoch**

### **Biblical Considerations**

The biblical person of Enoch should be familiar to most students of Scripture. Enoch first appears within the book of Genesis as the son of Jared, of the line of Seth (Genesis 5:18), and should not be confused with the earlier Enoch who was the son of Cain (Genesis 4:17). Within the Genesis narrative two main prepositions regarding Enoch are given. The first statement is that “Enoch walked faithfully with God;” and the second, that “then he was no more, because God took him away” (Genesis 5:24). Here John S. Kselman notes that while the phrase “no more” can refer to death (Genesis 42:13, 32, Jeremiah 31:15), the following text of “God took” draws closer parallels to Elijah’s own supernatural departure (II Kings 2:1-18, Psalm 49:13-15).<sup>22</sup> Moreover, this interpretation is also accepted by the author of Hebrews who writes:

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: ‘He could not be found, because God had taken him away.’ For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. (Hebrews 11:5).

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<sup>20</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, Kindle (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), chapter 6.

<sup>21</sup> Another important canonical list in which Jude is included, and 1 Enoch is not, can be found in Athanasius’ *Festal Letter XXXIX* from Easter A.D. 367.

Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Logos Catholic, vol. IV (New York, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), 551-552.

<sup>22</sup> John S. Kselman, *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 89.

Beyond Enoch's faithfulness and peculiar departure from this world not much else is known within the Old Testament canon. Within the New Testament, however, the epistle of Jude declares:

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: 'See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of this holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' (Jude 1:14-15).

This text that Jude quotes is taken from the pseudepigraphical work of the Book of Enoch which can be seen within the following text:

And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. (I Enoch 1:9).<sup>23</sup>

If Jude, presumably writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, identifies Enoch not only as the author of the Book of Enoch, but also as one who "prophesied", then why didn't 1 Enoch receive recognition as a canonical work?

### **Historical Considerations**

Perhaps the single greatest argument against the canonical reception of the Book of Enoch is its pseudepigraphical status. Pseudepigraphic works are considered "Writings ascribed to some other than their real author, generally with a view of giving them an enhanced authority."<sup>24</sup> E. Isaac notes that "1 Enoch is clearly composite, representing numerous periods and writers."<sup>25</sup> For example, the Book of Enoch is generally divided into five major sections:

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<sup>23</sup> R. H. Charles, tran., *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (New York, NY: Clarendon Press, 1912), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary*, 1345.

<sup>25</sup> James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. I (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2019), 6.

The Book of the Watchers (1-36), The Parables (or “Similitudes”) of Enoch (37-71), The Astronomy Book (72-82), The Dream Visions (83-90), and The Admonitions (or “Epistle”) of Enoch (91-105).<sup>26</sup> The Book of the Watchers (BW), from which Jude quotes, is generally considered to have been written in the 3rd century B.C. or possibly earlier.<sup>27</sup> Whereas, the Parables of Enoch (PE) is considered to have been written much later (1st century B.C. to late 1st century A.D.).<sup>28</sup> Modern scholars, however, are not the only ones to deal with the issue of authorship and therefore credibility of 1 Enoch.

In his work *On the Apparel of Women* Tertullian also wrestled with the issue of Enochian authorship. Tertullian admits that “I am aware that the Scripture of Enoch...is not received by some, because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon either.” (Tertullian, *On The Apparel of Women*, 1:3).<sup>29</sup> However, this does not dissuade Tertullian from dedicating an entire chapter of this work to argue for not only Enochian authorship, but actually elevates 1 Enoch to the level of Scripture. For example, Tertullian writes “But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord, nothing at all must be rejected *by* us which pertains *to* us; and we read that ‘every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired.’”<sup>30</sup> For Tertullian, it seems that the Book of Enoch is not pseudepigraphical, but authentically authored by Enoch, and not

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<sup>26</sup> Olson, *Eerdmans Commentary*, 906.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. IV (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885), 15.

<sup>30</sup> Emphasis found within the original text. Coxe, Vol. IV, 16.



only credible, but also “divinely inspired”. Similarly, Tertullian would describe Enoch as “the most ancient prophet” in his work *On Idolatry* (chapter 15).<sup>31</sup>

Tertullian’s position, however, was not necessarily representative of all early Christians writers. Origen, for example, acknowledges that “the books which bear the name Enoch do not at all circulate in the Churches as divine,” (Origen, *Origen Against Celsus*, 5:54).<sup>32</sup> Also, while Augustine would reluctantly admit that “there is some truth in these apocryphal writings” and that “We cannot deny that Enoch...left some divine writings” he would ultimately conclude “that these writings have no place in that canon of Scripture” (*City of God*, 15:23:4).<sup>33</sup> In fact, Jerome notes that because Jude “quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch, it is rejected by many.”<sup>34</sup> So why is the epistle of Jude considered canonical?

### **The Epistle of Jude**

#### **Biblical Considerations**

The author of the epistle of Jude, identifies himself in the opening passage as “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,” (Jude 1:1a). According to Richard J. Bauckham “by calling himself ‘brother of James,’ the author identifies himself as Judas the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3).”<sup>35</sup> If this is indeed that same Jude (or Judas) then earlier New Testament appearances may include Matthew 13:55, John 14:22, and possibly even Acts 1:13. Norman Hillyer notes that Jude’s claims no apostolic title in his introduction, unlike his contemporaries such as Peter (II

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<sup>31</sup> Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 70-71.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., 567.

<sup>33</sup> Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian*, vol. II (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1887), “The City of God,” 15:23:4.

<sup>34</sup> Halton, *Saint Jerome*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 1298.

Peter 1:1) and Paul (Romans 1:1).<sup>36</sup> Certain authors, such as David A. deSilva, have also suggested that the author of Jude may be the Judas surnamed Barsabbas (Acts 15:22).<sup>37</sup> However, Caffin notes that this particular theory has been “met with little favour.”<sup>38</sup>

What is clear is that the author of Jude was familiar with both Jewish and Christian literature.<sup>39</sup> Scot McKnight notes that in particular Jude showcases “an especial affinity to *I Enoch* and the *Testament of Moses*” as well as “to other Christian letters, especially to James, Hebrews, 1 John, and ideas and forms found in Paul’s letters.”<sup>40</sup> One need look no further than to the Apostle Paul’s own citations of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides (Acts 17:28a), and the Cilician Stoic philosopher Aratus (Acts 17:28b) to realize that early Christian writers often had at least a passing familiarity with other literary traditions. However, Jude’s citation of 1 Enoch is far more than a passing reference.

Regarding the citation of the Book of Enoch, Jude produces two important presuppositions. The first of which, is that the author of the citation is none other than “Enoch, the seventh from Adam.” (Jude 1:14a). If the epistle of Jude were written some time in the A.D. 50s, as both Bauckham and McKnight suggest, then it is quite possible that Jude was familiar with the Book of Enoch as it stands today.<sup>41</sup> One possible exception to this could potentially be

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<sup>36</sup> Norman Hillyer, *New International Bible Commentary: 1 and 2nd Peter, Jude*, vol. 16 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 231.

<sup>37</sup> David A. deSilva, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: John's Gospel, Hebrews-Revelation* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2005), 329.

<sup>38</sup> Caffin, “Introduction to the Epistle of Jude: Authorship of the Epistle”, iv.

<sup>39</sup> Scot McKnight, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 1529.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

the section known as Parables of Enoch (PE), which scholars date anywhere from the “late first century BC and the destruction of the temple in AD 70.”<sup>42</sup> However, the Book of the Watchers (BW), from which Jude cites is thought to have been much earlier (3rd century B.C.).<sup>43</sup>

The second assertion that Jude makes about the Enochian reference is that it is prophecy (Jude 1:14b). The Greek word for “prophesied” that Jude uses here is προφητεύω (Jude 1:14, SBLGNT). The Louw-Nida lexicon defines προφητεύω as “to speak under the influence of divine inspiration, with or without reference to future events - ‘to prophecy, to make inspired utterances.’”<sup>44</sup> Given the composite nature of the Book of Enoch, however, it is quite possible that Jude is only ascribing inspired status, as well as true Enochian authorship, to this single passage within the BW. Unlike Tertullian, Jude does not appear to be further concerned in arguing for a limited or broad Enochian authorship or inspired status. That question is simply beyond the scope of Jude’s work.

### **Historical Considerations**

Undoubtedly, what Jude leaves behind historically with his citation of 1 Enoch are various questions regarding inspiration and canonicity. In his commentary on the epistle of Jude, Martin Luther summarizes a few of these issues as, “This language of Enoch is nowhere to be found in Scripture. For this reason some of the Fathers did not receive this Epistle, although there is not a sufficient reason for rejecting a book on this account.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in translating Calvin’s commentary, John Owen notes that Jude was not the only canonical work which suffered from

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<sup>42</sup> Olson, 906.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Louw & Nida, *Lexicon of the New Testament*, v. 1, 439.

<sup>45</sup> Martin Luther, *The Epistles of St. Peter and Jude: Preached and Explained by Martin Luther* (New York, NY: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1859), “Jude 14”.

such a lack of early reception, writing that “The Epistle of James, the Second of Peter, and that of Jude, had not from the first been universally received as canonical, though they were eventually so received.”<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly, Calvin himself offers another perspective regarding Jude’s referencing of Enoch, namely, that “I rather think that this prophecy was unwritten, than that it was taken from an apocryphal book; for it may have been delivered down by memory to posterity by the ancients.”<sup>47</sup> Given the composite nature of the Book of Enoch, it is quite possible that 1 Enoch 1:9 came from an earlier verbal tradition than even the rest of the BW. This theory offers a potentially satisfying justification to both Jude’s assumptions regarding this passages’ authorship and inspired status. McKnight argues that it is important to realize that Jude’s “Quoting *1 Enoch* does not nullify Jude’s inspiration nor suddenly give ground for seeing *1 Enoch* as Scripture.”<sup>48</sup> If Jude never actually intended to reference the BW of 1 Enoch, but rather was only ascribing Enochian authorship, and an inspired prophetic status, to an earlier verbal tradition, then Jude’s canonical status would subsequently become disentangled from that of the Book of Enoch. However, McKnight also recognizes the possibility “that Jude himself, in company with others in the ancient world, considered *1 Enoch* Scripture.”<sup>49</sup>

### Conclusion

Hopefully it has been shown that while the text of 1 Enoch that was cited within the epistle of Jude may have been authentically prophetic, this is not necessarily representative of the

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<sup>46</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), v.

<sup>47</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries*, 442-443.

<sup>48</sup> McKnight, *Eerdmans Commentary*, 1532.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

entire work. Given that the question of canonicity is one of reception, it is quite possible that inspired Scriptures exist that have not been universally recognized as such. Though as Augustine appears to allude, just because a particular work contains some truths doesn't necessarily mean they are of a type of character that demands that the whole work be canonized.<sup>50</sup> If this were true, then potentially the Apostle Paul's citations of Greek philosophers Epimenides and Aratus (Acts 17:28) would demand that their corresponding works be canonized as well. This could ultimately result in an ever-growing canon simply by way of reference.

That the biblical Enoch was a person of note seems clear. Less clear is to what extent that the Book of Enoch actually represents the work of this biblical person. Given the late dates for the Book of Enoch this authorship seems highly unlikely. More likely, perhaps, is Calvin's theory that 1 Enoch 1:9 represents a verbal tradition ascribed to Enoch that also happens to appear in the pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch.<sup>51</sup> Though further research into such a verbal tradition would be needed to verify such a theory.

That the biblical Jude was a person of note also seems clear. Less clear, perhaps, is which of the two biblical persons was actually the author of the Epistle of Jude.<sup>52</sup> Given the author's usage of προφητεύω (Jude 1:14, SBLGNT), it does seem likely that this author may have considered the Book of Enoch to be inspired, if not canonical. That this particular position made the universal reception of Jude difficult within the early Church is a matter of historical record.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Philip Schaff, vol. II. "The City of God", 15:23:4.

<sup>51</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries*, 442-443.

<sup>52</sup> Caffin, "Introduction to the Epistle of Jude: Authorship of the Epistle", iv.

<sup>53</sup> Halton, *Saint Jerome*, 11.

What is important within both canonical and extra-biblical studies is the perennial wrestling with issues of inspiration and canonicity in light of recent scholarship. Such future scholarship may include a historical study of the reception of the Book of Enoch within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

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