

BOOK OF JOHN THE EVANGELIST

From "The Apocryphal New Testament"

M.R. James-Translation and Notes

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Introduction

Reprinted by Thilo from I. Benoist's *Histoire des Albigeois, &c.*, Paris, 196, T. 1, 283-96. Dollinger in his *Beitrag zur mittelalter-lichen Sektengeschichte*, vol. ii, printed another text from a fourteenth-century manuscript at Vienna. I have not given the variants. Thilo's reprint is followed. The Vienna MS. is rather imperfect at the end. Benoist derived his text from the Archives of the Inquisition at Carcassonne. The manuscript of it had this annotation in Latin:

'This is the secret book of the heretics of Concoreze, brought from Bulgaria by their bishop Nazarius; full of errors.'

This Nazarius was examined by Rainer (*Contra Waldenses*, vi: printed in *Bibl. Patr. max.* xxv. 271). He said that the Blessed Virgin was an angel and that Christ did not take upon him a human nature but an angelic or heavenly one: and that he had this erroneous teaching from a bishop and elder son of the church of Bulgaria almost sixty years since.

The book is a Bogomile production, denying that the world was made by God, and attributing creation to the devil. Catholic Christians are disciples of John Baptist: baptism has no value, nor, probably the Eucharist: but the statement about this has dropped out of the text. The law of sacrifices (promulgated by Enoch) and the Mosaic law are works of the devil.

The account of the Last Judgement, I agree with Thilo, seems too orthodox and conventional to square with the rest of the book: one suspects dilution from another source. In its Latin dress the book can hardly be older than the twelfth century. The original might be of the sixth or seventh.

I, John, your brother and partaker in tribulation, and that shall be also a partaker in the kingdom of heaven, when I lay upon breast of our Lord Jesus Christ and said unto him: Lord, who is he that shall betray thee? [and] he answered and said: He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish: then Satan entered unto him and he sought how he might betray me.

And I said: Lord, before Satan fell, in what glory abode he with thy Father? And he said unto me: In such glory was he that he commanded the powers of the heavens: but I sat with my Father, and he did order all the followers of the Father, and went down from heaven unto the deep and ascended up out of the deep unto the throne of the invisible Father. And he saw the glory of him that moveth the heavens, and he thought to set his seat above the clouds of heaven and desired to be like unto the Most High.

And when he had descended into the air, he said unto the angel of the air: Open unto me the gates of the air. And he opened them unto him. And he sought to go further downward and found the angel which held the

waters, and said unto him: Open unto me the gates of the waters. And he opened to him. And he passed through and found all the face of the earth covered with waters. And he passed through beneath the earth and found two fishes lying upon the waters, and they were as oxen yoked for ploughing, holding the whole earth by the commandment of the invisible Father, from the west even unto the sunrising. And when he had gone down he found clouds hanging which held the waters of the sea. And he went down yet further and found hell, that is the gehenna of fire and thereafter he could go down no further because of the flame of the burning fire. And Satan returned back and filled up (passed over again) the paths and entered in unto the angel of the air and to him that was over the waters, and said unto them: All these things are mine: if ye will hearken unto me, I will set my seat in the clouds and be like the Most High, and I will take the waters from this upper firmament and gather together the other parts (places) of the sea, and thereafter there shall be no water upon the face of all the earth, and I will reign with you world without end.

And when he had said thus unto the angels, he went up unto the other angels, even unto the fifth heaven, and thus spake he unto each of them: How much owest thou unto thy lord? He said: An hundred measures (cors) of wheat. And he said unto him: Take pen and ink and write sixty. And unto others he said: And thou, how much owest thou unto thy lord? and he answered: An hundred jars of oil. And he said: Sit down and write fifty. And as he went up through all the heavens he said thus, even unto the fifth heaven, seducing the angels of the invisible Father. And there came forth a voice out of the throne of the Father, saying: What doest thou, O denier of the Father, seducing the angels? doer of iniquity, that thou hast devised do quickly.

Then the Father commanded his angels, saying: Take away their garments. And the angels took away their garments and their thrones and their crowns from all the angels that hearkened unto him.

And I asked of the Lord: When Satan fell, in what place dwelt he? And he answered me: My Father changed his appearance because of his pride, and the light was taken from him, and his face became like unto heated iron, and his face became wholly like that of a man: and he drew with his tail the third part of the angels of God, and was cast out from the seat of God and from the stewardship of the heavens. And Satan came down into this firmament, and he could find (make) no rest for himself nor for them that were with him. And he asked the Father saying: Have patience with me and I will pay thee all. And the Father had mercy on him and gave him rest and them that were with him, as much as they would even unto seven days.

And so sat he in the firmament and commanded the angel that was over the air and him that was over the waters, and they raised the earth up and it appeared dry: and he took the crown of the angel that was over the waters, and of the half thereof he made the light of the moon and of the half the light of the stars: and of the precious stones he made all the hosts of the stars.

And thereafter he made the angels his ministers according to the order of the form of the Most High, and by the commandment of the invisible Father he made thunder, rain, hail, and snow.

And he sent forth angels to be ministers over them. And he commanded the earth to bring forth every beast for food (fattening), and every creeping thing, and trees and herbs: and he commanded the sea to bring forth fishes, and the fowls of the heaven.

And he devised furthermore and made man in his likeness, and commanded the (or an) angel of the third heaven to enter into the body of clay. And he took thereof and made another body in the form of a woman, and commanded the (or an) angel of the second heaven to enter into the body of the woman. But the angel lamented when they beheld a mortal shape upon them and that they were unlike in shape. And he

commanded them to do the deed of the flesh in the bodies of clay, and they knew not how to commit sin.

Then did the contriver of evil devise in his mind to make paradise, and he brought the man and woman into it. And he Commanded to bring a reed, and the devil planted it in the midst of paradise, and so did the wicked devil hide his device that they knew not his deceit. And he came in and spake unto them, saying: Of every fruit which is in paradise eat ye, but of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil eat not. Notwithstanding, the devil entered into a wicked serpent and seduced the angel that was in the form of the woman, and he wrought his lust with Eve in the Song of the serpent. And therefore are they called sons of the devil and sons of the serpent that do the lust of the devil their father, even unto the end of this world. And again the devil poured out upon the angel that was in Adam the poison of his lust, and it begetteth the sons of the serpent and the sons of the devil even unto the end of this world.

And after that I, John, asked of the Lord, saying: How say men that Adam and Eve were created by God and set in paradise to keep the commandments of the Father, and were delivered unto death? And the Lord said to me: Hearken, John, beloved of my Father; foolish men say thus in their deceitfulness that my Father made bodies of clay: but by the Holy Ghost made he all the powers of the heavens, and holy ones were found having bodies of clay because of their transgression, and therefore were delivered unto death.

And again I, John, asked the Lord: How beginneth a man to be in the Spirit (to have a spirit) in a body of flesh? And the Lord said unto me: Certain of the angels which fell do enter unto the bodies of women, and receive flesh from the lust of the flesh, and so is a spirit born of spirit, and flesh of flesh, and so is the kingdom of Satan accomplished in this world and among all nations.

And he said to me: My Father hath suffered him to reign seven days, which are seven ages.

And I asked the Lord and said: What shall be in that time? And he said to me: From the time when the devil fell from the glory of the Father and (lost) his own glory, he sat upon the clouds, and sent his ministers, even angels flaming with fire, unto men from Adam even unto Henoah his servant. And he raised up Henoah upon the firmament and showed him his godhead and commanded pen and ink to be given him: and he sat down and wrote threescore and seven books. And he commanded that he should take them to the earth and deliver them unto his sons. And Henoah let his books down upon the earth and delivered them unto his sons, and began to teach them to perform the custom of sacrifice, and unrighteous mysteries, and so did he hide the kingdom of heaven from men. And he said unto them: Behold that I am your god and beside me is none other god. And therefore did my Father send me into the world that I might make it known unto men, that they might know the evil device of the devil.

And then when he perceived that I had come down out of heaven into the world, he sent an angel and took of three sorts of wood and gave them unto Moses that I might be crucified, and now are they reserved for me. But then (now) did the devil proclaim unto him (Moses) his godhead, and unto his people, and commanded a law to be given unto the children of Israel, and brought them out through the midst of the sea which was dried up.

When my Father thought to send me into the world, he sent his angel before me, by name Mary, to receive me. And I when I came down entered in by the ear and came forth by the ear.

And Satan the prince of this world perceived that I was come to seek and save them that were lost, and sent his angel, even Helias the prophet, baptizing with water: who is called John the Baptist. And Helias asked the

prince of this world: How can I know him? Then his lord said: On whom soever thou shalt see the spirit descending like a dove and resting upon him, he it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost unto forgiveness of sins: thou wilt be able to destroy him and to save. And again I, John, asked the Lord: Can a man be saved by the baptism of John without thy baptism? And the Lord answered: Unless I have baptized him unto forgiveness of sins, by the baptism of water can no man see the kingdom of heaven: for I am the bread of life that came down from the seventh heaven and they that eat my flesh and drink my blood, they shall be called the sons of God.

And I asked the Lord and said: What meaneth it, to eat my flesh and drink my blood? (An answer and question seem to have fallen out.) And the Lord said unto me: Before the falling of the devil with all his host from the glory of the Father [in prayer], they did glorify the Father in their prayers thus, saying: Our Father, which art in heaven; and so did all their songs come up before the throne of the Father. But when they had fallen, after that they are not able to glorify God with that prayer.

And I asked the Lord: How do all men receive the baptism of John, but thine not at all? And the Lord answered: Because their deeds are evil and they come not unto the light.

The disciples of John marry and are given in marriage; but my disciples neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But I said: If, then, it be sin to have to do with a woman, it is not good to marry. And the Lord said unto me: Not every one can receive this saying (&c., Matt. xix.11, 12).

I asked the Lord concerning the day of judgement: What shall be the sign of thy coming? And he answered and said unto me: When the numbers of the righteous shall be accomplished that is, the number of the righteous that are crowned, that have fallen, then shall Satan be loosed out of his prison, having great wrath, and shall make war with the righteous, and they shall cry unto the Lord with a loud voice. And immediately the Lord shall command an angel to blow with the trumpet, and the voice of the archangel shall be heard in the trumpet from heaven even unto hell.

And then shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall, and the four winds shall be loosed from their foundations, and shall cause the earth and the sea and the mountains to quake together. And the heaven shall immediately shake and the sun shall be darkened, and it shall shine even to the fourth hour. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man, and all the holy angels with him, and he shall set his seat upon the clouds, and sit on the throne of his majesty with the twelve apostles on the twelve seats of their glory. And the books shall be opened and he shall judge the whole world and the faith which he proclaimed. And then shall the Son of man send his angels, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds from the heights of the heavens unto the boundaries of them, and shall bring them to seek.

Then shall the Son of God send the evil spirits, to bring all nations before him, and shall say unto them: Come, ye that did say: We have eaten and drunk and received the gain of this world. And after that they shall again be brought, and shall all stand before the judgement seat, even all nations, in fear. And the books of life shall be opened and all nations shall show forth their ungodliness. And he shall glorify the righteous for their patience: and glory and honour and incorruption shall be the reward of their good works: but as for them that kept the commandments of the angels and obeyed unrighteously, indignation and trouble and anguish shall take hold on them.

And the Son of God shall bring forth the elect out of the midst of the sinners and say unto them: Come, ye

blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say unto the sinners: Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. And the rest, beholding the last cutting off, shall cast the sinners into hell by the commandment of the invisible Father. Then shall the spirits of them that believe not go forth out of the prisons, and then shall my voice be heard, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd: and the darkness and obscurity shall come forth out of the lower parts of the earth -that is to say, the darkness of the gehenna of fire- and shall burn all things from below even to the air of the firmament. And the Lord shall be in the firmament and even to the lower parts of the earth. (read And the distance from the firmament unto the lower parts of the earth shall be) as if a man of thirty years old should take up a stone and cast it down, hardly in three years would it reach the bottom: so great is the depth of the pit and of the fire wherein the sinners shall dwell. And then shall Satan and all his host be bound and cast into the lake of fire. And the Son of God shall walk with his elect above the firmament and shall shut up the devil, binding him with strong chains that cannot be loosed. At that time the sinners, weeping and mourning, shall say: O earth, swallow us up and cover us in death. And then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. And he shall bring them before the throne of the invisible Father, saying: Behold, I and my children whom God hath given me. O righteous one, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee in truth, because thou hast sent me. And then shall the Father answer his Son and say: My beloved Son, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet, which have denied me and said: We are gods, and beside us there is none other god: which have slain thy prophets and persecuted thy righteous ones, and thou hast persecuted them even unto the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And then shall the Son of God sit on the right hand of his Father, and the Father shall command his angels, and they shall minister unto them (i.e. the righteous) and set them among the choirs of the angels, to clothe them with incorruptible garments, and shall give them crowns that fade not and seats that cannot be moved. And God shall be in the midst of them; and they shall not hunger nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. And he shall reign with his holy Father, and of his kingdom there shall be no end for ever and ever.