

Reformed Theological Seminary
Charlotte

*Those Who Mock Them Will Become Like Them:
Jude's Polemic Use of the Evil Angels*

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Peter Leach
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INTRODUCTION

Jude is one of the NT's most neglected books,¹ and angels are perhaps one of theology's most neglected loci. Jude's commentary on angels, then, might seem an unpromising and cobwebby project! But, when investigated, it is actually full of thought-provoking and highly relevant material. In this paper, we will investigate the discussion of evil angels in Jude 6-9,² concluding that Jude utilises the angels for an ironic reversal: the false teachers will share the fate of the very angels they blaspheme, for their sin shares the same basic nature.

Our discussion will fall into two sections: the angelic sin in Jude 6-7, and the human sin of blaspheming angels in Jude 8-9. The interpretation of both sections has attracted a measure of controversy; we will attempt to sort through the issues before highlighting the relationship between the two sections in Jude's thought.

JUDE 6-7: THE SIN OF THE ANGELS

Jude 6 refers to a rather obscure story: angels deserting their first estate³ and being punished by Christ with “eternal chains in gloomy darkness.”⁴ There is, however, considerable scholarly consensus on the referent here. According to this consensus, the sin in question is the sin of the “sons of God” in Gen 6:1-4, which Jude is interpreting in line with the later Enochic traditions – particularly those found in the *The Book of the Watchers*,

1 Enoch 1-36.⁵ The “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1-4 are taken to be angelic beings who have

1 Nearly every commentator on Jude complains about this, and who am I to buck the trend? See, for example, Simon J. Kistemaker, “Jude,” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016), 507.

2 Angels are also referenced in Jude 14. However, these are clearly not fallen angels, and there is only so much that can be covered in one paper!

3 Αρχὴν. There is some debate over how this should be translated, and it is often taken to signify the authority of the fallen angels (cf. the ESV's “positions of authority”). Αρχη more commonly means beginning, however, and it doesn't seem unreasonable to take it that way here; in fact, it even fits rather well with Jude's attack on the false teachers, who have departed from the truth that they presumably once outwardly adhered to. The question is, however, not directly relevant for our purposes. David W. Jones, “The Apostate Angels of 2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6,” *Faith and Mission* 23, no. 2 (2006): 22.

4 Scripture citations are from the ESV unless otherwise indicated.

5 Jude's use of extracanonical material, both from the Enochic traditions and (possibly) from the *Assumption of Moses*, raises a whole host of interesting questions about canon, apostolic use of non-scriptural sources, and the value of intertestamental traditions. With some regret we will have to pass over these questions almost entirely. This is not because of a lack of interest! Rather, this paper should be seen in part as a ground-clearing exercise. We cannot safely draw conclusions from Jude's use of extracanonical material until we know what he is actually saying, and that is what we are attempting to determine here.

sexual relations with human women, resulting in giant offspring; God then punishes the angels involved for their sin.⁶ In particular it is worth noting that, even if Gen 6:1-4 is interpreted along these lines, that passage contains no explicit reference to any particular punishment for the “sons of God”; the theme is, however, developed in some detail in 1 Enoch. According to this position, the phrase τὸν ὄμοιον τρόπον τούτοις in 7 is generally taken to link the sexual sin of Sodom and Gomorrah to the sin of the angels, which fits with the Enochic understanding.

Probably the most interesting way to argue for this position is to consider some possible objections to it. Although there is a definite scholarly consensus on Jude 6, it is by no means unanimous. We will base our discussion on one particular argument against this interpretation, as a helpful way to overview the evidence and relevant issues. Once we have done this, we shall consider the exact nature of the link between the angels’ sin and that of Sodom, which is rather more controversial.

The Referent of Τούτοις and the Nature of the Angelic Sin

M. A. Kruger⁷ has argued strongly that the entire understanding above is false and based on a misinterpretation of the text.⁸ According to Kruger, the correct referent of τούτοις in 7 is not the angels in 6 but the false teachers in 4. And this, he claims, undermines the entire position: “The conclusion that Jude 6-7 relates the same story as Genesis 6:1-4 is based solely on the assumption that τούτοις refers to angels.”⁹

What evidence does Kruger present? The idea that τούτοις in 7 refers to the men in 4 is often dismissed as a possibility because such a referent would be too far away; but Kruger points out that οὗτοι in 8 is generally agreed to refer to precisely these men, which would be an even bigger gap. But not only this: Kruger points out that οὗτοι is used frequently in Jude to refer to the same men (8,10,12,14,16,19). Not only that, but the only other use of the

⁶ Those who hold this interpretation include George Lawrence Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 64; E. M. B. Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (London: Tyndale, 1968), 166; Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 48; Jones, “The Apostate Angels of 2 Pet. 2,” 26; Daniel J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 203–4; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 256.

⁷ To be carefully distinguished from M. J. Kruger.

⁸ M. A. Kruger, “Τούτοις in Jude :7,” *Neotestamentica* 27, no. 1 (1993): 119–32.

⁹ Kruger, “Τούτοις in Jude :7,” 130.

demonstrative pronoun in Jude which does not refer to the false teachers (*τούτοις* in 10) is neuter, which would make 7 unique. In the parallel passage in 2 Pet 2, the pronoun is likewise only used of the false teachers.

Kruger's sights are clearly set on not merely correcting the referent of this particular pronoun but on questioning the entire interpretation of 6. He argues that the parallel passage in 2 Pet 2 gives no indication that the angels were guilty of sexual sin;¹⁰ that if Jude is not referencing Enoch then he can have no such sexual sin in mind;¹¹ and finally that, given that no other author in the New Testament references the well-known Enochic tradition, we should not be quick to do so here;¹² Vigorous as he is, however, it must be judged that he slightly overplays his hand. We will review his arguments in turn.

The central argument from *τούτοις*, while strong, does not seem enough on its own to bear the weight of Kruger's conclusions.¹³ But in any case it is not quite as strong as he claims. It is worth noting that, although *οὗτοι* is clearly a set term in Jude, this is almost entirely based on the nominative case; the only other definite use of it to refer to the false teachers is in 14 (also *τούτοις*), while when the men are referred to in another case, in 11, the less emphatic *αὐτοῖς* is used (cf. *οἵ* for the false teachers in 2 Pet 2:17, and even the nominative *αὐτοὶ* in 2 Pet 2:19). Although it is obviously hard to pronounce decisively on the instincts of a first century Greek writer, particularly one who has given us as little material as Jude, it seems plausible that *οὗτοι* is used when a new thought about the false teachers is introduced – and that while the connection *there* is strong, the extension of it to other cases and contexts of this (very commonplace!) word is probably a little much.

10 Kruger, “*Toutoις* in Jude :7,” 130.

11 Kruger, “*Toutoις* in Jude :7,” 130.

12 Kruger, “*Toutoις* in Jude :7,” 131.

13 His insistence that only “grammatical, literary and stylistic arguments” are allowed, as opposed to biblical-theological ones, perhaps demonstrates that he is aware of this! Kruger, “*Toutoις* in Jude :7,” 119.

What about the appeal to 2 Peter,¹⁴ and the apparent lack of sexual sin ascribed to the angels there? It is certainly the case that Peter does not contain the explicitly extracanonical material that Jude is happy to include.¹⁵ What exactly should be made of this, however, is not quite as clear. Arguments from silence are not frequently convincing. The fact that Peter does not reference a sexual aspect to the angelic fall hardly means he disagrees with this interpretation,¹⁶ and still less indicates that Jude (who is clearly much freer with his extracanonical references) is not speaking of it.

Thirdly, Kruger claims that if Jude is not dependent on Enoch, he cannot be ascribing sexual sin to the angels; it is not obvious to me how this claim can be defended. Leaving aside for the moment the evidence that Jude *is* in fact referencing Enochic tradition, we may still make a number of observations. First, the only other authors I've found who think there is no dependence on Enoch go on to argue that Jude is simply taking his material directly from Gen 6:1-4 – the polar opposite of Kruger's claim!¹⁷

More importantly, this appears to rest on the assumption that Gen 6:1-4 is almost certainly *not* talking about sexual alliance between angelic beings and human women.¹⁸

14 The relationship of Jude to 2 Pet 2 is a debated one and beyond the scope of this paper. The majority position appears to be that Peter is dependent on Jude, while a cheerful minority maintains the reverse. For examples of the former position, see Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 162–63; Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 226. The latter position can be found in Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 13.

Detailed arguments based on the relationship of Peter and Jude will obviously need to take a position on this, but it should be noted that many observations can be made while remaining agnostic. In points where one author is clear and the other is obscure, for example, great weight must be given to the probability that they are in fact thinking along similar lines. (Of course, for those who believe in the Spirit's inspiration, the possibility that Peter and Jude *disagree* is untenable. But my point is rather stronger: we should assume not merely that they do not disagree, but also that they largely are taking the same perspective on their material, even where they may be expressing themselves differently or drawing different applications.)

15 Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 162–63.

16 In point of fact, I think it's perfectly possible that Peter *does* ascribe sexual sin to the angels. 2 Peter 2:10 says that the three examples Peter has given (the angels, the people of Noah's day, and Sodom and Gomorrah) highlight in particular God's judgement on those who "especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority." It could be argued that the first of these sins refers to Sodom and the second to the angels (although one might wonder where the men of Noah's day fit in), but it seems just as natural to take these two sins as characteristic of *each* of the three examples.

17 Peter J. Gentry and Andrew M. Fountain, "Reassessing Jude's Use of Enochic Traditions (with Notes on Their Later Reception History)," *Tyndale Bulletin* 68, no. 2 (2017): 286.

18 Kruger is by no means the only person to feel this way. Green, while acknowledging that Jude is using Enochic material, argues that this doesn't necessarily mean Jude *believes* that material but is simply using it "like any shrewd preacher". Kistemaker, meanwhile, accepts that Jude agrees with Enoch as far as that goes, but argues that Jude does not accept or reference the Enochic tradition of a sexual element to the sin (and therefore doesn't agree that an angelic fall can be tied to Gen 6:1-4). His approach to the τὸν ὄμοιον τρόπον τούτοις in 7 is reminiscent of Kruger's, though much briefer. Green, *II Peter and Jude*, 165; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, NTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 380.

Given the disputed nature of the passage, this seems like a claim that at the very least needs support. Perhaps just as pertinent, however, is not our modern exegetical conclusions on Gen 6, but the conclusions that were common in Jude's day. Davids points out that there was no other interpretation of the passages for at least two centuries before and after the writing of Jude;¹⁹ Kelly helpfully demonstrates that this cannot be explained by saying that the passage was seldom mentioned, citing Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria as advocates.²⁰

Not only this, but there is an obvious question that Kruger does not appear to consider: if Jude is not speaking of Gen 6:1-4, then what event is he speaking of? Lawlor helpfully points out that there are really only three possibilities: the original fall of Satan and his angels, the events in Gen 6:1-4, or some event not related in the OT at all. That he is referencing some otherwise unknown event seems intrinsically unlikely (and Lawlor notes that it would spoil the triplet of OT examples by providing two OT examples sandwiching an extracanonical one)²¹; that he is referencing the original angelic fall seems difficult, given the strong impression in the OT that Satan is anything but bound!²² The events of Gen 6:1-4 seem *prima facie* the most likely referent, even absent any reference to Enoch.

In short, to follow Kruger's argument here, we are required to believe that:

- (1) Jude references an angelic fall, an event of great interest to the Enochic traditions and widely associated in Judaism with Gen 6:1-4.²³
- (2) Jude even includes elements that resonate strongly with this tradition and interpretation (the angels' chains, the τὸν ὄμοιον τρόπον τούτοις of 7, and others), and explicitly draws on this tradition later (14).
- (3) Jude does not agree with this interpretation, and is not alluding to it here.

19 Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 49.

20 Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 256.

21 This is not merely an aesthetic objection: Jude has a marked passion for triplets throughout his epistle. Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, 356.

22 Let alone with everlasting chains. Cf. Job 1-2, Rev 20. Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 64. The same argument can be found in Jones, “The Apostate Angels of 2 Pet. 2,” 26.

23 Note, to give just one example, that this interpretation of Gen 6:1-4 is also found in *The Book of Jubilees*, chapter 5.

(4) Despite the apostolic disagreement with the common Jewish interpretation of Gen 6:1-4, that interpretation remains unchallenged in the church for centuries.

On the whole this seems a little too much to swallow.

In particular, however, there *is* good reason to think that Jude is consciously depending on Enochic material. Most obvious is the fact that he explicitly references Enochic tradition later in his letter! In addition to this explicit reference, there are a number of elements scattered through the book that appear to draw on Enochic material; compare for example “deny our only Master and Lord” in Jude 4 with 1 Enoch 48:10,²⁴ or the “wandering stars” (13) with 1 Enoch 18:14-16.²⁵ Focussing more narrowly on Jude 6-7, there is the already-noted fact that Jude’s main point about the angels is their punishment, bound with everlasting chains, an element at best implicit in the Genesis account but developed at length in the Book of Watchers. Finally, there are a number of direct verbal and conceptual parallels with regard to the angelic fall, such as the reference to “the great day” (an unusual phrase in the NT),²⁶ the binding of the angels,²⁷ and the angels’ having “abandoned” their abode.²⁸ Taken together, this is quite a formidable amount of evidence for such a short reference!²⁹

24 The versification does not appear to be entirely consistent across different editions; in some cases the reference is 1 Enoch 48:11.

25 Walter M. Dunnett, “The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions,” *JETS* 31, no. 3 (1988): 289.

26 Jones, “The Apostate Angels of 2 Pet. 2,” 25–26.

27 Interestingly, there is a different verbal parallel in 2 Peter 2:4, where the word Tartarus (ταρταρός) is rare in the NT but frequent in pseudepigraphical writings. Note that Peter cannot have derived this echo from copying Jude, since Jude does not use the word! This should perhaps be noted as a helpful caveat to the account which sees Peter as deliberately avoiding all extracanonical material: if he does not explicitly cite such material, he still appears happy to agree with it. Jones, “The Apostate Angels of 2 Pet. 2,” 21.

28 Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, 379.

29 It is worth commenting briefly on Gentry and Fountain, who mount one of the few other attempts to deny any dependence of Jude on Enoch (they agree that Jude 14 depends on extracanonical tradition, but do not agree that this tradition should be identified with 1 Enoch). Their paper is rather extraordinary: it is long and tremendously detailed (with a great deal of extremely useful information on Enochic traditions and intertestamental reception of pseudepigraphy!), but the direct arguments relating Jude and Enoch amount to, firstly, a close comparison of the Enoch quote in 14 with the claimed source in 1 Enoch 1; secondly, a re-reading of Gen 6:1-4 based on discourse analysis that suggests that 1 Enoch is mistaken in its interpretation; and thirdly, a structural analysis of Jude which suggests he separates extra-canonical from canonical materials. They do not engage with the fact that Jude explicitly declares that his citation is Enochic in 14, with the alleged allusions scattered throughout Jude, nor with the material and verbal parallels between Jude 6 and Enochic material. Nor do they explain whence Jude draws his doctrine of the binding of the angels in Gen 6. Although their conclusion that Jude 6 has no Enochic dependence and solely draws on Gen 6:1-4 is very confidently presented, then, it cannot be judged persuasive. Gentry and Fountain, “Reassessing Jude’s Use of Enochic Traditions.”

A final argument against the standard interpretation, not directly presented by Kruger but perhaps in the background of his thinking, is supplied by Kistemaker. This is simply that Jude cannot have been interpreting Gen 6:1-4 to refer to sexual sin, because sexual sin is impossible for angels. They are spiritual not physical, and Jesus says they neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt 22:30).³⁰ It is certainly refreshing to meet an approach that takes the inspiration and therefore unity of Scripture seriously! However, this is not the only reasonable interpretation of the scriptural data on angels. Lawlor notes that Jesus does not claim to be describing every kind of spiritual power in Matt 22:30, but only the “angels in heaven”, and moreover that he describes a limitation to their *action*, not a limitation to their *ability*.³¹ As for the spirituality of angels, we have to confess that we have no very clear idea of what a spirit actually is; but angelic spirits are certainly capable of having direct physical impacts on this world (Gen 19, 2 Sam 24:15, 2 Kings 6:17), so it is not clear on what basis the possibility of sex could be consistently excluded.³²

We may then turn and sum up the evidence for the standard position, namely that Jude is drawing on Enochic tradition to present an interpretation of Gen 6:1-4 that sees the angels involved in sexual sin. Firstly, Jude explicitly references Enoch later in the book, everything he says in Jude 6 fits perfectly with the Enochic tradition, with a number of verbal and conceptual parallels, and at least one important element (the punishment of the angels) seems to depend on the Enochic tradition. Secondly, it is hard to point to any event other than

30 Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, 378.

31 Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 67–68. Indeed, were it impossible for beings to switch between sexual and asexual, Matt 22:30 would lose its main thrust – which is that redeemed humans will make precisely that switch!

32 Of course, we have not touched here on the discussion of Gen 6:1-4 in OT scholarship. A thorough investigation of the matter would take us well beyond Jude and beyond the scope of this paper. Three major interpretations are, firstly, the angelic view already canvassed, secondly, the polygamous marriages of human (perhaps demon-possessed) rulers, and thirdly the intermarriage of Seth’s godly line with Cain’s ungodly one. Douglas Mangum, Miles Custis, and Wendy Widder, *Genesis 1–11*, Lexham Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Gen 6:1–22. The first of these, which we have already reviewed in its Judan context, seems to be the consensus of commentators on Genesis as well as having the longest pedigree. Gordon J. Wenham, “Genesis,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 43.

For an exposition of a different view, see for example James E. Coleran, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:2,” *Theological Studies* 2, no. 4 (December 1941): 487–509.

In my view, however, probably the most salient feature is the one that we have been exploring here. “When there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” (WCF 1.9) As far as I can tell, this is just such an instance: Gen 6:1-4 is less clear than Jude 6-7, and should be read in line with its NT interpreter.

Gen 6:1-4 to which Jude could be referring. Thirdly, the implied interpretation of Gen 6:1-4 was apparently universal in the early church. And fourthly, the phrase τὸν ὄμοιον τρόπον τούτοις in 7 appears to imply a sexual element to the angels' sin, which again fits perfectly with the Enochic interpretation. Perhaps none of these arguments would be sufficient on their own;³³ taken together, they seem to me to be overwhelming.³⁴

We move on, then, from Jude 6 to Jude 7: what aspect of the sexual sin is being highlighted?

The Sin of the Angels and the Sin of Sodom

The sin of Sodom, which is directly linked to the sin of the angels, is expressed in a twofold manner: they were sexually immoral, and they "pursued unnatural desire". This should perhaps be taken as a hendiadys. The debate arises from the second phrase, ἀπελθοῦσαι ὥπισω σαρκὸς ἐτέρας, and what exactly was "different" (or, in the evocative old translation, "strange") about the flesh that the Sodomites lusted after. The way in which the angels lusted after different flesh is obvious: they were angels, and they coupled with humans. But the precise analogy between this and the sin of Sodom has commentators in two different camps. On the one hand there are those who think that the sin of Sodom is that of desiring homosexual relations.³⁵ In this case, the flesh is "different" not because it is a different type from their own (in fact, its similarity to their own is the whole problem), but because it is different from the flesh they are designed for relations with. The other position sees a more direct connection: while the angels lusted after the flesh of humans, the

33 One finds advocates of the standard position who are less persuaded by one or another of these four arguments; for example, Lawlor recognises the similarity to the Enochic material but doesn't think it is "necessary to insist" on actual dependence. Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 66.

34 A fifth argument, more subjective than the previous four, is that opponents of this view do not appear to have come up with a convincing alternative. I have not managed to find two who disagree in exactly the same way! Gentry and Fountain argue that Jude directly relies on Gen 6:1-4 and not on Enoch; Kistemaker thinks that Jude relies on Enoch, but in a carefully truncated fashion (i.e. not including the sexual aspect of the sin); Green thinks Jude uses Enoch illustratively but does not agree with him, "like any shrewd preacher"; and Kruger rejects the interpretation wholesale. Were this text a famously controversial or difficult one (like, for example, 1 Cor 15:29), such a divergence would not be remarkable; but, given that there is a significant historical and scholarly consensus on Jude 6, the failure of these opponents to agree with one another seems significant. Gentry and Fountain, "Reassessing Jude's Use of Enochic Traditions," 286; Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, 380; Green, *II Peter and Jude*, 165; Kruger, "Τούτοις in Jude 7," 131.

35 Green, *II Peter and Jude*, 166. Green notes that the prefix for ἐκπορνεύσασαι is unusual, and suggests that it may be pointing to the homosexual nature of the sin.

Sodomites lusted after the flesh of angels.³⁶ A number of commentators agree that this second meaning is primary while still allowing for an implicit attack on homosexuality.³⁷

While the question does not seem to admit of certainty, I would like to suggest that the homosexual angle is the primary one. The proponents of the other view tend to rely on a two-fold argument: firstly, that it makes better sense of the word ἐτερος, and secondly that homosexuality is not normally associated with Sodom in the OT, the connection being made perhaps no earlier than Philo. The first of these arguments is not determinative on its own: while not a terribly common usage, ἐτερος can bear the connotation of “the wrong sort.”³⁸ The second overlooks what is probably the oldest and perhaps the sharpest OT ‘commentary’ on the Sodom account, namely Judges 19. The parallels of that account are too many to miss, and there is no question there that, while the sexual offence and gross breach of hospitality are enough to incite civil war, the initial aim of homosexual rape was viewed as providing an extra signifier of wickedness.³⁹

Meanwhile, the reasons for seeing homosexuality in view in Jude 7 are several. Firstly, there is no evidence in either the Genesis account or Jude’s description to suggest that the men of Sodom knew they were dealing with angels at all. Secondly, their sin in Jude 7 is imputed not just to the men of Sodom but to all the cities of the plain, which makes most sense if the sexual sin described in Gen 19 is taken to be typical of their regular behaviour. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it is not clear how an emphasis on human-angel sex would really serve Jude’s argument. We have no evidence that the false teachers he describes were doing, or indeed could do, any such thing.⁴⁰ On the other hand, if Jude compares the angel-human sex of Gen 6:1-4 to the homosexual sex of Gen 19, then he has provided a

36 Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 197.

37 Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 258–59; Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 51–52.

38 LSJ, 702.

39 Ken Stone, “Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19: Subject-Honor, Object-Shame?,” *JSOT* 20, no. 67 (September 1995): 99.

It is also worth noting that, whatever the interpretation of Judg 19, it cannot possibly involve angel-human sex. And it is further worth noting that, even were the silence on the homosexual nature of Gen 19 granted, exactly the same would apply to the proposed angel-human interpretation: nothing in the OT even hints at that being the issue in question.

40 Harrington, quoting Bauckham, suggests that the connection to Jude’s polemic is that the Sodomites are the only one of the three examples in 5-7 who abuse angels. However, the treatment of blaspheming in 9-10 suggests a rather different sin than attempted rape. We will discuss the blasphemy of angels at some length in the second half of this paper and suggest a different connection. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 206.

bridge to see both sins as directly connected to the way the false teachers “pollute their own bodies,” (8) by joining both in a wider category of unnatural sexual behaviour.⁴¹ The homosexual interpretation thus seems to provide a better fit for Jude’s polemic as a whole.

To summarise the position so far: in Jude 6, Jude references the angelic rebellion of Gen 6:1-4, interpreting it through the Enochic traditions; in 6, he highlights the angelic sin of abandoning their situation and the consequent punishment, while in 7 he connects it to the sin of Sodom in a way that brings out the sexual element.

In 8, Jude brings this home to the false teachers. They too “defile the flesh” and “reject authority.” But in the third element of his (characteristically) triple condemnation,⁴² Jude introduces an unexpected element: they blaspheme glories. The exploration of this idea constitutes the second half of our study.

JUDE 8-9: BLASPHEMING GLORIES

We will first describe our basic approach to these verses, before considering in some more detail the contested elements. In 8 Jude introduces the accusation of blaspheming ‘glories’, and by way of comparison alludes to Michael’s reticence in refusing to blaspheme Satan when disputing over the body of Moses. The argument appears clear; Michael, though much greater than the false teachers, does not dare to do what they readily and arrogantly do, which is slander a celestial being.

This leaves somewhat open the question of exactly whom the false teachers are blaspheming: is the argument *a fortiori*, so that Michael refuses to blaspheme even an evil ‘glory’, while the false teachers blaspheme holy ones? Or is the argument more direct, with Michael refusing to blaspheme exactly those the false teachers are arrogantly speaking of? A glance at the parallel passage in 2 Pet 2:10b-11 helps clear up the matter: there the false teachers likewise blaspheme δοξας, but on this occasion the more concise reference to angelic reticence provides extra clarity, as their restraint is clearly directed at the same beings that the

41 Note that this argument admits the possibility that Jude is insinuating homosexual behaviour among the false teachers, but in no way relies on that possibility. There is more than one type of unnatural sexual behaviour.

42 Kelly suggests that the μεν... δε... δε... format shows that there is an essentially bipartite nature to the condemnation, with the first element centred on sex and the second centred on authority. This is attractive (and certainly rejecting lordship and blaspheming glories appear closely related ideas), but the bipartite proposal should be held together with Jude’s love for triples. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 261.

false teachers are blaspheming.⁴³ Hence we conclude that the false teachers are blaspheming at least evil angels (although we can leave open the question of whether they are also blaspheming good angels).

This conclusion, however, is far from universally accepted, and the case needs to be argued at a few distinct points.

The Identity of the Δοξαί

Firstly, we need to examine the term Jude uses in 8. Who or what are indicated by δόξας?⁴⁴ While most commentators apply the word to celestial beings of some kind, there is a minority report in favour of seeing not persons but simply glories, i.e. the glories of Christ. Lawlor, drawing on Lenski's work, argues that the verse should be read this way because δόξα is never a term applied to angels, but is used very clearly of Christ's glories (e.g. in 1 Pet 1:11).⁴⁵ The illustration of 9-10 could then be termed 'pure *a fortiori*', since the object of Michael's restrain and of the false teacher's lack of restraint are almost polar opposites: on the one hand, restraint when faced with the most evil being imaginable, on the other hand, blasphemy in the face of the greatest glory.⁴⁶ This approach is certainly attractive, but it seems to founder somewhat on 2 Pet 2:10-11, where, as we have observed, the angelic restraint is directed at the *same object* as the false teachers' blasphemy, and the same word δόξας is used. Even on the somewhat unlikely hypothesis that Jude and Peter are using two superficially similar but in fact very different arguments (Jude that Michael did not blaspheme the devil, an *a fortiori* argument; Peter that angels do not blaspheme Christ's

43 Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, 296–97. Kistemaker notes that, even in 2 Peter, the angels being blasphemed appear to be evil. If 2 Peter is compared back with Jude, however, the matter moves from probable to virtually certain: if any being counts as evil, Satan does.

44 This is in fact not the only debated term in this verse: there is also some question over κυριοτης, which some take to refer to angels or human authorities. There appears to be considerable agreement, however, that the particular word used, in its relationship to κυριος (4), indicates that the lordship of Christ is particularly in view. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 206; Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 262; Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, 384; Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 76. Increasing knowledge of first century Greek, and (more importantly) early Christian and first century Jewish usages, appears to have helped significantly in bringing about some measure of consensus. Plummer lists six interpretations of κυριοτης and another six of δοξαί, of which at least some (such as Ecumenius' suggestion that δοξαί refers to the Old and New Testaments) would not find much traction today. Alfred Plummer, *The General Epistles of St. James and St. Jude* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), 418.

45 Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 77.

46 Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 78.

glories, a case of straightforward example), it then remains the case Peter's approach seems rather unexpected: surely there are more obvious ways of arguing that Christ should not be blasphemed than appealing to the restraint of angels!

In any case the objection that δοξαί is never used for angels is not as strong as it at first appears. While there is no incontrovertible instance of this usage in the LXX (though Davids suggests Exod 15:11), this meaning is "found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 10:8; 1QPs^aZion 22:13) and apocalyptic literature (*Asc. of Isa.* 9:32; *2 Enoch* 22:7,10)."⁴⁷ While the usage is relatively rare, it therefore fits well with material that Jude is clearly drawing on quite extensively; and the concept of blaspheming angels, while unusual, certainly makes more sense of the appeal to the story in 9-10, not to mention the parallel in 2 Pet 2:10-11. We therefore join the majority of commentators in concluding that δόξας refers to angels.

The question of exactly which angels seems to be more difficult. I favour the approach of Kelly, who points out that the distinction between good and evil angels can be significantly overplayed.⁴⁸ In this vein, Jude is speaking of blaspheming angels *tout court*, while the illustration of Jude 9 suggests that if anything it may be evil angels who are particularly in view. This inclusive position, however, has not found widespread acceptance. Davids, for example, suggests three candidates: evil angels, good angels (regarded as bad by proto-Gnostic false teachers), or good angels who gave the Sinai law (regarded as bad by antinomian false teachers).⁴⁹ In favour of the latter interpretation, Lucas and Green have noted that it would mean 5-8 takes a chiastic structure:

A: Exodus, which includes Sinai (5)

B: Angels rejecting their positions (6)

C: Sodom (7)

C': defiling the flesh (8)

B': rejecting authority (8)

A': blaspheming the Sinai angels (8)⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 56. Kelly notes similar usage in Philo, Hebrews, and others. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 263.

⁴⁸ Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 263.

⁴⁹ Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 57.

⁵⁰ Dick Lucas and Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, BST (Leicester: IVP, 1995), 189.

This certainly seems attractive, especially in light of the strong association between Sinai and angels in Jewish thought (Acts 7:53, Gal 3:19, Heb 2:2).⁵¹ Given that the emphasis in 5 is on Jesus' activity rather than angelic actions, however, and given that angels appear explicitly at other places in this proposed chiasm, one hesitates to build on this approach wholesale.⁵² More cautiously, Davids opts for a generic interpretation of the δοξαί as good angels. There appear to be two main reasons taken for rejecting the idea that evil angels are in view. Firstly, it is suggested that Michael's restraint in 9 should be reinterpreted, in a way that breaks the connection between blasphemy of the δοξαί and (non-)blasphemy of Satan. Secondly, it is questioned whether it is even possible to blaspheme evil angels. We shall consider these in order.

Michael and the Κρισιν Βλασφημιας

Jude 9 is interesting, and somewhat difficult, not only because it alludes to a clearly extracanonical account, but also because we do not possess the tradition on which it draws. This tradition is often thought to have come from the Assumption of Moses, a book which is only partially extant and of which the relevant section is lost.⁵³ Michael's specific statement to Satan ("The Lord rebuke you") provides a very strong echo of Zech 3, where the angel of Yahweh opposes Satan over the judgement of Joshua with the same words (3:2).

There are at least three possible explanations of what exactly Michael refrains from doing in 9. The typical view is that the genitive βλασφημιας is a "genitive of quality": in other words, Michael does not bring a blasphemous/reviling judgement against Satan.⁵⁴

The second view is propounded by Lucas and Green, who, while agreeing with the interpretation of the genitive, see the judgement as directed not towards Satan but towards Moses. However, they still understand Michael's cry of "The Lord rebuke you" as directed

51 Najman notes that each of these references does not assert but assumes the presence of angels at Sinai, suggesting a "well-established tradition" that the authors could draw on uncontroversially. Hindy Najman, "Angels at Sinai: Exegesis, Theology and Interpretive Authority," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7, no. 3 (2000): 320.

52 In this vein, Kelly draws a different set of connections between the three examples of 5-7 and the three example of 8: Sodom is again connected with the sexual sin, but the rejection of κυριοτης recalls the work of Jesus in 5, while the blasphemy of δοξας recalls the angels of 6. While less neat to a chiasm-lover, this does have the advantage of stronger verbal connections. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 262.

53 Ryan E Stokes, "Not over Moses' Dead Body: Jude 9, 22-24 and the Assumption of Moses in Their Early Jewish Context," *JSNT* 40, no. 2 (2017): 193.

54 Stokes, "Not over Moses' Dead Body," 199.

towards Satan: thus Michael refuses to condemn either Moses or Satan but “instead allows God to remain the lawgiver and judge.”⁵⁵ The connection to the blasphemy in 8 is that Moses is the recipient of the law at Sinai. Thus Jude condemns the false teachers’ antinomian tendencies (8), and then shows that Michael did not bring a blasphemous judgement against the man of the law (9). While this approach is intriguing, it has two significant difficulties. The first is that it means that Peter, despite having started out in such a similar manner and apparently taking the same line as Jude, must actually be doing something rather different in 2 Pet 2:10-11.⁵⁶ The second problem lies within Jude 9 itself: the context of Michael’s reticence has already been determined for us by the phrase τῷ διαβόλῳ διακρινόμενος διελέγετο περὶ τοῦ Μωϋσέως σώματος. The question does not appear to be whether Michael will join Satan in condemning Moses; the reticence occurs within the context of “contending”, διακρινόμενος.⁵⁷ The point is not *whether* Michael will oppose or agree with Satan, but the *manner* in which Michael opposes him. Probably consequent on these issues, this interpretation does not appear to have gained much traction.

The third interpretation, with all the weight of Richard Bauckham behind it, is that the genitive is not a genitive of quality at all, but rather indicates the substance of the κρισίς: rather than a reviling judgement, we have an accusation of reviling. The idea is that Satan is reviling Moses, but Michael refrains from pronouncing judgement on Satan for this, instead leaving such a judgement to God. There is a parallel usage of the genitive with a verb of accusation in Acts 19:40. The problem with this interpretation, admitted even by proponents, is that it breaks the link between this blasphemy and that of Jude 8, making the link between the verses a “catchword connection” rather than an organic development of thought.⁵⁸

In both cases a major driver in the search for an alternative explanation appears to be that it is difficult to imagine slander against the devil. How could one slander such a

55 Lucas and Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 193.

56 Lucas and Green recognise this difficulty in their commentary on that passage, noting that 2 Pet 2:11 is “complicated” and “there is no way to avoid some hard thinking.” They go on to propose an interpretation which does in fact see Peter significantly diverge from Jude. But it seems that their biggest difficulty has been introduced by themselves, taking the passage in Jude in such a unique manner! Otherwise it is hard to agree that 2 Pet 2:11 is so terribly complicated; rather obscure, perhaps, which is not quite the same thing. Lucas and Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 106.

57 “The present middle participle διακρινόμενος denotes a continued altercation in which Michael was engaged with Satan in a prolonged verbal battle.” Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, 78.

58 Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 62.

manifestly evil being?⁵⁹ If the concept of slander against evil angels can be envisaged, then it does seem as if that would make best sense of the flow of Jude's argument.

Can One Blaspheme the Devil?

In my view, such a supposition is not nearly as difficult as is sometimes made out. Authority and angels are certainly two areas where our modern instincts are not terribly well aligned with those of the biblical authors! We inhabit a culture in which, whatever minimal deference might be shown to authorities who are directly over us, there is often no expectation of honour to foreign rulers at all – and, if the ruler is evil, it is often considered more praiseworthy to mock him than otherwise. But a striking example of how differently ancient authors thought can be found in Amos 2:1-3. There, in the sequence of oracles against the nations, Moab is condemned for burning the bones of the king of Edom. For this crime (the only crime listed against them) fire will descend from the Lord and burn them up. The Moabites are guilty of a lack of respect towards a ruler.⁶⁰ At least three striking elements may be noted about this accusation. Firstly, Moab are a pagan nation, not arraigned under the Mosaic law; clearly the principles involved are supposed to be accessible to all. Secondly, the king they have desecrated was not their own king! And finally, Edom was itself judged earlier in the oracles, with fire no less (Amos 1:11-12): the inference would appear to be that Edom's ruler deserved disgrace, and perhaps even a disgrace very like that given him by Moab. The issue was not that the disgrace was undeserved but that Moab did not have the right to inflict it.⁶¹

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that authority is frequently associated with evil spiritual powers (Eph 6:12, Col 1:16). The devil is a ruler (Eph 2:2, John 12:31) with a kingdom (Col 1:13). And, while Christians are obviously to fight the devil and are promised that he will be humiliated by their victory (Rom 16:22), it is still striking that resisting the devil is so closely linked with humility (Jas 4:6-7; 1 Pet 5:5-9).

59 Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 62. Lucas and Green call the usual interpretation “very confusing.” Lucas and Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 194.

60 David Allan Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, TOTC (Nottingham, England: IVP Academic, 2009), 143. Hubbard notes a similar theme in 2 Kings 9:34, where Jehu orders that Jezebel, whom he has just had killed, should nevertheless receive a decent burial. Jezebel has, in fact, been eaten by dogs in fulfilment of God's prophecy. God reserves to himself the right to disgrace rulers; in Amos, he clearly does not take kindly to humans infringing on that right.

61 Compare Josiah's righteous burning of bones in 2 Kings 23:16, done with divine warrant.

With this background, then, the most obvious interpretation of Jude is that he is condemning blasphemy against angels of all stripes. Even evil angels should be treated with respect, a respect not derived from any good in them but from the inherent dignity of their office and a consciousness of their power compared with our own. It is not hard to imagine the libertine false teachers, drunk on the victory and freedom of the gospel, mocking angels (perhaps with a focus on the vanquished evil authorities, perhaps indiscriminately) and making proud boasts against them; and neither is it hard to imagine Jude seeing in this behaviour a tell-tale sign of their rottenness.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that Jude 6 references the sin of angels in Gen 6:1-4, drawing on Enochic interpretations of that text; and that in 8-9 he charges the false teachers with blaspheming angels, when even Michael did not bring a blasphemous judgement against even Satan. There remains only one concluding thought to bring out, which is that these two aspects of Jude's argument have a powerful rhetorical link. The false teachers blaspheme angels (8); they consider themselves superior to them in some way. But Jude turns the tables on them! Not only are they foolish to blaspheme angels, but their blasphemy (in its arrogance, self-assurance, and disrespect for authority) reveals that they are like the very lowest of those angels. They mock the fallen angels, and their very mockery shows that they will share the angels' fate.

“No other book of the New Testament so vividly and emphatically sets forth … the true character of apostate religious teachers. … [Jude] is without question the book of our time.”⁶² Those words are if anything even more true today than they were when written in 1972! In particular, our study suggests that one often-overlooked characteristic of false teachers is their lack of right reverence, not just for the Lord's authority but for subordinate and derivative authorities. That this section of Jude's teaching should be so strange to the ears of evangelicals today is not a reason to carefully replace its cobwebs, but rather to bring it out, blow off the dust, and let it resound.

Soli Deo Gloria.

62 Lawlor, *The Epistle of Jude*, v.

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