

Hope Tsai

Professor Niditch

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The End of the World, or an Acorn?

In the European folktale, *Henny Penny*, a hen is hit by an acorn, causing her to exclaim, “The sky is falling!” (Ashliman). Though the falling of an acorn is an everyday occurrence, the hen interprets it as the end of the world. Human beings may do the same, and their interpretations for everyday occurrences often lie in a supernatural world, where good and evil have been dueling, and are now on the verge of the final battle. The effects of these battles ripple into and influence the physical world. Eventually, good will conquer evil, and order will be restored. This interpretation can be seen in the Bible’s book of Enoch and the 21st-century’s QAnon movement. Even though they are separated by thousands of years, both feature a pseudonymous author, and focus on a supernatural world, the distinction between good and evil, and the idea of an orderly Earth. A comparison of Enoch and QAnon reveals how little humanity has changed; from ancient times to today, humanity has found comfort and meaning in apocalyptic works, even if an acorn is just an acorn.

Before examining the two works in detail, it may be useful to establish their contexts. Enoch is said to be penned by the biblical character of Enoch in the Near East during the second century BCE, and foretells the end of the world. Most importantly, it explains the supernatural “spread of evil,” the cause of the earth-cleansing Flood, which has been omitted in the book of Genesis (Collins 57). Although QAnon is a more recent work, penned in the 21st-century, its authors are not explicitly verified either, only revealing themselves as United States’ government

officials with high security clearance. Like Enoch, the work explains the supernatural “spread of evil,” citing a group of “elites” who exercise their power to control the common people for their sinister purposes. After this brief overview, it is clear that both Enoch and QAnon use pseudonymous authors and supernatural worlds to give a “simple explanation of the world’s problems” (Loxton 36). However, the *reason* is unclear--why do they, so separated by space and time, share these similarities? A further investigation may be necessary.

Firstly, the usage of a pseudonymous author can “be bound up with a claim to authority,” thus verifying an apocalyptic work (Collins 40). In the Bible, the character of Enoch is so pious, moral, and righteous that he does not die. Instead, “Enoch [walks] with God; then he [is] no more, because God [takes] him” (*New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 5:24). The phrase, “then he [is] no more,” is particularly noteworthy. It appears in a chapter of genealogies, which records the life of each descendant of Adam, the first man. The section for each descendant ends with the phrase, “and he [dies]” (Gen. 5). However, this is not true for Enoch; as Enoch is too good for this fallen world, he does not die, but is “taken” by God. Therefore, once the book of Enoch is attributed to the character of Enoch, it gains a claim to authority. As the sole mortal resident of both worlds, Enoch is “well qualified to be the revealer of heavenly mysteries” (Collins 54). He understands the human mind and the physical world, as well as God’s mind and the supernatural world. His very nature (pious, moral, and righteous), close relationship with God, and experiences of the supernatural plane lend credibility to the work. Therefore, the pseudonymous author gives readers a reason to trust the book of Enoch, and turn to it for comfort and hope.

Similarly, the writings of QAnon, known as “drops,” are pseudonymously authored as well. Although the specific details are different, since it is not one author, but many, the claim to authority still holds: the authors are “high-ranking officials with ‘Q’ level security clearance”

("About-Q"). The "'Q' level security clearance" refers to the topmost position in the national Department of Energy; such individuals have access to "Top Secret National Security Information" and "Secret Restricted Data" ("Departmental Personnel Security FAQs"). As the authors are reportedly "behind the scenes" of the government, they can use their positions to release "drops" of information to the public on message-boards known for being the digital version of the ungoverned, unruly "Wild West." The nature of these platforms allow the authors to remain unverified, even while their claims to authority (via the security clearance) give them an audience. Though people may be incredulous, and demand that the authors reveal themselves, the pseudonymity actually lends further credibility, for how can the authors continue to divulge such secret information if they do so? These identities and, in turn, the work, become difficult to directly dispute, thus gaining even more credibility among believers. Ultimately, the usage of pseudonymity gives the hopeless what they wish to hear, by claiming authority and knowledge while remaining under a safe, unremovable cloak of anonymity.

Once the authors have a following, they can establish and effectively broadcast their message. In the realm of apocalypses, the message must include the "revelation of a supernatural world" (Collins 15). Enoch is characterized as a spiritual and religious man, so much so that he is "taken" by God, away from the physical world and into the supernatural one. He has first-hand knowledge of both. Thus, it logically follows that his message relates to this unseen plane, thereby fulfilling the criteria of an apocalyptic work. The "revelation" comes to Enoch in a "vision of the Holy One in the heavens," in which he sees a battle between the forces of good and evil culminating in the end of the world (*The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, Enoch 1.2). During this time, both worlds will meet, and the battles of one will be felt in the other. Enoch writes that "the eternal God will tread upon the earth," and "the

high mountains shall be shaken, and the high hills...shall melt like wax before the flame” (Enoch 1.6). Therefore, while the battle is not being fought between those on Earth, humanity will still be affected. The apocalyptic events in Enoch lead to the Flood in Genesis 6-9, in which God drowns every living creature on Earth, except for those in the righteous Noah’s ark. Earth will be cleansed. As such, Enoch serves as an optimistic message to the oppressed believers, stating that the wicked will be punished with all the might of the supernatural Holy One.

Due to the fact that QAnon focuses on the wickedness in the national government, it seems unlikely that it would mention a supernatural world. After all, the work claims that those in power are the ones who cause and solve problems. Moreover, most followers believe “that elites are controlling the United States government” for their own prosperity (Garry 156). The supposed “deep state” (so-named for how deep corruption can go) is only concerned with furthering the interests of its own members (Garry 157). Admittedly, such beliefs could stem from the mistrust of Earth-bound, human institutions. However, upon a closer look, the assumption of QAnon’s sole foundation in the physical world is rendered incorrect. QAnon states that government officials worship the devil, and “may be in league with supernatural demons” (Loxton 36). Like in Enoch, a battle between good and evil will result in an Earth-meets-the-supernatural event: “The Storm,” which will “cleanse the world” (Loxton 26). It must be noted that the shared water motif in “the Storm” and the biblical Flood is not a coincidence. Many QAnon believers are Christian, and the supernatural elements in QAnon read as “overt spiritual language,” which “[connect] directly to the Bible” (“How QAnon Conspiracy Is Spreading In Christian Communities Across The U.S.”). As such, appropriated details from biblical events, like the Flood, link QAnon to an already trusted work, thereby strengthening the validity of QAnon. The hope of a world, cleansed by supernatural forces and safe from evil, is evidently not

new, and QAnon, like Enoch, serves as a comforting message of a powerful deity who is on the oppressed people's side.

However, *why* must apocalypses include the supernatural world? The reason lies in the distinction between good and evil, which is prevalent in all such works. In particular, many oppressed communities may believe that the rampant spread of evil must “require a supernatural origin” (Collins 57). This view can be seen in Enoch. The good are the “the elect and righteous,” who will be “blessed,” and the evil are “the wicked and godless,” who “are to be removed” due to their perverse and unnatural relationship with divine beings (En. 1.1-2). When angels descend from heaven to have intercourse with mortal women, Enoch writes that they stay on Earth and “[teach] them charms and enchantments, and the cutting of roots, and [make] them acquainted with plants” (En. 7.1-3). While gaining more knowledge does not appear to be an immoral act, it cannot be denied that these human beings are learning more than they could on their own; this knowledge has an unnatural source, one that arises from the unholy, intimate relationship between angels and mortals. As such, it is seen as sinful. When the offspring can no longer be satiated by regular fare, they begin to “[devour] mankind” and “sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish” (En. 7.4-6). They are so wicked that they even “drink the blood” of animals, which is forbidden by the ancient law in Deuteronomy 12:23 (En. 7.6). Consequently, the wicked stand in stark contrast to the only remaining righteous humans, Noah and his family, who have remained godly and have not desecrated the earth (En. 8.3, En. 10.2). By showing how these evil acts are not inherent in humanity's psychology, and thus can be eliminated, the inclusion of the supernatural world comforts the reader.

Even though the numbers of the wicked are smaller than the numbers of the good in QAnon, the opposite of Enoch, there is the distinction between good and evil in QAnon as well.

The work states that those on the side of good are the mass public. They are the ones who are righteous, rooting for the common people and shunning greed, lust, and power. They assist in the battle against evil, a force supported by a group of elites who are not merely “bad, greedy, or ruthless,” but “deliberately, totally, breathtakingly evil” (Loxton 36). The small yet powerful group of elites resemble the wicked in Enoch. For example, QAnon writes that they have a close relationship with beings of the supernatural world, and use their otherworldly knowledge for their own selfish purposes. Just as those in Enoch sin against God by drinking the blood of animals, the elites in QAnon reportedly sin against humanity by “systematically [abusing], [torturing], and [murdering] children,” even drinking the blood “drained from children ritually murdered at the moment of maximum terror” (Loxton 36). Like the Storm and the Flood, the inclusion of drinking blood is not a coincidence. QAnon has “recycled” and appropriated from an older apocalyptic work, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which in turn “recycled” the “medieval”-era idea of “blood libel” (Loxton 38). The previous appropriation of water revealed that the hopes of humanity--a cleansed world--have stayed the same. Here, the appropriation of blood reveals that the fears of the wicked harming the innocent have not changed. In both QAnon and Enoch, the distinction between the good and evil on Earth is strengthened by the supernatural world, which elevates acts of evil to new, unhuman heights. Though terrifying in its “[breathtaking] evil”, this unseen realm once again soothes humanity’s fear by revealing the unnatural, and therefore removable, origin of evil.

Finally, both works believe that heaven will violently meet Earth and destroy evil for good. Moreover, the world will be restored to its natural order for the survivors to cultivate. While it may seem unwise to declare such an optimistic ending, many apocalypses exist to “comfort and exhort a group in crisis” (*Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*). After such

a horrific accounting of the wicked's actions, and such a bleak picture of the once-beautiful world, people need the comforting idea of a world that can be brought back to order. Indeed, Enoch's main purpose is to "show that the righteous who are oppressed in this world can hope for salvation outside it and that the present world order will eventually be reversed" (Collins 72). Once the end of the world comes, Enoch writes, God will "bring judgment upon all men," "but with the righteous He will make peace" (En. 1.7-8). The godless will be destroyed, leaving the elect to "inherit the earth" (En. 5.7). When those who sin against God receive their punishment, the world will return to its natural state. No longer will humans devour other humans, or drink the blood of animals. Instead, "the whole earth [will] be tilled in righteousness," and beautiful trees, olives, and vines will spread across the land (En. 10.18). At the time of writing, the spread of evil and oppression undoubtedly left many hopeless. Without such a sure victory in the chaotic and destitute world, there may have been little left to live for. Therefore, in order to encourage, "comfort and exhort" believers, Enoch uses the existence of a world that is naturally orderly and can be restored; evil is not forever.

Similarly, QAnon's "Storm," in which all of the elites will be exposed, forms the catalyst for the return of the orderly world. Many followers believe that "the day of the rope is coming for the wicked," and once "the Storm" is upon the world, the children will be saved and returned to their rightful place as the harbingers of the new generation, not the source of youth-giving blood (Garry 182). Moreover, those in power will be overthrown and replaced by the uncorrupted, who will ensure that the common people are represented and protected. The natural world gains an additional aspect compared to Enoch. According to QAnon, the United States has been a corporation, not a nation, for well over a century. The difference between the legitimate country and the corporation can be seen in the swearing-in dates for the president. When the

United States was a legitimate country, the date was on March 4th. However, the corporation has manipulated into existence the 20th Amendment, which states that the date is henceforth on January 20 (US Const.). Therefore, the citizens of the United States have been living in an unnatural world since 1933. In order to restore the legitimate country, and thus the world, a president must be sworn in on March 4th. Thus, QAnon states that there are two worlds which need to be restored to order: the legal world of a country, and the everyday world of the children. Despite “countless failed prophecies,” QAnon’s message still inspires hope in an orderly, restorable Earth, comforting and drawing believers just as Enoch did during its own time (Tian).

Even though Enoch and QAnon were authored thousands of years apart, they share four features: pseudonymous authors, the distinction between good and evil, and the existences of an orderly Earth and a supernatural world. The first feature lends the works strong yet unverified (and thus difficult-to-dispute) claims to authority, either to the heavenly or governmental realm. Furthermore, by explaining that chaos, oppression, and evil, are not of human origin, but of an otherworldly, perverse, and unnatural source which can be destroyed, the remaining features comfort the righteous reader. Thus, both highlight the evidently age-old fear of the evil not receiving their just rewards, and of the good suffering in spite of their righteousness. However, perhaps these fears may not always remain. Instead of proclaiming, “The sky is falling!”, one can look at the many apocalyptic writings of ages past. Sometimes, an acorn is just an acorn; there is truly nothing to fear. Sometimes, the fear one feels, such as the fear of elites drinking the blood of children, is not real, but rather an appropriation of an older work, changed to explain the circumstances of the present day. However, if evil is indeed rampant, then one need only realize that similar fears and evil acts may have happened before. If those communities could survive, then so can the communities of today.

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