JUDE AND 2 PETER

NCCS | New Covenant Commentary Series

The New Covenant Commentary Series (NCCS) is designed for ministers and students who require a commentary that interacts with the text and context of each New Testament book and pays specific attention to the impact of the text upon the faith and praxis of contemporary faith communities.

The NCCS has a number of distinguishing features. First, the contributors come from a diverse array of backgrounds in regards to their Christian denominations and countries of origin. Unlike many commentary series that tout themselves as international the NCCS can truly boast of a genuinely international cast of contributors with authors drawn from every continent of the world (except Antarctica) including countries such as the United States, Puerto Rico, Australia, the United Kingdom, Kenya, India, Singapore, and Korea. We intend the NCCS to engage in the task of biblical interpretation and theological reflection from the perspective of the global church. Second, the volumes in this series are not verse-by-verse commentaries, but they focus on larger units of text in order to explicate and interpret the story in the text as opposed to some often atomistic approaches. Third, a further aim of these volumes is to provide an occasion for authors to reflect on how the New Testament impacts the life, faith, ministry, and witness of the New Covenant Community today. This occurs periodically under the heading of "Fusing the Horizons and Forming the Community." Here authors provide windows into community formation (how the text shapes the mission and character of the believing community) and ministerial formation (how the text shapes the ministry of Christian leaders).

It is our hope that these volumes will represent serious engagements with the New Testament writings, done in the context of faith, in service of the church, and for the glorification of God.

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JUDE AND 2 PETER

A New Covenant Commentary

Andrew M. Mbuvi


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New Covenant Commentary Series

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1. Bible. Jude—Commentaries. 2. Bible. Peter, 2nd—Commentaries. I. Series. II. Title.

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Manufactured in the U.S.A.

To my family,
and to the memory of my beloved mother,
Jane Mutave Musyoka (b. July 24, 1941— d. June 8, 2013)

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Preface

Writing a commentary has proved to be quite the daunting task, and evidently a most distinct one from all other forms of research I have engaged in. Starting with doing my own translation of the text from Greek, to writing my own independent interpretations before I read any of the other commentaries and finally writing as judiciously as possible in order to stay within the word limit, while trying to be as comprehensive in each section as I possibly could, was a most challenging balancing act. It gave me renewed respect for those who have gone ahead of me in this venture, especially before the age of computers. Yet, it was a most rewarding experience, which I hope brings some measure of contribution to these lesser-indulged in letters of the New Testament.

The freedom granted by the series editors was crucial in providing the space to engage Jude and 2 Peter from the two vantage points that I considered vital in breathing new insight in these short but important writings—communal identity and Greco-Roman associations. A renewed interest in Greco-Roman associations, especially from the works of Philip Harland, provide aspects of comparison that I hope introduce new perspectives on the role of minority group rhetoric from the first century and act as a sounding board to the rhetoric in Jude and 2 Peter. Secondly, the *Fusing of the Horizons* sections provide a useful avenue to reflect on modern implications of reading certain elements of the epistles within contexts of the modern communities with which I am familiar. I sincerely hope that the findings offer some distinctive contribution to the study of these letters.

Without downplaying my indebtedness to the prodigious minds that have gone before me in writing commentaries on Jude and 2 Peter, I quite consciously sought to limit my footnotes so that as much of my own reflections on the texts were not obscured by side comments and discussions. Aware that the readership for the series aims for an academically informed reader, but one who may not have the technical background needed to engage in the Greek text, I have sought to limit overt engagements with technical commentaries and tried as much as possible to present a running commentary as best as I could. The imprint, upon my own work, of such

great commentaries on Jude and 2 Peter as those by Richard Bauckham, J. D. Charles, Peter Davids, Gene Green, Michael Green, Jerome Neyrey, Bo Reicke, etc., is unquestionable. Thanks also to R. Jackson Painter and Jeremy Hultin for sharing their SBL papers and subsequent thoughts with me.

I must acknowledge the support of Shaw University for their support, especially the former dean of the Divinity School (currently Interim VP for Institutional Advancement) Dr. Bruce Grady. Together with the generosity of the Association of Theological Schools grant (Theological Scholars' Grant, 2012–13), the university approved a semester's sabbatical in Spring 2013, that allowed for the bulk of the initial work in the commentary to be accomplished. My family has played a very helpful role in finding time for me to write, especially my in-laws who have driven six hours each way on numerous occasions to babysit our two very energetic kids so that my wife and I can have some free time to ourselves. To my wife Amanda, thank you for your continued support. For our kids, Elijah and Rachel, may you one day read this book and find in it blessing. A close friend of mine, Rev. Canon Francis Omondi, Director of the The Sheepfold Ministries, in Kenya, read the entire manuscript in its penultimate stage and provided a lot of very helpful comments that resulted in at least two more *Fusing of the Horizons* sections.

When you spend a couple of years doing a writing project like this one, it is bound to be impacted by important events in life. Towards the end of my sabbatical, I was saddened to lose my mother, Mrs. Jane Mutave Musyoka, after what would have been a minor surgical procedure, on June 8, 2013. A pillar of prayer in our family lives, she is sorely missed! Travelling back home for the funeral allowed me to reconnect with family and friends, but also gave me evidence of my mother's legacy of kindness, graciousness, love of God and neighbor, and selflessness. She was the embodiment of the virtues in 2 Peter 1:5–7. If for some freaky anomaly in nature we could choose a mother, I would choose her all over again! It is to her memory that I wish to dedicate this book.

Last, and certainly not the least, I would also like to thank the series editors, Michael Bird and Craig Keener, first for the invitation to contribute in the series, and also for their encouraging support along the way. I hope I have lived up to your expectations for the project! And may the commentary serve the Covenant community.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGRW	Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook
ANF	Anti-Nicene Fathers
Anodos	*Anodos: Studies of the Ancient World*
ANTC	Anglican New Testament Commentary
ASV	American Standard Version
Bib.	*Biblica*
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BDAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BTS	Biblical Tools and Studies
CÉFR	*Collections de l'École Française de Rome.*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBNT	Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
CCSS	Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture
EKKNT	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommntar Zun Neuen Testament
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

GPBS	Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IGRR	Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas
IVPNTC	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JGRChJ	*Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*
JSH	*Journal of Sport History*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	JSNT Supplement Series
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSP	*Journal For the Study of Pseudepigrapha*
JTC	Jewish and Christian Traditions
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KEKNT	Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
NAC	The New American Commentary
NBBC	New Beacon Bible Commentary
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	The New Cambridge Bible Commentary
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTL	The New Testament Library
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PCS	Pentecostal Commentary Series
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary

PL	J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*
PGNT	Phoenix Guides to the New Testament
RFIA	*The Review of Faith & International Affairs*
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
Sac. Pag.	Sacra Pagina
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
tev	Today's English Version
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TH NTC	Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
THNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
tniv	Today's New International Version
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TSAJ	Texte und Studium zum antiken Judentum
TWNT	*Theological Words of the New Testament*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
WSNT	Wuppertaler Studienbibel Neues Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

Ancient Sources

ANF	*Anti –Nicene Fathers*
Aristotle	
Eth. Nic.	*Nicomachean Ethics*
Poet.	*Poetics*
Pol.	*Politics*

Babylonian Talmud (*b.*)

Barn.	*Epistle of Barnabas*
Cicero	
Flac.	*Pro Flacco*
1 Clem.	*1 Clement*
2 Clem	*2 Clement*
Did.	*Didache*
1 En.	*1 Enoch*
3 En.	*3 Enoch* (*Hebrew Apocalypse*)
Dead Sea Scrolls	
1QS	*Rule of the Congregation*
CD	Community Rules
Dio Crysostom	
Or.	*Orationes*
Epictetus	
Ep. Ar.	*Arist. Epistle of Aristeas*
Eusebius	
Hist. Eccl	*Ecclesiastical History*
Gen. Rab.	*Genesis Rabbah*
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas

Greco-Roman Inscriptions

BGU IV 1137 (*AGRW* 281)
IAssos 26, c. 37 CE
IEph 3801 (c. 35–54 CE) (AGRW 160)
IG II² 1365 (*AGWR* 33.)
IG II² 1369 (ca. 100 CE) *(AGRW* 8)
IG XI,4 1299 *(AGRW* 221)
IGR IV 144, c. 41–54 CE (*AGRW* 108)
IGRR VI 314
ILS 9495 = *ILAfr* 306
IMT 573 – *Inschriften Mysia und Troas*
IMT 1431 = *IGR* IV 144 ((37/36 BCE) (*AGRW* 108)
ISardBR 22 (ca. 100 BCE) (*AGRW* 122)
IGLSkythia III 44 (AGRW 74)

ISmyrna 633 – (c.a. 129–31) ()
ISmyrna 731 (*AGRW* 116)
IEph 3801 (c. 45–54 CE) (*AGRW* 160)
GRA 1 49 = *IG* II² 1369 (*AGRW* 8)
GRA I 90 = *IByzantion* 31 (c. 85–96 CE) (*AGRW* 68)
GLSkythia III 35

Jerome
Ep. Heb. *Letter to Hebedia*

John Chrysostom
Jos. Asen. *Joseph and Aseneth*

Josephus
Ag. Ap. *Contra Apion*
Ant. *Antiquities*
J. W. *Jewish Wars*
Jub. *Jubilees*
Life *The Life of Flavius Josephus*

Justin Martyr
1 Apol. *First Apology*
Dial. *Dialogues with Trypho*

Livy
Hist. Rom. *Roman History*

Martial
Epigr. *Epigrams*

Mishnah (*m.*)
m. Ber. *Berakot*
m. Sanh *Sanhedrin*

Musinius, Rufus
Frag. 13 *Fragment 13*

Origen
Cels. *Contra Celsum* (*Against Celsus*)
De Princ. *De Principiis* (*First Principles*)
Pesh. *Peshitta*

Pirqe R. El. *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*

Philo
Conf. *De confusione linguarum* (*On the Confusion of Tongues*)

Flacc.	*In Flaccum* (*Against Flaccum*)
Vit. Mos.	*De vita Mosis* (*On the Life of Moses*)
Mut. Nom.	*De mutatione nominum (On Changes of Names)*
De post. Caini.	*De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* (*On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel*)
Vit. Cont .	*De Vita Contemplativa (On a Contemplative Life)*
Plato	
Crat.	*Cratylus*
Poet.	*Poetics*
Rep.	*Republic*
Pliny the Younger	
Ep.	*Epistolae*
Plutarch	
Mor.	*Moralia*
Cam.	*Camillus*
Pseudepigrapha	
Apoc. Ab.	*Apocalypse of Abraham*
2 Apoc. Bar.	*Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*
T. Ab.	*Testament of Abraham*
T. Isaac	*Testament of Isaac*
T. Job	*Testament of Job*
T. Levi	*Testament of Levi*
Seneca	
Ep.	*Epistulae morales*
Seutonius	
Jul.	*Divus Julius*
Vit Caes.	*The Twelve Caesars*
Shepherd of Hermas	
Mand.	*Mandates*
Vis.	*Visions*
Sir.	*Sirach*
Tg. Ps.-J.	*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*
Tatian	
Or.	*Oration*
Tacitus	

Hist.	*Historiae*
Wis.	*Wisdom of Solomon*
Xenophon	
Hist. Graec.	*The History of Greece*

Inscriptions

AGRW	*Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, edited by Richard Ascough, Philip A. Harland and John S. Kloppenborg (Waco, TX: De Gruyter/Baylor University Press, 2012).

Introduction to Jude and 2 Peter

General Introduction

No longer can we maintain the oft-quoted declaration made about three decades ago, that the so-called Petrine epistles (and Jude) are the most neglected books in the New Testament.[1] True, the Gospels and the writings of Paul continue to dominate Biblical and Theological Studies, but the last fifteen to twenty years have seen a steady stream of publication of commentaries, journal articles, and conference papers that have increased the profile of General Epistle studies in the discipline. Such growth has even warranted the formation of a "James, Peter and Jude" section at the annual Society of Biblical Literature, which has brought a good discussion platform and engendered the publication of several significant studies including *Reading Jude with New Eyes*, *Reading 2 Peter with New Eyes*, and *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students*.[2] While the collective amount of publications in this area of the NT are only a fraction of volumes produced in the studies of Jesus and Paul, they nevertheless represent a positive trend.

My cursory count of stand-alone commentaries on 2 Peter and Jude (or James and Jude) has unearthed no less than twenty-five in the last twenty years, making an average of at least a commentary a year in the last quarter century alone.[3] That is not counting commentaries in single

1. Rowston 1975: 554–63; Cf. Elliott 1976: 243–54, in 1 Peter. Elliot's own commentary on 1 Peter (2000) with over seventy pages of bibliographic material is evidence of interest in the letter had sustained, perhaps instigated by his earlier comments about the neglect.

2. Davids and Webb 2008; Watson and Webb 2010; Mason and Martin 2014.

3. Recent influx of studies on 2 Peter and Jude as reflected in the number of commentaries that have been produced, has brought some long-needed focus on the letters but this does not preclude the fact that in comparison with studies on the Gospels and Pauline literature, the numbers on these letters pale. The list includes—Grundmann 1986; Paulsen 1992; Neyrey 1993; Chester and Martin 1994; Holmer 1994; Krimmer and Holland 1994; Vögtle 1994; Moo 1996; Horrell 1998; G. Bray 2000; Schelkle 2002; Kraftchick

volumes or stand-alone monographs, of specific aspects of the letters, or edited volumes. Needless to say then, the question of whether to write another commentary is indeed a genuine one, and one that I hope I can justify in this particular case. Even with this surge in publications, there have hardly been any works in the area that have sought to tap the methodological, theological, and cultural diversity that has been necessitated into the Biblical Studies discipline by postmodernism (Aichele 2012 is an exception). Hopefully, my maiden attempt in this commentary to integrate postcolonial readings will pave the way for more research that highlights the diversity of the discipline.

Commentaries in Biblical Studies, for the large part, have remained the domain of Euro-American white male commentators who over the years have directed their inquiries of the Bible to matters they deem relevant to the text. Unfortunately, these were driven *and* constrained by the particular concerns of these individuals' Euro-American worldviews, cultures, religious flavors, and positions of power, authority and privilege. Mostly, these *a priori* concerns were unacknowledged, and even when they were, these commentators assumed their views to be universal and representative of all of humanity. Since the western culture has been dominant in world affairs, and has cast its influence over many different parts of the globe through colonialism and other forms of foreign occupations, the western authors have tended to assume that they spoke for *all* peoples or that their interpretations captured all a text could say.

This rather myopic perspective on interpretation has meant that western scholars have controlled the discourse in Biblical Studies and have set the agendas and questions to be addressed, oblivious to the diversity and difference that readers from different cultures would bring to the interpretive process. The advent of postmodernism, has cast a long shadow on this form of thinking, making it plain that the role of the author/interpreter is never neutral, and that all knowledge is the product of the speaker's background, upbringing, culture, gender, wealth, language, privilege or lack thereof, power both political and social. Therefore, one cannot claim to speak for "all" people. This is also true of the writing of commentaries. They represent the writers' points of view, shaped and influenced by their background—cultural, historical, social, economic, educational, etc. One

2002; Schreiner 2003; Brosend II 2004; Skaggs 2004; Davids 2006; Reese 2007; Senior and Harrington 2008; Green 2008; Witherington III 2008; Powers 2010; Vinson 2010; Donelson 2010; Keating 2011; González 2011; Aichele 2012; Painter and deSilva 2012; Watson and Callan 2012.

who writes from a position of privilege, power, authority, and influence cannot claim to represent the views of the persons who, on the other side of the equation, are colonized, oppressed, enslaved, powerless, and otherwise subjugated. The respective points of view are colored by their respective social locations, political privilege (or lack thereof), and freedom (political, social, economic, etc.) that they have available.

This commentary series (NCCS), with its deliberate international, multicultural, multiracial representation of scholars has sought to correct that omission, albeit in its limited way. However small that gesture is, it is a significant recognition of the shifting composition of the community of biblical scholarship from the previous dominance of Euro-American white males, to one where there is an increasing significant presence of women, and of Latino/a, African-American, African, Asian, and Chinese biblical scholars. Each of these groups brings different questions to the text that previous commentaries, written largely by Euro-American white biblical scholars may have completely failed to address or may have done so from a biased (mostly privileged) position that did not cater to the needs of those in very different socio-cultural-politico-economic positions.

In a sense, one can speak of the Euro-America readings of the Bible as *top-down* readings (reading from positions of privilege, power, influence, etc.) versus the more recent crop of scholars from the Global South who represent a more *bottom-up* (reading from the position of the poor, colonized, enslaved, subjugated, etc.). Inevitably, the latter scholars also emanate from regions formally colonized or otherwise occupied, by western nations and are invariably shaped by that encounter. Much as the Enlightenment shaped the western civilization, colonialism and slavery shaped the lives of the communities over which these exercises of domination and subjugation were implemented. For this reason, the tendency to apply forms of reading that reflect a postcolonial vantage for the latter scholars seems inevitable for the non-western scholar.[4]

Another important factor is that there are constant advances in knowledge that may necessitate the revisiting of issues in the Bible thus justifying the need for new or updated commentaries. For example, the last ten years or so have seen the development of a robust discussion in historical studies about first century Greco-Roman associations (and small groups) within the Empire, which I have argued in this commentary can enhance our understanding of the communities of Jude and 2 Peter within

4. Dube et al. 2012: 1–28.

their first century setting, for they seem to fit quite well into the category of these associations. Comparisons of structure, language, and practices between associations and Jude and 2 Peter imply a world where borrowing was common and puts in new relief certain features of these New Testament writings.

That is why the editors of this New Covenant Commentary Series have sought to put together a commentary series that is as internationally representative as it is possible, in order to allow different voices, from different parts of the world to air their thought about how they read and understand the New Testament.

Communities Of Jude And 2 Peter As Greco-Roman Associations

Beyond family gatherings, associations were the most common unofficial community gatherings in antiquity.[5] They formed around common interests such as funeral guilds, labor groups, etc., and most involved regular informal gatherings that included meals, fraternizing and drinking. Philip Harland defines associations thus:

> In broad terms, associations, synagogues, and congregations were small, non-compulsory groups that could draw their membership from several possible social network connections within civic settings. All could be either relatively homogeneous or heterogeneous with regard to social and gender composition; all engaged in regular meetings that involved a variety of interconnected social, ritual, and other purposes, one group differing from the next in the specifics of activities; all depended in various ways upon commonly accepted social conventions such as benefaction for financial support (e.g., a meeting-place) and the development of leadership structures; and all could engage in at least some degree of external contacts, both positive and negative, with other individuals, benefactors, groups or institutions in the civic context.[6]

In a subsequent study, Harland points out that these gathering were as much about socializing as they were about honoring benefactors, both human and divine. As such, the modern distinction made between social and religious aspects of associations is patently mistaken, and that "all associations

5. Kobel 2011: 280.
6. Harland 2003: 211.

were in some sense religious. . ."[7] Reading the letters of Jude and 2 Peter as products of similar small groups will hopefully allow us to see them in a light that they have not quite been seen before. Since these letters reflect the writings of social groups that were part of the minority groups within the Greco-Roman empire, I have sought to read them in the context of Greco-Roman associations to highlight aspects they commonly share and how these in turn provide a window of understanding the rhetoric of these Christian letters.[8]

Both Jude and 2 Peter mention their communities' regular meal gatherings or "love feasts" as the prime target of the infiltrators to propagate their untoward teachings (Jude 12; 2 Peter 2:13). Meal gatherings were a shared commonality with other Greco-Roman small groups, and played a key role in the structuring of associations and so it mattered who controlled them.[9] These meal gatherings served as social institutions that functioned as both social and religious assemblies with the religious entwined with the communal, making the occasions without question both civic and religious.[10] It is in this context that one must read both Jude and 2 Peter allowing for the general analysis of Greco-Roman associations to inform our interpretive process of the letters.[11] Indeed, it is not a novel claim on my part since indications are that contemporaries viewed and understood early Christian gatherings in terms of associations, while some of the early Christians communities also viewed themselves in such terms.[12] We shall examine especially the tendency in associations to use stereotyping as a form of self defense against perceived enemies and also the importance for associations to maintain what was considered acceptable "banquet decorum."

7. Harland 2009: 26–27.

8. The term "voluntary associations" used by some scholars to distinguish between Greco-Roman associations whose membership was by means of birth or civic or religious responsibility, in contrast to the purely voluntary groups such as trade guilds. However, it is clear now that even such groups as the synagogues and some trade groups obligated membership, meaning the notion of "voluntary" could not be held too strictly.

9. Harland 2003: 2. "From a bird's-eye view of culture in the Roman Empire, Jewish Synagogues and Christian assemblies stand together as *minority cultural groups*, primarily due to their monotheism (and devotions to the same God) in a polytheistic culture" (emphasis original).

10. Smith 2003: 1–12.

11. Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996; Harland 2003; Harland 2009.

12. Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996; Harland 2003: 211.

Stereotyping in Associations, and in Jude and 2 Peter

According to Harland, language common to many of the Greco-Roman associations and groups typically stereotypes and vilifies perceived opponents as *sexual perverts*, *cannibals/barbaric*, and *murderers*, all with the aim of shoring up internal self definition and social identity at the expense of an opponent's.[13] These stereotypes therefore, had no intention of reflecting any actual historical practices.[14] In Jude and 2 Peter, the opponents are characterized using similar categories of sexual perversion (Jude 4, 18; 2 Pet 1:4, etc.), "wild brutes" (Jude 10, 19; 2 Pet 1:9; 2:10, etc.), and "blasphemy/ungodly" (Jude 8–10; 2 Pet 3–4) resulting in death (2 Pet 1:10, 2:2, 10, etc.). Also, the focus on value in 2 Peter retains parallels with the purity focus of the Greco-Roman stereotype.[15] Drawing from Harland's conclusion about certain characteristics of the stereotyping language evident in the Greco-Roman group dynamics, "novels, histories and ancient ethnographic material," the characterization of the opponents in Jude and 2 Peter therefore closely parallels that which is found in the Greco-Roman discourses on identity formation and boundary structuring.[16]

Placed in the wider Greco-Roman association context, an analysis of the group dynamics in Jude and 2 Peter would hopefully put in new light, and further clarify, the harsh tone that the letters reflect, and which remains a disquieting aspect of the letters for most readers. Following Duane F. Watson, the authors of Jude and 2 Peter were using ancient rhetoric, that involved "artificial proof" (*entechnoi*), in which case, "the rhetor seeks to show his own and his client's ethos in the best light and his opponent's in the worst."[17] This parallel with association language however, does not preclude Jude's and 2 Peter's clear agenda of iterating their conviction about the centrality of the communities' faith in God through Jesus. In fact, it is in this regard that we will be able to witness their rhetorical inventiveness.

13. Ibid., 59. Cf. also Smith and Taussig 2013: 73–86.

14. Harland 2009: 174. "These . . . arise from a common stockpile of stereotypes of the threatening other, and there is no need to look for any basis in the reality of actual practices."

15. Jude, however, may have maintained the caricature of the infiltrators as "murderers" and proponents of violence directly by associating them with the likes of Cain, Balaam and Korah (v. 11).

16. Ibid., 161.

17. Watson 1988: 15.

Such rhetoric not only seeks to paint the perceived enemy in as much a negative light as possible, it does not necessarily claim to be historically accurate in its portrayal of the perceived enemy. If the situation is one where rival groups are competing to persuade the same population about who is right, then the more the rhetoric escalates, increasingly becoming *less* realistic, and more stereotypical, in how each group portrays the other. It is less likely then to find in such rhetoric accurate representation of the opponents' views. Instead, one is likely to find language that is characteristic of stereotyping of the Other, by portraying them as less desirable, dependable, lovable, acceptable, and even, less than human. This is probably even more so if the competing groups share a lot in common, meaning they have to find whatever they think is distinct about themselves and contrast it, as starkly as possible, with the competing group.

Greco-Roman associations, which included officially recognized groups, guilds, and gatherings of people who shared common trades such as funeral support groups in Roman Empire, provide us with a glimpse of how conflict and competing identities frequently turned to stereotyping as means to fend off any competing claims to the group's distinct identity, membership or boundary. As Harland explains,

> Although rules may often be drawn up to deal with problems that were actually encountered, the regulations suggest that "good order"—as defined by such groups—remained a prevalent value in many banqueting settings. So *we should not imagine that stories of wild transgression are descriptive of real activities* in immigrant or cultural minority groups, or in other associations.[18]

And as C. McGarty, V. Y. Yzerbyt, R. Spears, elaborate, "These beliefs [stereotypes] represent a necessary precondition for collective action such as protest as well as for regulation and law enforcement. Their argument is that stereotypes form to enable action. They are *political weapons* that are used in the attempt to achieve and resist social change."[19] All these elements are present in the way, for example, 2 Peter portrays the false-teachers and Jude caricatures the infiltrators.

There is no doubt that in both Jude and 2 Peter we are dealing with the three issues that Harland points out concerning minority groups' interactions—rivalry between author and infiltrators/"false-teachers," identity construction (who is the true representation of the teachings of Jesus?), and

18. Harland 2009: 172 (emphasis added).

19. McGarty et al. 2002: 15 (emphasis added).

group-boundaries (who rightfully belongs to the Jesus community?). These are the issues at the heart of the construction of the virtues in 2 Peter 1:5–7, and in the characterization of vices of the "false-teachers" and infiltrators in Jude. If the virtues represent the "good order," for example, the list of vices in 2 Peter 2, represent the dangerous inversions of this order.[20]

When dealing with their opponents, both Jude and 2 Peter are therefore steeped in Greco-Roman rhetorical banter that regularly employed the use of stock stereotyping when verbally jousting with known opponents. Even the primary characterization of the opponents by 2 Peter as false-teachers (*pseudodidaskaloi*), for example, must be tempered by the realization that this is still part of the negative caricature of opponents that says little, if anything, about whether they are actual teachers, and what they actually teach, or even how they in fact behaved.[21] It is largely an effort to discredit the opponents and not necessarily intended to be an accurate description of their teachings or behavior.[22]

Banqueting Protocols in Associations and in Jude and 2 Peter

A second concern in association life was the place of decorum without which the gathering would easily devolve into chaos, a not-so-unusual result for many associations. Therefore, regulations were frequently put in place to guide behavior in the gatherings and heavy penalties meted against any that would exhibit anti-decorum behavior, including excommunication from the group. As Harland explains:

> Evidently, banqueting practices played an important role in discourses of identity, in which certain authors, representative in some ways of their cultural group, engaged in the process of

20. Harland in Smith and Taussig 2012: 73–86.

21. In contrast, for example, Bauckham's (1983) discussion of the opponents in Jude/2 Peter seems to take for granted the stereotypes as actual characterization of opponents' behavior upon which he then builds a portrait of them as itinerant teachers/preachers (11–13).

22. Wisdom and Philo also use similar language to caricature non-Jews (Harland 2009: 177): ". . . we are witnessing the expression of Judean or Christian identities in relation to the associations in a way that illustrates the internalization of external categorizations…" The Psalms in the Hebrew Bible reflect the tendency to use such rhetoric to discredit opponents, and calls for their divine destruction (e.g., Ps 3:7; 22:16, 20; 44:15; 69:21–28; 143:12).

> defining his or her own group as civilized by alienating another as barbarous.[23]

At stake in Jude's and 2 Peter's accusations are also issues of decorum and order, rituals and banquets.[24] The behavior displayed by the opponents in both letters flies in the face of the established social practices that govern all Greco-Roman banquets and social gatherings. Both epistles make reference to "love feasts" (2 Peter 2:13—*syneuōzocheomai*: Jude 12—*agapais*, *syneuchomai*) for the communities into which the false-teachers and infiltrators, respectively, had introduced their untoward and scandalous behaviors and teachings. Both authors find fault with their opponents, alleging that their out of control shenanigans represent that which is "anti-banquet" behavior which reflects the image, to any outsider, of deplorable and out-of-control gatherings that are not fit to be classified within the category of civil organizations.

Similar concerns are also highlighted in contemporary Jewish writings on gatherings, giving us a glimpse of how such concerns were addressed, providing a larger context for Jude and 2 Peter. Josephus *Ant*. 14:214–16 (c. 93 CE), for example, reports that Julius Caesar, in a letter to magistrates, allowed the Jews in Rome "to collect money for common meals (*sundeipna*) and sacred rites," even though it does not mention the regularity of such gatherings. Detailed meal gatherings and their decorum are outlined in the Dead Sea Scrolls writings (1QS 6.2–13 and 1QSa 2.17–21), while Philo compares what he considers the superior and civil Jewish therapeutae gatherings with those of Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, which he portrays as tending to be filled with out of control drinking, violence, and recklessness that leads to "frenzy and madness" (*Vit. Cont*. 40–41; *Flacc*. 4: 136–37). Tacitus, *Hist*. 5.5.2 (c. 115 CE), on the other hand, accuses the Jews of supposed lurid and unlawful sexual practices in their gatherings.[25]

Similarly, the authors of Jude and 2 Peter are determined to expose the barbaric image of the anti-banquet attributed to their opponents, and which they fear may expose the entire group to accusations of barbarism and ritual uncleanness that reflect lack of order and piety.[26] In contrast, they strive to define their own communities in association terms that align them with the respectable and recognized Greco-Roman associations. This

23. Crook and Harland 2007: 74.
24. Harland 2009: 171.
25. Alikin 2010: 28.
26. Harland 2013: 74–75.

seems to be the role played by the list of virtues laid out in 2 Peter (1:5–7), and exhortations for proper conduct in Jude (3, 20–24) which provide the foundation for the social structure of their communities. Granted, however, that the communities of Jude and 2 Peter do remain distinct in some ways from their Greco-Roman counterparts, they still mirror them in their striving to fit neatly in the larger society's expectations and concerns about religious group structures and behavioral patterns.[27] By indicting the opponents as anti-banqueters and anti-moralists, Jude and 2 Peter seek to conversely portray their own communities as models of association life within the Roman Empire, even as they seek to distinguish them as structured around the Lordship of Jesus Christ and not Caesar.[28]

So, while locating Jude and 2 Peter in their first-century setting, I do also hope that in my analysis of these two small but important New Testament writings, my own readings tempered by my sensitivities to matters hermeneutical, postcolonial, liberationist, and African will further contribute to the conversation on how best to interpret these writings in our day and age, while paying close attention to the first century Greco-Roman context of their origin.

Jude

Authorship

Today there are essentially two primary positions on the question of Jude's authorship: advocates for an early authorship usually arguing for Jude the brother of Jesus ("a servant of Jesus and the brother of James"),[29] and in contrast, advocates for a pseudepigraphical authorship (later author writing in the name of Jude).[30] The latter position rejects the authenticity of the letter's own claim in Jude 1. These two positions are equally balanced and both have committed defenders within the guild. Arguments made by Bauckham over twenty years ago, remain at the heart of the defense for the authenticity position.[31]

27. Alikin 2010: 34n73; Charles 1998: 55–73.

28. Beard et al. 1998: 337.

29. Bauckham 1983: 14–16; Green 1987: 179–82; Davids 2006: 9–28, while leaning towards Jude is non-committal: Green 2008: 46.

30. Reicke 1964: 190; Kelly 1969: 233–34; Neyrey 1993: 29–31; Ehrman 2011: 189.

31. Bauckham 1983: 14–16; idem 1990: 177–81.

For these defenders of authenticity, the process of elimination is used in order to arrive at one of at least eight people named Jude (Judah, Judas) in the NT as the author. The name Jude was fairly common given its origin with one of the patriarchs of Israel, "Judah," and is one of the most common names in the NT, besides the reference to "Judas Iscariot."[32] The early church seemed to assume that the Jude in the epistle, who identifies himself as the brother of James, is one of the disciples ("Jude son of James" listed in Luke 6:15; John 14:22; Acts 1:13) or a brother of Jesus listed in the Gospels with other Jesus' siblings (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). A third identification was with the apostle Thaddeus (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18), while a fourth identified Jude with disciple Thomas (whose name means twin) who some of the Syrian church traditions identified as a "twin" of Jesus (*Acts of Thomas* 11; 31; 39; Book of Thomas 138. 4, 7, 19).

While there are others called Jude in the NT (Judah father of Simeon Luke 3:30; Judas the Galilean Acts 5:37; Judas of Damascus in Acts 9:11; Judas Barsabbas Acts 15:22–32) none of them is identified as having a brother called James. As for the disciple in Luke 6:15, he is called a "son of James" and not brother, making him and others mentioned above as unlikely candidates of identification with the letter's author. The only person in the Gospels who has a sibling called James is Jude the brother of Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). The James mentioned here can also be identified with the one mentioned in Acts (12:17; 15:13) who is also called "the brother of the Lord" in Galatians (2:9-12). Mention by Paul (1 Cor 9:5) of "the Lord's brothers" as traveling missionaries strengthens the idea that the Lord's brothers (James and Jude) were well known in the early Church.[33]

Early acceptance of the letter by the Church was followed by challenges, primarily for its use of *1 Enoch* and other biblical writings.[34] The Western church accepted it early, but the Syrian church hesitated (e.g., exclusion in the fourth Syrian *Peshitta* manuscript together with 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Revelation) for a while to include it in its canon. But it is probably Jude's reference to the non-canonical writing of *1 Enoch* in Jude 14–15, that made it suspect in the early period, rather than questions of the author's authenticity.[35] While accepting Jude as authentic, Origen (second

32. Green 2008: 1. At least forty-five of the mentions are in reference to Judah the patriarch (Matt 1:2–3; 2:6; Luke 3:33–34; Heb 7:14; 8:8; Rev 5:5; 7:5) or the land of Judah (Luke 1:39).

33. Bauckham 1990: 57–60. E.g., *Gos. Thom.* 12.

34. Mason and Martin 2014: 10.

35. Green 2008: 5.

century), Tertullian (second century), Jerome (fourth century), Dydimus of Alexandria (fourth century) all point out to the questioning raised about its use of *1 Enoch*, but nevertheless defend this use even to the point of arguing for recognition of 1 Enoch as Scripture. Against this argument, Augustine (fourth century), while accepting Jude as authentic, argued against *1 Enoch*'s acceptance as he recognized it to be pseudepigraphical.[36]

Arguments for pseudepigraphical authorship of Jude only gained prominence largely following the rise of the German biblical interpretation in the mid-nineteenth century, especially following the work of F. C. Baur and the Tübingen school who argued for a late date of the book's authorship than had traditionally been assumed. The basis of this argument was primarily an assumption that the letter of Jude (and 2 Peter) evidenced "early Catholic" teachings that focused less on eschatological expectations and more on establishing long term Christian communities. While grouping writings together under a common theme, such as early Catholic, may be useful in highlighting similarities in such works, it unfortunately also has the tendency to obscure and eradicate the individual characteristics of each writing in the group. Combined with this was the perception that Jude's opponents exemplified Gnostic tendencies in beliefs; available evidence, however, suggests that Gnosticism as a theological teaching did not exist until the second century CE.

Bauckham made it clear that the "early Catholic" classification was inconsistent with the letter's internal evidence including a strong eschatological nature (14–15), his classification of the letter as what he calls "a Jewish *midrash*" (which reflects a Jewish Palestinian provenance for the letter), and the lack of a record of Church offices such as elders, deacons or bishops.[37] These factors, among others, convinced Bauckham that the benefit of the doubt lies with those who maintain the authenticity of Jude while the burden of proof is with those who think otherwise. Davids concurs, and after a lengthy analysis of the evidence finds that ". . . none of the explanations why someone would use Jude as a pseudonym is convincing."[38] It therefore makes more sense to maintain the authenticity of the Jude in this regard.

36. Ibid.

37. Bauckham 1983: 14–16.

38. Davids 2006: 28.

Date

The same split that we see in the arguments about authorship happens with regard to the dating of the letter. Scholars who maintain the authenticity arguments date the letter fairly early, either as early as the 50s/60s or 80s CE, while those who think it is pseudepigraphical date it as late as the 90s CE. The guideline dates that serve as points of reference are the well established date of the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, and the traditional dating of the death of Jude's brother James as 62 CE. And since we have no record of Jude's death, these serve as the plausible references to the period within which the letter was constructed. Jude's reference to himself as "the brother of James" (Jude 1) would assume he was still alive and influential in the early Christian community (even though the reference does not require that James be alive) and would make most sense if that is the authority with which he seeks to align himself in getting his letter accorded the respect he desires. If that is the case then, one would assume that the letter would have been written before 62 CE.

Relationship to 2 Peter also assists in trying to situate the letter, depending on when one dates 2 Peter. Since 2 Peter utilizes and replicates a substantial amount of the material in Jude, one must assume that there was enough time for the letter of Jude to circulate among the churches and be familiar to the author of 2 Peter but, at the same time, not be well known by his audience who presumably did not know about Jude. That would be the reason that the author of 2 Peter would have included such a fair amount of the letter of Jude in his own letter while also performing some significant editorial work on it.

Eschatology

The issue of eschatology is important in both letters, but more pronounced in 2 Peter where the scoffers questioned what they perceived to be a delayed return of Jesus (*Parousia*) in 2 Pet 3:8–10. Whether they had misunderstood the timeline as presented earlier by some Pauline letters or they had simply misunderstood the anticipation of the earlier apostles, these scoffers referred to this perceived delay to argue that the message they had received about the Gospel could not be sustained since none of the expected or predicted events had taken place. Second Peter then turned to Psalm 90 to unearth a philosophical response to this accusation: "To the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years, like a day."

Opponents

Over the years, the opponents in Jude have been conflated with the *pseudo-didaskaloi* (false-teachers) in 2 Peter, even though nowhere in Jude are they referred to as false-teachers.[39] However, a close analysis of the two letters reveals significant differences between the opponents in Jude and the false-teachers in Jude. In Jude, the opponents seem to have emanated from the community and there still seems to be hope for them to be saved, while in 2 Peter the false teachers seem to have crossed the red line and are beyond redemption.[40] While in Jude the opponents are already in the community, 2 Peter is ambiguous in reference to the presence of false-teachers as he speaks of their arrival in the future tense (2:1).

Identity of Jude's opponents has ranged from "Gnoctics"[41] to "antinomian/ libertines,"[42] besides the letter's own reference to them as "intruders"/"infiltrators," and "scoffers." The abundance of stereotyping language in Jude's rhetoric—vilifying the opponents—makes it virtually impossible to make any identification based on the described characterization possible.[43] Recent arguments have sought to connect the opponents with Jewish libertines, perhaps those reflected in Acts 15 and in Paul's letter to the Galatians, who seem to have misunderstood Paul's teaching on freedom.[44] The judiciousness of Thomas Schreiner to avoid any attempts at identifying the opponents with any labels is a more commendable perspective.[45] Overall, Gene Green is probably most accurate when he states that the identity of the opponents "cannot be fixed with any precision" and there

39. Kelly 1969: 231; Green 1987: 51. E.g., Bauckham (1983) constantly refers to them as false-teachers.

40. Mason and Martin 2014: 10.

41. Sidebottom 1967: 75; Kelly 1969: 231, calls it "incipient Gnosticism"; See Green (2008: 23–25) for arguments against Gnostic identification.

42. Rowston 1971: 31. Bauckham 1983: 41; Idem 1990: 166–68.

43. Thúren 1997: 451–67.

44. Painter 2013: 5. "Who are the opponents? I propose that the opponents are Jewish and particularly affiliated with Jewish leaders in Palestine, probably Jerusalem. His characterization of the perpetrators comes based on their actions, which I will focus on in a moment. Why Jewish leaders? I would first reiterate that the letter is thoroughly Jewish in its focus and uses not only the Hebrew Scriptures but at least two other Jewish writings of the period, *1 Enoch* and Assumption of Moses."

45. Schreiner 2003: 411–16.

is no sufficient data to positively identify them with any known specific philosophical groups from antiquity.[46]

2 Peter

Date and Authorship

The author in this letter introduces himself as "Peter, slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James," and goes on to present elements in his writing that would portray a person intimately familiar with the life of Peter the apostle (talks of impending death [1:14] prophesied by the Lord), awareness of an earlier letter he wrote (3:1), familiar with the Gospels (reference to Jesus' Transfiguration—1:17–18, described in Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2–7; Luke 9:28–35) and also familiar with the writings of Paul (3:15). All these personal anecdotes would usually provide sufficient grounds on which to attribute the letter to the self-identified author. However, in the case of 2 Peter, it has not proved to be conclusive and, in fact, has become the premise of counter-arguments against a Petrine authorship.[47]

Arguments about dating are closely related to those on authorship. Basically, the positions seem to fall into two categories; of Petrine authorship (including use of *amanuensis*), which would give it an early pre-70 CE dating, versus pseudepigraphic writing which puts it between 70 CE and 125 CE. But if it was written before Peter's death then it has to be dated before 64 CE. This letter is perhaps the one NT writing to which most modern scholars overwhelmingly assign pseudepigraphic authorship. From very early on in the life of the church, the authenticity of this book has been questioned, albeit for differing reasons. While the letter very clearly states its author as "Simeon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), it does not seem to have a clear historical trail among the canonical writings for the first two centuries of the Church. The first time the letter is clearly mentioned by name is by Origen at the beginning of the third century, who though clearly citing it as Scripture, explained that it was still a disputed writing within the Christian circles.[48]

46. Green 2008: 26.
47. Ibid., 150.
48. Green 1987: 20.

Nonetheless, studies have shown that there may be plausible references of 2 Peter in earlier writings such as *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. 70–150),[49] 1 *Clement* (ca. 95 CE), 2 *Clement* (ca. 135 CE) and *Shepherd of Hermas* (ca. 120 CE).[50] Third century Church historian Eusebius (ca. 260–340 CE) says that it was by then accepted as Scripture even though he himself raises concerns about its authenticity.[51] Jerome (*Epist*. 12.11) was the first to offer the possibility that 2 Peter was written by a secretary (*amanuensis*) giving its distinct style. Their initial rejection (or lack of mention) in the Syrian Church of 2 Peter (and Jude) may have been more to do with their references to angels, a subject the Syrian Church may have been eager to quell since it had dominated Jewish angelology in the region.[52]

In the Reformation period (sixteenth century) there were also misgivings about the letter; Luther is said to have included it, among other NT writings whose authenticity he is famously known to have questioned (*antilegomena*), Calvin cautiously accepted it stating, "If it be received as canonical, then we must allow Peter to be its author . . .", while Erasmus rejected it as a forgery.[53] However, while doubts had been raised about its provenance, it was not until a German scholar named Grotius in the seventeenth century dated the book to the period of the Roman Emperor Trajan (98–117 CE), and altogether eliminated the possibility of it having been written by Simeon Peter (the apostle who died under Nero in 64 CE, as it claims in its salutation).[54]

Over time, primary concerns raised about (and responses to) authenticity issues in 2 Peter have included the following:

1. *Stylistic and theological differences with 1 Peter* (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*. 3. 3. 1, 4; 3.25.3, 4)—At least from the time of Jerome (ca. 345–420), it has been adduced that 1 Peter's Greek is excellent and dignified while that of 2 Peter is flamboyant and cumbersome. Yet Peter in the Gospels and Acts is presented as uneducated lowly fisherman (Matt 4:18–19; Acts 4:13). A common response given is that each letter could have

49. Picirelli 1988: 65–74.

50. Green 1987: 20. Bauckham 1983: 162: "There is better evidence than is sometimes admitted for the fact that 2 Peter existed in the second century."

51. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*.: 3.3.1–4; 25.3; 6. 25 .11: "Peter has left behind one acknowledged epistle, and perhaps a second; for it is questioned."

52. Green 1987: 21.

53. Calvin 1885: 363.

54. McNamara 1960: 13.

been written by a different secretary giving the distinctive styles.[55] While a linguistic analysis shows that 2 Peter follows an "Asiatic style of writing" with an Aramaic thought background,[56] it is generally agreed that the sizes of both letters are not large enough to warrant sufficient proof of difference.[57] These make reasonable explanation to the differences between the letters.

2. *Dependence on Jude whose earliest plausible date is 60–70 CE*. The earliest the letter of Jude would have been completed is between 60 CE and 70 CE. Thus, 2 Peter must be later since it contains a majority of Jude. And if Jude's provenance is Palestine and 2 Peter's is Rome, we must allow for a period of time for Jude to get to Rome for the author of 2 Peter to be familiar with it. A plausible response here is that 2 Peter was written not too long after Jude's letter which 2 Peter's audience were not familiar with. So the author of 2 Peter would have a copy of the letter, but his audience would not know that it exists and that is why he finds no problem both quoting it extensively and also altering its content for his audience. However, a further objection would be, if this is Peter's letter why does he find the need to copy Jude's letter so extensively? If as many scholars are now convinced, Jude's letter is authentic from Jesus' brother, then it would explain why Peter would consider it significant enough to replicate in his own letter.[58] And as has been shown, 2 Peter does not simply copy Jude, but has consciously utilized Jude and integrated Jude into his own arguments.[59]
3. *Reference to the first Christian generation as "fathers" falling asleep* (3:4), probably indicating they had already died by the time of its writing, and thus unlikely to have been written by Peter. The term "fathers," however, was more commonly used in reference to biblical ancestors rather than apostles (Heb 1:1; Rom 9:5).[60] Support of this understanding also comes from the author's response by referring to

55. Jerome *Ep. Heb.* 120.11. Rejection of this reasoning states that if the secretaries had such freedom to construct the letters, then the letters cannot be rightfully called Peter's. However, this objection is driven by our modern understanding of authorship.

56. Green 1987: 23–26. This apparent use of Attic Greek style may also lend support to a late dating of the letter.

57. Green 2008: 145.

58. Ibid., 144.

59. Davids 2006: 145.

60. Green 2008: 147.

the flood as an example of God's intervention in history—it would not make sense if the history envisioned here is that of the Church.[61] The term, therefore, can easily have referred to the OT prophets who had prophesied the initial *parousia* of Jesus.

4. *Reference to a delayed "parousia* (revelation) of the Lord" referring to the second coming of Jesus (Matt 24:3; 1 Thess 2:19; 4:15), indicating that some long time had passed since the time of the apostle initial ministry to the audience. In response, Webb has argued, it is not simply the denial of the second coming that the opponents represent in their questioning but the concept of *parousia* at any period in time.[62] M. Green also points out that the greatest disappointment of the delayed *parousia* would have been reflected more prominently in mid first century than in the second century where the effects of the shock had waned.[63]

5. *Reference to Paul's letters as a "collection*" and to the author's equating them to other "scripture" (3:15–16).[64] The tradition or copying and sharing of Paul's letters in the early Church may have been encouraged by Paul himself (Col 4:16) and so should not be a surprise if the author of 2 Peter is familiar with Paul's writings. But nothing in the passage here assumes a "Collection" of corpus, as proponents of this argument assume.[65] Furthermore, in the Council of Jerusalem, Peter and Paul are united against the instigators (Acts 15:7–11).

6. *Reading 2 Peter (and Jude) as if it is responding to the second-century threat of Gnosticism*. While 2 Peter does favor the term "knowledge" (*gnosis*) from which we get the term Gnosticism (a form of early philosophy that emphasized "special *secret* knowledge" as the means to salvation), 2 Peter's use of the term does not fully conform to Gnostic thinking. Recent rhetorical studies of the letter however have shown that, rather than focusing on fending off Gnosticism, 2 Peter's primary concern is with *ethics* as reflected in the list of virtues (1:5–7), and the

61. Green 1987: 34–35.

62. Webb 2012: 476. ". . . the issue at hand is *not* a questioning of the *parousia* in the future because of its delay, but rather a rejection of the truth of the *parousia* itself because there is no evidence of divine intervention and judgment in the past" (emphasis original).

63. Green 1987: 35–36.

64. McNamara 1960: 13–14.

65. Green 1987: 38.

pointed inquiry in 3:11 ("Given that all things will dissolved, *what kind of lives ought you to live*?"), driven by eschatological concerns.[66]

7. *Identifying 2 Peter as a "Testament" genre*, has been used as grounds on which to argue that it is pseudepigraphical just like other Testamentary writings.[67] While this argument has been well developed by Bauckham and is widely accepted by scholars, it has significant weaknesses. In fact, as I will argue below in the commentary, you can have testamentary material in a piece of writing, without converting the entire document into a "Testament."[68] Also, 2 Peter does not follow all the conventions of a Testamentary writing.[69] A strong argument against pseudeipgraphical authorship is the early church's vigilant censorship of the canonical writings as they determined what to include in the Bible. Writings deemed to be inauthentic were eliminated from contention, irrespective of their teachings. We know for example other writings written in the name of Peter, such as *Gospel of Peter*, were rejected as pseudepigraphical.[70] For example, the authorship of the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (ca. 160) was questioned and eventually its author, a presbyter in the Church, admitted writing it not in an attempt to mislead, but in admiration of the apostle Paul. But this was not sufficient argument to the Church leaders who proceeded to condemn and defrock him for writing in the name of the apostle. Given that this issue of morality seems to have loomed large when dealing with apostolic writings, it makes it rather challenging for one to concede Bauckham's otherwise well crafted argument that the authorship of this letter would have come from the hand of a Petrine sympathizer.[71]

66. Charles 2006: 357–412.

67. Kümmel 1975: 433; Bauckham 1983: 159–62.

68. Charles 1997: 45–75.

69. Green 2008: 149.

70. Serapion (ca. 180) is quoted by Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist*. 6.12.2) declaring about the *Gospel of Peter*," "For our part, brothers, we revere both Peter and other apostles as [we revere] Christ, but the *writings which falsely bear their name we reject*" (emphasis added).

71. Bauckham (1983: 162) is aware of these arguments and does not think they disqualify the pseudepigraphy argument. Instead, he thinks that a more apt comparison of acceptance of 2 Peter as Petrine would be with Origen's acceptance of Hebrews as written by Paul because it contains the apostles' thoughts.

Arguments against Petrine authorship have continued to persist, but comprehensive (if not fully convincing) answers to each objection have been provided. The alternative theory of pseudepigraphy also has its own gaping holes making each side's position, on the one hand plausible and, on the other, still inconclusive. Of all the concerns for the pseudepigraphy arguments, I still believe the moral issue is probably the most challenging to account for. Nonetheless, as Witherington III points out, our modern notion of authorship may be too narrow to accommodate the plausible fact found in his own proposal of 2 Peter as a form of "sapiental literature" where scribal editing of writings was done communally allowing for a composite writing to be crafted by scribes, from original kernels and other sources.[72] This would allow for aspects of the letter to have originated with the Peter but with subsequent accretions over time, much in the same way that 2 Peter itself has incorporated the letter of Jude.

While advancing the concept of authorship, Witherington III's argument does not preclude a difficulty of the time-frame of a purported writer's death *vis-a-vis* his/her own writing. For instance, most pseudepigraphon were documents penned hundreds of years after the deaths of those to whom those documents were attributed (i.e., *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Assumption of Moses*). And the audience would have been aware of that fact, versus the so-called NT pseudepigrapha which would be penned several years after the purported author's death inevitably raising suspicion of authorship. Of course, this would be resolved if we accepted Bauckham's testamentary genre which, however, as we have noted and will elaborate further below and in the commentary, has its own shortcomings. Also, it is one thing if such a writing appeared soon after the writer's death versus, say, twenty or thirty years later, the time-frame suggested by Bauckham's dating of the letter (80–90 CE) from the death of Peter.[73]

So where are we left after all this? I am still not convinced by the pseudepigraphical arguments for authorship, as it seems to me that there are significant unanswered concerns over it.[74] At the very least, even the primary accusation that 2 Peter itself levies against its opponents—what

72. Witherington III 2007: 269–70.

73. Bauckham 1983: 158.

74. See Green (1987: 40–48) for a detailed presentation of the concerns with pseudepigraphy in 2 Peter. Peter H. Davids (2006: 149) seems to come to an impasse, concluding that there is no way of proving "*from historical investigation*" whether the Simeon Peter in the salutations is the disciple or a pseudepigrapher.

it considers false teaching posing as the truth—would seem to undermine any claim of it being pseudepigraphy in the first place. On the other hand, the history of the reception of the document in the early Church does give one pause. That notwithstanding, 2 Peter was eventually accepted into the canon even as its authenticity concerns lingered. At this point then, Jerome's amanuensis explanation would seem to sufficiently address many of the concerns 2 Peter raises about authorship, and remains as equally plausible to any of the other possibilities adduced.

Opponents

The opponents in 2 Peter are identified as false-teachers (*pseudodidaskaloi* —2:1) meaning they may have enjoyed a certain authority in the community as teachers. While the term is occasionally mistakenly applied to the opponents in Jude, this term does not appear in the letter of Jude in reference to the opponents in that letter. In spite of Michael Green's insistence that the opponents in the two letters share significant similarities as to warrant a conflation, there is need to recognize that even the distinctive use of the terminology in 2 Peter, that is missing in Jude, gives a specific nuance to the characterization of the opponents in the letter as opposed to those in Jude.[75] The false-teachers basically seem to have cast doubt on the apostolic teaching about the return of Jesus as a judge of creation dubbing it a myth (1:16–17). Accordingly, there would be no return; there was no need to have moral codes or virtues (2:19), given that it was not in the nature of God to interfere in human affairs (3:5–7), since all evidence points to a never changing universe (3:8–10). These positions are reconstructed from what 2 Peter refutes regarding the false-teacher's perceived teachings, but are not comprehensive enough to identify them with any specific first-century religious or philosophical group.

Genre

A key element of Bauckham's psuedepigraphical authorship argument for 2 Peter rests on identification of the writing as a farewell *testament* (the last words or wishes of a dying person of significance, e.g., a patriarch).[76] For

75. Green 1987: 51.

76. Bauckham 1983: 130–33.

Bauckham, the nature of testaments is that they are *all* inherently, always fictional, a claim questioned by other scholars.[77] The elements that account for identification of 2 Peter with this genre include: i) its reference to the author's impending death (1:12–14), ii) emphasis on moral exhortation (virtues) which parallels other Testaments (1:5–7), iii) recounting (reminiscing?) of the arrival of the gospel message to the community (1:16–19), and iv) warnings of impending dangers that must be resisted and fought (2:1–3; 3:1–7).

Challenges to Bauckham have pointed out that a document can have testamentary material without the whole writing being a Testament (e.g., John 21, 1 Macc. 2), that there is no clear premise to presume that all testamentary writings are pseudepigraphical, missing significant testamentary material in 2 Peter (e.g., a death scene), and rather than predicting arrival of opponents they seem to already have arrived.[78] Also, while today we may understand documents such as the testamentary writings to have been written in the name of worthies who had died ages before; it is not clear at all whether first or second century readers would have understood 2 Peter that way.[79] So while the testamentary elements are truly present, they are not sufficient to make the document a testament, and so the nature of the documents remains one of an epistle—a *farewell letter*, to be exact.

Eschatology

There is an image of changing attitudes and concerns about God's ultimate judgment of creation and the desire for assurance that promises made earlier about the *parousia* of Jesus were still part of the present reality of the readers. The agitation is being driven the teachings of the false-teachers who have questioned the reliability of the message the community had received from those who brought the gospel to them. Second Peter's sentiments about the *parousia* are similar to those in Paul's letters (1 Thess 5:2) and Revelation (3:5; 16:15). Therefore, the day of the Lord is expected to make a sudden appearance (2 Pet 3:10, 11) and calls for the readers to be watchful (2 Pet 3:12). However 2 Peter does add an aspect to the *parousia* in that it can be directly influenced by the believers' ethical response, hastening its appearance by moral conduct (2 Pet 3:12–14). Similarities can

77. Davids 2006: 148–49.

78. Kraftchick 2002: 74–75: Davids 2006: 145–49.

79. Davids 2006: 146.

be drawn to Acts 3:19–21. These eschatological perspectives set 2 Peter firmly in the early Church's understanding of an expected return of the Lord within their own lifetime.

JUDE

Letter Opening and Greeting (vv. 1–2)

> **1**Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ, the brother of James, to those who
> are beloved and called in God the father and are kept safe in Jesus
> Christ; **2**Mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

Jude's letter greeting, while still in keeping with Jewish salutations, is slightly distinct from Paul's "Grace and peace," (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4–9; Phil 1:3–11; 1 Thess 1:2–4; 2 Thess 1:3; Phlm 4–7; 2 Tim 1:3–7) but is not a typical Greek letter greeting which was simply *chairein* ("Greetings"), as seen in James 1:1.[1] Jude replaces *chairein* with *heleos* (mercy) where Paul usually uses grace, and adds Christian love (*agapē*), which Paul does not usually have in his greetings. Mercy (Hebrew—*chesed*) and peace, likely originate from the typical Jewish salutations of *shalom* ("peace"), which is more than just a wish for peace but includes the notions of wellness, prosperity, and wholeness.[2] And since Jude ends the epistle with two mentions of mercy (v. 24), both of which are related to the safe keeping of the believers until eternal life, then it must also serve as an *inclusio* that encapsulates the eschatological context of the message.[3]

The author of this brief letter identifies himself as Jude (Grk. *Judas* or *Judah*), a common Jewish name (and calls himself a "slave of Jesus" and "brother of James" (cf. Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). In ancient literature, it is typical to identify oneself as *son of so and so*, which makes Jude's identification with his brother rather atypical.[4] The most plausible reason for doing so

1. Davids 2011: 3; Bauckham 1983: 20

2. 2 *Apoc. Bar*. 78:2.

3. Bauckham 1983: 26; Webb 1996: 140.

4. Neyrey (1993: 47), explaining Jude's relationship with James, points out that in an ancient society governed by honor "[a] young sibling, whose birth ranks him lower than his older brother, claims honor by blood ties with his richer, stronger, or more influential brother." If this is the logic, it still does not explain why both Jude and James would then avoid making explicit claims of *blood ties* with Jesus.

would be that this brother is well known and highly regarded among the recipients of the letter. James, the brother of Jesus (also called the "Just"), had risen to become a leading member of the early Church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 2:9, 12).

If this is the case, it is also peculiar that Jude chooses not to identify himself as the brother of Jesus but instead as a slave (*doulos*). However, it is no more peculiar than James (1:1) who in his epistle does not call himself "brother of Jesus" but uses the same exact phrase as Jude in identifying himself as, "a *slave* of the Lord." As Bauckham explains it, "Palestinian Jewish-Christian circles in the early church used the title 'brother of the Lord' not simply to identify the brothers, but as ascribing to them an authoritative status, and therefore the brothers themselves, not wishing to claim an authority based on mere blood-relationship to Jesus, avoided the term."[5] This may be even more perplexing for Jude, however, if the majority of his audience was Gentile.

For most scholars then, the traditional identity of Jude as the brother of Jesus (Matt 13:15; Mark 3:21, 31, 6:3; John 7:5) remains the name's most plausible identity.[6] Scholars, nevertheless, remain divided as to whether Jude actually wrote the letter or someone else did so in his name (pseudepigaphy).[7] Critics have pointed at, among other things, the erudite Greek language and rhetorical skill of the letter as evidence against Jude's authorship.[8] However, these and other concerns of authorship have been fairly convincingly answered by Baulkham, and more recently by Green.[9]

Undoubtedly, then, the word slave is here used metaphorically, as a description of the type of commitment that the author perceives himself as having toward Jesus who is the Christ (the Greek translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic *mešiah* (translated as Messiah, meaning anointed one or more accurately understood as one who is anointed by God for a special mission).[10] Just as a slave is fully under the master's ownership and lordship,

5. Bauckham 1983: 21.

6. Ibid., 14.

7. Barnett 1957; Reicke 1964; Kelly 1969.

8. Bauckham 1983: 1–16.

9. Green 2008: 1–9.

10. The pattern of metaphorically applying the title "slave" to prophets or king may have originated in the HB/OT (Exod. 32:13; Lev 25:55; 1 Sam 3:9; Ezra 9:9). This romanticization of the reality of slavery in euphemistic language has been criticized as one possibility of even the institutionalization of the Transatlantic slavery. cf. Angela Bauar, "Servant/Slave," in L.M. Russell, and J. S. Clarkson, 1996: 255–56.

Jude understands his place in this relationship as one where he is fully and wholly under Jesus' lordship.

Given that slavery was not necessarily a desired status in the Greco-Roman world it is not necessarily an appealing self-descriptor. However, it was not uncommon for those who owned slaves to use them as spokespersons on their behalf. Such occasions vicariously infused the slave with vested authority by playing the role of a quasi vicegerent. By implication then, Jude is aware that slavery to Jesus brings a certain honor by association with the glorified Lord, while at the same time allowing him a semblance of humility.[11] Parallels can be seen, in an Egyptian inscription where Primos and Ioukoundos, though described as "slaves of Caesar," were highly regarded since they occupied the office of synagogue leader and president, and head of gymnasium, respectively:

> In the 25th year of Caesar, on the 22nd of the month of Hathyr, at the assembly that occurred in Paratomos of the synod (*synodos*) of the god emperor Caesar Augustus, whose synagogue-leader (*synagōgos*) and president (*prostatēs*) is Primos, *a slave* of Caesar, and whose priest is Ioukoundos, *a slave* of Caesar, and whose head of the gymnasium is Alexandros, with most of the members assembled."[12]

The same interplay between the honor and humility found in Jude is also present here. A biblical parallel is in Luke 14:15–24, depicting a parable of Jesus where the slave, acting on behalf of the master, is able to act violently against freepersons. The authority the slave exercises emanates not from himself, but from his master who invests him with authority.[13]

Besides connection with Jesus, Jude also claims to be a sibling of one with significant repute within the larger Christian community, and a leader of the church in Jerusalem—James (Acts 12:17; 15). Jude once again manages to stake a claim of authority while all the time retaining an air of humility.

The only difficulty with the title *doulos* (**slave**) would depend on the actual social status of those addressed. If they are freepersons, then the

11. Martin 1990: 35. While focusing on the Greco-Roman metaphor of populist leaders being "enslaved" to their followers, Martin also notes ". . . the well-placed slave of an important woman or man was an important person. It mattered less that one was a slave than whose slave one was." Cf. also discussion of slaves as surrogate bodies for slaveholders in Jennifer Glancy (2006: 11–16, 120, 131).

12. *AGRW* 281 = BGU IV 1137 (c. 6 CE, Alexandria, Egypt)

13. Cf. Aichele 2012.

notion of addressing oneself as a **slave**, even metaphorically, may not endear the author to his audience. However, whose slave you are, may matter in such cases, just as we have seen in the examples above. One is bound to listen to an important person's slave when the message communicated is understood to be, without doubt, from the master.[14] Yet, it is also possible that the identity of *doulos* may have been deliberately chosen by Jude to challenge the false teachers' self-perception as those with freedom to do whatever they wanted.

Overall, if Jude's audience is—Gentile as the *Byzantine Lectionary* asserts—and if this is understood in light of v. 3 (**our common salvation**) where the author stresses the commonality of his faith with that of the recipients of the letter, it would suggest the possibility that he finds the need to identify with an audience that does not share a common heritage with him. For this reason, by finding the need to highlight the shared or common salvation, he intends to remove any doubt that may prevail among the readers about their place in God's plan of salvation. In this regard, the likelihood would be that the author is of Jewish heritage whose close identification with a Jewish messiah figure (his self-identification as brother of James, and therefore, half-brother of Jesus puts him in a privileged position) whose intent is to make a conscious choice to identify with believers whose heritage puts them outside of this racial (or seeming privileged) relationship to Jesus.

Not only is the audience assured of this common salvation, but the author wants to ascertain this as a concrete commitment—it is secured by Jesus, the Messiah. This is an affirmation not only of the reliability of the security over time, but also the confidence of its ability to, always reliably, protect from any danger.

Fusing the Horizons: True Christian Identity

As an African, I am strongly aware of the fact that tribal identity is a central part of all African communities. Just like *doulos* (slave), the concept of "tribe" has negative connotations and has been used to denigrate African social structures in colonial and postcolonial discourse. I am fully aware of this but I choose to use the term anyway since it provokes similar reactions to *doulos*, and also it provides the parlance of the menacing "tribalism" (ethnocentrism),

14. Martin 1990: 35.

itself a byproduct of colonial construction, fully infused (for good or ill) into the psyche and language of the Kenyan community. Tribes have for millennia provided the structure of the society, safeguarded the cultural elements and preserved the languages of the communities. Tribes have played (and continue to play) a central role in shaping the identity of individuals in Africa. Thanks to the colonial borders, however, African countries have had to confront the centrality of the tribal identity as it has stood in direct conflict with national identity. As nationhood (ideology) has been placed before tribalism (bloodline), the struggle to restructure African communal identity has ensued.

Similar to early Christian converts' Christian-Pagan identity struggles, the church in Africa has been plagued with competing identities making for challenging situations for the individual Christians. In the African church, age-old tribal identities and allegiances continue to provide some of the stiffest challenges for Christian converts.[15] For example, during the ensuing post-election violence in Kenya, driven in many respects by tribalism (as well as political reasons), one of the most disheartening scenes was when a church, full of women and children of one tribe seeking refuge from violence, was set ablaze by a marauding mob of a neighboring tribe, killing most of the people within.[16] Among the perpetrators, identified by some of the survivors, were neighbors whose identities as members of Christian communities was known. How could people identifying themselves with the Church participate in such violence? One possible culprit in such a case would be the assumption that the Christian identity, despite its presence in the country for more than two hundred years, never quite took root enough to overcome the tribal identity as the primary identity.

Jude's restructuring of his identity *vis-a-vis* the person of Jesus, provides a useful lesson on this matter. Jude, while he could have chosen to use the bloodline (brother of Jesus) to construct his identity, instead chooses to identify himself as a *slave* of Jesus (a theological construction). Jude prioritizes his theological identity over what perhaps others would have preferred, the bloodline that would have given him more claim to authority as a sibling of the Lord. Instead, by not only downplaying the use of biological identity as his primary one, and instead using a theological identity that also embraces a deep humility, he aligns himself with Paul who cautions that in Christ old

15. Okullu 1974: 43.

16. *The New York Times*: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/02/world/africa/02kenya.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

things have ceased and all things are made new, and we can no longer regard each other on the basis of blood (flesh) (2 Cor 5:16–17).

What seems like a subtle and somewhat insignificant move by Jude thus turns out to be a most crucial element that converts to Christianity *must* emulate. This was what the rest of the Kenyan church community's reaction evidenced, as it led the mobilization of assistance for all the displaced victims of the violence, irrespective of tribal or religious affiliation, and sought to establish a Truth and Reconciliation commission.[17] True Christian identity should incorporate and transform, without eradicating, all other forms of identity one may possess.

Contending for the Inherited Faith, Against Infiltrators (vv. 3–4)

> 3Beloved, I am earnestly making this writing to you concerning the common salvation we share, being compelled to write you and encourage/urge you to contend for the faith handed down to the saints/holy ones, once for all.

Jude uses an endearing term, **beloved** (also in v. 17 and v. 20), to address his readers as a way of either identifying an already close relationship with them, or perhaps in an attempt to seeking that closer tie. In terms of ancient rhetoric, this is his establishment of an *ethos* (trustworthy character) that should then establish his credibility to be able to address his audience with authority.[18] This is in-keeping with early Christian communities to construct their communities as "families" with fictive kingship (1 Cor 4:14; 2 Cor 7:1; Phil 4:1; 1, 2, 3 John; 1 Peter 2, etc.). He elaborates this further with his reference to the **shared bond of salvation** (*koinos soteria*) in order to establish, without doubt, whose side he is on. This would be vital especially if, as we reckon, the audience may be of Gentile origin while Jude is Jewish.[19] While it reflects a warm regard for his audience, it stands in stark contrast to his strong vilification of the opponents later in vv. 5–9.

17. Mwaura and Martinon 2010: 39–46.

18. Kennedy 1984: 15.

19. So Kelly 1969: 246. See his discussion of the contrast in understanding of *soteria* (salvation) in Jewish monotheism verses Hellenistic piety.

Jude then informs his audience of his compulsion to write to them in order to encourage them to stand up for the faith in light of the perceived danger of infiltrators. The phrase he uses, **contending for the faith,** need not be understood simply as attacking the infiltrators (even though Jude does denounce them), but vv. 5–19 must be understood in light of vv. 3–4 and vv. 20–23. Ultimately, the readers must overcome through **faith** (*pistis*) and resistance, the infiltrators' message.[20] Their condemnation is already pronounced (vv. 17–18), and will be a definite divine act.

Even after assuring the community of the shared faith, Jude notes that the faith they are contending for is one received from the **holy saints** (*hagiois pistei*). The question then becomes, i) is faith here a reference to a body of teachings or the acts of exercising belief? If the former then this may imply a later period of Jude's provenance, in the post-apostolic era; ii) does **saints** here mean the Jewish community as the chosen c*hasidim*? Or does he mean his own audience and all people associated with the Judeo-Christian faith? If the former, then this would seem to conflict with his desire to make the largely Gentile audience, feel like part of the inheritors of the faith. By declaring, that this faith was given **once and for all**, means it would not be given again, at least not in the manner that it was first given. As such, Jude's community can only come by it through their relationship with those who first received it. If the latter, then it means that while the reference may be to Jewish saints of old, it also includes his readers who have inherited this faith and now are recipients of God's salvation.[21]

The language of **struggle** (*epaginitzō*) used here was also commonly used in reference to athletes and their endurance and determination when competing in a race—"pep talks" to get them fired up for the competition.[22] The call then is one that recognizes that the exercising of faith, called upon here, is one where they have to "stand up" for the faith and literally defend it. Like soldiers in battle defending their territory, the audience is urged, in essence, to exert itself in a deliberate effort to defend the faith, fully aware that actual dangers are entailed in this process.

Besides the fact that the audience may not share a common Jewish heritage with the author, the compulsion to write to them originates from

20. Kelly 1969: 247; Bauckham 1983: 32–34; Green 2008: 58.

21. Note in 1 Peter 2: 9–10, the largely Gentile audience is directly identified with terms previously reserved for the Jewish community—chosen people, holy nation, royal priesthood, etc. Bauckham 1983: 33; Mbuvi, 2007:1–45.

22. *BDAG* 356; Kelly 1969: 247.

his concern for their struggles in relationship to the shared Christian faith. He is under conviction of the gravity of the situation that he feels obligated to write a letter that in essence pronounces warfare against those who he believes to be active enemies presently assailing the community of Christians.[23] It would seem to be the case that the community is struggling in regards to faith, perhaps, due to persecution. The sense of urgency that the author announces in v. 3, by pointing out how this letter is a product of a compulsion and earnestness, points to a scenario where the readers are finding it difficult to maintain their faith in Jesus Christ, and maybe questioning their place in the larger community of believers.

Like any conflict, there are casualties expected and so the urgency to struggle is with the awareness that something has to be done, and there is no choice about getting involved. What they contend for is described as that which was received by the saints, once and for all. If those from whom they received it had not guarded it, then there may have been nothing to inherit.

For this reason, the readers have to exert effort to protect the precious gift that they have received. This suggests that there is an identifiable body of normative, authentic and authoritative teaching to which Jude refers, which was inherited and now is entrusted, to the community for "safe-keeping." They must not allow it to be in any way altered or damaged. Not only was it a *once-and-for-all* exercise, which cannot be replicated, it was also a once-and-for-all body of teaching, to which there can be no accretions or deletions. Anybody claiming otherwise is thus to be regarded as deceptive and be treated as an enemy of truth. These are the people who are about to be revealed in the next verse as those who have infiltrated the community of Jude and brought with them a teaching other than the one that was delivered to the community of the **holy ones/saints**, and is now inherited by the community.

Arrival of Infiltrators (v. 4)

> **4**For some men have stealthily infiltrated [among you], whose judgment was long ago/before written about; ungodly, they who instead of our God's grace have preferred giving themselves over into licentiousness and denied our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

23. *Ananke* ("eagerness")—urgent desire, to write to them need not indicate a quickly written letter but reflects common rhetoric in Greek letter openings (Thurén 1993: 456).

Indications are that usually there was a strong guard among Greco-Roman associations against what each group considered external meddlers or busybodies, who did not belong, with invocation of irrevocable divine punishment on such perpetrators.[24] Similarly, in Jude, the condemnation of the infiltrators involves declaration of immutable divine judgment (**whose judgment was long ago/before written about**). The appeal to this judgment as having been pronounced **long ago** is Jude's use of a rhetorical device, which, in a society where the more ancient a claim was the more respected, establishes authoritative grounds on which to build his case against the infiltrators.[25] It is also a way of establishing credibility with his audience, that while the case he brings against the infiltrators may be immediate, it nevertheless finds support in ancient divine pronouncements against them (v. 14).

The language of **stealth** (*pareisduō*) here conjures a scenario where the enemy manages to infiltrate the camp and, like the Trojan horse tactic, fans out among the unsuspecting enemy wrecking havoc from within. The infiltrators come in a guise, and only later is their true form revealed. This echoes the scene in Gal 2:4, where the opponents are identified as Judaizers who claimed to arrive with blessing from the leaders in Jerusalem and infiltrated the Galatian church. Paul describes them as infiltrating into the community of the Galatian gentile-Christians, accusing them of spying on his freedom, with the intent of imposing on the Galatians the bondage of the law of circumcision. Paul goes on to lay out arguments that show the contrasting understanding of what freedom in Christ entails for him in contrast to that of the Judaizers, with whom he is at loggerheads.

Unlike Paul, who does lay out clearly what the Judaizers were advocating for before refuting their teachings, point by point, Jude seems to prefer to generally stereotype and caricature the infiltrators using stalk language found in Greco-Romans writings to typecast enemies.[26] If that understanding holds, it would mean that it is unlikely to determine with any precision what the teachings of the infiltrators in Jude may have been. This difficulty of pinning down exactly what their teachings were makes it complicated, if not impossible, to determine with any accuracy the philosophical or theological group the infiltrators in Jude may have belonged to.

24. *AGWR* 2012 33. For example, *IG* II2 1365—"Anyone who is a busybody or meddles will incur sin against Men Tyrannos that cannot be expiated."

25. Brosend II 2004: 170.

26. Harland 2009: 171–77.

Similarly, the issue of religious freedom is at the root of the concerns in the letter of Jude. However, the origin and nature of the infiltrators' beliefs are not presented with any clarity, as they are in the letter to the Galatians. Throughout Jude's letter, the infiltrators are characterized as *asebeia*—**ungodly or impious** (vv. 4, 15, 18; cf. 2 Pet 2:5), **sexual perverts** (vv. 4, 8, 10), **blasphemous** (vv. 8–10; cf. 2 Pet 2:2) and **antinomian** (vv. 4, 10; cf. 2 Pet 3:17).

Accusations of sexual promiscuity and unusual sexual practices were common in ethnographic descriptions of outsiders in first-century Greco-Roman group polemics.[27] So, when Jude proceeds to construct the image of the infiltrators, he does so not by giving actual descriptions of the perceived enemies, but by falling back on a weapon of warfare—propaganda rhetoric! Just like in the case of warfare scenarios where the next step would be to identify and uproot the enemy, Jude follows this with the Greco-Roman stereotypes that caricature enemies as sexual perverts, ungodly, and barbarians.[28] Thus, it is likely the case that what may be happening in Jude is a case of competing groups each seeking to have the upper hand theologically within the community.

Ungodliness (*asebeia*) is here, in v. 4, paired with **sexual perversion** (*aselgeia*) that the infiltrators are accused of exchanging for God's **grace** (*charis*). Ungodliness' immediate contrast to *aselgaia* (**sensuality**, **licentiousness**) has tended to be understood as depicting a more specific notion of Christian freedom that the infiltrators abuse with their wanton sexual activity. **Grace**, a common Christian term for salvation through Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24; Eph 2:8; 2 Thess 2:16; Heb 12:15; James 4:6; 1 Pet 1:2, 10: 2 Pet 1:2, 3:18; 2 John 3; Rev 1:4) most probably encompasses the same meaning here. The opponents are despising divine authority and ultimately rejecting salvation.

However, while this is a plausible reading, the combination of ungodliness and sexual perversion, evident in other parts of the epistle (vv. 8, 16, 18, 23), may reflect more of a stereotyping accusation than substantiation of actual behavior among the infiltrators.[29] A similar pattern is seen in v. 8, the notion of the opponents as **dreamers**, a possible allusion to dreams as means of divine guidance is also juxtaposed with an accusation

27. For example, Tacitus c. 115, accused Judeans' of supposed "unlawful" sexual behavior (*Hist.* 5.5.2); Cf. also Martial *Epigr.* 7. 30; Justin, *1 Apol.* 7.3, 46.3, 60.11; Tatian, *Or.* 1.1; Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* V.1.63.

28. Harland 2009: 171–74.

29. Jourbert 1995: 75–79.

of "defilement" which also may presume sexual or other moral, misconduct. Furthermore, the insinuation that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah involved the sexual desire of **a different flesh** also again seems to presuppose some form of angelic sexual contact. All these juxtapositions of what Jude considers godly or moral *contra* that which he perceives to be sexual deviance seems to imply that these are caricatures of two diametrically opposed extremes, which, like light/darkness, day/night or true/false, make a stark distinction between the two spheres of either morality or spirituality.

Similarly, *Charis*, cannot simply be narrowly defined here, if throughout, *aselgeia*'s constant contrast is with the notion of godliness.[30] Therefore, the meaning of *grace* here has to be the larger meaning encompassing salvation, since *aselgeia* is more than simply sexual aberration and represents a form of sinfulness that ultimately results in the denial of **our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ**.

Jude's emphasis that the **only (***monos***) lord and master** is Jesus (cf. also v. 24) also reflects a clear anti-Empire rhetoric that sets up Jesus as the anti-Caesar, who deserves the readers' total loyalty.[31] The Majority Text adds *theos* ("God"—"the only master, *God* and Lord, Jesus Christ"), making the contrast that much more plain, given that the Roman Emperor in the Imperial cult was considered divine—a god or son of the gods.[32] As Philip Harland points out, "Fittingly honoring gods and emperors was a means by which families, associations, cities, and larger regions helped to ensure the safety and security of their communities."[33] This would place Jude's community in direct challenge to, not only other groups and associations within the Empire, but also at odds with the expectations of the Roman government. However, it is important to clarify that even though Jude's rhetoric and beliefs may indicate anti-Empire sentiments, it is unlikely that Jude himself, and Jude's community, was overtly actively involved

30. See Beard et al. (1998: 224–25), on *eusebeia* in Roman religions—practical involvement in cultic and prayer activities of the religion rather than a contemplative aspect of faith.

31. For example, inscriptions from Asia Minor: *ISmyrna* 731—". . . Ceasar Domitian son of god Vespasian Augustus"(*AGRW* 116), and *IEph* 3801 (c. 45–54 CE) Asia Minor marble slab: "Caesar-loving highpriest of Asia and life-long director of contests for goddess Roma and god Augustus Caesar, Zeus Patroos ("Ancestral"), emperor and greatest highpriest, father of the fatherland and of the whole race of humankind" (*AGRW* 160).

32. Rohun Park 2007: Conversely, Park connects this title to divinity of Jesus. While plausible, it is unwarranted in the way Jude presents Jesus.

33. Harland 2009: 149.

in anti-Empire activity. Minority groups, including Christian groups like Jude's, operated mostly under the rudder of Empire, unless deemed to pose a direct threat.[34]

Fusing the Horizons: Jude's Infiltration Language in Light of an African Proverb

A Swahili proverbs states, *kikulacho kiko nguoni mwako* (*that which consumes you is concealed within your clothing*). This is an apt description of Jude's claim of his community's infiltration by the opponents. According to Jude, they have stolen into their midst and are wrecking havoc, seemingly unbeknownst to his audience. The common understanding of the Swahili saying is that the source of one's trouble is usually those closest to him or her. It is usually used as a warning to the fact that those most likely to cause you the gravest harm tend to be the ones closest to you, since they know both your strengths and weaknesses.

Jude might as well have quoted this proverb to his readers for it captures his concerns about his community, that those that are endangering their faith have clandestinely become part of the community. They have endeared themselves to the believers and unless one is observant enough, he or she may not realize that the infiltrators are doing grave harm to the community. They exploit both the strengths and the weaknesses of Jude's community and that is why Jude's letter is so urgent and uncompromising. The suitability of the proverb is made even clearer by v. 23 of Jude where he uses the metaphor of soiled clothing to describe the spiritual state of those who have been misled by the infiltrators. Both the Swahili proverb and Jude urge caution, vigilance and self examination!

Three Examples of Divine Judgment of Ancient Israel, as Warnings (vv. 5–7)

> **5**But wishing to remind you, even though you all know of a people that the Lord at one time saved from Egypt, and those who did not believe afterwards were destroyed.

34. Instone-Brewer and Harland 2008: 2004.

Verses 5–19 have been called a *midrash*,[35] have been analyzed as the centerpiece of a hortatory speech,[36] and have been identified as a three-part structure of a Greco-Roman letter.[37] The tripartite structure is itself an identifiable pattern within classical Greco-Roman *epideictic* (**praise-blame**) rhetoric, culminating in a climax, just as in Jude's case.[38] The pattern of the citation of Scripture followed by an explanation and application by Jude, occurs three times in this section and makes all these analyses plausible.

The expression **you all know** tends to be interpreted by scholars as a rhetorical device used by the author in line with other NT writings such as Rom 15:15; 1 Cor 15:1 and 1 Pet 1:12, 31. The implication is that the readers do have prior knowledge of the stories of Israel engraved in the writings even though they emanate from different sources (*Sir.* 16:7–10; CD 2:17—3:12; 3 Macc 2:4–7; *T. Naph* 3:4–5; *m. Sanh* 10:3).[39] The reference to *laos* (**a people**) maintains the notion that not all the people that left Egypt in the Exodus event were eventually guilty of sin. From among them were those who got saved and those who, bound to their apostasy, were not. A case has also been made that, without the article, **laos** here would indicate that not all who left Egypt were believers.[40] However, elsewhere Israel is called *laos tou theou* (**people of God**—Exod 19:5; 1 Pet 2:9), and Jude's truncated version of **laos** may assume that the audience is aware of such a reference.

The point may be that even though all who left Egypt were **laos**, from among them were those who rebelled and paid the price of divine judgment. In this same say, it would suggest that the false-teachers may also have been part of Jude's community and having rebelled now risk divine judgment.[41] If this were the case, it would explain why the author assumes that his audience is unaware of the infiltration by those espousing contrary teachings. If these were people initially familiar to the audience prior to this point, then it would explain this assumption on the part of the author.

Jude is using examples from the Hebrew Scriptures as warnings of the judgment that awaits the infiltrators and any who would dare tag along with them. Even while referring to the history of Israel, Jude's rhetoric retains an

35. Ellis 1978. The comparison is with the Qumran *pesher* method of interpretation, with some distinctions. See also Bauckham 1983: 5ff.

36. Witherington III 2007:

37. Green 2008: 51.

38. Kennedy 1984: 73–85; Thurén 1993: 461.

39. Bauckham 1983: 46.

40. Green 1968: 190.

41. So Bauckham 1983: 50.

anti-Empire stance. The reference to *ho kurios* (**the Lord**) as the one who **once** (*hapax*)[42] **saved** (*sōzō*) can be a contrast between God's ability to save versus proclamations of Caesar as savior. That Caesar was publicly hailed as *despotes kai soteros* (**master and savior**), makes this contrast rather pointed.[43] It also continues the military imagery that we noted earlier (cf. p. 31). In this case, it foregrounds the Lord as the true divine warrior that rescued his people from bondage.

Jude also points out that, while usually the Exodus is held up as an example of God's salvation of Israel (the perspective that is consistent with the Passover celebration and the accompanying Seder meal where the emphasis is on the remembrance of divine salvation of Israel), the lesson he chooses to highlight is that of those who were subsequently destroyed for unbelief, even after initially being saved. The emphasis here then is on judgment, even as the aspects of God's salvation are on display.

> **6**Not even the angels, who in the early days did not carefully guard themselves but forsook their own dwelling/home, in eternal darkness and fetters/chains they are reserved/detained, the rest of their days, for the great judgment.

Jude continues with his second example of divine judgment for disobedience by turning to the story of divine beings. To make clear the ominous nature of the divine judgment that the infiltrators are inviting on themselves and their followers, Jude turns to the legendary divine judgment meted on divine beings in Gen 6:1–4. However, accusations against the "angels" for Jude are primarily on their failure to observe boundaries and, not on sexual sin, and reflects more of the depiction found in *1 Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 10:4–6; 12:4; 15:3) than in Genesis 6.[44] Over time in Jewish history, the text from Genesis 6 had come to exemplify the inescapability of divine judgment.

In referencing the version found in second century BCE book of *1 Enoch* (10:4–6), the judgment is not on humans but on those identified as

42. *Hapax*, which usually means "once and for all," here means "once." (Cf. *BDAG* 97:2)

43. According to historian Suetonius, (*Jul.* 49) in his *Vit Caes.*(*The Twelve Caesars*), Julius Caesar, named "*theos kai soteros*" (god and savior) following his conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean, was first to be deified after his death in 14 CE. Cf. Fantin (2011), on similar terminology in Pauline letters and on the Gospels see Verheyden and Van Belle 2014.

44. Charles 1994: 7. ". . . whereas in *1 Enoch* 6–10, *Jub.* 5:1 and *2 Apoc. Bar.* 56:12–16 the angels' fall is related explicitly to fleshly lust and in Origen26 the fall is attributed to pride, in Jude it is a fall from *authority*, *domain* and *position*."

"fallen angels." This forms a better background for Jude's statement. They broke the regulations of staying within specified heavenly boarders, and instead transgressed, and trespassed, the appointed divine limitations. And so, like those arrested on the wrong side of the fence, they are detained awaiting judgment. The home that they forsook is not identified here. However, Jude's later use of *1 Enoch* 6–16 allows us to presume their home is the one referred to in *1 Enoch* 6:2 (*ouranos*—**heaven**). However, unlike *1 Enoch* which simply reports that they "descended" from heaven, Jude makes it clear that they are heavenly beings who **forsook** (*apolipontas*) their heavenly abode and thus transgressed divine boundaries.[45]

In essence, he is implying that the divine beings (**angels**), who may have an even greater status than humans before God, when it came to judgment, even they were not spared. And, if this happened to the divine beings, there is little hope for humans who deliberately reject the truth, as the author perceives it, and mislead others to do the same. Such reasoning is derived from the exegesis principle of *qal va-homer* (arguing from the greater to the lesser). "If angels were not spared divine judgment for their fault, do you—mere humans—think you could escape?"

One could not paint a direr scenario of the consequences, their inevitability and inescapability. The divine beings forsook their home, their rightful domicile and the presence of God, much in the same way that the infiltrators are departing from their true home—union with God through Jesus Christ—and are inviting upon themselves divine judgment. The verb *tereō* (**to keep**, **to preserve**) is used twice in the sentence, and contrasts with its use later in v. 21 where it is used in reference to those being *kept safe* by God, awaiting divine mercy. Here, however, the reference is to the angels who did not carefully "keep" themselves within their given boundaries and are therefore being **kept** (or more accurately, **are being guarded** or **in custody)** awaiting final divine judgment.[46]

Judgment, therefore, is the immediate context for both vv. 6 and 21. For the angels, it is an act of being detained for a negative outcome that is already predetermined. Similarly, in v. 21, the believers are kept or guarded also with a predetermined future in mind; however, for them it is positive —divine mercy and eternal blessing.

The reference here to **judgment day**, though rare in NT, may be drawing from the HB/OT's expression the "day of the Lord" understood as the

45. Cf. Charles 2005: 40–44.

46. The detention of angelic beings is also referenced in apocalyptic writings such as 2 *Apoc. Bar*. 56: 13; *Jub*. 5:10; and Rev 18:2; 20:7.

time of God's ultimate final judgment over creation (Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph 1:14; Mal 4:5; Rev 6:17; 16:8). In *1 Enoch* 22:11; 4:4, a similar expression is used in the same manner.[47] Jude's language of "the great judgment," however, echoes more precisely *1 Enoch* 22:5, 11; 84:4, which is distinct from the more common biblical expression, "the day of the Lord!." While both mean the same thing, the language of Jude approximates more closely with *1 Enoch*. This is further supported by the reference to "chains and fetters" with which Jude describes the angels as being detained (1 En. 22:12). Finally, in *1 Enoch* 22:9–12, the righteous and the sinners are kept apart, awaiting the great Day of Judgment when eternal blessings for the former and eternal torment for the latter will be meted out.

The warning is, therefore, made abundantly clear to the infiltrators. Like the angels, they are transgressing the set boundaries by crossing into Jude's community and thus setting in motion divine judgment. The element of exclusivity (belonging to one group) was a central emphasis of group identity among Christians, even though it was not unique to them, and may likely not have been the norm as people maintained memberships in various groups for social, economic, and even cultic reasons.[48] It is such a practice that Jude may have in mind as he focuses attention on the need for the group's exclusive divine loyalty. Such strong language also indicates that a lot is at stake and Jude sees no wiggle room; it is a matter of life and death, literally.

> 7In like manner, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which also gave themselves over to sexual immorality and followed after different type of flesh, were exposed to an eternal fire to suffer punishment without end.

The third example of divine judgment due to transgression is once again from Genesis! To continue painting the anticipated unfolding of the dire fortunes of the infiltrators, Jude now turns to the Gen 19:1–25 where the focus is specifically on **sexual sin** (*porneia*). Just as the angels mentioned above are described in the present tense, as continuing to await in chains for ultimate judgment, similarly the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is also portrayed as still continuing—**punishment without end**.

47. Davids 2011. There are no sources in the current document.

48. Harland 2003: 264. "Unlike other associations, participations among Jews and Christians stopped short of a conscious or active involvement in religious rituals for emperors as gods." However, "[t]he potential for intermittent conflicts should not blind us to areas of participation in civic life by these minorities" (267).

In Genesis 19 Sodom and Gomorrah got destroyed by fire from the heavens, yet for Jude, their punishment is eternal and has no end. Kelly understands this statement to mean that the evidence of the judgment of these cities is still there for anyone to "see and note with dread."[49] Both *Wisdom of Solomon* (10:7) and Philo (*Vit. Mos.* 2: 56) also support such an understanding, with reference to the molten sulfur that continued to be present in the locations thought to have been where these cities existed.[50] The shortcoming with both Philo and Wisdom in this perspective is that the reference is to those judged, and who continue to suffer, but not simply the continuing presence of molten rocks in a particular site. **Fire** (*puros*) does two connected but divergent things—it destroys and it purifies. It destroys the pollutant in judgment and at the same time, by getting rid of the pollutant it, in effect, purifies the remnant.

Is the central focus of Jude's reference to Sodom and Gomorrah primarily about sexual sin? In Genesis 19, the sexual sin that the men of Sodom (not Gomorrah) are accused of is that of homosexuality as they especially desired to have sexual intercourse with the angels who came to the city. However, subsequent biblical reference to Sodom as a symbol of human sinfulness and divine judgment did not always focus on sexual sin. In Isa 3:9, the issue is with the shamelessness with which sin was committed by the Sodomites, while in Ezek 16:47–50, Jerusalem is accused of being worse than Sodom whose primary guilt is listed as failure to take care of the poor and needy, and committing "abominable things" before God. Jesus portrays the final consequences of any city that rejects the gospel message as being worse that the fate of Sodom (Luke 10:12). While, 2 Pet 2:6, who uses Jude as his source, shifts the focus to judgment more specifically.

In the same way, it cannot be simply assumed that Jude's focus in referencing Sodom and Gomorrah is on the issue of homosexuality.[51] Jude describes as the course of their undoing to be following or lusting after **different/other flesh** (*sarx heteros*). And, as Kelly points out, homosexuality is lusting after the *same* flesh, not *different* flesh.[52] As such, "different/other flesh" is to be possibly understood in two ways—1) reference to bestiality, and/or 2) desiring the different flesh of angels. In the former, it is unlikely

49. Kelly 1969: 259.

50. Wis. 10.7: "Evidence of their wickedness still remains: a continually smoking wasteland, plants bearing fruit that does not ripen, and a pillar of salt standing as a monument to an unbelieving soul."

51. Keener 1993, 2013: 721.

52. Kelly 1969: 258.

that the **different/other flesh** would be that of another human being and may theoretically align with Jude's later accusation that opponents behaved like wild animals (v. 10). However, there is no evidence that bestiality was ever read in line with Sodom and Gomorrah. This leaves us with the second option as the more likely explanation for the phrase. If we are to understand **different flesh** in contrast to Gen 2:24, which says the couple Adam and Eve, became **one flesh** (Heb. *echad basar*), then perhaps Jude's focus is best understood on the boundary breaking union of human and divine "flesh."

Infiltrators And Their Destiny (vv. 8–16)

> **8**Yet, likewise, these dreamers defile their bodies, reject lordship and blaspheme [against] the glorious ones. **9**But even Michael the archangel, when the devil disputed in argument concerning the body of Moses, did not dare bring a judgment of blasphemy but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

In spite of the above examples of past divine judgment which should be in their knowledge and awareness (vv. 5–7), these infiltrators persist in their rebellion. Once again, the depiction of the infiltrators as morally out of control continues the stereotyping we mentioned earlier that makes it difficult to determine whether these are true characteristics of the infiltrators described here or simply a caricature that is inspired by both the typical stereotyping of enemies and competing groups. Either way, these are the examples that the author has chosen to utilize in driving home his point of divine judgment for disobedience. The accusations are very broad and general, with hardly any specifics that can be analyzed—the infiltrators **defile their bodies**, **reject authority**, and **blaspheme**! Once again, these accusations follow the stereotype pattern mentioned above—sexual perversion, renegade tendencies, and ungodliness (see pg. 33).

However, Jude introduces an additional element to the characterization list of the infiltrators—**dreamers** (*enupniazō*). Reference to them as **dreamers** may seem to modern readers as a simple dismissal of denigrating them as disconnected from reality or being delusional.[53] As Harland reports on Greco-Roman society in particular, but also true of other contemporary Mediterranean communities, "The gods were a regular part of the landscape of the populace's dream life as well as waking life, and for workers of

53. Oecumenius was also of the same opinion (cf. Bray 2000: 251b).

many trades appropriately honoring the gods was important."[54] This is also still true in many African, South American, and Asian communities and that is why there is general affinity to such biblical characters like Jacob, Joseph, and Daniel given their abilities to interpret dreams.[55]

Therefore, since dreams were reckoned as pathways of divine contact in the Mediterranean world (Jer 27:9; Daniel 2, 7; Acts 2:17, 10:1–48, 16:9), it is more likely that a deeper spiritual conflict may undergird this accusation. In the Gospels, for example, Joseph, betrothed to Mary was the recipient, on three different occasions of dream messages about his fiancée Mary's faithfulness, the need to retreat to safety for the sake of Jesus' life, and about when to return home, after Herod's death (Matt 1:20–21; 2:13; 2:19–20). Similarly, Pilate's wife warned him about Jesus' innocence based on a dream she had about him (Matt 27:19).

Interpretation of dreams in antiquity was taken quite seriously as a means of divine revelation which proper interpretation was limited to those with the gift to do so. For example, in the *Dream Interpretations* by Artemidorus of Daldis (second century CE), we are introduced to professional dream interpreters in the Greco-Roman society who functioned as representatives of the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses.[56] What such a background puts in context is the plausibility that Jude' opponents are basing their conduct on claims of divine revelation in the tradition of dream interpreters, which Jude then attacks as the rejection of the rightful lordship of God.[57] And, in that regard, it may be safe to say that Jude's use of the term "dreamers" is definitely not simply metaphorical in this instance. However, it would be faulty to assume that the dream tradition was a reflection of Gnostic background for the infiltrators, as some commentators have.[58]

54. Harland 2003: 62–3.

55. Virtually every leader of African indigenous churches identified dreams as the source of their calling.

56. Harland 2003: 62–3; Artemidorus 1975: 7. Though Artemidorus wrote in the 2nd century CE, he uses older sources that indicate that the tradition of dream interpreters was in existence even before first century CE Greco-Roman society. While revisiting the question of whether dreams come from gods or an inner self, Artemidorus seems to want distinguish his perception from the popular understanding of their source (1:6).

57. For example, in an inscription from Delos (c. 200 BCE), the priest Apollonios writes concerning the instructions to dedicate a temple to Serapis. *AGRW* 221 = IG XI,4 1299: "…the god instructed me through a dream that I should dedicate his own temple of Sarapis (*Sarapieion*), and that he was not to be in rented rooms anymore."

58. Kelly 1969: 231.

So, rather than it simply being a swipe at their wishful thinking, Jude levies accusations against these infiltrators for adherence to the dream interpreters' traditions or teachings, with their lopsided beliefs in such issues as sexual deviance in dreams. For example, Artemidorus' *Dream Interpretations* 1:45, elaborates on the different metaphorical interpretations of the penis *vis á vis* family members, while in 1:76 he makes an extensive discussion on what it means to have intercourse with one's mother in a dream. This may put in some context Jude's connection of the infiltrators with sexual deviance, when he accuses them of **defiling themselves**.

In opposition to the infiltrators, based on what Jude sees as conduct unbecoming of those who identify with the Christian community, any claim to divine origin by the **dreamers** is seen as misplaced. What they do is not to honor God but instead to reject divine authority and consequently blaspheme against God's representatives. That is why the following contrast in verse ten zeroes in on the fact that their actions reflect a rejection of the lordship of God and result in blaspheming of angels.

As it were, if indeed these dreams were divine revelations, these infiltrators would neither **reject the lordship** of Jesus nor **blaspheme** against God's **glorious ones**, since they would know better. It is an accusation of a misplaced dangerous claim to divine authority by the infiltrators which, according to Jude, results in rejection of the very faith they may be claiming to represent. Like the false prophets in the HB/OT who claimed divine revelation from dreams while they failed to speak the truth (Jer 23:15) so do these **dreamers**.[59]

We are not told exactly what they do in **defiling** their bodies. However, the language of **defiling** (*miainō*) **the flesh** seems to assume that the sexual conduct discussed in v. 7, may give a broader context of their actions. When the term *miainō* occurs in other parts of the NT, it is usually connected to cultic elements, e.g., John 18:28: Titus 1:5; Heb 7:6, 12:15, 13:4; Jas 1:27; 1 Pet 1: 4. (cf. G. Green, 2008, 75, on sexual sin and ceremonial pollution) and their potential for pollution. So, the defilement language in Jude likely draws from such ceremonial uncleanness, of which sexual impurity is common.

This notion is strengthened by the second part of the sentence, which refers to the other spectrum of the infiltrator's fault, blaspheming against **glorious ones** (understood to be angels from the following verse, v. 9). Possibly led by their own understanding of dreams, these infiltrators may claim a certain authority that they can appeal to as a justification of acts which

59. Keener 1993, 2013: 721.

to them, may seem in line with their religious practices but to Jude are deemed blasphemous. Perhaps, in their dreams, they re-enact the defiling acts of the angels who left their abode and consummated with humans. Nevertheless, **defiling** here is to be understood as a deed that reflects loss of control and the latter **blaspheming**, invokes a lack of spiritual prudence that displays the depth of their spiritual depravity, blinded by their own notion of revelation from their dreams.

A transition from the negative examples happens when we get to the positive model drawn from the archangel Michael. In contrast to those who with arrogance would defile their bodies and blaspheme angels, the submissiveness of the archangel Michael is a suitable rebuke and a stark contrast to their behavior. The extreme arrogance of the dreamers in their blaspheming, is contrasted by the extreme humility of the otherwise powerful archangel Michael. (In Dan 10:13; 12:1, and Rev 12:7, portrayals are of a powerful archangel Michael, protector of the Israel and the leader of angels into spiritual warfare.)

By deferring to God's justice, Michael avoided placing himself as judge over Satan, which would put him in the place of God (even though he is God's spokesperson) and resulting in blasphemy. Apparently, the infiltrators may be positioning themselves as judges over the community consequently usurping God's authority and thus blaspheming.

Once again, the backdrop for this image is *1 Enoch* with its elaborate discourse on angels. The exact provenance of Michael's disputations with Satan over the body of Moses is elusive since Deut 34:1–6 only describes Moses' death and burial. Proposals have pointed to the possibility that it may have originated from a lost ending of the *Testament of Moses*. Very early on in the third century CE, Origen (*De Princ.*, 3. 2, 1), attributed this text to a Jewish writing he called *Assumption/Ascension of Moses* (also known as *Apocalypse of Moses* and *Testament of Moses*). Recent scholarship has promulgated the theory that, rather than Jude simply quoting directly from a single source, he has conflated Jewish traditions of Michael as gravedigger from *Assumption of Moses*, with those of Michael and accusations of Azazel, in the *1 Enoch* 1:9.[60] As the argument goes, it points to the need to acknowledge that in the only other extant reference to disputation over a human body, there is no rebuking of Satan over the body of Joshua in Zechariah 3:1–5.[61]

60. Bauckham 1983: 72–3; Neyrey 1995.

61. Neyrey 1993: 65; Webb 2008, 59.

Ultimately, the point is that the arrogance of the infiltrators is placed in stark contrast from the meekness of the powerful heavenly being who, though he could be justified in claiming a greater sense of authority than mortals (Dan 12:1; Rev 12:7), nevertheless approaches delicate matters with a decided sense of humility.[62] Even while representing God, Michael the archangel never presumes the role of Judge; that role belongs to God. Rather, by appealing to God's authority, he is able to invoke God's judgment without undermining God's position. By implication, those infiltrators making judgments of others are in essence playing God, by virtue of which they put themselves in danger of divine judgment.

Infiltrators as Blasphemous (vv. 10–11)

> **10**Yet how much these, who do not understand, are blaspheming and how they are governed by natural instincts, as brutes without rational reason, fix their thoughts, [and] are destroyed by these things. **11**Woe to them, for they have followed the path of Cain and the error of Balaam, reaping the wages, and just as Korah's rebellion, are destroyed.

While the otherwise powerful archangel Michael displays extraordinary restraint and humility; in contrast, the arrogance of the infiltrators and their inability to master any restraint has placed them at the lowest of rank of creation—they are **brutes** with no **self-control**. The infiltrators are described as ignorant of the working of the Christian God, which results in their blaspheming. It is not that they do not have the capacity to comprehend or understand, rather they deliberately refuse to accept the nature of the Christian faith and as a result of this failure their actions lead them to do things that are destructive to the faith and ultimately to themselves. It is not simply lack of knowledge, but, more probably, stubbornness on their part, allowing themselves to be governed by basic instincts rather than rational reasoning.

Yet, stereotyping language continues in this verse with the infiltrators compared to **wild animals** (*zōon*) led by **instincts** (*phusikōs*) and with **no rational thought** (*alogos*).[63] It makes it unlikely that this is a literal description of their behavior. Rather, more likely, it is a figurative characterization

62. Charles 1994: 13: "Michael as a paradigm presents the irony of true spirituality—humble recognition of spiritual powers over against mindless profanity."

63. Harland 2009: 167–81.

that probably says more about the animalistic nature that they display, than their actual behavior. To compare them to **brutes** is to denigrate and shame them, to lower their status and standing in society, and to show them to be lacking of the proper moral and social qualities of members of a civil society. This is not unlike the Greco-Roman associations, which were generally concerned with decorum, order and group rituals, while accusing outsiders of corruption, drunkenness, and destruction of moral law (e.g., Livy *Hist. Rom*. 39.8–19).[64]

The archangel Michael's **self-control** (v. 9) is the contrast of the infiltrators' animalistic out-of-control behavior that ultimately leads to destruction. While in verse eight **blaspheming** is paired with the rejection of lordship (God's or Jesus'), here it is said to be the result of the infiltrator's base animal instincts—failure of discernment. Likeness to wild animals implies that, in contrast to civil humans, they do not possess a governing sense of rationality and as such are slaves to the very basic animalistic instincts they reflect. Plato remarks that the *wild beast* in humans becomes rampant and out of control when overfed with meat and drink.[65] This is exactly what Jude accuses these infiltrators of later in v. 12—feeding themselves shamelessly with out-of-control appetites!

In essence, since they lack the very basic self-control that distinguishes humans from animals, they are classified as less than human—**beasts** with no capacity for civility or rational behavior. While metaphorical in its function, this labeling denigrates the targeted individual or group, and places them outside of the accuser's self-perceived membership to a rational civil society. Jude, by pointing to archangel Michael's self-control in the previous verse, and in the same vein as Plato, advocates moderation of appetites as the way to true fulfillment and happiness. The archangel Michael, in his humility, becomes the perfect example for humans to emulate. In contrast, the infiltrators in their arrogance, lose even their human nature and have regressed to basic elements of the lowest of animals.

The language of **woe** (*ouai*) echoes the pronouncements of future divine judgment by prophets of Israel (Isa 3:11; Nah 3:1; Amos 6:1; Hos 7:13) and Jesus in the gospels (Matt 11:21; 18:7: 23), against peoples and cities that had failed to heed the warning of God's message. While **woe** encompasses a pronouncement of judgment, it reflects more of a deep-seated

64. Ibid., 171: "Moreover, the association regulations or sacred laws of the Greco-Roman era that have survived and been uncovered… are concerned with issues of order and decorum in meetings, rituals, and banquets."

65. Plato, *Rep*. 9, 571 E–572 B.

sense of empathy, sympathy, and disappointment with the addressees. It also reflects the author's eschatological expectation of the imminence of judgment—an expectation of the inevitably approaching judgment, which would have otherwise been avoided, if only the addressees had paid attention to prior warnings! All they needed to do was to see the bad endings of the examples cited from Scripture. What a pity!

Jude, by going back to the HB/OT for examples that should stand as warnings for the infiltrators, makes it clear that their path is one that leads to an inevitable damnation. All three HB/OT characters given as examples were judged by God for their actions—**Cain** murdered his brother Abel and was banished to wander forever (Gen 4:1–14) and in later Jewish tradition came to epitomize the archetype of ungodliness.[66] **Balaam** tried to curse Israel, but was subsequently killed by Israel (Num 31:8) and in later Jewish tradition came to typify selfish greed, deception and pride.[67] **Korah** led a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness and was swallowed alive by the earth (Num 16:1–35) and in later Jewish tradition came to be aligned with the men of Sodom as those that would never make it to the world to come.[68]

Over time, these three came to represent classic examples of rebellion against divine ordinance in the Second Temple Jewish tradition, where they all represent those who "taught evil to others and they were punished" for it.[69] Their punishment parallels the eternal destruction that befell those who left Egypt but were destroyed in the wilderness (v. 5). It is this inescapable judgment that the infiltrators are courting, according to Jude. There is no escaping such final and comprehensive divine destruction. That is why the infiltrators are following the **path** or **way** of the three. The metaphor captures the direction that their choices are leading them to—a path to eternal destruction. The same basic spirit of rebellion and deception said to have characterized the triumvirate of wickedness **Cain**, **Balaam** and **Korah**, now characterizes the infiltrators.

Nature of Infiltrators as Bringers of False Hope (vv. 12–13)

> **12**These are those who, in your love feasts, are hidden stones, gathering together [with you] without fear, feeding themselves. They

66. Cf, Philo, *De post. Caini* 38; *Sacr.* 1:2, 3; 13:52.
67. Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 52; *Tg. Ps.–J. Num* 22: 5, 29.
68. m. Sanh, 10:3
69. *Sir* 45: 18–19; Josephus *J.W.* 5.13.7; Davids 2011: 17; Green 2008: 92–93.

> are clouds without water, moved by every passing wind, dry trees with no fruit, twice dead, to be uprooted. **13**Untamed waves of the sea foaming with their shame, wandering stars for whom total darkness is preserved.

To avoid the possibility of creating boredom with purely Jewish imagery, Jude now turns to images from nature to further shame and disparage the infiltrators.[70] Having compared them and their destiny to three HB/OT characters and events, he now switches to two sets of three generic idioms from nature, to further paint a picture of their depravity. First set—hidden stones/without fear/shepherding themselves—and second set—waterless clouds/fruitless trees/foaming waves.

First, Jude's reference to the **love feasts** (*agapais*) and **gatherings** (*suneuchomai*) (cf. 2 Pet 2:13) gives us the evidence that the infiltrators targeted the community gatherings as their main entrance point for their activities.[71] This reference to communal meal gatherings is central to the argument that elements of this epistle can be profitably analyzed alongside the records of Greco-Roman banqueting in associations.[72] The word *agape* occurs frequently in the NT with the meaning of love. But its use here as description of the **love feast** (*agapais*), is unique to Jude (a *hapax legomenon*—this is the only place the word occurs in this form in the entire New Testament) though a variant is found in 2 Pet 2:13. Here, it describes "a common meal eaten by early Christians in connection with their worship, for the purpose of fostering and expressing mutual affection and concern; *fellowship meal, a love-feast*."[73]

Not only does it indicate that these were regularly planned occurrences for Jude's community, as the case was for the Greco-Roman groups and other early Christian groups (Acts 2:46, 20:7, 11; 1 Cor 11:20–34), it also seems to indicate that is was a specific target of the infiltrators, who knew that they would have captive audiences on such occasions. Their message

70. Watson 1988:78.

71. Keener 1993, 2013: 722. Connections can be made to the Passover as the template for the last supper and so also possibly for the love feasts. However, the Passover itself was an annual feast while the Christian love feasts seemed to happen more regularly, perhaps every week.

72. D. E. Smith 2003: 2. The social meals were not simply about eating but were social institutions in the Greco Roman world of the first century, ". . . that cut across ethnic, religious, and social lines . . ."

73. *BDAG* 7:2.

could reach the most committed of the community, allowing their teaching to spread faster.

If, as I suppose, the Christian communities organized themselves in much the same way Greco-Roman voluntary associations did, then virtually everyone in the group knew everyone else and there were regulations on who came to the gatherings.[74] On the one hand, this does not preclude the possibility that these infiltrators are coming in pretending to be converts, and then somehow managing to bring their brand of teachings to the group, the traditional assumption of commentators on this text. Or else they are former members of the group now returning and are welcomed, but bring with them the corrupt teachings.

If both Jewish and Greco-Roman guilds and associations regulated who came into their banquets, it makes sense to assume that the Christian groups were doing the same. On the other hand, however, looking at the regulations of how minority associations worked in Greco-Roman society, these infiltrators in Jude would have made it into the community feasts if in the first place they were not totally unknown to the community.[75] This is not to say that it was not possible since Christian outreach and hospitality would have necessitated the welcome of the outsider.

What is hidden is not their identity but their intent and teachings.[76] The word *spillas* (**stain**, **storm**, **rocks**) is, perhaps, best translated as **hidden rocks** in the manner of dangerous rocks hidden near seashores that pause unseen dangers to vessels.[77] Inevitably, one wonders, if these were actual infiltrators coming from outside or, just like the stereotypical language the author has used to caricature them above, these **hidden rocks** (*spillas*) are simply a part of the community (or returning former members) whose teachings the author disagrees with, and so seeks to expose.[78]

However, it is important to note that the first interpreter of Jude, 2 Pet 2:13, seems to understand its use in light of its moral meaning when he changes *spilades* to *sploi* (**moral spots or defects**). In the process of seeking to oust them, the language of the infiltrator then works, not simply to show that they are coming from outside, but for Jude, they rightfully belong

74. Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996; Harland 2003: 25–53.

75. Harland 2003: 55–87, points out that the two key factors governing regular meal gathering of Greco-Roman associations was *worship* and *fellowship with friends*.

76. Reese 2007: 59–60.

77. Bauckham 1983: 85–86; Rogers and Rogers 1998: 607a. Reese 2007: 59–60.

78. Charles 1993: 65–90.

on the outside. The *spillas* (**morally wrecking individuals**) can then be in line with the *epithumia* (**lust, uncontrolled passions**) in v. 16, who, due to their overriding lack of self-control, succumb to their lustful desires.

Jude's complaint is analogous to that made by Philo concerning Roman after-dinner-banqueting (Philo, *Cont.* 6.48–54)[79] which, though not concerned with infiltration, is nevertheless, focused on the opinion within his Jewish audience concerning the acceptability of what he deems as morally reprehensible behaviors prevalent in Greco-Roman gatherings.[80] As Harland warns, such characterizations have to be taken with a pinch of salt, given their one-sided, polemic-driven rhetoric.[81]

This trope of sexual deviance and comparison to **animal instinct**, once again, appeals more to a stereotyping of the infiltrators than it would as a reliable historical description of their character or moral aberrance. Such an understanding finds support in the characterization that Jude employs in next three verses to describe the infiltrators. Not only are these stereotypical, he also utilizes metaphors whose literal understanding is not sufficient to reconstitute, with any certainty, the historical veracity of the infiltrators.

The idea of **fearlessness** (*aphobōs*) in the "**fearlessness, shepherds/feeding themselves**" is not a positive one, say, in the way that a brave soldier in war would show fearlessness. Rather, it is with impunity that the infiltrators exhibit an astounding lack of shame that evidences in their unabashedness in the face of wrongdoing, and marks them as lacking basic moral judgment. Not only a disregard of the etiquette of these **love feast gatherings**, but their daring uninhibited behavior which shows lack of attentiveness to implications for their actions.

And, for a society governed by honor and shame, no greater public accusation could be made against someone than that he/she has no honor![82] This is the accusation leveled against the infiltrators by Jude. It is unlikely, however, that they exhibited their abandon to immorality during the love feasts since this would obviously expose them out immediately to the group

79. "Some perhaps may approve the method of banqueting now prevalent everywhere through hankering for the Italian expensiveness and luxury emulated both by Greeks and non-Greeks who make their arrangements for ostentation rather than festivity. . . The last tables brought in are reserved for the drinking bouts and the after-dinners as they call them."

80. Cf. *Flacc.* 136–37; Winter 2001: 83–85.

81. Harland 2003: 74.

82. Neyrey 1998: 30–31; Green 2008: 97–98.

in the close confines of the intimate meals. Instead, this is more likely a characterization of the general attitude they exhibit, with little fear of recrimination.[83] That is where the notion of "wild" is evidenced—a failure to regulate their behavior in accordance with given community guidelines. It is with impunity that they carry themselves. Therefore comparison to uncaring **shepherds** recalls Ezekiel 34 where Israel's leaders are accused of being shepherds that eat the flock instead of taking care of it.

It is this comparison with shepherds of Israel that allows some commentators to identify the infiltrators as teachers, even though Jude never identifies them as such. It would seem then that these commentators wrongfully fuse the image of the **false-teachers** (*pseudodidaskaloi*) of 2 Peter into this metaphor to identify Jude's infiltrators as teachers, even though Jude never calls them teachers—false or otherwise.[84]

Jude then continues his metaphors describing the infiltrators with four more images that derive from elements of nature—**clouds with no rain** (air), **trees with no fruit** (land), **sea full of foam** (water) and **wandering stars** (heavens) to continue his descriptions.[85] Faith in the Bible is usually analogous to rootedness and stability (e.g., Psalm 1—tree planted by the waters) while wickedness is characterized as the inability to settle Sir 5:9–10; Eph 4:14; 2 Pet 2:14; Jas 1:6), and this provides that background for the tree metaphor in Jude. Almost identical language is found in Isa 57:20–21, describing the wicked: "But the wicked are like the *tossing sea* that *cannot keep still*; its *waters toss up mire* and mud. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."

The danger these infiltrators pose, is that they move from one place to another—whether physically or theologically, it is unclear—and they do not seem to have the capacity to hold fast to the group's teachings. Instead, they are subject to any passing fad. Similar concern and language is reflected in Eph 4:14–15, where the author implores unity to his audience: "As a result, we are no longer to be children, *tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine*, *by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming . . .*" The phrase **untamed or wild** (*agria*) **waves,** also retains the image of out of control state of the infiltrators that is reflected in their comparison to irrational brutes in v. 10. Allusion to *1 Enoch* 80 is also possible here. This inability to be contained (or to contain one-self)

83. Bauckham 1983: 86.

84. Thurén 1997: 455–59.

85. Witherington III 2007: 621.

continues the caricature of the outsider as uninhibited and ungovernable. Theirs is a public dishonor that can only be characterized as **foaming with their shame.**

These analogies imply that the deep deception that these infiltrators present is not immediately visible to the community. They are not what they seem to be on the surface. Just like the hidden rocks in the previous example, their impression, on the surface, is misleading. What they turn out to be is mirages; giving the impression of being one thing while in reality they are simply illusions!

The following images Jude uses of the infiltrators, **Clouds without water, moved by every passing wind,** implies several things—i) they fail to live up to expectation, ii) they are unstable and therefore unreliable, iii) they are both the converts to, and purveyors of, false teachings.[86] As we have noted, nowhere in Jude are the infiltrators explicitly identified as teachers. Nonetheless, they do not need to be teachers to spread their teaching since it is in their unsuspected interactions within the community that they seem to influence their audience. The transitory nature of clouds in this metaphor has also been adduced in support of the itinerant nature of the infiltrators. However, the emphasis is not their transient nature but in their untrustworthiness.

Israel is usually depicted as a tree (Jer 24:1–2; Psalm 1; Micah 4:3–4.). In the Gospels, for example, Israel is compared to the fig tree (Mark 11:12–25; Matt 21:19–25) with its fruitfulness (or lack thereof) a measure of its spiritual health. In Jude, it is the infiltrators who are depicted as unfruitful trees. **Dry/late autumn (***phthinoporinos***) trees with no fruit, twice dead, to be uprooted** rather than a reference to second death, *ala* Bauckham, is more likely that the notion of twice dead is simply an emphatic declaration of the hopelessness of the tree.[87] It is through the seed that a tree engenders new life and keeps on producing life, and seed comes from the fruit they bear. Without fruit, the tree itself is of little use since it provides no sustenance (might as well be dead), nor propagates new life in the form of seed—it is **twice dead**![88] If by **late autumn** the tree does not bear fruit then it has no chance of doing so as winter approaches.[89]

86. Green 2008: 96.
87. Bauckham 1983: 88.
88. Green 2008: 97.
89. Senior et al. 2008: 217.

The fruitless tree thus also evokes comparison with the fig tree that was cursed by Jesus after he found it to be fruitless (Mark 11:12–14, 20–25). Fruitlessness, then is an indication of spiritual deadness deserving judgment, and contrasts to the notion of fruitfulness (Matt 3:8; Luke 3:8) that exemplifies abundance of the Spirit of God, which is also described as **bearing fruit**.

Finally, the image of **wandering stars** probably harks back to *1 Enoch,* which the author references directly in the next verse (v. 14) and which he has already referenced earlier in v. 6. Allusions could also be made to *1 Enoch* 18:14–16; 21:6; 86:1–3; 90:24.[90] Unlike stationary stars like the North Star, which could be relied upon for direction in the night, these mobile heavenly bodies are of no use to the traveler. They are useless, in the least, and dangerous since they would definitely misdirect the traveler using them for guidance. These are phony and unreliable guides, not to be trusted at all.

Fate of the Infiltrators as Predicted by Enoch (vv. 14–16)

> **14**And also, Enoch, the seventh from the Adam, prophesied against these ones saying, "Behold the Lord comes with his holy tens of thousands, **15**making judgment against all things and convicting all hearts on account of all their ungodly works of, those who act impiously and, concerning all the harsh/violent, who speak along with those ungodly sinners. **16**These are complainers who quarrel, are driven by their lustful desires and their mouths speak pompous words, raising their countenance on account of profit.

Drawing further textual support for his condemnation of the infiltrators, Jude turns his attention once more to the writing of *1 Enoch* to bolster his evidence for their impending judgment. In Gen 5:21, Enoch is listed as seventh from Adam and is also, referenced as such in *1 Enoch* 60:8. Unlike the other HB/OT examples adduced by the author as warnings to the infiltrators and their followers, Enoch is appealed upon as a voice that spoke warnings on behalf of God. Others were examples of what not to do or say, but Enoch is one who correctly uttered the warnings of God. (Yes, archangel Michael was also cited as an example to emulate but he is an angel, not human.) Enoch is the exemplar, who positively stands out in contrast to all

90. Bauckham 1983: 89.

preceding characters from the HB/OT. His are reliable words to pay heed to, in contrast to the unreliability of the infiltrators.

Probably quoting from memory, Jude cites *1 Enoch* 1:9, a prophecy concerning the final judgment. From early on, the validity of the reference to non-canonical writings such as *1 Enoch* or *Testament of the Twelve* that Jude makes, have been debated. In the third century, Tertullian defended the epistle's canonicity and showed no major qualms about the use of *1 Enoch*.[91] Venerable Bede, the seventh-century Benedictine exegete, in defense of Jude's canonicity, summarizes the issues that have been raised on this concern:

> Indeed, it was precisely because Jude quotes [Enoch] that for a long time his letter was rejected by many as being un-canonical. Nevertheless it deserves to be included in the canon because of its author, its antiquity and the way in which it has been used, and particularly because this passage which Jude takes from Enoch is in not itself apocryphal or dubious but is rather notable for the clarity with which it testifies to the true light.[92]

While it has become increasingly clear that such writings as *1 Enoch* were considered, if not canonical, at least at par with scripture in some Jewish circles such as in Qumran, it is possible that Jude is also exploiting his readers' or opponents' affinity for the writing.[93]

The turn of phrases here combines the stereotypes we have already encountered above (sexual depravity, v. 4) with the addition of the infiltrator's self-glorifying aggrandizement (disputing, haughtiness, and faltering). These accusations also parallel the elements of *anti*-banquet attested in Greco-Roman associations (see pg. 46). The expressed requirement of order, decorum, and piety in association gatherings is clearly violated by the infiltrators who instead are argumentative and boastful (**murmur, quarrel, pompous words**), sexual philanderers (**lust**), greedy, and **impious** (*asebeia*).[94] Jude's rhetoric bears clear resemblance to polemical rhetoric in Greco-Roman groups and associations, especially in context of contested group identities. It is no wonder that the infiltrators are cause of disruptions

91. Bray 2000: 254b.

92. *PL* 93:129 (in Bray 2000: 255a).

93. Charles 1994: 1–2; Harland 2009: 171.

94. *AGRW* 8 = *IG II²* 1369 (c.2nd CE): "The law of the club members (*eranistai*): It is not lawful for anyone to enter this most holy synod (*synodos*) of club members without being first examined as to whether he is pure, pious, and good (*a[gn]os kai eusebēs kai ag|a[th]os*)." Cf. Harland, 2009, 171.

to the community gatherings (v. 12; cf. v. 19). As a collective, the behavioral patterns attributed to them by Jude represent the type of conduct that would have resulted in being kicked out of any association.

The attitude of self-interest and self-promotion that prevails among them, serves only to make them appear better than they actually are. Jude sees in them an ungrateful, dissatisfied, self-seeking, deceitful and arrogant group, whose claims about anything cannot be trusted at all. To him, everything they say is either wildly exaggerated or totally unfounded. Jude describes their speeches as *huperongka*, a word found in the writings of Philo, Josephus, and in the LXX (Septuagint—Greek translation of HB/OT) where the general meaning is **excess in terms of size, attitude or personality**. That is why translators of Jude have chosen words such as **haughty**, **pompous**, or **bombastic to** describe *huperongka*.[95]

Conceit abounds in their attitude, blinding them to their own falsified self-perception! Their intent is obvious, according to Jude; they want to impress themselves in the eyes of the community and thus gain admiration and respect, all along driven by self-deception. In contrast to the **words** (*rhemata*) spoken by the apostles, which are reliable (v. 17), the words of these infiltrators are filled with **hot air** (*huperongkos*)—"words with no trustworthiness" or "words that carry no truth." Riddled with falsehood, they fail to deliver what they promise since such claims cannot be backed up by their actions.

Warning About Scoffers (vv. 17–19)

> **17**But you, beloved, remember the words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, **18**for they used say to you, "In the last days there will scoffers, following after their own evil desires and godlessness." **19**These are those who are causing divisions [among you], brutes of nature, having no spirit [of God].

Turning his focus to his audience, Jude makes a striking contrast with those previously described in v. 16. While the latter speak **pompous words**, the community is encouraged rather to remember the **words** (*remata*) of Jesus' apostles.

"**But you** . . ." repeated also in v. 20, sets up a pattern of A B A' B', where Jude addresses the dangers posed by the infiltrators in A A' and strongly contrasts it with the caution to his audience B B', to exemplify a

95. *BDAG*, 1034.

counter position to that presented by the infiltrators. This sets up a scenario where the contrast is between **they** (infiltrators—*houtoi*) and **you** (audience—*humeis*)

A – **they** are to be judged,

B **but you** are to be saved;

A' – **they** are liars

B' **but you** must speak the truth;

A"– **they** are devoid of the spirit of God,

B" – **but you** pray in the holy spirit;

A"'– **they** are complainers, arrogant and sexually deviant,

B"' – **but you** show mercy, save those falling away, seek eternal life, through God's mercy.

Such emphatic bifurcation between the **beloved** and the damned infiltrators is driven by the author's conviction that these are **the last days**. The infiltrators represent those whom **the apostles of Jesus** had predicted would appear **in the last days**. These are the **scoffers/mockers** (*empaiktēs*), who dishonor others with the intent of shaming by making a public ridicule of those they deceive.[96] The meaning drawn from its cognate (*empaizo*) is "to trick someone so as to make a fool of the person" and implies a premeditated malicious intent.[97]

This is precisely what Jude accuses the infiltrators of doing when he accuses them of deception; deliberately waylaying the community, fully aware that they are deceiving it (v. 4).[98] By ridiculing the apostolic teachings, the **scoffers** undermine the veracity of their message forcing the community to doubt. Jude wants to bring it to the open that this very tactic had been foretold as a warning that prophesied the eventual arrival of these, otherwise unreliable **scoffers**.

However, the term **scoffer** (**mockers**) still remains a generic classification of general opponents' overall portrayal rather than a description of specific action. This is supported by the stereotypes that follow the reference to the sayings of the apostles, which have been used earlier against the

96. Green 2008: 115. HB/OT references to mockers include Isa 3:4; Ps 1:1; 35:16; Prov 1:22; 9:7–8; 13:1; 14:6; 19:25, 29)

97. *BDAG* 323; Watson 1988: 70.

98. *TDNT* 5: 630–36

infiltrators labeling them as sexually deviant (**following their own lusts**) and rebellious (**godless—***asebeis*) (cf. v. 16).[99]

Also, since the prediction of their appearance in this case is part of an earlier prophetic utterance attributed **the apostles of Jesus,** it suggests the saying was a well known phrase that is identified with any who fit the general category of mockers. Their infiltration and their subsequent exposure as imposters (vv. 4, 8, 10, 11, 15) brings mockery to the audiences both for failing to see the deception and for failing to remember the warning of the apostles.

This reference to the **apostles of Jesus Christ,** who had spoken earlier, may also be used to argue for a later dating of the letter, given that it leaves the impression that the apostles were long gone, and therefore the letter could not be written by Jude. On the other hand, it could also mean that the apostles had earlier spoken directly to Jude's community and that Jude expected them to remember what had been said directly to them. In that regard, the apostles would still be alive, but since Jude was never an apostle, it would make sense that he distinguishes himself from them.

Once again, the comparison with wild animals remains consistent with the stereotyping of the enemy as being out of control. From all the imagery and metaphors Jude uses to describe the infiltrators, the one thing we can know with certainty is the infiltrators are **causing divisions** (*apodiorizontes*) within Jude's community. The rest of their characterization seems to fall neatly into purely stereotypical categories—**brutes of nature** (*psuchikos*)**, scoffers, having no spirit [of God]**. By virtue of their lack of spirit (of God), they retain their natural brutish nature. The transformation that happens from having the indwelling spirit of God is missing among the infiltrators because the truth of the matter is that they do not have God's spirit. They are still governed by their natural instincts and that is why their behavior cannot be tempered.

Clearly, here the contrast between a God's spirit-led-life versus a non-spirit led life is what is meant. As such, the description of the infiltrators as *psuchikos* (**brutes of nature**) does little to tell us of their character since it seems the case that all who do not have the spirit (of God), according to Jude, are simply **brutes of nature** or in other words, governed by a **worldly mind**. The simplicity of this dichotomy—if you have God's spirit, you have self control, versus if you have no spirit you have no control—is what makes this comparison stereotypical. It leaves no room for the possibility that one can still have the spirit of God and still struggle with self control, and that

99. It could also be translated, "following after their ungodly lust."

one who has no spirit of God can exemplify strong self control. The binary holds, only in so far as, this remains a metaphoric comparison.

Nonetheless, if the comparison is between the community and the group of infiltrators, rather than individuals (vv. 20–21), then the author is contrasting the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community to the lack thereof among the infiltrators. And since the community is being kept, or sustained, by Jesus until the eternal life (vv. 1, 24), Jude can thus speak with confidence about the common community ethos *contra* that of the infiltrators. This strong polemical binary then is a boundary marker, more than a rendering of the outsiders' character, since the primary intent is to show how diametrically opposed the *ethos* of the two groups are.

Encouragement to Believers (vv. 20–21)

> **20**But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith,
> offer prayers in the holy spirit, **21**guard yourselves in God's love,
> anticipating the mercy of our lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

One again, "**But you** . . ." continues the contrast being developed between the infiltrators and Jude's audience. Jude distinguishes between his readers and those he perceives to be in danger of judgment. It also marks a shift in focus from the concern about the negative elements of the infiltrators to positive instructions to the author's **beloved**, the recipients of his letter.

The previous condemnation is thus to be understood as clearly directed to those who have been identified as infiltrators, while now the focus is on the faithful. In direct contrast to the infiltrators, who are **causing divisions** (v. 19—*apodiorizontes*), Jude's audience is called upon instead, to **build or construct** (*epoikodomeō*) themselves up, as a community. The third person masculine plural participle indicates that the injunction is for the whole group. This building-up, then, is a group effort to support one another even as the infiltrators have tried to tear them apart by causing divisions. The premise on which this building-up will take place is faith and prayer—the two things that require a sense of communal participation.

A second direct contrast with those dividing the community concerns the presence of God's spirit. Those detractors, the author affirms, have **no spirit** (presumably the spirit of God) while his audience is encouraged to make their prayer **in the Holy Spirit** (spirit of God). Each is the antithesis of the other. While the former lack the spirit of God, the latter must seek the community's wellbeing via spirit based prayers and faith. The contrast

between bruteness of the former (v. 19) and the civility of the addressees is premised upon the absence and presence of the spirit of God, respectively.

This equation of civility with divine connection, in contrast to the wild animal-like nature of those who do not have the spirit, is also premised on the stereotyping that allows the in-group to distinguish the out-group as barbaric, ungodly and out of control.[100] In contrast, the in-group perceives itself as those with control over their faculties, emotions and desires, the direct opposition to the wild ungodly outsiders (*psychikos*).[101] It is therefore unlikely that such statements would be an accurate measure of the infiltrator's actual sense of godliness, since the language used is stalk caricature of perceived outsiders.[102]

The notion of **mercy** as it relates to anticipation has an eschatological outlook as it focuses on **eternal life** (*zoē aiōnos*).[103] In v. 1, after Jude identifies his audience as those that **are kept (***tēreō***) safe in Jesus Christ**, he wishes them the mercy of God. Usually, when the verb *tēreō* occurs in the NT in connection with God, it is with God as the agent (i.e., God as the one keeping).[104] **Mercy**, was added to the greeting in v. 1 to make Jude's use of the generic epistolary salutation more distinct. But it also may emphasize the eschatological nature of his overall message. Here, in v. 21, **mercy** appears once again with eschatological connection to eternal life. While the two are very likely connected, it has also been suggested that the occurrence of **mercy** here may be more closely derived from *1 Enoch* 1:8.[105] Either way, the three elements of **mercy**, **keeping,** and **eternal life** are juxtaposed in a symbiotic relationship. In light of these previous uses of *tēreō*, it is a peculiar command here in Jude given that the believers are the ones expected to actively participate in keeping themselves in God's love, *contra* Jude 1.

100. Harland 2009: 171.

101. Ibid., 174.

102. Ibid. "These accusations like the bandit anti-associations, political conspiracy, and alien cults, arise from a common stockpile of stereotypes of the threatening other, and there is no need to look for any basis in the reality of actual practices."

103. Webb 1996: 141.

104. *BDAG* 814–15: *Tēreō* is usually used in NT with an eschatological inclination (e.g., 1 Thess 5:23; 1 Pet 1:4; 2 Pet 2: 4, 9, 17; 3: 7; John 17: 11–12)

105. Webb 1996: 141, n. 7: "Jude's use of *eleos* in v. 21 to allude to Christ's parousia may be influenced by the Greek text of *1 Enoch* 1:8 in particular, for it describes eschatological salvation as 'mercy shall come upon them' (*ep outous genesetai eleos*). Jude has already cited the succeeding verse (*1 Enoch* 1: 9) in vv. 14–15 as a reference to Christ bringing judgment at the parousia."

The same vocabulary in v. 6 is used of those that are **kept** (*tēreō*) awaiting divine judgment. Divine regulations must be therefore understood in both cases: both groups are being *kept*, but with radically different outcomes anticipated for each one. For the former, it is an expected divine and eternal judgment and for the latter, it is a divine blessing, of eternal life.

Rescuing The Wavering (vv. 22–23)

> **22** And to those wavering,[106] show mercy. **23** Save these as if snatching them from fire and showing mercy in fear; hating even the defiled clothing hanging from their bodies.

Following the example of God in v. 21, who exercises mercy awaiting the coming judgment, the audience is encouraged to also exercise mercy to **those wavering** (*diakriō*). It is not very clear who it is that Jude has in mind when talking about the ones **wavering**. More likely than not it is not the infiltrators in view here, but those of the community who may have been drawn away, or may be in danger of being drawn away by the infiltrators. The fact that there is hope for such ones contradicts the certainty of the judgment that awaits the infiltrators (v. 11).

This, instead, must be a third group, which is part of the beloved community, but they have found themselves being waylaid by the intruders and are now in danger of falling off. The encouragement to seek after such ones is also in contrast to keeping away from the infiltrators (v. 11). As such, Jude calls on the community to **show mercy** and **save** them,[107] by **snatching them from fire** (cf. Zech 3:2). The image of fire here has to do with its destructiveness and therefore refers to the teachings of the infiltrators that lead to destruction (cf. notes on v. 7). The fire image also conjures the notion of divine judgment that is variously described, in Judeo-Christian sources (Isa 33:4; Jer 21:4; Amos 1:10; Matt 13:5, 18:8, 25:41; Mark 9:43–45; 1 Cor 3:11–15; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 9:2; 20:9; 21:8; *1 Enoch* 1:6–7; Jos *Ant* 1.2.3).

Jude, however, may be more specifically drawing from Zech 3:3–4, where Joshua's filthy clothing signifies Israel's sinfulness which God replaces with clean clothes.[108] Those who have to do the saving in Jude are advised to do it in **fear** (*phobos*), not in the sense of being scared but in the

106. Verb *diakrinō*, usually translated "to contend", e.g., v. 9, here to means "doubt." Cf. Metzger 1994: 659.

107. Ibid., 659–60.

108. Bauckham 1983: 114–15.

understanding that they are putting themselves in a precarious position and thus must exercise every caution possible.

They should not think of themselves are invulnerable. They have to attempt the saving with **mercy** while at the same time **hating** (*miseō*) the **defiled clothing hanging on [the] flesh** (*sarx*—representing the sin) of those wavering.[109] The image here is one where the wavering persons are so corrupted by the infiltrators' teachings that every aspect of their live, represented by the imagery of the inner clothing (*kitona* means undergarments worn next to the body (**flesh**)), and whose soiling then would emanate from the body itself) is so stained that it can stain whoever is handling it.

Reference to **flesh** here also has to be understood in light of the Pauline distinction between "sinful nature" (**flesh**—Rom 7:18, 25; Gal 5:13, 24; Col 2:23) and "godly nature" (**spirit**—Gal 5:16–18) which also aligns with its use in vv. 7–8 concerning the sinful acts of the angels.[110] What is called for then is a balance between mercy (a measure of divine mercy shown to the community, v. 1) and hatred of sin—loving the sinner and hating the sin. Abundant caution is what the author calls for when dealing with the ensnared ones, since there is always the danger of being ensnared.

Conclusion and Benediction (v. 24)

> **24**Now, for the one able to guard you without stumbling, and cause you to stand before the face of judgment itself, without blemish, and in extreme gladness, to the only God our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and all authority for all time now and forever more, amen.[111]

This benediction is perhaps the best-known segment of Jude, recited often at the close of church services. While Jude is clearly an epistle in the Hellenistic epistolary convention, this benediction seems well suited to oral performance, and no wonder it is the most popular part of the letter.[112]

Jude began the epistle with the assurance to his audience that they are **kept in Christ Jesus** (v. 1), and now he rounds up the epistle with a similar

109. Green 2008: 128.

110. Horrell 1998.

111. See Metzger (1994: 661) who points out that some manuscripts omitted "for all time and forever" because they may have thought such a phrase does not belong in a doxology. However, many manuscripts (ℵ A B C L vg syr^{h}, etc.) included it.

112. Thurén 1993: 454. The oral aspect of the epistle derives from the fact that these letters were meant to be read out loud to the original recipients.

affirmation by committing the audience to the **one able to guard** them the **only God and savior Jesus Christ**. Having ended the previous section (vv. 21–23) with the need for abundant caution for those who would be rescuing the **wavering ones** lest they too fall, he quickly reassures them that he commits them to God who is able to keep them from **stumbling**. While remaining careful, they can also remain confident that God is able to keep them secure. Given that the clothing of the wavering ones was **stained** in sin (v. 23), in contrast, God is able to actually keep the believers safe so that they can appear at the final judgment, **without blemish and in extreme gladness** (v. 24).

The emphasis by Jude on the Christian God as the **only God** (*monō theous*) must consciously be a proclamation that deliberately contests the Greco-Roman religious pantheon as we mentioned in v. 4. Part of *Pax Romana* was assimilation, or at least inclusion of conquered people's deities into the pantheon, as long as the Romans did not perceive such a conquered peoples as barbarians, whose religious practice was *superstitio* rather than the more sophisticated *religio*.[113] For example, the Roman pantheon had assimilated the Greek gods resulting in the equation of Greek gods with their Roman counterparts (e.g., Zeus with Jupiter or Artemis with Diana).

It was also common to describe the Greco-Roman god as savior. For example, in a slab inscription found in Philadelphia, Asia Minor (c. 1 CE), it declares, "For in this house altars have been set up for Zeus Eumenes and Hestia his consort, for the *other Saviour gods*."[114] So, by Jude declaring there was *only* one God, it was clearly a statement of resistance of any Roman attempt at co-opting the Christian God as simply another deity in the pantheon. This God will subject all of creation to the final judgment since *all* **power and authority** belong to him. Not just for a certain period of time, but for *all time*—**now and forever more, amen**.

Fusing the Horizons: Preaching From Jude

When was the last time you heard the epistle of Jude preached from a church pulpit? Perhaps, never! The challenge that Jude poses for the new covenant community is its polemical language, which is usually shocking to first time readers of the epistle. This vilification language sits uneasily for the modern

113. Beard et al. 1998: 225.

114. *AGRW* 121.

reader but the case has been made that it would have been better understood by both Jude's audience and opponents as an acceptable rhetorical device in public encounters, involving contested group identity. Also, besides the acerbic rhetoric, the letter itself is devoid of much of the doctrinal teachings found in other NT books. As a result, not much preaching usually comes from this little but important part of the NT epistles. It is no wonder then that probably the most commonly known passage from Jude is the often used benediction:

> Now, for the one able to guard you without stumbling, and cause you to stand before the face of judgment itself without blemish, in extreme gladness, the *only* God our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, glory, majesty, dominion, and all authority for all time, now and forever more, amen.

Though used often, it is also very likely that many who are familiar with this benediction do not even know that it is from Jude.

However, before declaring Jude's language untenable for the Church it behooves us to take a look at the rhetoric that accompanies other NT writings in comparison to Jude's. For example, compare Jude's caustic speech with Paul's in 1 Cor 5, where he condemns the member of the church who has married his father's wife to be cast out for a while that the devil might work on him. Other NT writers occasionally employ the polemical rhetoric of opponent name-calling. Jesus, for example, calls Gentiles "dogs" when the Syro-Phoenician woman seeks him out on behalf of her daughter—"It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the *dogs*" (Matt 15:26; Mark 7:27). Paul also calls his opponents *dogs* (Phil 3:2) and so does Rev 22:14, while 2 Pet 2:22 employs sayings that equate opponents to dogs and pigs. Listen to the reprimand that Jesus (Matt 12:34; 23:33) and John the Baptist (Matt 3:7; Luke 3:7) gave to the Pharisees when they called them "brood of vipers."

The vitriol seems to approximate that of Jude yet these writings are not ostracized for that reason. In fact, one may see some similarities of the remedial intention between Paul and Jude. Later, in 2 Cor 2:5–11, Paul decides enough punishment has been meted against the man who married his father's wife, and recommends that the person be brought back into the church. Similarly, while Jude is very harsh against opponents, he does come around and encourage the community to reach out to those wavering to save them as if from fire (22–23), even though it is doubtful that this group includes the infiltrators.

Another area of comparison for Jude is with the ancient prophets. Jude's language is not so different from that of some of the prophets in the HB/OT (e.g., Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah). In fact, some scholars have even suggested that the earliest form of Israelite prophecy may have been primarily pronouncement of curses on other peoples, much in the same vain as Balaam's.[115] Even rhetoric against Reformation opponents by reformers such as Calvin and Luther in the sixteenth century could itself be quite caustic and downright abusive.

In this regard then, it may be the case that the issue is with our modern sensitivity more than anything else. Also given our modern sensitivity to political correctness, we fail to fully appreciate the deep concern that was driving Jude's rhetoric. Jude's seemingly unforgiving stance is driven by the greater concern with the imminent eschatological judgment for which all the believers need to prepare themselves.[116] For all intent and purpose, Jude believes they are living in the last days warning that the activities of the infiltrators are clear indication of this (vv. 17–19). While his language may make us bristle, it does so because it is a large part of a very short letter, and so it appears markedly pronounced and exaggerated.

Understanding the world of Jude, and how Jude relates to, and utilizes, cultural and religious resources, allows us to better understand his rhetoric and use of imagery.[117] The distinctive element of Jude *vis-à-vis* other NT writings is that, while the others by virtue of their length also include a lot of other teachings about salvation and God's grace and mercy, Jude's short letter does not have much to say about that. That omission however should not be used against Jude, for he wrote his letter to strictly address what he considered a desperate and urgent situation for his community (v. 3).

Therefore, we have to be cognizant of the ancient world out of which Jude emerged. We have to pay attention to such aspect as social values (e.g., honor and shame), which dominated the first-century Near Eastern cultural world and not use modern day sensibilities to interpret the letter. We need to pay attention to the role that stereotyping played in such public discourse in order not to misconstrue the message of the letter. Shaming of an opponent was part of the *challenge-riposte* that governs contested public space in such cultures where the primacy of honor-shame in moral control remains dominant. The rhetorical structure employed in Jude's letter is highly sophis-

115. Kugel 2007: 628.

116. Bauckham, 1984: 3–6. Webb 1996: 139–51.

117. Charles 1994: 14.

ticated, and fits well within the classical Greco-Roman rhetorical structures.[118] And if the vilification, usually perceived negatively by most modern readers, is simply part of *conventional diatribe* in public discourse understood by all parties, then perhaps it is we who need to adopt to Jude's rhetoric, or at least, come to terms with it as a veritable first century form of public discourse.[119]

On the reverse, Jude presents his target audience in very positive terms, which implies that his intent in stereotyping the opponents is to distinguish very clearly between his readers and his opponents. This, in and of itself, may also reflect a stylistic aspect of his rhetoric of persuasion. As Joubert explains, "[t]he ancient rhetoricians referred to this technique of estranging one's opponents from the audience, by presenting them as negatively as possible, as *vituperatio*."[120] A skilled rhetorician is able to weave the praise of his recipients while vilifying opponents as a weapon of persuasion.[121] The important thing is that, in the ancient world, all parties would be well aware of this rhetorical device and the role that exaggeration and hyperbole plays in a bid to draw pronounced difference between the groups, aware that Jude's main aim is to thoroughly dissuade his audience from being influenced by the opponents, accused of infiltration.

If we get stuck on the ethics of it, then we fail to see the clear structural binaries that control this discourse, which seek to draw a very clear demarcation between the author's audience and the perceived opponents.[122] On the other hand, this does not mean excusing some of the significant dangers of extreme stereotyping as evidenced in such horrendous situations as the Rwanda genocide of 1994, where the language of hate was entwined in stereotypes of the Tutsi minority by the Hutu majority to lead to the death of about a million people.

Reading Jude in the African context, where the African has been the victim of European racism and stereotyping raises a significant concern and problematizes the very language Jude uses. The violence meted on the African peoples via slavery and colonialism was partly driven by the western caricature and stereotyping of the African person as "uncivilized," "unreligious" and even less that human. Even the case of the Rwandan genocide is partly a

118. Watson 1988.
119. Kelly 1969: 230.
120. Joubert 1995: 80; du Toit 1994: 403–12.
121. du Toit 1994: 403.
122. Weima 2001: 150–69.

by-product of stereotyping of the Other instituted by the colonial overloads upon the people of the regions racially and artificially rating a chasm between Hutus and Tutsis.[123]

In all fairness, we do not really get to hear the opponents' position and can only infer it from what are clearly exaggerated accusations and vilifications by Jude. It is possible that, given its very short length, the main focus was really on the urgency of keeping the faith of the community intact by decisively exposing the infiltrators, and so the negative portrayal dominates Jude's discourse. On the other hand, this may be somewhat ameliorated by understanding the eschatological urgency with which Jude was writing.

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123. A. D. Forges 1999: 31–91.

2 PETER 1

Salutations and Bestowing of Honor on Readers (1:1–2)

> **1**Simeon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. To those equally honored with us to receive the faith in righteousness of our God and savior, Jesus Christ. **2**Grace and peace be multiplied to you by/through the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus.

The first chapter of the 2 Peter outlines the author's desire for the community to be built up through adherence to certain ethical practices (1:4–7), positioning them not as human injunctions, but as divinely inspired instructions for godly living. These, he argues have arrived at the community's doorstep via an unbroken chain of reliable human messengers, having had their divine origin which gives them their divine authority. God passed these on to Jesus, who in turn gave them to the apostles and the apostles faithfully relayed them to the author to communicate them to the community, with the common thread that connects them all being the Holy Spirit. Employing rhetorical persuasion, the author incrementally builds his argument structuring it as a well organized refutation of what he identifies as enemies' fables that have misled the community.

This is a standard letter introduction in Greco-Roman antiquity, with author's name first followed by recipients. The author identifies himself here with the name Simeon Peter, a name used in the gospels for one of the disciple of Jesus (Mark 1:16–30). According to the Gospels, Jesus gave him the name Peter (Aramaic equivalent *Cephas*) meaning "rock,"(Matt 16:17) and establishes him as a leader of the early church (Acts 4, 5, 8, 9, 15). The spelling of the name here is rare; *Sumeon* which is a transliterated Semitic name and which only appears once elsewhere in the NT as Peter's name, in Acts 15:14.[1]

1. Its appearance in Rev 7:7 is in reference to the tribe of Simeon. The more common transliteration of Simon was also one of the most common Hellenized Semitic names.

The assumption usually stated in commentaries, with no defense, that *Sumeon* indicates an early Palestinian or Hebraic version of the name *Simon* and thus an indication of a more "ancient" provenance has been recently challenged by J. Hultin.[2] Hultin has argued that the name Sumeon, is simply the name of the OT patriarch and not a more ancient version of Simon. Some of the manuscripts have the Hellenized *Simon* (B ψ) which, according to Hultin, is not just the more commonly occurring version in the NT but may also be the more ancient one.[3]

The letter is addressed to **those equally honored** (*isotimon*) **to receive the faith** with the author identifying himself as an "equal" with those he is writing to, since he like them, is simply a recipient of God's grace. This identification with an important presumed eyewitness to Jesus' earthly ministry (1:17–18) does two things—elevates the readers to the same level as the eye witness, and equates the two in the eyes of God, the source of *all* honor. It also sets up the honor list of virtues in vv. 4–5 which are the means and measure of honor for the community.

In the first-century Mediterranean world, a person's status was determined by the **honor** (*timē*) attributed to him or her; while, on the other hand, losing honor or being shamed was to be avoided at every cost. Honor is a public recognition that could be attained by birth, good deeds, kindness to others, leadership, wealth, status, or good reputation.[4] Honor was a rare commodity and, therefore, sought after by all. Within Greco-Roman associations, benefaction (Greek)/patronage (Latin) involved the exchange of "good deeds" (determined by each individual group) in exchange for **honor** (*timē*).[5] Given that honor, both individual and group, was understood as a limited and scarce commodity in society, desire to attain it meant that there was constant competition for its acquisition which, on occasion, would spur rivalry in contesting groups with each group claiming greater honor

2. Claim made first by Bigg (1901: 248), it has been referenced without support by Schreiner 2001: 284.

3. J. Hultin SBL 2013: In an email sent to me states: "Contrary to what folks have been saying for 200 years, Συμεων is not the 'palestinian' or the 'hebraic' form of the name. To the contrary, Σιμων is the more palestinian, indeed the more 'ancient' form of the name. Συμεων is above all the name used for the Patriarch."

4. Malina 1981: 20–50

5. Harland 2009: 148. The individual groups determined the definition of "good deeds", though many groups shared aspects of what this entailed.

than its rival(s). Since honor could be lost or gained, it had to be constantly guarded.[6]

In political terms, there was shared honor for all citizens, which in turn resulted in certain privileges. A good example is one found in the book of Acts (16:13–40) where Paul, after being publicly dishonored via public whipping, only later identifies himself as a Roman citizen forcing the Roman authorities that had shamed him to try and spirit him out of the town quietly, to avoid any legal ramifications, but Paul demands a public apology instead. J. D. Charles explains in his discussion of *isotimon*:

> From a political standpoint, all citizens have the same position and rights; they are thus *isoi kai homoioi* (Xenophon *Hist. Graec*. 7.1.1). Political connotations carry over into the legal domain, infusing law with a principle of judicial right; the law is no respecter of persons. It is only natural that these legal connotations are translated into the covenantal language of the NT, illustrated by 2 Pet 1:1. Inasmuch as a reference to *isotēs* in Hellenistic culture reassures the citizen of his or her rights and privileges, its application to equality of spiritual allotment in the Christian life is particularly meaningful.[7]

This may indicate in the mind of the author of 2 Peter, and hopefully to the reader, that even though Simeon Peter was an important eyewitness to the historical Jesus, **honored** (*timē*) by God's voice (1:17), the letter wished to remind them that they have as high a status as Simeon Peter does, before God.[8] That the esteemed disciples are, before God, equal to those who have come to embrace the grace of God, through Jesus. It is an equality that gives God's honor to all, and raises the status of all who have committed themselves to faith in God through Jesus the savior.

Similar language of honor derived from relationship with gods is attested among Greco-Roman associations. Service and commitment to a specific deity brought the recognition of **honor** (*timē*) among association members in Greco-Roman empire, and significant honor could propel one up the social status ladder. For example, an ancient inscription from Rhegion[9] (Thrace, Danube and Black Sea areas) depicts honor being be-

6. Neyrey 1991: 22–66.

7. Charles 1998: 61.

8. *Contra* Schreiner 2003: 286.

9. *AGRW* 68 = GRA I 90 = *IByzantion* 31 = Jaccottet 2003, 2.38/2 = PHI 170872 = ID# 2638 (c. 85–96 CE).

stowed on an former slave who had served faithfully as a priest of the gods, while a second slab mentions members being given crowns of honor with inscriptions (cf. crown in Rev. 2:10).[10]

From a Greco-Roman perspective, the only problem in ascribing honor through Jesus is the fact that Jesus had died an ignoble and dishonorable death of crucifixion—the kind that Roman citizens were exempt. Making the claim that Jesus is conduit for the said honor would be rather absurd. Possibly, this may be part of the reason why 2 Peter never mentions the crucifixion and, instead, reckons that Jesus was given honor by God in an audible confirmation of his divine origin (1:17). It is a level of honor that affords the greatest possible outcome—a measure of imputed divinity upon the readers (1:3–4).

Whether the rest of the statement is to be translated as **our God and savior, Jesus Christ** or **our God and our savoir Jesus Christ,** has been interpreters' dilemma. The former would identify Jesus as God, while the latter distinguishes between Jesus and God. The grammatical rule (Granville-Sharp Rule) that states that when a single article (*tou*—**the**) governs both subjects (nouns **God** and **savior**), implies that the former translation should be preferred here.[11] Similarly, in 1:11, 2:20, 3:2, 18, where combinations of God and Jesus appear, suggest this is an important classification by the author.

This seeming ascription of deity to Jesus, the focus of many commentators, may owe its significance of ascription to a political response to Roman ascription of deity (*apotheosis*) to human rulers.[12] Such ascriptions, placed on epigraphs in public places, were common in many cities of Asia Minor. For example, a marble found in Mysia (Kyzikos), Asia Minor, honors the daughter of king Polemon for her piety towards "the greatest of the gods, Tiberius Augustus Caesar (*tou megistou theon Tiberiou Sebastou Kaisaros*)."[13] In more than one example, a bronze tablet from Assos, Asia Minor (*IAssos* 26, c. 37 CE), has an oath to Caesar inscribed: "We swear to Zeus Soter ("Savior"), *god* Caesar Augustus, . . . to have good will towards

10. *GLSkythia III 35*.

11. Some ancient mss (P ψ), possibly uncomfortable with the dilemma or by copyist error, left out the direct article (*tou*) in an attempt to clarify that this was a reference to God and Jesus, as two distinct persons.

12. Chalupa 2006/7: 201–7.

13. *AGRW* 108 = *IGR* IV 144, c. 41–54 CE.

Gaius Caesar Augustus and his whole household . . ."[14] while another inscriptions declares Caesar to be god (*theos*).[15]

It is difficult not to see in 2 Peter a counterclaim, and a counter-narrative if you will, that seeks to establish Jesus as the rightful claimant of divine attribution, and not Caesar. The proclamation then is that, if emperors can claim or be declared to be divine by virtue of ascribed son-ship to deity, Jesus can more rightfully make that claim as the *true* **God and savior**. **Faith** (*pistis*) is not reference to some organized doctrine, but is the basic ability to put one's trust in God; the act of belief in God, through Jesus Christ! This contrasts with Jude for whom *pistis* (v. 5) suggests a body of teachings passed down from the apostles.

After ascribing divinity to Jesus in vv. 1–2, Peter separates the persons of God and Jesus in the following verse. The formula **Grace and Peace . . . to you** may actually be a greeting formula since Paul also employs similar phrases in several of his letters (Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Phil 1:2; Eph 1:2; Cf. also Rev 1:4), and would thus explain why, after employing the grammatical structure that identified Jesus as God in v. 1, he chooses not to restructure this greeting formula.

The greeting formula itself combines the Christian concept of **grace** (*charis*) with the Jewish greeting of *shalom* (**peace, wholeness, wellbeing**, etc.). The wish that these aspects of God's blessing be multiplied or increased, goes hand in hand with the development he desires to see in the community's incremental progress in regards to their ethics (1:8). That is why it is through the **power of God** that **everything** (*panta*) needed to strive towards **godly life**, is given.

God's Calling That Bestows Godly Nature (1:3–4)

> **3**Just as we are given all things all things through the power of God towards life and godliness, through the knowledge of he who calls us to his glory and virtue/excellence, **4**through which our honorable/precious and greatest promise is bestowed, in order that through this you become co-partakers of Godly nature, escaping from the world with its corrupt desires.

The **knowledge** (*epignōsis*) of God and/or Jesus is the grounds for fullness of **peace** and **grace** (cf. letter closing, 3:18, where also **grace and knowledge**

14. IMT 573: Barth and Stauber 1993.

15. *AGRW* 160 = *IEph* 3801 (c. 35–54 CE).

[*gnosis*] of Jesus are essential for faith, forming an *inclusio* for the entire epistle—all requisite ethical requirements are the by-product of the relationship with God, through Jesus).

While the concept of *gnosis* (**special secret knowledge**) was later to be developed into a very crucial element of doctrine for Christian Gnostics in the second century CE, where they believed that one had to be initiated to some specific neo-platonic secret knowledge in order to become a Christian, it does not seem to be the way 2 Peter is using the term in this letter (cf. 1:3, 6, 8; 2:20; 3:18).[16] As Bauckham points out, a key missing ingredient of Gnosticism in 2 Peter is "cosmological dualism."[17] By *epignōsis* 2 Peter thus emphasizes the idea of having the **accurate and complete knowledge** of God and Jesus, and not some secret knowledge.[18] That said, 2 Peter does seem to emphasize **knowledge** (*gnosis*), like in this verse, where someone like Paul would have preferred to focus on **faith** (*pistis*) instead.[19]

The notion of **godliness** (*eusebeia*) which is important to 2 Peter (1:3, 6, 7; 3:11) is also one of the most common virtues that appears in Greco-Roman epigraphs throughout Asia Minor which characterize those given special honor in the associations, usually for their acts of service towards deity. For example, a typical marble epigraph from Mysia (Kyzikos) honors Antonia Tryphaena, daughter of king Polemon of Pontus (37/36 BCE), for having shown *eusebeia* towards the gods, and "performing many sacrifices in a distinguished manner . . . with a natural love for humanity so that foreigners were amazed with favor at her piety (*eusebeia*), holiness (*osioteti*), and love of glory (*philodoxia*)";[20] in Sardis, a slab of blue marble found near the temple of Artemis reads as follows: "The therapeutists (i.e., servants) of Zeus who enter the shrine have consecrated and crowned Sokrates Pardalas

16. Rowston 1975: 554–63; Desjardins 1987: 89–112 [94–95].

17. Bauckham 1983: 12. Desjardins 1987: 95, adds: "Dualism is virtually absent, and the basic cosmological, eschatological and anthropological tenets of the movement do not receive even a passing mention. It is, of course, debatable just how many of those elements of Gnosticism—let alone of' incipient Gnosticism"—must be present in a work before it can be considered as gnostic or anti-gnostic, but surely one needs more than licentiousness and *psychikoi*, appeals to gnosis, and allusions to visions and 'cleverly devised myths.'"

18. Picirelli 1977: 85–93.

19. Charles 1998: 61. "Thus, 'knowledge' in 2 Peter is stripped of any misconception whereby the distinction between Christian revelation and pagan rationalism might be obscured. Presupposed is a 'knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord' as the requisite means by which 'grace and peace might be multiplied' (1:2)."

20. *AGRW* 108 = IMT 1431 = IGR IV 144.

son of Polemaios, the foremost man of the city, for following in his ancestors' footsteps in his piety towards the deity (*diakeí |menon ek progonōn pros to| theîon eusebōs*)."[21] It is in this context that we must understand 2 Peter's use of *eusebeia*.

It is crucial that not just **glory** is attributed to God, but **virtue** (*arête*) as well. While **virtue** (*arête*) occurs three times in 2 Peter [1:3, 5], it is rare in the NT (Phil 4:8; 1 Pet 2:9). But the combination of **glory and virtue** was common in Hellenistic literature and was attributed to both human and divine recipients.[22] By appropriating it here, 2 Peter adapts it to allow for glory and virtue to be accessible to the readers by means of their relationship to God, through Jesus.

Therefore, the next section (vv. 4–7) elaborates on the community's need to appropriate a list of virtues as a means of attaining a measure of **godliness** that the author sees a pivotal in reclaiming the community's endangered relationship with God. By making it clear that all virtue rightfully belongs to God, 2 Peter distinguishes itself from other Hellenistic moral instructions by fixing the premise of the moral character in God, and not on the virtues themselves. All virtue for 2 Peter, originates and culminates with God.

After ascribing divinity to Jesus (1:1), 2 Peter extends to its followers a measure of **divinity** (*physis*) that is the outcome of association with the divine. The idea that the readers could be incorporated into divine nature has been analyzed as precept of Gnosticisim prompting the argument that the false-teachers in this epistle were second century Gnostics.[23] However, recent arguments have pointed out that with the context of the ancient concern of the nature of relationship between gods, humans and animals, the "question raised was not about humans becoming divine but rather which characteristics and attributes these different classes of beings shared or did not share."[24] For this reason, there is really no need to equate its use here to second-century Gnosticism.

21. *AGRW* 122 = *ISardBR* 22, ca. 100 BCE. (Trans. Harland)

22. Charles 1998: 62–64; Green 2008: 183–4.

23. Kelly 1969: 299; Schelke 1980: 230–4; M. Green 1987: 42.

24. Green 2008: 186; Bauckham 1983: 181. Jesus in John 10:24–37, is accused of blasphemy for identifying as "a son of God" (apparently understood by opponents as claim to divinity) by referencing Ps 82:6 (I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High) and also asking, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me? In so doing, Jesus directly connects the idea of divinity with "good works."

Timios (**honorable**) hacks back to the **honor** (*isotimon*) in the first verse. In verse one, it was the honor equally distributed to all who have faith in Jesus and here it identifies the imputation of such honor as to make the believers partakers of **divine nature**. There is no greater honor than one where a person attains such an affiliation with the deity that one could claim to embody elements of the divine.

This dispensing of divine nature on the Petrine community is perhaps aimed by the author at upending, if not countering, even if in the slightest theoretical and ideological manner, the claims to divinity made by the Roman leaders and their families. It may be also a response to the act of *apotheosis* (divinization) through which the Roman Senate could vote to elevate deceased leaders to semi-divine status.[25] Even if 2 Peter's would not have been a direct response to the claims of divinity by Caesars, it is not unrealistic that this notion of divine individuals would have loomed in the background of the claims being made here.[26] That the focus, the end result, is on a culmination of **thorough knowledge** of the person of Jesus (1:8), who for 2 Peter is the **Lord**, another common title for Caesar, would seem to support this assumption.

Another way to understand this relationship is by looking at it through the prism of the Greco-Roman structure of Benefactor-Client relationship.[27] The benefactor in this case is God and the client is the Petrine community, where the affiliation of the latter with the former, grants the latter status, authority, and honor possessed by the former and thus only available to the latter because the former embodies it. By virtue of association with the benefactor, the benefactors' benefits are extended to the client. In return, the client offers loyalty, gifts, honor, trade, good name to the benefactor.

It is in this regard that the client can claim to rightfully represent or even embody elements of the benefactor even to the point of speaking on his/her behalf. And, like many benefactor-client relationships, there were intermediaries who communicated to both sides, mostly on behalf of the client. This role is clearly played by Jesus, who paves the way by virtue of his faithfulness, to the granting of God's power, knowledge and glory (v. 3) that transform the community towards a godly nature (*theias . . . physeōs*).

25. Chalupa 2006/7: 257–70.

26. Ascough et al. 2012: 77. As far away as Thinissut, a none Roman African trading town, was found a dedication to *Divus* (god) Augustus Caesar (*ILS* 9495 = *ILAfr* 306 = Ben Abdullah, 1986: 73/190.

27. Neyrey 2005: 465–92.

Ultimately, however, 2 Peter's concern is with the moral transformation of the community, as vv. 5–7 indicate. This would suggest that the form of godliness he has in mind is very closely connected to the community's appropriating of the ethical aspects, which can be rightly described as **godly**, because it is God who empowers them through Jesus, to be able to conform to the virtues listed.[28] This is the godly power that they need in order to escape the **world's corruption and its evil desires**.

Virtues That Govern The Godly Life (1:5–11)

5And for this same reason also, mastering every effort

to bring alongside your faith, virtue/excellence, and
to virtue add knowledge, **6**and
to knowledge, self-control, and
to self control, longsuffering/endurance, and
to longsuffering, godliness **7**and
to godliness, sibling kindness and
to sibling kindness, love.

8For these things will abound and increase for you, keeping you from being inactive and unfruitful, and bringing you into the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9**For in whomever these things are lacking, he/she is so shortsighted as to be blind, forgetful of the purification received of past sins. **10**Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to ascertain your calling and election. For by doing this, you will never stumble. **11**For this will draw you closer to the way into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Similar virtue lists as the one found in this section of 2 Peter are identifiable in other NT writings and have been identified in Greco-Roman writings.[29] However, unlike the Greco-Roman writings or even the other NT catalogues (Gal 5:19–23; Col 3:12–14; Phil 3:6–9, 4:8–9; Eph 4:1–6; Jas 3:13–18; Titus 3:1–7; 1 Tim 1:9–10, 6:3–5; 2 Tim 3:2–5), 2 Peter's list of virtues sets up a complete and incremental relationship of the individual elements with each successive virtue deriving from and building upon the previous one.

28. Starr 2000.

29. Malherbe, 1986: 138; Charles 1998: 57–59.

The result is a climactic conclusion of foundational Christian elements of faith and Love.[30]

Greco-Roman virtue lists were also forms of stereotypes that characterized the "idealized essentials" in a community's construction of group identity. As such, they were useful for instruction and were commonly utilized as such (e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 95:65–67; *Herm., Mand.*, 5.1.1; 8.10). For example, a document of club membership admission from Attica, Greece (*AGRW* 8 = *GRA* 1 49 = *IG* II² 1369), states: "The law of the club members (*eranistai*): It is not lawful for anyone to enter this most holy synod (*synodos*) of club members without being first examined as to whether he is **pure** (*agnos*), **pious** (*eusebeia*), and **good** (*agathos*)."[31]

Most Hellenistic virtue lists begin and end with **knowledge** (*gnosis*).[32] It is therefore vital that 2 Peter, in contrast, starts the virtue list with **faith** (*pistis*) and closes it with **communal love** (*agapē*). As mentioned above, the foundational and distinguishing aspect of 2 Peter's virtues from all Hellenistic moral instruction is primarily that the relationship with God, through Jesus, is what undergirds all moral stipulations. It reflects what seems to be a Christian pattern. In giving instruction on love to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:13), for example, Paul concludes that the greatest of virtues are "faith, hope, and love: and the greatest of these is **love** (*agapē*)." The three elements of **faith/faithfulness**, **hope,** and **love** are also included in other Pauline lists (Rom 5:1–5; Gal 5:5–6; 1 Thess 1:3; Eph 4:2–5) suggesting their centrality in early Christian ethics. Shephard of Hermas (*Vis*. 3.8.1.) also has a list that begins with **faith** (*pistis*) and ends with **love** (*agapē*), although in his case one may make a case of dependence on biblical sources. Having informed us of his awareness of Pauline writings (3:15), we could also postulate a Pauline influence on 2 Peter's structuring of the virtues to be book ended by **faith** and **love.** Concluding with **love** is a reminder for the need for the community to bear with one another as they all strive individually and collectively to live up to the author's stipulations.

While the whole list is on communal **virtue,** there is still an aspect of *arête* (virtue) as a distinct element of individual morality. *Arêtē*

30. Charles 1998: 58–59. Note how Paul's list, in 1 Cor 13:13, esteems love (*agapē*) as the highest virtue: "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (NRSV).

31. Charles 1998: 64–72.

32. Ibid., 67.

in Greco-Roman associations typically related to one's dedication to the gods.[33] However, it was also used a descriptor of divine power similar to the way it is used here in 2 Peter.[34]

Arêtē (**virtue**), *eusebeia* (**godliness**), *doxa* (**glory**) are also common ascriptions on epigraphs for people honored in Greco-Roman associations. It is virtue as a mark of moral uprightness and distinctiveness, which would also make reasonable sense in the way it is listed here in 2 Peter. That is why regarding the issue of godly nature imbued from God, through our relationship with Jesus, does not guarantee attributes that are in and of themselves godly but simply allows the community to strive towards those attributes with every effort, aware that they share in the nature of God.

Apparently, becoming a partaker of godliness does not automatically transform one's sense of commitment toward virtues, since the expectation is that there will be exertion of one's every effort (**mastering every effort**) to inculcate in oneself these honorable character building elements, through **knowledge** (*gnosis*).

As Wayne Meeks points out, virtues were redefined in the Christian context relative to the community as opposed to the individual focus in philosophy.[35] This is not just any knowledge but it points back to the specific knowledge described earlier, of God (v. 2) through Jesus, which leads to godliness. The expected outcome by the author of 2 Peter is that the community will succeed, having already confirmed to them that they can become partakers of **God's nature** (v. 4). Therefore, the promise is that these things will flourish in the believers (or among believers) resulting from their full and accurate knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. If this is the case, then the exertion here expected is not individualistic effort but group-oriented drive. The supporting evidence is that exhortation in this section is in second person plural in the Greek, meaning the author is addressing the group effort to make sure that, as a group, these virtues are a living reality.

The virtue that follows is **self-control** (*enkrateia*). According to *a* leading lexicon, *enkrateia* translated as **self-control**, also implies ". . . restraint of one's emotions, impulses, or desires…" and is found only a few other times in the NT (Acts 24:25; Gal 5:23; 1 Pet 1:6 [twice]).[36] It is also found in other

33. For example, *AGRW* 74 = *IGLSkythia* III 44.
34. Charles 1998: 57.
35. Meeks 1993: 5–11, 31.
36. *BDAG* 274.

NT virtue lists in Acts and Galatians, and may indicate a central element in the moral structure of the Pauline and Petrine communities.

Furthermore, it is also one of the four Platonic cardinal virtues (others being "justice, fortitude, and prudence") indicating a sense by which 2 Peter adapts to, or has internalized, some of the common philosophical moral principles of the day, to which he appends his own convictions concerning connection to divine and human/familial love. In comparison, Musonius Rufus, a 1 CE Stoic philosopher, in commentating on why women should be allowed to study philosophy in *Frag.* 3, follows the four cardinal virtues in his diatribe, and elaborates on self-control: ". . . to control her temper, not to be overcome by grief, and to be superior to uncontrolled emotion of every kind. Now these are the things which the teachings of philosophy transmit, and the person who has learned them and practices them would seem to me to have become a well-ordered and seemly character, whether man or woman."[37]

A common element in pagan virtue that is missing in 2 Peter's list is *philanthropos* (**humane**) which seems to be replaced by **longsuffering** (*hypomone*), a common Christian virtue (2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:2) which is linked to **self-control**.[38] It seems significant that *philanthropos* is omitted given that it was the epitome of arête (*excellence*) in Greek thought. However, one could argue that *hypomone* does encompass an aspect of *philanthropos* ever slightly shifting the characterization that 2 Peter is developing, from the focus on the individual to that of the group. Another possibility would be to point the role of p*hiladelphia* at the end of 2 Peter's list as the equivalent of *philanthropos*, which also in turn shifts the focus from the individual to the group. Ultimately, in Petrine writing, *hypomone* characterizes not only the writer's perceived group's virtue, but it also becomes a divine attribute (God is described as **longsuffering**—1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:9, 15) providing the direct link of the community to God.

Aware that there is temptation for longsuffering to be turned into an element of pride, 2 Peter admonishes that it has to be linked with *eusebēia* (**piety**, **godliness**). *Eusebēia* is one of the most commonly noted attributions of special honor in the Greco-Roman associations.[39] In Greco-Roman religion, it was understood more in terms of performance of "religious

37. Malherbe 1986: 133.

38. Ibid., 138.

39. E.g., *AGRW* 8, 13, 18, 28, 107, 108, 122, 131, 160, 188, 193, 211, 252, 297, 303; Cf. also Alicia Batten 2007: 135–51, and Donelson 2010: 221.

deeds" as defined by the different groups and adherence to cultic practices (*orthopraxy*), than to contemplative reflection or faith (*orthodoxy*).[40]

However, the terms **godly** and **ungodly** (*asebeis*, *adikia*) are very narrowly defined in 2 Peter as describing those who abide by the author's teachings and those who do not, respectively. This distinction is important in understanding the different meanings that may be appended to the words by the author of 2 Peter and by the false-teachers. So it could not mean the same thing for 2 Peter as it would for those whom he considers false-teachers, who are otherwise characterized as **ungodly** or **unrighteous** (*adikia*, the direct contrast of *eusebēia*), since for Christians the cultic elements were no longer part of their gatherings (e.g., Pliny Younger). That is why the ultimate scenario will be that in which God saves the godly while condemning the *adikia*/*asebeis* (2:5–9).

Similar attitude is in display in the Jewish writing called Wisdom, which may indicate a tendency in Jewish oriented writers, like the author of 2 Peter, in use of this terminology. Discussing Wisdom's use of this language Harland intones:

> At the same time, personified Wisdom [Wis 12:4–5; cf. Wis 14:15–23] herself is an initiate of another, superior kind, an "initiate (*mustis*) in the knowledge of God" (Wis 8:4). Elsewhere the author critiques the "idolatry" of Greeks generally, the "impious ones" (*asebūs*) who do not know such "divine mysteries" (2:22) and who instead establish their own inferior "mysteries and rites" (*mustēria kai teletas*; 14:15).[41]

The group aspect in 2 Peter's virtue list is embedded in the admonition to add **sibling kindness and love** (*philadelphia*). These can only be practiced in a community and they can effectively mitigate any selfish tendencies that may be promoted by the virtues listed so far. The cumulative accretion with which 2 Peter structures his virtue implies that the last virtue listed carries significance that puts all others in perspective. It is what holds all the other elements of the list together and makes them fully effective, since affection can only be exercised and reciprocated in community.

In alignment with v. 2 above, v. 8 forms an *inclusio* where the virtues listed above are encapsulated by **knowledge** (*epignōsis*). It is the saving

40. See Beard et al. (1998: 224–5), on *eusebēia* in Roman religions—practical involvement in cultic and prayer activities of the religion rather than a contemplative aspect of faith.

41. Harland 2009: 177.

knowledge of God through Jesus Christ that makes this list of virtues more than *philanthropos*. It is this aspect of divine foundation as the premise of practicing of virtues that distinguishes 2 Peter's virtues from similar Hellenistic virtue lists, like those of Stoics, whose emphasis is on the performance of the virtue as an end in itself.[42] This framework of virtues built on faith but structured by *epignosis* (**knowledge**) (1:5), ultimately leads to a very specific form of *gnosis*—that of Jesus Christ the Lord! This type of knowledge is premised on **revealed truth** (*tē parousē álitheia*—1:12), meaning its origin is not human, but divine. The pinnacle of the progressive and cumulative list, while admonished as what one should strive for, clearly originated from **faith** in God and leads to the **saving knowledge** of Jesus Christ.

The concern in 2 Peter is with group dynamics, which play a crucial role in bearing witness to outsiders about the nature of the Petrine group. For this reason, the author is convinced that the cultivation of these virtues is what would help define the identity of the group *vis-á-vis* the rest of society. This concern is shared with Greco-Roman associations which strove primarily to inculcate a given structure of discipline that would result in "mutual respect, order and decorum" among its membership. In such associations, breaking the group's statutes resulted in some form of penalty including fines, and even expulsions.[43] And, although similar concerns may be shared with the larger society, the distinguishing feature for the Petrine community is that the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ is the foundation that governs their ethics.

If the virtue list is to encourage community growth and a sense of communal identity, then the danger envisioned by the author of 2 Peter is one where **inactivity** and **unfruitfulness** (*akarpous*) regarding the listed virtues, stunts spiritual growth, allowing the community to be a prime targets of those bringing in false teachings. Just like the incremental building of the virtues in vv. 5–7, any state of stagnation seems to be viewed as hazardous by the author as it would mean failure to reach the stated goal of full **knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

42. Charles 1998: 59.

43. Example from Liopesi (Attica, Greece and Macedonia) *AGRW* 8 = *IG II²* 1369 (ca. 100 CE). "May the club increase because of the zealousness of its members! But if anyone of those should be seen where fighting or disturbances occur, he shall be expelled from the club, being fined twenty-five Attic drachmas or being punished with double the blows in addition to judgment (?)."

Unfruitfulness here may have the eschatological implication of loss of salvation, in the same way the unfruitful trees in the gospels are uprooted or chopped off (Matt 3:10; 12:33; 21:19–21; Mark 11:13–21; Luke 3:9; 6:43; 13: 6–7). Therefore, the **unfruitfulness** in v. 8 is not simply a sense of unproductivity, but a more dire situation where the failure to produce fruit is an indication of the internal spiritual deadness that would result in judgment. It seems to recall the enacted parable of Jesus with the figure tree which he cursed when he found it to have no fruit in its due season (Matt 21:19–21; Mark 11:13–20) and it withered.

This eschatological dimension is further engrained by the warning that follows in v. 9: the readers are to bear evidence of their exalted state, as those privileged to be **called** and **elected**, of God (v. 10). This language of election reminds them that the virtues are to be a response to God's grace (v. 2) and not a means of archiving any standing before God. It is principally because they are **called** and **chosen,** that the virtues must govern their behavior. And, since they now belong, they need to reflect that in how they live their lives.

Therefore, the lack of two elements of comprehension, sight (**blind**) and memory (**forgetful**), v. 9, characterize one who is deficient in the virtues outlined above. Blindness and forgetfulness indicate an absence of discernment concerning the significance of the cleansing of sin, which would warrant a complete transformation of one's behavior. They already **know** (1:12) but they fail to act upon it. It is not total absence of something but a faulty or unclear comprehension. It is interesting that virtues, otherwise highlighted as the epitome of religious practice in Greco-Roman religion, are listed here serving only as a measure of spirituality and not as the end.

Of course, the idea of blindness here is understood metaphorically as reference to behavior rather than physical malady—the person who fails to have the virtues previously outlined, can be characterized as **blind**, unable to see where they are going or what they are doing. If the virtues characterize the **called** and **chosen**, then those who do not evidence them are so nearsighted as to be blind. Blindness is usually used in the NT to characterize inability to comprehend the teachings of the gospel message (Matt 12:22; 15:14; 23:16–19; 23:26; Luke 4:18; John 9:39; 2 Cor 4:4; Rom 2:19; 11:8; Eph 4:18; 1 John 2:11; Rev 3:17) putting one in danger of divine judgment. The implications seem to be the same here. Any that fails to exemplify the virtues listed is still blind and has failed to fully grasp what it means to have one's sins forgiven. This is apostasy, where one who initially

was cleansed of sin (i.e., through baptism) now fails to embody the virtues which should otherwise be present in all whose sins are forgiven.

Finally, having articulated the dangers inherent in the failure to retain the **saving knowledge** the author switches to some encouragement. He shifts from injunction to exhortation and addresses the community as *adelphoi* (**brothers, siblings**), a common Christian reference to fellow believers that appeals to a fictive kinship of the church. Here 2 Peter, like Paul, refers to the community he is addressing as *adelphoi*, literally **brothers**, but more accurately understood as **siblings**, and therefore the NRSVs rendering of **brothers and sisters** since there were women in the community. Sometimes touted as unique to Christianity,[44] the application of fictive kinship language, where family language is used to describe the relationship among the members of the community who are not biologically related, has been shown to be a common characteristic in Greco-Roman associations and groups.[45]

Since the family formed the nexus of a person's instructional life, it makes sense that groups sought to embody a family-like atmosphere that provided the kind of close kinship-like relationships, especially if, as it was commonly the case, one was excommunicated from his/her family of birth for converting to Christianity. It was a vital way of group identity formation that allowed for otherwise unrelated individuals to find common ground to relate in familial terms. So, by calling them siblings, the author of 2 Peter seeks to reassure the community that the familial bond units them firmly together with Christ, through whom they become children of God (2:17).

The familial metaphor may also explain the theological terms of calling and election that the author uses next to describe the community's status in relationship to God. Just like one is born into a family as a result of parental decision, believers can also be described as having been **called** and **chosen** by God (the heavenly parent) to become members of the spiritual family that is the Petrine community. A return to **calling and election** here, in v. 10, without doubt harks back to v. 2, where the author talks about the calling and election that comes via the **received faith**.

As such, the virtues list is encapsulated within the framework of God's calling and election of the community as recipients of God's honor and sharers of the divine nature. By means of their honored status, the virtues provide the guidelines wherewith this honor granted by divine determination

44. Meeks 1983: 225n73; Hellerman 2001: 21–25.

45. Harland 2005: 491–513; Harland 2007: 57–79.

is to be maintained *vis-a-vis* others—both God and the larger society. Virtues thus are only meaningful in this context if what they do is to bring a sense of commitment to **bolstering** (*bebaios*) the relationship established between the believers and God.[46]

The section closes with a clear articulation of the ultimate purpose of all that the author is asking of the community—entry into the **eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ**. Since they are assured that if they live up to the virtues listed they are guaranteed never to **fall** (v. 10), they can rest assured that they will enter into the eternal kingdom. The use of the verb *ptaiō* in v. 10, (cf. Rom 11:11; Jas 2:10; 3:2), meaning **to stumble**, when used with the adjective "never" is meant to draw attention to the certainty of no possibility of being in danger of falling off the path of the faith. In contrast, those who fail to are in danger of not entering (v. 9).

The language of *kyrios* (**Lord**) and *soteros* (**savior**) (cf. also 3:1) is both a reflection of the assimilation of Caesar's claim to divine titles as well as a repudiation of the same by positing the claim of Jesus as the rightful owner of the titles.[47] The true Lord and savior is the one to whom the eternal kingdom belongs, and not the temporal Roman Empire, and that is the kingdom where those who faithfully keep to the virtues will end up too. The **calling** and **election** are the means by which eternal life, via Jesus Christ, can be guaranteed. The virtue list then serves as a moral guideline, not as an end itself, but more significantly, maintains eschatological implications.

Fusing the Horizons: Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

The challenge of relating *orthodoxy* (what one believes) to *orthopraxy* (practicing what one believes) has always been part of the struggle for the church

46. Theissen 2001: 263: "… Christianity required a profound transformation of behavior and attitude. This was a 'Judaism for non-Jews,' a 'philosophy for the uneducated.' It required neither the observance of many practical rules of conduct, as did Judaism, nor did it make the intellectual claims of philosophy. But what it did do was to oblige people to give fresh bearing to the whole of life. And in this way it made possible that inward consistency of conduct which we otherwise encounter only in Judaism and certain philosophical schools."

47. *ISmyrna* 633—(c.a. 129–31) describes Emperor Hadrian as "Olympios, savior [*soteros*] and founder; *IpergamonSupp*, AM 27, 1902, n. 86—An altar inscription (c. 158 BCE) honors King Eumenes II, ruler of Attalid Kingdom in Pergamon, between 197–159 BCE, as "god, savior, and benefactor," and *IGRR* VI 314, writing on slab honors Caesar as "god Augustus, son of god".

from the very beginning. It is no surprise then to find that one of the primary concerns for 2 Peter in this first chapter is relating how Christian conduct (list of virtues) should be understood *vis-a-vis* the issue of faith in God, through Jesus. At the danger of oversimplifying, I am convinced that the different streams of the Church have ended up over emphasizing one over the other, with some devastating results. The historical relationship of Africa with the western world is complex but broad elements of comparison can be drawn based on this issue.

Looking at the history of the western Church, central to the most significant turning points were issues of doctrine—what the church believed to be the correct understanding of what was said in the Bible. The significance of this cannot be downplayed, even for a moment. However, it is also interesting that while the western church did battle (sometimes literally) in defense of doctrinal positions, one cannot avoid noticing how sometimes this excessive focus on doctrine over and above, say ethics, seemed to create strange bedfellows for the church. For example, over centuries, the focus of the western church continued to be dominated by arguments over issues of baptism and observance of the Eucharist while at the same time turning a blind eye on, or even actively defending, systemic sins like the African slavery or colonialism.

In contrast, the African Church seems to have been predominantly concerned with ethical issues more than doctrinal matters. As a result, due to the lack of doctrinal foundation, the spread of questionable doctrines, incidentally from western evangelical tradition such as prosperity gospel, have found fertile breeding ground throughout the African continent devastating communities with continued impoverishment while supporting lavish lifestyles of individuals who have made themselves the supposed conduits of God's blessing. At stake is a failure to grasp the fundamental elements of what it means to be a community of God, built on faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Second Peter warns of the danger in both extremes. There has to be a clear understanding that the expected character transformation in believers is not an end itself, but is the by-product of the faith in God, through Jesus (1:2; 8). Otherwise, the call to practice certain virtues becomes an end in itself and fails to comprehend the *telos* ("the projected end,") of why this transformation is necessary (1:10–12). One the other hand, focusing only on the understanding of doctrine and failing to incorporate it into the social fabric of the community indicates a blindness and a failure in comprehension of what God's forgiveness of sin entails and inclusion into the community of faith demands of its members (1:9).

Personal Reflections of Impending Death by Author (1:12–15)

> **12**Therefore, I will deliberately always remind you about this, although you already know and are established in the revealed truth. **13**And I consider it right, for as long as I am in this tent of a body, to stir up your memory **14**because I know, soon I will put off my tent just as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. **15**But I will be diligent so that at any time, after my departure, you will be able to remember these things.

This section represents a "testament" of the author; *testaments* are part of ancient writings that bear farewell statements of great individuals just before their demise. The record of *testaments* that we have from the Jewish tradition tend to be fictive recordings of the last words of dying patriarchs or matriarchs, and drawing authority on such premise of the final will for followers or disciples of such as person.[48]

A well known Jewish example of this genre is the apocryphal writing from the second century CE, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. In it, we have what the author(s) imagined to have been the last words ("testaments") of Jacob's twelve sons, recorded at their deathbed, as their final wish and instruction for their progeny. In the NT, farewell speeches appear in John 13–17; Acts 20:17–38 and 2 Tim 4:6–8, all which predict arrival of opponents following the departure of the apostolic figure.[49]

However, other elements found in *testaments* are missing in the NT examples. As Kugler points out, in the NT examples there is no "deathbed scene, ancient figure from Israel's past, death, burial, [and] response. More importantly [they] lack the most consistent element, the third-person narrative framework."[50]

Because of their nature as final statements of a departing leader or significant figure, *testaments* tend to focus on ethics exhorting readers to keep on the path of teachings already relayed by the departing figure.[51] This would fit well with 2 Peter's instructions so far in this letter which have laid out the virtues that are to build the community unto eternal life (vv. 5–11). The main parallels with *testaments* in this section are the author's

48. Bauckham 1983: 133–34.
49. Kugler 2001.
50. Matthews 2011: 64.
51. Bauckham 1983: 194.

awareness of his impending death and a reminder of his teachings, so that they would not be forgotten.

However, postulation of this testamentary section as a genre designation of the entire letter is not necessary since testamentary anecdotes do appear in documents without turning the whole writing into a *testament*.[52] Similarly, it has been shown that the pseudepigraphical nature of the Hellenistic Jewish *testaments* cannot be used as supporting argument to designate 2 Peter as pseudepigraphy.[53]

Having warned the community about the danger of forgetfulness (1:9), the author makes it his personal responsibility to keep reminding them, even though they already know the **revealed truth** (*parousē aletheia*). The **truth** that is revealed is what has been discussed so far in the letter—God has called them to salvation through Jesus Christ, which has to be manifest in their conduct shaped by the virtues list above. This is the truth to which the apostles and eyewitness bore witness (1:16–21). It will also soon be contrasted to the opponents' teachings, which he describes as teachings of falsehood or anti-truth.

Confident that they already **know** what he is saying or about to say, (he uses the verb *oida* meaning that they **have the information** rather than *gnosis* which would imply that they **have internalized the knowledge**) he nevertheless is not convinced that they have internalized it enough and he still sees the need for continued reminding.

Revealed truth is a Christian (Jewish?) expression of a certain understanding of speaking about God's revelation to the chosen people (Gal 2:5, 14: Eph 1:13; Col 1:5–6; 2 Tim 2:15; Jas 1:18, 5:19). Already having identified his community as such in v. 10 (**elect** and **chosen**), they can rest assured that what they know is from a reliable source. It is not from human thought or imagination but is a certainty divinely **revealed** (*pariemi*) and, therefore can be fully trusted. However, unlike the urgency driven by the concern about the activity of the opponents in later chapters, this time it is the author's own mortality confirmed in a **revelation** by **our Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 13) that is the driving force.

The lengthy deliberation by the author (or more precisely, of the presumed author, Simeon Peter) about his impending demise is what has

52. Proponents of this view include: Munck 1950: 155–70; Reicke 1964: 143–47, Bauckham 1983: 141–43; 194–6, Bauckham 1988: 469–94. Recent opponents include Green 2008: 207; and Matthews 2011: 51–64.

53. Green 2008: 167; Matthews 2011: 52–57.

prompted the understanding of 2 Peter as a testament.[54] Just like God has revealed the truth to the community (v. 12), Jesus also reveals to the author his impending demise. The adjective *tachinē* implies an event that is to take place, "speedily, without delay," even though the verb used here *pariemi*, translated as **reveal** or **make clear**, does not necessarily have the connotation of divine revelation in the background, as *apocalypsis* (**revelation**) would.[55] Rather, it implies more of a coming to certain clarity or understanding about a particular subject matter. This awareness may therefore, be driven by the author's own personal experiences lately in his life, rather than a direct divine revelation, even though he does credit some form of revelatory confirmation from the **Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 14).

The premonition that he would soon depart this world fills the urgency of communicating the basics of the faith to the community, even though he has confidence that they **do know** it. It is because they already **know** that he commits to continue to remind them (lit. **stir your memory**), as he wants them to be **well grounded** or **secure** (*sterigmos*), something he mentions several times in the letter (1:12, 15; 3:1). Already, he had alerted them to the dangers of failing to live up to the set virtues (1:9), while he remains confident that they are already established.

So, more than a concern about any impending fall, the author is rather desirous that the grounding on which the community is currently established be affirmed, so that it would be able to resist any future upheavals when he himself would no longer be there to provide the support needed. While he hopes to keep reminding them, as long as he is alive, the very act of writing the letter also plays the role of being a reminder, even later, as the community would be able to read it over, as letters were commonly read publicly, even after the author was long gone.

He characterizes his envisioned demise as a putting off, or unclothing, of a garment. In this regard, he compares his body to a **tent** (*skenoma*) which in contrast to a permanent building is a temporary and fleeting structure (vv. 13, 14). The imagery created is one of this life as a "temporary dwelling," in contrast to the more permanent life in the eternal Kingdom of God (1:11).

When the Gospel of John (1:14) talks of the incarnation it describes Jesus as having **temporarily dwelt** (*skenoō*) among us, using the same root word found in 2 Peter. The expression translated here as **put off my tent**

54. Neyrey 1980: 504–19.

55. *BDAG* 992.2.

(*apothesis*) appears only one other time in the NT, in 1 Pet 3:21, and is defined as "removal, getting rid of," and is related to *tithemi* (**to place**, **put**) but not to *apotheosis* (**elevation to divine status**).[56] It is the transitory nature of life that the author emphasizes rather than the Hellenistic elevation of the soul over the physical body (cf. Diogn. 6:8).

A related imagery which he uses to describe his impending death is as an **exodus** (*exodos*) (v. 14), a common description of death in Jewish writings (Wis 3:2; 7:6; Sir 38:23; Jos. *Ant*. 4.8.2) but which more closely evokes Jesus' use of the same terminology about his own impending death in Luke 9:31.[57] Use of both terms by the author here seem to emphasize death as a transition rather than an end, and may even be channeling the Hebrew Bible book with the same name whose story is about the journey of Israel is from bondage to the promised land. Death is the gateway from this ephemeral life to the permanent heavenly abode.

Refuting Accusations: Defending Divine Origin of Author's Teachings (1:16–21)

> **16**For we did not follow after cleverly devised myths while making known to you of our Lord Jesus Christ's power and appearance but had been eyewitnesses of his [divine] majesty. **17**For he received, from God the Father, honor and glory, when a voice was heard which proclaimed the majestic glory, "This is my son whom I love, in whom I am well pleased." **18**This is the voice which we heard coming from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. **19**And we are quite certain of the prophetic word, so you will do well to pay attention as to a light shining in a dark place, until the break of dawn and the morning star rises into your hearts. **20**First of all, you will do well to understand this—that all prophetic scripture did not come from the prophets' interpretation ("no prophecy came from the prophets' personal interpretation"), **21**for no human will is able to produce prophecy, but carried by the Holy Spirit, humans spoke from God.

Three things are highlighted in this section as evidence, and in defense, of the author's claim to divine authority, as a follower of Jesus and teacher of the community: i) he was an eyewitness to Jesus' transfiguration (v. 16), ii) he heard the divine voice confirming Jesus' divine mandate, iii) the

56. *BDAG*, 110.

57. Green 2008: 215.

prophetic words spoken by apostles had their origin in the divine Holy Spirit of God, and not in human imagination. It is the eyewitness claims concerning the life of Jesus that opponents may have characterized as **cleverly devised myths/tales** (*sesophismenois mythois*), with the intent of derailing Petrine authority, allegations which the author now embarks on stringently refuting.

Having made the declaration of his impending death (vv. 12–15), the author now reminds the community of the basis of authority upon which he shares his teachings with them. Switching from a first person singular when talking of his impending death to first person plural **we**, the author indicates his teaching is shared with others who also bore witness to its reliability.

These, therefore, are not simply personal opinions of the author but are shared teachings which others, presumably apostolic community present with Jesus at the mount of transfiguration (v. 18), who also bore witness to them. In this regard, there was more than one **eyewitness** (*epoptai*) to an extraordinary event where divine confirmation of the divine status, authority and glory of Jesus were audibly pronounced and, by virtue of which the author, and the other witnesses, gained special privilege or authority regarding all matters relating to Jesus Christ.[58] An eyewitness account was perceived to bear greater authority than hearsay, assuming it is the report of one who was present at the event. That is why the role of the eyewitness was to become crucial later as the Church deliberated what writings were to be included in the NT canon. The two primary criteria were that a piece of writing had to be traceable to an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, and secondly, should not have heretical teachings.

The content he refers to as having been **made known** (*gnosis*) to the community involves the proclamation of **our Lord Jesus Christ's power** (*dynamis*) **and appearance** (*parousia*). The reference here is to the initial proclamation of the gospel to the community, which as the author indicates in his use of the first person plural pronoun, he was part of. In Greco-Roman society, the word *parousia* was used to describe the arrival of a ruler or the appearance of a god. Typically in the NT, it is used of Jesus in reference his "Messianic Advent in glory to judge the world at the end of this age."[59] Therefore, it is unlikely that the reference here is to the incarnation since it is typically the return of Jesus that is described as *parousia* in the NT (Matt

58. *BDAG* 388.

59. *BDAG* 780–81.

24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; 2 Thess 1:7; Rev 4:11; 17:13). Nonetheless, if connected to v. 19 the case could be made for OT prophets (cf. pg.95).

Like a conquering ruler whose arrival among conquered subjects evidences his/her power, Jesus' arrival with **power** will be to judge the world: those who have denied the final judgment and its cataclysmic end (3:10–13) and the faithful to eternal heavenly abode. The general assumption here is that this reference to power and coming/appearance of Jesus clearly anticipates the elaboration of vv. 17–18, about the majestic glorification that occurred in the mountain. However, it also evokes the accusation that the false-teachers have levied in calling the gospel message a myth.

Having already declared that he and the community are co-sharers in God's **honor** (1:1), the author now makes clear that Jesus, by virtue of God's own declaration was the recipient of divine **glory**, **honor,** and **authority** (v. 16–17). On this matter, the community must rest assured that one who bore actual witness to those events now confirms that this is not a fairy tale.

While evidencing some differences, the background here is that of the transfiguration tradition of Jesus on the mount, found in the gospels (Matt 17:1–6; Mark 9:1–7), where three disciples John, Peter, and James, were eyewitness of Jesus' glorification.[60] The same statement about Jesus' divine son-ship had been earlier spoken at his baptism by John the baptizer (Matt 3:16–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22), commemorating the beginning of his ministry. In that case, as is the case here, a voice from heaven spoke the words, "Behold, this is my beloved son."

Nonetheless, it does seem peculiar that this would be the event out of the life of Jesus that the author would choose to highlight as evidence of God's power, since one would have thought the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were, by far, more central for Christian apologetics; at least, they were for Paul. Also, since the divine voice was also heard saying the same words about Jesus—at his baptism by John and at the transfiguration—why would the latter have precedence over the former? However, if these events are ones that opponents have pointed to as **cleverly devised myths/tales** with no basis in historical fact, in order to cast doubt at the teachings of the author to the community, then it makes sense that the author would be responding directly to them.

60. Bauckham 1983: 205–10, articulates arguments for 2 Peter's independent provenance of the tradition, but also concludes that the reference is indisputably to the Transfiguration.

This section, therefore, most likely begins the rebuttal of possible accusations against the author's teachings by false-teachers, even though they are yet to be directly introduced (2:1). Bauckham, pointing out the same, explains that the false-teachers accuse the author and his group of preaching **myths** (*mythos*).[61] In this case then the *mythos* would refer to the teachings about Jesus that the 2 Peter 2:17–21 goes on to defend as being historically grounded and having the support of eyewitnesses.[62] The concept of *mythos* was the primary category identification of stories, fables, legends, or tales of Greco-Roman gods and their escapades.[63] In antiquity, *mythos* was not always laden with any negative connotation about it being a lie or untrue since it was understood as the simply the stories about the gods.

However, besides its use here in 2 Peter, the word *mythos* appears only in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7, 2 Tim 4:4, Tit 1:14), in the rest of the NT, where it is usually translated as fables and contrasted with the truth. Furthermore, the participle used in 2 Peter to modify *mythos* and translated as cleverly devised (*sesiphizō*) carries the connotation of "the intent to deceive."[64] Evidence from Hellenistic writers such as Plutarch (*Mor.* 1124C), Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 54:1), Dio of Prusa (23.11; 70:10), Josephus (*J.W.* 4.2.3 §103; Bell. 4) and Philo (*Mut. Nom.* 240), indicates that the term could be used to disparage an opponent as a charlatan or sophisticated sounding deceiver.[65] The postulation is that by modifying *mythos*, *sesophizo* creates the sense of *mythos* as anti-truth; a deceptive speech that sounds almost authentic but turns out to be false (e.g., Plutarch *Cam.* 22.3 contrasts *mythos* to a true account *alēthei logō*, and Neyrey has shown that Philo uses similar language as 2 Peter to contrast *mythos* to *logos*).[66]

Those who recounted Greco-Roman mythology were known to be creative re-tellers who improvised in their telling of the myths to suite given societal concerns, with divine origins claimed by the archaic poet.[67] It would seem like this is the very accusation that false-teachers levied

61. Buackham 1983: 213.

62. Ibid., 214.

63. *BDAG* 660.

64. *BDAG* 935.

65. Green 2008: 217.

66. Neyrey 1980: 507–9.

67. Bremmer 1987: 3–4. "Mythology, then, was an open ended system. As has been points out recently, it is precisely this improvisatory character that guarantees its centrality in Greek Religion."

against the Petrine community's claims of divine heritage through Jesus Christ, and which the author of 2 Peter then sets out to rebut. In contrast to deceptive *mythos*, the author claims that the historical reliability of the story of the divine nature of Jesus and its proclamation by his apostles, is based upon eye witnesses evidence. So the *recounting* of the divine origin of the Christian message is grounded on historical evidence—the reliable word of **eyewitnesses of [Jesus' divine] majesty**.

Its trustworthiness then, is premised on this defensible historical witness. By defending the reliability of the teachings about Jesus' divine mandate and subsequent role of his divinely inspired messengers, the author of 2 Peter draws attention to, and fends off, the accusations levied by the false-teachers.

What exactly is the form of majesty presumed here? In the Greco-Roman society, honor and glory were ascribed as public recognition of one's service to the gods, society, family or courageous display of gallantry in warfare or other public service. Honor was bestowed publicly on those who were deemed honorable and usually transmitted by an already honorable person or group to the recipient(s). Honor then was one of the highest virtues sought after in the Greco-Roman society, and in most Mediterranean societies.

The **honor** (*timē*) and **glory** (*doxa*) ascribed to Jesus is said to originate from God, who is called **father** (*pater*) whose heavenly **voice** (*phōnē*) (vv. 17, 18) was heard publicly ascribing power, honor, and glory to Jesus by eyewitnesses at the special event on the **holy mountain** (*hagio orei*). It evokes the installation of the king of Israel, which according to Ps 2:6–7, takes place on God's holy mountain, Zion.[68] In the NT, reference to the holy mountain not only identifies the event with the transfiguration (Matt 17:1–9; Mark 9:1–9; Luke 9:28–37) it also builds on the tradition of the mountain as a place of divine revelation (Exod 3:5–6) affirming that the voice is divine and that the **majestic glory** (*megaloprepeia doxa*) bestowed on Jesus is from God. The transfiguration then must be the event referenced as the divine majesty witnessed by the followers of Jesus among whom the author of 2 Peter claims to have been.

The title **Father** (*pater*) anticipates the identification of Jesus as the royal **son** (v. 18) while also identifying God as the benefactor who bestows **honor** and **glory** upon the son, and through the son to the community

68. Green 2008: 225.

(1:1).[69] The words attributed to the **voice** at the holy mountain proclaimed about Jesus, "**This is my son whom I love, in whom I am well pleased**" (v. 17) echo the words proclaimed from the cloud at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration in the Gospels (Mat 3:17; Mar 1:11; Luke 3:22—baptism; Mat 17:5; Mar 9:7; Luke 9:35—transfiguration).[70]

In the following verse, the author of 2 Peter clarifies that this was no ordinary voice, by explaining that the voice "we" heard came from **heaven** (*ouranos*) (v. 18). In light of the accusations about reliability of the author's teachings (v. 16) as myth, this must be understood as part of the author's apologetic regarding the reliability of the message given that its origin is divine.

Standing behind this notion of heavenly voice as divine, is the Jewish tradition of *baṯ qol* (lit. "daughter of a voice" or "divine voice") where a disembodied voice is understood as the voice of God, harking back to the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai (Exod 20; Deut 4:12). While it is true that in Jewish tradition the Scriptures were held as higher than the *baṯ qol*, the transfiguration of Jesus involved more than just a voice from heaven and unveiled Jesus in his glorious majesty evident in his physical transformation.[71]

Megaloprepeia, translated here as **majestic glory** is a *hapax legomenon* in NT (appears only here in the entire NT), but is found in Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* VI 1123a18–27, 1107b16–20—"a public lavish financial spending which often took place in associations/clubs, and among aristocrats"), and in Plato's *Republic* (402c, 490c, 494b, 536a, 486a, and 503c), where the meaning is a public display of magnanimity, magnificence or generosity. The same act of *megaloprepeia* could be interpreted either positively (**display of prestige and power**) or negatively (**tyrannical display of power**).[72] It had connection to conspicuous financial generosity, mostly by aristocrats as a sign of social standing, and was one of the virtues that motivated Athenian aristocrats to participate in liturgies.[73] The vocabulary also echoes that which is found in Greco-Roman associations where it describes the lustrous occasion of splendor.

69. Neyrey 2005: 465–92.

70. Bauckham (1983: 204–12) spends some good amount space to refute independent provenance of 2 Peter's quotation, its relationship to the Gospel accounts and its relation to other references to the saying.

71. Ibid., 223.

72. Papakonstantinou 2003: 173–82 [175].

73. von Reden 2009: 60.

By implication, in modifying **glory** (*doxa*), 2 Peter's use of *megaloprepeia* implies the undeniable grandiose and public display that characterized God's public affirmation of Jesus. This public spectacle then leaves little doubt about the elevated stature of Jesus in the social structure, his divine origin and his privileged position. In terms of further refuting the *mythos* accusation, it could not be a myth since it was a public display of divine splendor evidenced by multiple witnesses, among whom, was the author.

While the primary purpose is to refute the accusation of Jesus' story as *mythos*, it is not difficult to envision in this declaration also a response to the Caesars' claim to be sons of God. While Caesars pronounced themselves (or were pronounced by others—e.g., Roman Senate) to be divine (*divus*), Jesus' status was announced, not by humans, but by a heavenly voice of God, in an unmistakable public display of divine majesty (Deut 4:12; 1 Kgs 19:12–13; Ezek 1:28; Ezek 1:25; Jer 25:30; Joel 4:16–17; Amos 1:2; Dan 4:31). The divine pronouncement gives an independent confirmation of Jesus' status in public, and before witnesses, of his elevated position. Second Peter wants to make it clear the Christian God actually speaks on *personal* volition, making a public display that is an unmistakable evidencing of divine authority and power. This God needs no spokespersons and is able to communicate directly without intermediaries.

The need to ascertain the reliability of the **prophetic word** (*prophetikos logos*) is obviously to counter any insinuations that it is the product of the author's creative imagination—the *mythos* (1:16).[74] While there is no clear evidence to conclusively be certain that accusation emanated from the false-teachers, the possibility is rife since, after all, they are the purveyors of falsehood. It is also not clear whether the prophetic word here refers to what comes before, the **voice** (*phōnē*) that was heard (v. 18), or what comes after, the **words** of the prophets that had predicted the coming of the lord (v. 20–21).

Furthermore, the **voice** heard on the mountain could be connected to the **words** (*logos*) of the prophets, which in turn could be related to the **prophecy** given by the Holy Spirit (v. 21). Somehow, in the author's mind, there is a relationship between these aspects of speech, and that is why he has specifically strung the words together this way. The only other appearance of the adjective *propheticos* (v. 19) in the NT is in Rom 16:26 where it refers to **prophetic writings**. In 2 Peter *propheticos* modifies *logos* (**word**). While *logos* is usually presumed to be reference to spoken word, it

74. Plato's *Dialogues* serve as samples of written *logoi*. Cf. Sallis 1996: 18.

nevertheless includes the form is speech in written form, the idea of written *logos*.[75] This may thus incline us towards an understanding that the **prophetic word** in 2 Peter refers to the words of the OT prophets who made **prophetic writings** (*prophetiai graphē*—v. 20), in contrast to NT prophets (e.g., Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 1 Cor 12:28) who are never referred to in this way.[76]

This leaves the stronger argument for support of the reference here to be HB/OT prophets. It also makes more sense considering that this section (vv. 19–21) is still connected to 1:16 as it continues the rebuttal of accusations that have to do not only with the divine origin of the authority of Jesus but the divine origin of the authoritative words of the prophets who communicated the **power and** *parousia* of Jesus (v. 16).

Having established the origin, authority and reliability of the **prophetic word**, the author then goes on to use several imageries to describe the type of reception his audience should have concerning the reliability of the message: pay close attention, as to i) a **light shining in darkness**, ii) **breaking of dawn**, iii) **morning star**. All three imageries are about light and darkness, and how light overcomes darkness, but also a chronological outline of the soon approaching eschatological end.

In Jude 13, the infiltrators were described as "wandering stars" that deceive the people. In 2 Peter the imagery is positive and speaks of **the morning star rising in your hearts**; the "morning star" brings light (God's presence) to the believer. Since light is the "element and sphere of the divine," then the reference in 2 Peter is to the essence of God engulfing the believer.[77] It also possibly relates to the idea earlier mentioned of the divine imputation upon the believers (1:3–4).

Another distinctiveness that the author wants to draw out here is about the *origin* of prophecy, and thus its reliability and its authority—it came from God and not from humans! For it to be trustworthy, it has to have ultimately had divine origin since humans cannot be the source of divine authority or power. For 2 Peter, if the words were not from God, then they were simply from the humans who **spurn** them (*epilusis*—a *hapax* noun, not in LXX, meaning of "loose, unfurl knots, interpret"), the same way a story teller spins a yarn. In this case, it would not be any different

75. Ibid., 19.

76. See Green (2008: 218–20) in defense of OT prophets, and Neyrey (1980: 518–19) for support of NT prophets.

77. *BDAG* 1072.

from the accusation of *mythos* that had been propounded by the opponents. Such *mythos* is not attributed to gods or spirits, but it is assumed to be the product of deliberate **human will** (*thelema*) to deceive, evident in the false-teachers.

The contrast then is between God-inspired activity versus and human-derived thoughts and actions, and the model of distinguishing between the divinely ordained and that which is of human emanation finds parallel in Greco-Roman religious distinction.[78] As the first-century Roman empire grappled with cohesion and identity in its rapid geographical expansion, with a growing number of religious groups within it, it came to classify all religious activity as either *religio*—worship of the Greco-Roman pantheon (the true gods), or *superstitio*—worship of "false" gods.[79] This binary is intended to make clear delineations of practices that were deemed acceptable, versus those classified as dangerous to the stability of the empire.[80] Since *religio* involved giving traditional honors (specifically, prayer and sacrifice) to the gods, it is no surprise that Christianity was classified as *superstitio* by Pliny the Younger in his correspondence with Emperor Trajan, and was assessed as needing close supervision from the authorities.[81]

This structure also seems to be reflected in this section of 2 Peter (though in reverse) where the aspects of true *religio* are premised on the alignment with the "true" prophetic message from God, in contrast to the *superstitio* of the false-teachers who do not honor God but satisfy their selfish desires—a false piety. As subjects of the Roman Empire it is not surprising that Christians would incorporate the Greco-Roman religious categories in their religious discourse.

Fusing the Horizons: Eschatology and the Gospel Message

Four decades ago, in his groundbreaking study on the New Testament and African eschatology, the renowned African theologian Prof. John Mbiti remarked that in the Akamba (Kenyan) traditional cosmology, with no clear conception of an end of the world, there existed no distant future, and the immediacy of the near future predominates any conceptualization of future

78. Green 1987: 111.
79. Beard et al. 1998: 214–16.
80. Ibid., 217.
81. Ibid., 216.

events.[82] As such, the distant future could only be best understood in terms of the distant past and he argued that it would be Christianity that would infuse the Akamba cosmology to accommodate the notion of a distant future.

Vestiges of this cosmological outlook survive even in the transformation of society into a predominantly Christian community in sub-Sahara Africa. As such, there is a strong emphasis on sense of the imminent return of Jesus in the gospel preaching that emanates from most church pulpits, roadside preaching, overnight prayer meetings, and "crusade" meetings in Africa. While the biblical notion of a distant future may have taken root, the Kenyan (and African) church experience reflects a robust African eschatological outlook that retains a sense of the immediate which Mbiti observed in the African cosmology.

Perhaps, also driven by the desperate situations of many people's daily lives, with the face of death an ever larking presence (even as I write this the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone are currently experiencing the worst outbreak of the deadly and incurable Ebola virus ever recorded), and their struggles to survive day to day, this looking forward to the *parousia* makes a lot of sense for them. Second Peter encourages his readers not only to look forward to the *parousia* (2:16) but to actually will it forward and make it arrive sooner, through their pious lifestyle (3:11). This message then is very relevant to the African Christian community today and, in such a vibrant world, it is no wonder this is the region that has the fastest growing community of Christianity anywhere in the world.

This intense eschatological outlook may also explain the proliferation of self-appointed God's spokespersons with such titles as *apostles*, *prophets*, and in some cases even *messiahs*, proclaiming the imminent end of the world. It is also true that this plethora of self-identified God's spokespersons whose messages not only adumbrate the notion of a soon-to-be end of world, but also present an understanding that the things are getting worse precisely *because* the world is coming to an end soon.

While such a theological perspective may have its benefits, such as keeping the church alert and on it spiritual toes, it also has its significant drawbacks including the discouragement of the church from investing itself fully into the present life of the community. Failure to invest in long term projects, especially those that cater to the needy and poor can have devastating effects in the long term well being of the community.

82. Mbiti 1971. Cf. also Mbuvi 1999.

Such an outlook contradicts the overall perspective that 2 Peter presents about building the community and meeting its needs, especially as it encourages the building of a cohesive community structured around the virtues outlined (2 Pet 1:5–7). Because of their eschatological enthusiasm, many Christian communities in Africa endure similar ridicule as 2 Peter's community about the delayed return of the Lord—"it has been thousands of years and the world goes on the same with its violence, catastrophes, diseases, and all forms of evil, yet Jesus has not returned!" 2 Peter's encouragement for the community to do good works in order to hasten the return of the Lord (2 Peter 2:12–13). This should serve as motivation for the African Church to plant itself in society and to seek society's transformation through the gospel message.

However, just like the warning of 2 Peter about false-prophets and false-teachers who come proclaiming to be preaching the true gospel, but are indeed messengers of falsehood, many of these are present in Africa. They are able to mislead because they sound convincing in their words. However, their lives fail to exemplify the teachings they claim to represent. The community has to be vigilant in turning to such a book as 2 Peter to find guidance in assessing the true teachings and the measure of true prophets.

The caution given is that people should be careful not to be misled by hype but rather understand that God's message, while powerful, is not to be accompanied by gimmicks (2 Pet 2:16). Ultimately, there will be two kinds of people who mislead—those who are outright scoffers who openly ridicule the message of the Gospel, and those who, for their own selfish ends, claim to represent the truth of the Gospel but whose lives fail to bear witness to its truth.

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2 PETER 2

After setting up what he considers the foundation of reliable prophetic characterization in chapter 1, the author of 2 Peter proceeds in the next chapter to contrast that image with that of the **false-teachers** (*pseudodidaskaloi*) who he now characterizes as bearing similarities to the **false-prophets** (*pseudoprophētai*) of old (2:1) in their perfidiousness. The dependability of the eyewitness, the assuredness of the presence of God's spirit in the message of the true prophets and the assuredness of Scripture, are all contrasted with the deceitful teachings, immoral lifestyle, and ethical out-of-control-ness, and deceptive ways of the false-teachers. The former are reliable while the latter only mislead, and inevitably lead to destruction, to eternal damnation.

The rhetoric employed casts the false-teachers as the direct *opposite* of the true prophets (inclusive of the author), portraying them as dangerous in their deceptive teachings, immoral in their character, and arrogantly rejecting divine authority embodied in Jesus. The rhetoric employs stereotypical language common in Greco-Roman group identity conflicts to further present the false-teachers as ungodly, sexual deviant, murderers and ethically immoral.[1] They are thus variously characterized as debased, driven by wild–animal–like instincts, and completely lacking in self-control, common human civility and morality (cf. 2 Pet 2:2–3; 12–13).

In 2 Pet 2:15, the author accuses the false-teachers of abandoning the "straight path," and meaning they formally belonged with the group but are now finding that their views are in conflict. They have lost their place in the community and they try to draw others out with them (3:14b).

False-Teachers And Their Inevitable Judgment (2:1–3)

> **1**But also false-prophets arose among the people, just as among you there will arise false-teachers who will bring in along with them destructive teachings and they would deny the master who

1. Harland 2009: 178–79.

> purchased them bringing upon themselves sudden destruction. **2**And many will follow them into unbridled living; because of them the way of truth will be corrupted. **3**In insatiable greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation [announced] long ago, is not impotent, and their destruction is not asleep.

This next chapter draws so heavily on the letter of Jude as to be essentially synoptic in relationship, and most modern commentators agree that 2 Peter 2 copied from Jude in this section, rather than vice versa. However, 2 Peter omits all extra-biblical material in Jude and reshapes the material to fit his own concerns.[2] Unlike Jude, who believed that the infiltrators to his recipient community were already present among them, 2 Peter seems to be predicting the arrival of false-teachers from among them (*en humin*—**in your midst**) at a future time using the future indicative verb *esontai*—**will come**.

Later in 2:15–20, he switches to the present continuous tense even though it is unclear who the subject of the sentence is because it could apply equally to the false-teachers or those they have waylaid. If the false-teachers, then he seems to describe them as having already arrived; indeed, having come out of the same community and left the true way, even as they mislead others (cf. 2 Pet 2:15). Therefore, while for Jude the challenge may be immediate, in 2 Peter it seems to be anticipated—**there** will arise **false-teachers**—even as he conflates the present with the future.

However, the use of the future tense here may also possibly reflect a subtle deliration of 2 Peter's own claim to be a prophet.[3] In chapter one he spent time defending the authority of the prophet as one who speaks **from God** or on **behalf of God**, while including himself among those that were eyewitnesses to the mysteries of God, through Jesus, by speaking in first person plural pronoun, "**we"** (1:15–17). He had also pointed out that what was heard at the mountain of revelation was the **true prophetic word**, of

2. See Green 2008: 159–62, for a discussion.

3. Writing decades later than the writing of 2 Peter, the early Church apologist Justin the Martyr (160 CE: *Dial.* 82:1) quotes 2 Pet 2:1 almost verbatim, but makes the appearance of a the false-teachers a present reality, of his time rather than 2 Peter's future tense: "And just as there were false prophets (*pseudoprophētēs*) contemporaneous with your former prophets, so *are now* many false-teachers (*pseudodidaskaloi*) amongst us, of whom our Lord forewarned us to beware" (*ANF* 1:240). In this sense, it is clear that Justin understood 2 Peter's words as prophetic for a future time, which happens to be his own. For an opposing view, see Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Tobias Nickla 2014: 215–28 [225–26].

which he is quite **certain** (1:19) having counted himself among the witnesses. And, since the prophet's word originates from God's Holy Spirit (1:21), by predicting the coming of the false-teachers he would be proven a true prophet, when it does happen.

Furthermore, by virtue of equating the **false-prophets** (*pseudoprophētēs*) of the past with the anticipated **false-teachers** (*pseudodidaskalos*) (2:1), the author is, in countermeasure, equating himself with the true prophets. The parallel he draws—showing both false-prophets and false-teachers as destructive, heretical, and deceptive—turns the false-teachers' claim to authority on its head. They falsely claim to be teachers but lack divine authority to make that claim.

The compound word *pseudodidaskalos* is a *hapax legomenon* (appears only here in the entire NT) and is possibly the author's own creation to parallel *with pseudoprophetai* found also in the LXX (Isa 41:25; Jer 50:36) and in the NT (Matt 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; 1 John 4:1; Rev 19:20; 20:10). It could either mean falsely named teachers or that they are simply counterfeits claiming to be what they are not.[4] The central issue by the author of 2 Peter concerning the false-teachers involves the denial of the authority or lordship of Jesus Christ (2:1). This may imply a turning away by the false-teachers from a previously held theological position, even though this notion is not demanded by the verb *pareisago* (**to steal in/infiltrate**), which could also be understood simply as having come in secretly from outside.

However, since the false-teachers seem to be well known by the community and only the author raises ire about their activity, the former assumption makes more sense. Furthermore, combined with the fact that the false-teachers are said to **arise** from **among you** (writer's audience) much in the same way that false prophets arose among the **people [of Israel]**—*laos* (Isa 41:29; 44:25; Jer 14:14; 23:16, 32; Ezek 13:6–9) seems to support this assumption. This being the case then, it is best if we understood the false-teachers as former members of the group who have strayed from the teachings of the group and now espouse a different doctrine.

What these false-teachers bring is a certainty of destruction upon themselves and their followers, since by rejecting the authority of Jesus, they essentially put themselves outside of God's grace (1:4). The word *apoleia* is a favorite of 2 Peter in describing the fate of the false-teachers—they are **damned to destruction**! Besides appearing here twice, *apoleia* also

4. Mayor 1907: 117.

appears in 2:3, 3:7, and 3:16, again with the subject being the false-teachers' fate of doom.[5]

The multiple uses imply a strong conviction in the author's mind concerning the unchangeable fate of the false-teachers. There is little doubt in his mind of their ultimate end which they bring upon themselves by virtue of their teachings—rejecting the authority of Jesus (and ultimately God), **the master who purchased them**. This destruction that they bring on themselves is going to happen suddenly and **quickly** (*tachinos*), meaning they will have no time to change their minds. In essence, there will be no warning about the judgment—it will be swift and comprehensive. It is a total annihilation with no hope for recovery.

The phrase used to describe Jesus' lordship in v. 1, is likely a compression from its source in Jude 4 who speaks of denying our **only** (*monos*) master and Lord, Jesus Christ. It loses its direct political anti-Caesar punch (see notes on 1:2, 17, 3:18) and focuses more on the idea of procurement of a slave by a master. The word *despotēs* is used in both Jude and 2 Peter and is translated as "master" or "lord." It usually appears in the NT as a designation of a "one who has legal control and authority over persons, such as subjects or slaves" (e.g., Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; Rev 6:10).[6]

Here, Jesus is the master, on the same grounds that the author can describe himself, as a **slave of Christ** in 1:1, in submission to Christ's authority. In contrast, the false-teachers' rejection of Jesus' authority over their lives, is evidenced by their failure to live up to the outlined virtues (1:5–7), and in their own **heretical teachings** (*hairesis*) that contradict the virtues and result in **unbridled living** (*aselgeia*).

Excursus: *Aselgeia*

As we have mentioned before, the stereotypical portrayals of **licentiousness** (*aselgeia*) imply more than just the sexual aberration that the word is generally understood to mean, but includes an attitude of not recognizing divine authority, and moral codes in society, seeing no need for restraint, and instead, penchant for excess. This flies in the face of the very ethos that 2 Peter's virtue list in (1:5–7) outlines as the foundational elements that the community's

5. Of the *eighteen* total appearances in the New Testament, *five* are found in 2 Peter.
6. *BDAG* 220.

relationship to God and to each other, on which the community should build upon in order to prosper and gain spiritual maturity.

If that is the case, *aselgeia* is thus not simply a description of individual sexual deviance (even though it includes that) but a characterization of a group's (false-teachers' and company) tendency towards activities rejecting Jesus' authority by failing to display **virtue/excellence** (*aretē*), **knowledge** (*gnosis*), **self-control** (*enkrateia*), **longsuffering/endurance** (*hupomone*), **godliness** (*eusēbeia*), **sibling kindness** (*philadelphia*), and **love** (*agape*) (1:5–7). Its use also by 2 Peter strongly implies that, in some regards, being outside of the author's recipient community is automatically being in *aselgeia*. This is essentially what constitutes their **blasphemy** (v. 2); their rejection of the **way of truth** (*hodos aletheias*).[7] For such ones, really, there is no hope.

Once again, while this inside/outside characterization may reflect some historical reality on the ground, it is more likely that it connotes stereotyping of perceived enemies among competing groups as evidenced in Greco-Roman associations. It is primarily rhetorical vituperation—"*we* have order and self-control, *they* are in total chaos and out of control."[8] In essence, *aselgeia* is an anti-morality stance, which is a general characterization of any persons that fails to inculcate the attributes proposed by the author in 1:5–6. It is a transgression against all desirable aspects of faith and community life that the author lays out for the community to cultivate.

It is thus a stereotyping of the perceived enemies, the false-teachers, who represent the *anti-morality* and *anti-banquet* and, therefore ungodly perspective, against which he is advocating. That is why, it is by means of *aselgeia* that, the false-teachers are accused of waylaying new converts from the Petrine community (2:18). *Aselgeia* then seems to be a catchall phrase for those who are the perceived enemies, without really giving us much of what excess they exemplify or indulge in.

There is no specific mention of what these teachings entail in 2 Peter but rather there is a sweeping condemnation of the false-teachers as those whose judgment, long ago pronounced, is certain to arrive soon. Therefore, if these accusations are not historically accurate but are stereotypical, as we claim, then what we have here may be understood in terms of political propaganda

7. The phrase "way of truth" may also echo the Johannine Jesus' pronouncement to be "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). The distinct difference is that in John it Jesus himself is the subject but in 2 Peter truth refers to teachings.

8. Harland 2009: 172.

and posturing, used in order to give legitimacy to the in-group while vilifying the out-group—the *pseudodidaskaloi*.[9]

Support for such understanding is found in the intra- and inter-group discourse among Greco-Roman associations that constantly contrasts *aselgaia* with *eusēbeia* (**piety/godliness**). It is the case that when used in associations to distinguish between those eligible for membership, the noun *eusēbeia* is usually related to one's faithful performance of duties pertaining to specific deities connected to the associations or groups. For example, inscriptions from Piraeus, Greece, *IG* II2 1327 and *IG* II2 1328, describe *eusēbeia* as actions towards the deities, with the latter elaborating that the subject as having been "zealous that the customary sacrifices to the gods be made, often paying for these himself."[10] It was not an ethereal construct but a practical performance of the cultic requirements and duties pertaining to the gods or goddesses.

The assumption by the author seems be that a rejection of the **way of truth** (teachings that he considers orthodox) by the so-called false-teachers simply leads to an out of control lifestyle (morally), and blasphemy (theologically). The same is true in the way it is used in Jude 4, where rejection of the lordship of Jesus is also said to lead straight to *aselgeia*. That is why 2 Peter characterizes the false-teachers as enemies of **way of the truth**! (*he hodos tes alētheias*).

In the entire NT, the closest approximation of the phrase "way of God's truth" only occurs in the gospels (Matt 22:16; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21), even though there are parallels in 2 Peter—**the right way** (*hodos euthus*), the contrary **way of Balaam** (*hodos Balaam*) (2:15), and **the way of righteousness** (*ten hodon tes dikaiosunes*—2:21). Those who fail to follow the **way of truth** or "the right way," which is also "the way of righteousness," end up following the "wrong way," which is also the way of falsehood, and which is also called the **way of Balaam**. Essentially, this is a simple binary: there are two ways or paths, and the way or path that one chooses determines where one ends.

The notion of unfettered excess continues from the previous verse where 2 Peter describes it as *aselgeia*, and in 2:3; the false-teachers are described as having an **insatiable greed** (*pleonexia*), which ultimately leads to

9. See Harland in Smith and Taussig 2012: 76.

10. *AGRW* 19–20.

deception on their part. Similarly, in 2:15 they are also described as having **adulterous eyes**, that are "**insatiable** (*akatapaustos*) for sin." The insatiability is clearly a vice in direct contrast with the virtue of **self-control** (*hupomone*—cf. 2 Pet 1:6), and continues the stereotype of the anti-banquet, those who are not fit to be members of the Petrine community. It describes voracious appetite that overpowers any inclination of virtue that may be present in the false-teachers.

Driven by this insatiability, they turn to deceit to get their way. For 2 Peter, their **deceptive words** (*plastios logos*) clearly contrast with **prophetic word** (*prophetikos logos*—v. 19 and **prophetic writings** (*prophetikos graphē*—v. 21) which bear witness to the true **knowledge** (*gnosis*) that saves, through Jesus Christ. While the phrase *plastios logos* is a *hapax legomenon* (it appears only this once in the entire NT), the expression is found in other first century writers such as Josephus where it refers to **forgeries**.[11] We could therefore understand reference to **deceptive words** to be more than just a form of speech but may refer to a body of teachings that the false-teachers have. Just as the false-prophets misled with their deceptive prophecies, so too would the false-teachers ensnare with their treacherous teachings.

Such an understanding may also suggest that these teachings by false-teachers may bear close resemblance to the teachings of the author, but turn out to have fundamental differences whose singular purpose is of intentionally misleading, and whose consequences for, both teachers and adherents, are utterly dire.[12] What the false-teachers speak is not **truth** (*aletheias*—in contrast to v. 2, above), and it does not bring salvation, but rather is falsehood masquerading as the truth and can only ultimately lead to eternal damnation.

The author does not mince words when it comes to judgment of the false-teachers and their followers (2 Peter 2:3b)—their long pronounced condemnation is nigh. Their condemnation [announced] long ago, is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. What awaits them is **judgment** (*krima*) and **destruction** (*apoleia*), which are neither **impotent** [lit. "idle"] (*argei*) nor **asleep** (*nustazō*). It would seem that this is a rebuttal of a claim by the false-teachers that God's judgment will never happen since such a long time has elapsed and promised divine punishment has not befallen

11. Josephus *Life*: 177, 337.

12. *BDAG* 823.

creation, and does not ever seem to have been carried out at any point in history.[13]

In the HB/OT, reference to God slumbering (*nustazō*) is usually a ridicule of a God and show of disdain for the God's lack of control, power, and authority.[14] The same attitude is reflected in the false-teacher's ridicule of the delayed return (*parousia*) of the Lord (3:4), spoken with the intent to cast doubt as to the trustworthiness of the teachings earlier delivered to the community by the author. It reflects not just the doubts of a struggling agnostic, but rather the convictions of one who has come to the conclusion that he/she cannot believe in the teachings about Jesus that are espoused by the author, because he/she foresees no evidence of divine punishment.

Therefore, 2 Peter sees no hope such ones as their questioning of God's authority would simply bring upon them swift judgment. In contrast to the view of the false-teachers, the fact that the pronouncements were made so long ago makes the arrival of this judgment that much more certain to happen soon. That is why the next section (vv. 4–11) then proceeds to list examples of divine judgments that, in the past, came against those who disobeyed God; to serve as warning to the false-teachers and their followers of the certainty of divine judgment if they remain in the path they are on.

Examples of Past Divine Judgments and Rescues (2:4–6)

> **4**For, if God did not spare angels that sinned, but in chains confined them in darkness in Tartarus, until they were delivered into judgment, **5**nor was the ancient world spared, even though as the eighth, Noah, preacher of righteousness, was saved from the deluge that brought judgment on the ungodly, **6**and the cities of Sodom and Gomorra were reduced to ashes and made them an example of what will come to the ungodly. **7**But righteous Lot, greatly troubled by the lawlessness and their behavior of unbridled living, [God] rescued. **8**For this righteous one, seeing and hearing their lawlessness as he lived among them from day to day, was tortured in his righteous soul.

This section of 2 Peter is directly dependent on Jude, quoting directly but omitting and adding distinct elements to Jude's epistle. The set of three examples, of angels (higher on the chain of creation than humans, v. 11)

13. Webb 2012: 471.
14. Neyrey 1980: 415.

unable to escape divine judgment, followed by the judgment of the whole ancient world (sparing of Noah because of his righteousness), and finally the judgment of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which have come to epitomize divine judgment (Deut 29:23; Isa 13:19; Jer 23:14, 49:18; Lam 4:6; Hos 11:8; Amos 4:11; Macc 2:5), make clear that the false-teacher's mistaken notion of a slumbering God is a sure sign of their inevitable damnation. In contrast, by establishing a binary pattern of juxtaposing a judgment example with a rescue example—ancient world/Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah/Lot, save righteous/keep ungodly for judgment—the author ascertained God's power to save the faithful.

The conditional statement that begins this section, "if **God did not spare** (*pheidomai*) **angels**," leaves no doubt the fate the false-teachers and their followers face, an inevitable encounter with God's judgment. If God did not spare the angels, the ancient world and Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, the false-teachers should expect no less. Angels rank higher than humans in the scheme of things (2:11—angels have **greater strength and power**), and if God condemned angels to judgment how can humans expect any less? Coupled with judgment, the theme of insatiability is also hinted at in the example the author gives of the angels.

While quoting directly from Jude 5, the author alters the reference just enough in order to keep the sense of his preceding argument. He first leaves out Jude's preceding example of Egypt (Jude 5), and then also eliminates the reason attributed by Jude to the angels' judgment—(who in the **early days** (*archen*) did not carefully **guard themselves** (*tēreō*) but **forsook** (*apolipontas*) their own dwelling/home)—and simply says they **sinned** (*hamatanō*). However, he adds the location of the confinement as **total darkness** (*zophou*) which in 2:17 (*zophos tou skotous*) is the same fate that awaits the false-teachers (cf. also LXX Job 40:20: 41:24; Prov 30:16; Philo, *Vit. Mos*. 2. 433).

By so doing, 2 Peter's alterations change Jude's pattern of identifying the reasons for judgment as *transgression of divine limits*! Instead, 2 Peter focuses on the angels being **chained** or confined *for* their sins, assuming that his readers know what he is referencing (Gen 6; *1 Enoch* 6:1–26). In essence, for 2 Peter, it was because the angels could not control themselves, just like the false-teachers' lack self-control, that they were confined. They are being **kept** (*tēreō*), until the **judgment** (*krima*) which, in line with Jude 6, is reference to the eschatological judgment (cf. 2 Pet 2:9, 17; 3:7).

In the second example of divine judgment, 2 Peter references the destruction of the **ancient world** (*archaiou cosmou*) in the flood, where only Noah and his family were saved (Gen 8:13–20). Both the story of sinful angels and that of the Noahic flood, follow each other in Genesis (6, 8) and are related; the flood (**water**) and judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (**fire**) were connected in Jewish literature as primary examples of divine judgment (*Jub* 20:5; Luke 17:26–30).[15] It is after the sin of the angels' cohabiting with daughters of humans that the sinfulness of humans reaches an unbearable point for God who then decides to wipe out humanity and start over with Noah and his family.

While Jude had followed his reference to angels with the example of Sodom and Gomorrah, 2 Peter inserts a reference to Noah, **the eighth** (*ongdoos*), in between. Noah was, counting together all the people that were saved during the flood, the **eighth** person from Adam (Gen 7:23; 8:18; 1 Pet 3:20). Noah is called a *preacher* **of righteousness** in this verse, which is not clear why, since in Gen 6:8–9 he is described as "righteous," "blameless," and "faithful," but never called a preacher.

As a noun, the word *keryx* (**preacher**, **herald**, **proclaimer**) is rare in the NT appearing in only two other places—in 1 Tim 2:7 and 2 Tim 1:11—where it is a self-description by the Pauline author on his own calling. It is therefore more likely then, that 2 Peter draws from the Jewish tradition that had developed a perspective of Noah as a preacher (e.g., *Sib. Or*. 1:129; 148–98; Josephus, *Ant*. 1.74; Gen. Rab. 30:7; *Pirke R. Eliezer* 22–23 [c. 80–118 CE]). In this Jewish exegesis, the years Noah spent building the boat are interpreted as a period of proclamation of the coming judgment, and of delayed judgment, just like in 2 Peter.[16]

Second Peter also removes references to Enoch, the archangel Michael, Cain, and Korah found in Jude 5–9, and in their place adds examples of Noah and Lot. While 2 Peter keeps the reference to Balaam, it expands on what Jude had to say, appending the piece about the reprimand by a **voiceless beast** (2:15). The author also retains the example of Sodom and Gomorrah used in Jude 7 but omits the mention of their desire for a **different flesh** (Jude 5) as the reason for divine judgment or the fact that their punishment is eternal and ongoing (Jude 7). Rather, he retains the distinction that they served as archetypes, **examples** (*hupodeigma*) of what would happen to the **ungodly** (*asebēs*). Second Peter also avoids language of fire in

15. Bauckham 1983: 253.

16. Ibid., 251.

relation to Sodom and Gomorrah and instead simply states that they would be **reduced to ashes** (*terrōsas*), thereby focusing instead on the comprehensiveness of the divine judgment, rather than it intensity.

While Jude uses the Sodom and Gomorrah reference as part of a list of warnings on the danger of breaking divine boundaries, in 2 Peter there is no clear reason given as to why they were reduced to ashes, except for the generic accusation of *asebēs*—**ungodliness**. The nature of their ungodliness is not elaborated upon here, as it is in Jude 7, where it is equated to sexual sin.

As we saw in the discussion in Jude 4, however, **ungodliness** (*asebēs*) was a common accusation in Greco-Roman groups and societies when identifying those they considered outsiders or potential enemies of their particular group. For this reason, it makes it difficult to pin down what exactly is meant by the term here in 2 Peter, and how accurate it is representative of the attitudes of the perceived outsiders. What we have instead is a not very helpful contrast with Lot, whose character in Genesis is negative, but who is here presented as the paragon of godliness. However, even this comparison to Lot's character does not necessarily clarify the nature of the sin that *asebes* refers to here since, as we have noted above, in Second Temple Judaism the story of Sodom and Gomorrah had come to represent the image of ultimate divine judgment, and that is essentially how 2 Peter uses it too. Therefore, while 2 Peter eliminates Jude's appeal to Enochic material, seemingly uncomfortable with its use in this section, he seems to be comfortable enough in appealing to other Jewish traditions to make his point.

Following the examples of divine judgment that should dispel any laxity on the part of God to exercise divine authority, 2 Peter moves on to introduce exceptions; those saved from judgment by their righteousness—Noah and, peculiarly, Lot. Now, while it is understandable for Noah to be labeled as righteous, since he is declared as such in Genesis (6:9b—"Noah was a *righteous* man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God") the same cannot be said of Lot. In the Genesis story of Lot (13, 19), it is hard to justify an image of him as that of a person who could be adjudged as **righteous** (*dikaios*). Yet, three times here in 2 Peter, Lot is called **righteous** (vv. 7–8).

So how did Lot get to be righteous? On the one hand, it is possible that 2 Peter simply aligns him with Noah who in 2:5 is referred to as a preacher of righteousness and thus finds the need to also show Lot to be righteous.

The logic behind such reasoning would be that since, like Noah, Lot was divinely rescued from judgment on a sinful community, then he *must* be righteous (2:9).

However, the image we have of Lot in Genesis makes his candidacy for entitlement of a righteous man rather questionable, to say the least! His preference for the cities, in contrast to Abraham's choice of the country, seems to indicate a tradition that makes Lot seem greedy (Gen 13:10–13); his attempt to give his daughters to be raped by the men in Sodom in order to save strangers, leaves the impression of an extremely callous father (Gen 19:8); his hesitation to flee Sodom indicates lack of faith (Gen 19:16); and, his drunkenness and his eventual incest with his own daughters, make him out to be a disgrace (Gen 19:33–35). In contrast though, it was Lot who took in the strangers into his home showing hospitality (Gen 19:1–4), and he attempted, no matter how awkwardly, to protect them from the sinful men of Sodom (Gen 19:6–10).

As it turns out, however, the Second Temple period Jewish literature virtually rehabilitated Lot and presented him as **virtuous** (*arête*). In the *Wisdom of Solomon* (Gen 10:1–13), for example, Lot is listed together with Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph as a "virtuous man," and he is **rescued** (*errusato*) by Wisdom, much in the same way that God **rescues** (*errusato*) him in 2 Peter 2:7. Similarly, for Philo (*Vit. Mos.* 57–59), it is a "virtuous man" (Lot) who is rescued from destruction of Sodom and Gomorra. Josephus' retelling of the Lot stories presents him as a "generous and hospitable man," attributes he had learned from his uncle Abraham and which earned him the honor of being listed in the ancestry to the David.[17] In similar fashion, Midrashic writings point to Lot's hospitality as a basis for his commendation and piety—*Gen. Rab*. 49:13 and *Pirqe R. El.* 25 (see also *1 Clem* 11:1).[18]

While all these Jewish writings certainly provide a plausible way of looking at the rehabilitation of Lot, it is still rather difficult to comprehend the description of him in 2 Peter as **tortured** (*basanitzō*) by the sinfulness of the city of Sodom given he willingly settled among them (Gen 13:10). The reading of *basanitzō* as psychological oppression has been contested since its appearances elsewhere suggest torment associated with torture (e.g., Rev 9:5; 14:11; 18:10, 15).[19] In that case, reference to threats of vio-

17. Josephus *Ant.* 1:11. *ANF* 1:8. Cf. also Avioz 2006: 3–13.

18. Alexander 1985: 289–300.

19. *BDAG* 168.

lence in Gen 19:9 is suggested as a more likely background, which may also be symptomatic of an aggressive nature of false-teachers.[20]

The only difficulty with such a reading is that, the torture in 2 Peter is explained as happening **in his righteous soul** (*psychēs dikaiaos*). Nonetheless, if we do understand *psychē* to refer to the whole person, for example like in 1 Pet 3:20, then such a reading would stand. An alternative explanation, however, has posited the possible use of an LXX variant.[21] The LXX variant reading seems to suggest a plausible background of 2 Peter's understanding of Lot as being troubled by sin, and on those grounds could be pronounced righteous.[22]

Ultimately, the pattern of judgment and rescue is, clearly, what governs the examples that 2 Peter selects from the Hebrew Scriptures. Just like Noah's case in the previous example, Lot's biblical context is also a case where there is a complete destruction of an entire community, in divine judgment for sin, save for a very small group of survivors who are rescued. One wonders then whether the author of 2 Peter is convinced that the majority of the Petrine community is in danger of destruction or he simply wants to paint a picture of the certainty of God's judgment against sin, even if it means using rhetoric that implies the total annihilation of a majority of the group. Moreover, if we understand it in terms of the author identifying himself as a prophet (1:19–21), then the urgency of divine judgment on entire nations and peoples in the Hebrew Bible was always tempered by the promise of the rescue of a faithful minority. This then is the pattern of prophetic speech that is being reflected here.

Guarantee of Divine Judgment in the Present (2:9–11)

> **9**The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial and to keep the unrighteous in punishment until the Day of Judgment. **10**And, especially those who walk in the flesh—in polluting lust, who despise lordship; arrogant and self-pleasing, they are not afraid to blaspheme the glorious ones. **11**Whereas angels, even though with greater strength and power, do not bring against themselves railing judgment from the Lord.

20. Green 2008: 259.

21. The Septuagint [LXX], the Greek translation, of the Hebrew Bible that was likely used by the author of 2 Peter.

22. Makujina 1998: 255–69.

In this section, 2 Peter concludes his examples of judgment and rescue with a general statement about God's ability to judge and save, and verse nine is a summation of 2 Peter's arguments from 2:1 about what God does, in judgment, to those who are **unrighteous**, and the promise of **rescue** to those who are godly. Just in case his readers are overwhelmed by the unrelenting portrayal of God's judgment of sinful people in last eight verses, 2 Peter makes a reassuring proclamation that this same God who judges, is also very aware of his duty to rescue the **godly** (*eusebēs*), and is capable of it as evidenced by the examples given. As Gene Green puts it: "In a world where the gods are considered to be capricious and could do a person harm as well as good, the confidence in God as the Deliver is striking indeed…"[23]

The communities of Noah and Lot, provide the backdrop examples of what would happen to disobedient people, while Noah and Lot themselves are the counter-examples of those rescued in the midst of their communities' annihilation. Note the use of the same vocabulary for **rescue** (*rhyomai*) used earlier in the description of Lot's story of divinely assisted escape from Sodom, and now used here in the generic statement of God's deliverance of the godly from divine judgment. This promise of God's ability to **secure** (*tēreō*) is not just for a limited period, but it goes all the way to the **Day of Judgment** (*hēmera kriseos*), the eschatological end of all time, when God would judge the all creation based on their works (also called **day of the Lord**—Isa 34:8; Prov 6:34; *1 Enoch* 22:11).

Following the juxtaposition of the assurance of rescue of the godly, and judgment of the unrighteous, 2 Peter proceeds to detail who these unrighteous are. In the same way that he provided a catalogue of virtues that should characterize the believers (1:5–10), he now similarly catalogues the characteristics of the ungodly. The list includes categorization of the false-teachers as **walking in the flesh** (*opisō sarkos*) **and in polluting lust** (*en epithymia miasmos*)**, despising authority** (*kyriatētos*)**, arrogant** (*tolēros*)**, and obstinate self-pleasers** (*authadēs*—only other reference in Tit 1:7)**, and not afraid to blaspheme the glorious ones** (*doxas*). It is possible that the rest of the categories elaborate what **walking in the flesh** means for 2 Peter or that each violation stands alone.

This section derives from Jude 8, which also identifies the infiltrators as **dreamers**. In keeping with modifications of his sources, 2 Peter avoids the reference to dreamers, focusing instead on their polluting acts, disobedience, and arrogance. He also eliminates the reference to archangel

23. Green 2008: 263.

Michael and instead makes a generic reference to angels who avoid blasphemy and subsequent divine judgment, even though they are more powerful than humans.

The reference to the **Day of Judgment** (*hēmera kriseos*) used here and in 3:7, is in respect to the final judgment, when God would judge the world. While it may parallel the Hebrew "day of the Lord," (Amos 5:18–20; Isa 2:2; Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:17–21) the phrase is really only found in the NT in the mouth of Jesus in the Matthew's Gospel (Matt 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36), and in 1 John 4:17. Given that 2 Peter's citation of the transfiguration (2:16) shows more resemblance to Matthew's gospel, it makes sense to assume that the expression's background should be Matthew and not simply from the HB/OT. In the passages in Matthew, the phrase appears in Jesus' pronouncement of the coming eschatological judgment, which he compares to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the two cities already cited by 2 Peter (2:7; following Jude 7), as a prime examples of the divine judgment that even now awaits the ungodly and rebellious. Later on, the phrase appears again in 2 Peter 3:8–10 where the focus is to alleviate the concern brought about by the false-teachers the apparent delayed *parousia* (**appearance of the Lord** in judgment).

So while the Petrine community can be assured of God's ability to **rescue them** (*rhyomai*), the unrighteous (including the false-teachers) can also be assured that they will be **kept** (*tēreō*) for judgment, in the same manner that in 2 Peter 3:7, the "present heavens and earth" are **kept** (*tēreō*) for destruction by fire, on the Day of Judgment of the ungodly. In Jude 6, it is the sinful angels **kept** (*tēreō*) for the Day of Judgment. And while in Jude the sinful angels were to serve as a warning to the infiltrators and their ungodliness, hoping to induce change, in 2 Peter there seems to be no room for repentance. The fate of the unrighteous is pronounced and its effect is expected to last to the Day of Judgment. The heavens and earth simply await their already decided fate. Unlike Jude, there seems to be here, no hope at all of their salvation, as their fate seems already sealed, simply awaiting the arrival of the judgment day.

Furthermore, not only are the false-teachers *being kept* for judgment, the unrighteous in general, are being kept **in/under punishment** (*kolazō*) until the Judgments Day. This is a difficult Greek phrase to interpret and makes its implication unsure—is it a continuing state of punishment as the Greek seems to presume[24] or is it an anticipated period of punishment

24. Kelly 1969: 335.

related to the Day of Judgment, as many scholars seem to prefer?[25] Either way, the certainty of divine judgment is unquestionable.

The reference to "**those**" may be generic in completing the thought of the last verse—"those who will be judged"—but it also includes specifically the false-teachers whom the rest of the section refers to in third person plural pronoun. "They" are contrasted to angels (v. 11), likened to wild beasts (v. 12), described as sexually perverse (v. 13a), portrayed as detractors at social gatherings (v. 13b), with "eyes full of adultery" (v. 14), and an insatiable desire for sin (v. 14b). While plausible, it is difficult for one to envision how these are actual descriptions of characteristics of the false-teachers. Instead, as we have seen so far and throughout the rest of this chapter, the collective descriptions and accusations of the false-teachers seems to reflect stereotyping language of people who are anti-banquet, and anti-association (see Introduction).[26]

If the point of the 2 Peter is to portray his adversaries as enemies of order, discipline, restrain, and therefore unworthy of membership to his group, this is in line with the way Greco-Roman associations portrayed competing or adversarial groups or individuals.[27] With such stereotypical portrayal, it is difficult to determine the accuracy of the specific accusations drawn against of the false-teachers with any certainty, let alone reconstructing their teachings and beliefs.

In this regard, these accusations are being made by the Christian writer against a rival self-identifying Christian group, with a difference in doctrinal teachings and difference in understanding of religious freedom. This may indicate the great desire by the writer's in-group to portray themselves in good light as upright members of the larger society—i.e., "we are not like these barbarians but we are a well mannered and responsible group that is being corrupted by a few bad apples; ones who are giving us a bad name. Our banquets are civilized affairs that conform to the decorum of banquets and associations. We conform to the expectations of empire and the larger society." In not too distant a future, a reversal would occur where it is the Christians who would be accused of the same offenses by their non-Christians neighbors (cf. Pliny the Younger's *Letter to Trajan* and *Didache*).

Once again, the notion of sexual perversion is included in a list of accusations against those who **blaspheme** (i.e., the false-teachers), and who

25. Bauckham 1983: 254; Green 1987: 114; Green 2008: 265.

26. Horrell 1998: 167.

27. Harland 2009: 161–81.

are not afraid to foolishly challenge divine beings (v. 10). In this case, their **walking** after **the flesh** (*sarx*) later on also becomes the primary means of enticement to new converts, waylaying them to sin (2:18). Similar vocabulary also appears in 1 Peter 2:11 (**abstain from** fleshly **lust**). Such an understanding of *sarx* recalls Pauline use of the word as the embodiment of sin (Rom 8:3; Gal 5:16, 17, 19; Eph 2:3), which stands in opposition to godliness, an emphasis of 2 Peter's. That 2 Peter acknowledges awareness of Pauline writings (2 Pet 3:15) makes this connection fairly likely. Lying in the background of both the Pauline and Petrine understanding is a Jewish apocalypticism reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls that sets up a dualism between the spiritual (godly) and the fleshly (evil) (e.g., 1QS 11:9).[28]

The rest of the negative appraisals describe characteristics of insubordination to authority—**despise lordship**, **arrogant**, **self-pleasing**, **not afraid to blaspheme (vv. 10, 12)**. As explained above, the focus on order, decorum and respect paint the false-teachers as anti-association and anti-decorum.[29] Their behavior and attitudes collectively represent everything that is not conducive to organized community life. Even the accusation of blasphemy need not be simply understood theologically, but must be seen in light of the characteristics describing the false-teachers as breeders of **defamation**. While not elaborating on the nature of the blasphemy, 2 Peter lays out the image of a group not afraid to engage in controversy that borders on the insane—even angels dare not do what they do (v. 11). They are not afraid to blaspheme; not surprising given their arrogance and their extreme self indulgence, paying little or no attention to what anyone else would say (v. 10). They are their own gods, so to speak! They display no caution, something even the more powerful angels exhibit, and as such are diving headlong towards disaster—divine judgment!

Stereotypical Characterization of False-Teachers (2:12–16)

> **12**But these ones, are like irrational beasts being born to be captured and slaughtered—who in their ignorance blaspheme, in their corruption they will be destroyed, **13**suffering injustice as wages for their unrighteousness. They find [sensual] pleasure in daylight reveling—blots, blemishes, wild revelers, and deceivers—even as

28. Flusser 2007: 283–92.

29. Harland 2009: 171.

> they feast with you. **14**Their eyes, full of adultery are insatiable for sin. They ensnare/trap/waylay unstable souls. They have hearts that are trained in greediness, accursed children! **15**They are abandoning the straight path and have gone astray, following in the way of Balaam son of Bosor who loved the wages of unrighteousness, **16**but was rebuked for his own transgression by a dumb donkey which spoke in a human voice, stopping the prophet's madness.

There are three things that need to be highlighted in this section: i) the author resorts to stereotyping to discredit the false-teachers, ii) reference to **meal gatherings** (*syneuōcheomai*) allows for comparison of the section with Greco-Roman associations which also had regular gatherings and may shed light into the stereotyping language used here, and iii) comparison of the virtue list (1:5–7) and the false-teachers' list of ignominy supports the argument that author's stereotyping list here was carefully constructed to stand in opposition to the virtue list.

First, while this section of 2 Peter is dependent on Jude, he realigns Jude's imageries applying them to a new context, and in the process reconstructs their meaning to fit his purposes. The overall focus is the fate of the false-teachers; essentially, that they deserve what is coming their way! The vitriolic rhetoric would be better understood in light of the Greco-Roman rhetoric of intergroup conflict and identity formation, especially among minority groups. It draws on stereotypical caricatures of perceived opponents as less than human and more like lower animals.[30] Such rhetoric cannot be trusted to reliably reflect actual historical reality of the opponents, since it tends to be not only overly exaggerated, but inclines towards employing the stereotypes *in toto* even when aspects do not directly apply to specific aspects exemplified by the opponents.[31] It is this metaphorical nature of the stereotype which, if misunderstood, may give the impression of falsification. All along there has to be clear understanding that this is

30. Harland 2009: 116–22, 145–60. As Harland explains, while discussing Greco-Roman associations, such an approach involves: ". . . emphasiz[ing] the manner in which charges of wild transgression are part of more encompassing discourses that reflect the methods and rhetoric of ancient ethnography in order to describe and distance the foreign "other" from one's own cultural or ethnic group."

31. Harland 2009: 174. "These accusations, like the stories of bandit anti–associations, political conspiracy, and alien cults, arise from a common stockpile of stereotypes of the threatening other, and there is no need to look for any basis in the reality of actual practices."

common Greco-Roman intra-/inter-group rhetorical banter in group identity discourse.

Second, the characterizations of the false-teachers in this section can be grouped into three main areas that bear close conformity to stereotyping categories identified among Greco-Roman groups around the first century, which tended to be human sacrifice, sexual perversion, and ungodliness.[32] The section begins with characterization of the false-teachers as wild beasts ready for slaughter (v. 12) and ends with the reference to Balaam's beast (dumb donkey) speaking him out of his madness (v. 16). The one category that may not align with Harland's list is "human sacrifices." However, that may be the result of 2 Peter's creative use of the categories.[33]

a. *Wild Beasts*

- **irrational beasts** (*aloga zoa*), **born to be captured and slaughtered** (v. 12);

b. *Sexual Perverts/Insatiable Appetites*

- **corruption** (v. 12);
- **find [sensual] pleasure in daylight reveling** (*truphēn*)
- **blots** (*spilos*), **blemishes** (*mōmos*),
- **wild revelers** (*entryphōntes*), **and deceivers** (*apatē*) (v. 13);
- **eyes full of adultery, insatiable** (*akatapaustos*) **for sin** (v. 14)
- **hearts that are exercised/trained in greediness** (*gymnazō*) (v. 14)

c. *Ungodly*

- **who in their ignorance** (*agnoeō*) **blaspheme** (v. 12);
- **unrighteous** (*adikia*) (v. 13);
- **abandoning straight path, going astray** (v. 15)
- **following unrighteous Balaam** (v. 15)

Third, the description list of the false-teachers (2:10–15), while undoubtedly drawn from Jude, seems to counterbalance rather well with the virtue list in 1:5–7 (below), leaving the clear impression that it is more than

32. Harland 2009: 169–81.

33. Watson 1988: 118. It is peculiar that 2 Peter does not capitalize on the "human sacrifice" category to talk about Jesus' crucifixion. But he seems to prefer not to talk about crucifixion and instead talk about glorification.

likely a reflection of the author's rhetorical construction that stereotypes the false-teachers, in direct contrast to the virtue listed in 1:5–7. Similar to the virtues listed, this unsavory list of false-teacher characterization also has "amplification by accumulation" of the elements listed culminating, in this case, not on divine blessing but in divine judgment.[34]

In this regard, it is quite unlikely that the characterizations thus presented reflect actual behaviors by the false-teachers, and rather that it is better understood in light of 2 Peter's rhetoric with its *idealized* proscriptions of both groups. Harland explains it thus: "In the process of defining one's own group, the activities of others are defined as *dangerous inversions of good order*."[35] This clearly becomes evident when we align side-by-side the virtue list in 1:5–7 and the transgression list in 2:10–15; the latter is undoubtedly an inversion of the "good order" represented in the former.

Believer's Virtues (1:5–7)	**False-teachers' Vices (2:10–15)**
Co-partakers of Godly nature (*physis*) (1:5)	Irrational Beasts (*aloga zoa*) ready for slaughter (v. 12)
Faith/Faithful (*pistis*) (1:5)	Blasphemous (*blasphemeo*) (v. 12)
Virtue (*arête*) (1:5)	Corrupt (*phthora*)(v. 12)
Knowledge (*gnosis*) (1:5)	Ignorant (*agnos*) (v. 12)
Self-control (*enkrateia*) (1:6)	Unbridled sensuality (*hedonen, moichalidos*) (v. 13)
Endurance/Longsuffering (*hypomone*) (1:6)	Hearts trained in Greed (*akatapaustos, gymnazō*) (v. 14)
Godliness (*eusebia*) (1:7, 8)	Unrighteous (*adikia*)/Abandoning straight path, going astray, following Balaam (v. 13, 15)
Sibling kindness (*agape*) (1:7)	Selfish/Self-indulgent (*authadēs*) (v. 10)

In contrast to those destined for higher things, including attaining a certain measure of **divine nature** (*physis*), the false-teachers are characterized

34. Watson 1988: 118.

35. Harland 2009: 180 (emphasis added).

as irrational beasts incapable of reason and therefore unable to attain any proper understanding of the gospel message. Their destiny is certain death—slaughter. This ignorance of the true **knowledge** (*gnosis*) means they cannot show **faithfulness** (*pistis*) and instead, in their **ignorance** (*agnos*), they blaspheme that which they do not understand. Lacking **self-control** (*enkrateia*), they have lost ethical bearings, allowing themselves to be controlled by their **sensual appetites** (*hedonen, moichalidos*) which they have failed to reign in. The result is unrighteousness and abandoning of the Godly way, reflected in their **self-indulgence** (*authadēs*) and **greed** (*gymnazō*), and their propensity to **deception** (*apatē*), even as they themselves seek to deceive others.

Lastly, reference to regular **feast gatherings** (*syneuōcheomai*) (v. 13) as the locus of the concerns in this section means that all these negative elements that characterize the influence of the false-teachers are best understood, once again, in light of Greco-Roman meals and gatherings which, for many minority groups in the Empire, presented the focal point of the social, political, and religious identity formation.[36] It is in this context that one can identify the vices listed as representing a common trend of anti-banquet accusations in intergroup conflict, whose implications are political, social and religious.[37] This last section of 2 Peter 2 which has been classified as a *digressio*, is a not only "a denunciatory description of the false-teachers," it is primarily aimed at pointing to the inevitable divine judgment that awaits them.[38]

Verse 12, drawing directly from Jude 10, begins the section of imageries by comparing the false-teachers to **irrational beasts, ready for slaughter**—a jarring image, to say the least! In Jude, the irrationality is said to cause destruction but in 2 Peter, it is connected with beastly nature whose *raison d'etre* is food supply. Where is the hope of repentance? Is it already over for them? It is important to note that the use of the comparative adjective **like** (*hōs*) puts the examples that are to follow in a generic category—"they are *like* animals, they are *not* animals!" They are behaving like unreasoning beasts whose highest intrinsic value is simply as a source of food. In essence, their greatest value comes when they are dead! Unfortunately, that sounds rather ominous for the false-teachers.

36. Smith and Taussig 2012: 2–3.
37. Harland 2009: 171.
38. Watson 1988: 115.

The comparison with wild beasts finds a slightly different meaning if the focus is less on the slaughtering part and more with the fact that they have placed themselves at the lowest level of life. During this period of Greco-Roman history, philosophers had sought to distinguish humans from the rest of the animal kingdom and they argued that it is largely their ability to reason through speech, that makes humans *humans*, and distinguish them from animals.[39]

Animals were presumed to be incapable of not only formulating virtues, but they also could not live up to them even if they understood them. Humans, on the other hand, are able to distinguish between aspects like good and evil, justice and injustice, and therefore are not controlled by their instinct, like the animals are. It is in this regard that Aristotle labels humans as **political animals** (*zoon politikon*) which would stand in stark contrast to 2 Peter's characterization of the false-teachers as **irrational beasts** (*aloga zoa*).[40]

If then, according to Aristotle, humans are the only **animals** (*zoon*) that use language to articulate between that which is in any sense good or evil, and to distinguish between justice and injustice, then 2 Peter's characterization of the false-teachers as **irrational beasts** (*alogon zoon*), **worthy only of slaughter** (*eis alosin kai phthoran*), is to remove them completely from the realm of that which is human.

It is this irrational nature of the false-teachers that is reflected in their **ignorance** (*agnoeō*) that results in blasphemy thus drawing, upon themselves, divine judgment. Since salvation for 2 Peter is on the basis of **knowledge** (*gnosis*) (1:5; 3:18), it is clear that their ignorance is not simply lack of information, but rather a conscious effort on their part to reject

39. Green 2008: 275.

40. Aristotle, *Pol.*, I.2.1252b line 27–1253a line 17. "Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal [*zoon politikon* KB]. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the "Tribeless, lawless, heartless one, "whom Homer denounces—the natural outcast is forthwith a lover of war; he may be compared to an isolated piece at draughts. Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals, is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.

the teachings espoused by the author. That is why it is **in their corruption** (*phthora*) they **will be destroyed** (*phthora*)—they bring upon themselves this divine judgment, the **wages** (*misthos*) **of their unrighteousness or fraud**. When they do **suffer injustice** (*adikoumenoi*) it is not because they are innocent victims of an unjust system, but instead they are receiving that which they have brought upon themselves. This reference to deserved **wages** (*misthos*) anticipates the example of Balaam in vv. 15–16, who had loved **wages** (*misthos*) of fraud.

It is difficult to envision the next accusation levied here in v. 13 as literal in any way—finding [**sensual**] **pleasure** (*hedonen*—only in Luke 8:14; Tit 3:3; Jas 4:1, 3) **in daylight reveling** (*tryphēn*). Is this actually a description of something that was taking place? If this were the case, then the likelihood would be that the author would be upset with his audience for tolerating it, just like Paul was with the Corinthians (1 Cor 5) for not dealing with the sinner in their midst. If what they do is so repugnant and so open, it is unclear why the community has not seen this as a significant concern. Surely the community can tell when inappropriate acts are taking place in their midst, unless they themselves tolerate it, and even get involved in it. However, the impression the author gives is that only the false-teachers are involved in these behaviors, even in the presence of those he is writing to, and whom he presumes do not get involved.

More likely than not, these accusations reflect a hyperbolic rhetoric aimed at amplifying the egregious nature of the false-teacher's ethics. Perhaps the vivid image painted here is best explained in light of stereotyping language rather than a malevolent desire by 2 Peter for physical violence against the false-teachers. If the collective use of stereotypes that 2 Peter uses is intended to completely discredit his opponents, then the intention is not to represent actual behavioral reports. Rather, it involves the use of metaphoric language, irony and hyperbole to enunciate the threat such opponents represent to the community.[41] This is the use of rhetoric which, while it overstates the case, is deliberately intended to shock the reader to the serious danger they may be in by following the **false-teachers**, even though what may be shocking language to us today may have been familiar public jousting platitudes to the ancients' ears.

41. Harland 2009: 174: "These . . . arise from a common stockpile of stereotypes of the threatening other, and there is no need to look for any basis in the reality of actual practices."

The description of the false-teachers and their followers as **blots** (*spilos*) and **blemishes** (*mōmos*) (2:13) is in obvious contrast to the Petrine community who are urged to strive to be **spotless and blameless** (*aspiloi kai amōmētoi*) in 3:14, as they hasten the return of the Lord for the final judgment. Read in light of v. 12, these elements, whose antonyms are attributed to the false-teachers (2:13) represent the unclean animals much in the same say that the author's audience represents the acceptable and unblemished animal sacrifices (Lev 1:3; 22:20; Num 29:8; Deut 15:21; 17:1). The same vocabulary is used of Jesus in 1 Peter 1:19, who is described as the **spotless** (*aspilos*) lamb of God, in the manner of the Passover lamb that cleanses sin. While, in Jude 24, it is Jesus who is able to present us before God's judgment, **without any blemish** (*amomos*).

An alternative reading of the text may also imply the reference to the feast as a separate event from the public carousing that happens, in which case the former is the community's regular *agapē* fellowships while the latter activities take place elsewhere. In that case, the sentence in verse 13 would read, "**they find sensual pleasure in daylight reveling—blots** (*spilos*), **blemishes** (*mōmos*), **wild revelers** (*entryphōntes*), **and deceivers** (*apatē*)**—while they also feast** (*syneuōcheomai*) **with you**." While this is plausible, it would still not explain why the Petrine audience is unaware of the false-teachers' wild conduct or why they would tolerate it. Unless, of course, they are totally unaware of any of the virtues that the author lays out in chapter one, which would be quite unlikely. The anti-association or anti-banquet idea is part of the overall Greco-Roman rhetorical strategy. These ancient discourses are best understood within the framework of intergroup rivalries, identity construction, and group-boundary negotiation.[42]

Unlike, the use of **blots** and **blemishes** which are clearly metaphorical, the next two accusations by 2 Peter have a greater likelihood of reflecting actual practices of the false-teachers. Description of **wild revelers** (*entryphōntes*) and **deceivers** (*apatē*), while remaining within the realm of stereotypes, may still capture some elements of their actions, especially if they caused disruption in the community feasts.[43] In Greco-Roman society, public display of revelry was frowned upon, and was seen as a mark of weakness and lack of self-control.[44] In gatherings like the associations, while indeed getting drunk and exhibiting abusive conduct was common,

42. Ibid., 180.
43. Ibid., 171.
44. Ibid., 163.

there were behavioral standards set to maintain order and decorum in the feasts, and any that would break the regulations risked being fined, being kicked out, and even loss of membership.[45] It is such kind of unbecoming conduct in light of group gatherings that Harland has indicated the anti-banquet behavior groups would levy against opponents, which in this case of 2 Peter, is labeling of the false-teachers as anti-banquet and therefore generally anti-society.[46]

The description of insatiable sexual desire continues the stereotyping that casts the barbarian as an out of control sexual slave unfit for membership in a civil society. In later years, Christian gatherings were to be characterized (falsely!) by opponents as meetings where uncontrolled and reprehensible sexual acts were performed.[47] It is therefore interesting here that it is the Christian author who labels his opponents as sexually immoral.[48]

The phrase on adultery is grammatically awkward since literally it reads, "they, with eyes full of an adulteress."[49] This may explain why Greek manuscripts that contain the epistle of 2 Peter, such as ℵ A 33, by replacing *moichalidos* with *moichalias*, offer the more refined alternative **having eyes full of adultery**. It is also true that when the accusation of adultery is typically levied against a group in the OT and NT, it is an accusation of idolatry against those who have rejected God's commands (Matt 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:38; Jas 4:4, Rev 2:22). Proverbs 30:13 (LXX) describes a wicked generation with **lofty eyes** (*hyphēlous ophthalmous*) and, decries the ways of the

45. Smith and Taussig 2012: 16–17.

46. Writing about the perception of Jews among the Greco-Romans, Harland 2009: 176, explains: "In virtually all the cases in this chapter, the inversion or perversion of the shared meal, along with inherent sacrificial connections, stands out as a symbol of the group's relation to surrounding society, as a sign of an anti–societal threat and the epitome of social and religious disorder."

47. Harland 2009: 171. "This combination of inverted banqueting and perverted sexual practices would recur in the list of counter-cultural practices attributed to the early Christians as well. Livy provides another clear case where fiction informed by ethnographic stereotypes of the criminal tendencies of foreign peoples informs the description of real-life associations, in this case an association with mysteries. Inversion of proper banqueting and drinking practices, as well as distorted sacrificial rites, are again at the heart of the allegations."

48. *Wisdom* and Philo use similar language to caricature non-Jews. ". . . we are witnessing the expression of Judean or Christian identities in relation to the associations in a way that illustrates the internalization of external categorizations. . . ." (Harland 2009: 177–78).

49. *BDAG* 656, translates it as "eyes full of (desire for) an adulteress."

gunaikos moichalidos (**adulterous woman**, v. 20) makes up part of that generation.

However, a teaching attributed to Jesus in the gospels maintains that looking at a woman **lustfully** (*epithymia*) means already committing adultery (*moicheuō*) with her (Matt 5:27–28) is the most likely source for 2 Peter. The second part of the statement about the false-teacher being **insatiable for sin**, accentuates the first part. All the negative aspects prompt the typically Jewish outburst of condemnation from the author, **accursed children**![50] The unspoken subject of the curse of course is God, who pronounces judgment on all.

Second Peter's appeal to the story of Balaam's rebuke by the "dumb donkey," found in Numbers 22, is meant to highlight the failure of the false-teachers to heed the warning about the danger of their chosen path. Since they are said to have **abandoned** (*kataleipo*) **the straight** (*euthys*) **path and gone astray**, then the assumption is that they previously belonged to the **straight path**, a typical expression of acceptable conduct in the OT and NT (1 Sam 12:23; Prov 3:5–6, 4:26; Psa 27:11; Isa 26:7; Hos 14:9; Acts 13:10).

It also anticipates a similar expression that refers to the **way of righteousness** (2:21), which the false-teachers have abandoned. As such, these false-teachers, unlike the infiltrators in Jude, without doubt emerged from the Petrine community and now pose a threat to it with their contrarian teachings. Unfortunately, Balaam's example does not help present us with any clarity concerning the false-teachers' teachings but simply seeks to highlight their ultimate failure. Without questioning Balaam's status as a prophet, 2 Peter explains the donkey's role in squelching the madness that had entered the prophet.[51]

Fusing the Horizons: Dangers of Stereotyping

While I have so far sought to give an *apologia* for the author of 2 Peter by locating the writing within the larger Greco-Roman setting where stereotyping played significant role in public discourse, I find myself in a quandary when I envision the ways stereotyping has been used in more recent history to devastating effects, especially in Africa. Not only did the Europeans create

50. Kelly 1968: 342.

51. van Kooten 2008: 131–61. van Koosten's essay suggests that Balaam serves as an emblem of Philo's opponents in his polemic against Second Sophist movement."

and perpetuate a stereotype of racism and its denigration of people of dark skinned peoples, they did so while finding support in the Bible – justifying both slavery and colonialism of Africans on such "biblical" premise. The post colonial African nations have struggled to find their own identity in the midst of such foundations, a reality perhaps epitomized by the Rwandan genocide of 1994.[52] It is reported that during the Rwanda genocide (a country of 10% African religions practitioners, 20% Protestants and 70% Catholics), the one way that the perpetrators of genocide would bring themselves to slaughter their Tutsi brothers and sisters was to use stereotypical language by referring to them as "cockroaches" (*inyenzi* in Kinyarwanda).[53] Dehumanizing fellow human beings as such played a significant role in blinding the perpetrators of violence.[54] It is thus very disturbing when I read 2 Peter 2:12's characterization of the opponents as "wild beast fit for slaughter" (see also 2:18-22 where they are compared to dogs and pigs).[55] Whenever one group of humans has sought to justify annihilation of its enemy, it has sought to downplay the humanity of the Other. Much as I have struggled to put 2 Peter in its larger Greco-Roman perspective, I have found it still too jarring to fully justify use of such language of "slaughter," even when it is attributed to God in reference to the final eschatological judgment.

Unreliability of the False-Teachers (2:17–19)

> **17**These are waterless springs and mists blown by a storm, which are kept for the gloomy darkness. **18**For with high sounding and empty speech and with unrestrained fleshly desires, they bait those who very recently escaped from those who conduct/live their lives in error. **19**They promise freedom, but they themselves remain slaves of corruption. For whatever one is mastered by, to that is one enslaved! The obvious contrast here is between freedom and slavery.

52. J. Semujanga 2003: 39. ". . . the logic of genocide did not exist in traditional societies of Africa. The genocide of one group is in fact possible only where modern state structures exist, because only these give to political power an efficient control of the population."

53. Semujanga 2003: 59, 201.

54. Semujanga 2003: 189. "It was as if the further the stereotype got from reality, the more it fed foolish fantasies on the harmfulness of 'the other.'"

55. C. K. Kettridge 2009: 404–12.

The metaphors that follow are drawn directly from Jude 12, but 2 Peter turns the imagery painted by the metaphors in Jude of failed promises by the false-teacher, by characterizing them like overcast clouds that threaten rain but never deliver. Even more than Jude's imagery, 2 Peter makes starker contrast between a **spring without water** (*pēgai anydroi*), already a contrast in itself since one expects a spring to have water, and **mist** (*omichlē*) blown by storm—referring not so much to a cloud but to the condensed air that rises after the rain.[56] The false-teachers are like these "empty" clouds and mist promising that which they are not able to deliver. In essence, theirs are empty promises full of hollow words, and speeches that make lofty promises, like the dark cloud promising rain, but failing to deliver on their word (v. 18). In modern parlance, their speeches are full of hot air.

The second half of verse 17 presents some grammatical difficulty since one is unsure why the springs and mist would be referred to as being kept for a **gloomy darkness**. Some explanation, however, could be adduced by realizing that 2 Peter restructures Jude 12–13 by omitting the rest of the metaphors in Jude, which resulted in an awkward structure of the sentence.

Building on the notion of unfulfilled promises, the next two verses elaborate the nature of emptiness in the false-teachers' words. Contrasted to the **sure/certain** words of the prophets and of God (1:19–21; 2:1), these false-teachers' words are not simply unreliable, they are lofty, high sounding, and sophisticated, which appeals to the new initiates in the faith, misleading them (v. 18). By sounding erudite and philosophical, it is easy to see how this would appeal to recent converts (v. 18b) who are still learning the basic tenets of the faith. And, since such ones have not been in the faith long enough to have clear discernment of what is trustworthy and what is not, they easily fall prey to the "impressive" and loquacious speakers.

According to verse 18, these speeches do not propagate truth but are intended as **bait** (*deleazō*) for recent converts. The implication is that the false-teachers were preaching to the new converts that they had the freedom in Christ to do whatever they wanted, probably misrepresenting Paul's teachings on what freedom in Christ means (3:15; cf. Rom 6:15; Gal 5:13). That no one need alter much of their previous pagan lifestyle (stereotyped as **unrestrained** [*aselgeia*] **fleshly desires**), even though now they were Christians.

But as 2 Peter warns, the false-teachers cannot free anyone since they themselves are not free; they are themselves captives of their own **fleshly**

56. Kelly 1969: 344–45.

desires (*epithymia sarkos*). Deriving from Jude, the reference to **fleshly desires** has been understood as a plausible reference to sexual sin, with some commentators identifying it specifically with homosexuality, by account of the mention of **flesh** (*sarkos*) here as harking back to Jude 7–8.[57] However, in our reckoning, it still remains within the realm of accusations that constitute stereotypes of enemies as sexual perverts.

There seem to be at least four distinct groups identified in this section—false-teachers (**bombastic preachers**), true Christian believers—Petrine community, recent converts, and those **living in error** (*planē—paganism or idolatry*).[58] The recent converts came out of the last group, who continue in their error, but the false-teachers are misleading them to think that they do not have to fundamentally change their lives now that they had become part of the Petrine community. It is this that the author of 2 Peter considers a **bait** that the false-teachers are using to mislead the new converts, in contrast to the author's already laid out moral expectations for all Christian believers (1:5–7).

The false-teachers cannot offer the liberty they promise since they themselves remain **enslaved** (*douloō*) to **corruption** (*phthora*—"the depravity that exists in the world because of inordinate desire").[59] The corruption referred to is not simply moral depravity but the same word appears in 2:15 (same vocabulary *phthora*) to establish that this is a more pervasive degeneracy whose ultimate fate is divine judgment. What they are describing as freedom is in actuality slavery since, as the aphorism he concludes with makes clear, one is a slave of what masters him/her.

The contrast to the author's self-description as a **slave** (*doulos*) **of Christ** (1:2) cannot be lost here. In essence, he is saying "we are all slaves to someone or something"—one is a slave to what masters him/her. Nevertheless, we do seem to have a choice in the matter even though the author virtually eliminates any possibility of the false-teachers claiming Christ's lordship since he considers even their current claim to be under the Lordship of Jesus a false claim. On the other hand, he may perceive it from the vantage point of seeing their current position as being the choice they have already made, and the final section of this chapter seems to make the case for such reasoning.

57. Green, 2003: 114; Schreiner 2003: 345.

58. *TWNT* 4: 230–54.

59. *BGAD* 1055.

Fusing the Horizons: Empty Eloquence versus Faithful Preaching

A statement probably falsely attributed to Francis of Assisi implores, "Preach the gospel all the time, and when necessary used words!" This sentenced is used when rebuking Christians for too much speaking of their faith without accompanying it with actions in their lives. False-teachers in 2 Peter were flamboyant preachers whose message did not tally with their actions in life. They serve as the kind of preachers that 2 Peter 2:17–19 believes are to be avoided.

Central to the life of the Church, and the primary mode of communicating the gospel historically, has always been the role of preaching. The effect of a good sermon is based on the persuasiveness of the message, clarity of communication, and trustworthiness of the speaker. In the history of the church, there have been renowned and eloquent preachers, but perhaps none more celebrated than the Early Church father, John Chrysostom (c. 347–407 CE, Archbishop of Constantinople) whose name literally means "golden mouth." While reading the autobiography of Jerena Lee (c. 1846) will also leave one with no doubt about this former slave's ability to preach and prevail in public debate as she describes her call to ministry.

However, the tendency to be to be enamored by vibrant preaching plays too central a role in determining the calling of pastors in some church denominations, and tends to overshadow other criteria of Christian servant leadership. How good one's preaching is also tends to be the sole criterion in influencing how much of an impact a church leader has beyond his/her local church. The significance of good preaching in communicating the Gospel cannot be downplayed. Nonetheless, overemphasis on the ability to preach impressive sermons often peppered with effusive vocabulary, as the primary criteria of a pastor's calling, ignores the dangers highlighted in 2 Peter 2:18–19.

It is not only the false-teachers' flamboyant and showy style that is criticized but the fact that it is empty, unaccompanied by any actions. It is true that the criticism is not simply because it is ostentatious, but also because they fail to live up to the expected virtues of a believer and in their extravagant speeches they make promises they cannot keep. No wonder, their speeches are credited to misleading especially the young in the faith (v. 18b). The point is not that only false-teachers are eloquent preachers, but that focusing primarily on eloquence invites blindness to other important factors.

Over emphasis on bombastic preaching has the danger of overlooking the faults of the speakers, of misleading people who are not well grounded in the faith, and also promoting pride in the preacher for thinking him/herself better than others. Today, some of the most gifted preachers/speakers end up on television, with its inevitable complications of TV ministry. Over the years we have witnessed televangelists ensnared by fame and fortune, pride, greed, sexual sin, false doctrines, self–delusion, corruption, etc., because everyone mainly paid attention on their preaching and not on how they lived their lives.

It is not surprising that the TV in many African countries is filled with prosperity gospel preachers whose message scarcely coheres to the message of 2 Peter's for self-sacrifice and self-discipline (1:5–7).[60] The false-teachers' lives may have mirrored their preaching, but their preaching was built on the wrong foundation (v. 19). They advocated a form of freedom that ultimately only leads to enslavement to corruption, greed, and licentiousness.

Ultimately, even "golden mouth," for all his giftedness, could not escape the pitfall of espousing hate speeches that would become the foundation for Christian anti–semiticism. The flowery, but ultimately deceptive, speeches of the false-teachers no doubt were having a major pull on 2 Peter's audience, and were the primary occasion for the writing of this letter aimed at exposing their dishonesty.

The Danger of Apostasy (2:20–22)

> **20**For, if they escape the pollution of the world through the knowledge of our lord and savior Jesus Christ, but again get entangled [and] overpowered by it, in the end they are worse off than in the beginning. **21**For it is better for them if they had not known the way of righteousness and then turned back from the commandments delivered to them. **22**It has happened to them according to the proverbs, "A dog returns to its vomit" and "A pig is bathed only to wallow in the mud."

60. I am aware of studies that have correctly pointed out that prosperity gospel partly finds fertile ground in Africa because of the prevalence of the cosmological outlook that emphasizes the present over the future, and the African religious outlook that emphasizes the religious "fullness of life" in the present rather than the future. This may be partly in reaction to colonial missionary emphasis on a Gospel of futuristic heavenly reward at the expense of the present reality. Cf. Ogbu Kalu 2008: 4–5.

So far, 2 Peter has used metaphors to portray the state of the false-teachers and now the language becomes more direct in articulating the false-teachers' ultimate slip-up. After becoming believers and joining the Petrine communities, they turned around and rejected the authority of Jesus and instead went back to their previous state of sin. And this situation is said to be worse than if they had not converted to the Christian faith in the first place. Caution has to be observed here, though, since what we have argued so far is that 2 Peter's vituperative rhetoric against the false-teachers has no clear elaboration on their exact beliefs or teachings.

By utilizing the language of escaping the world's **pollution or defilement** (*miasma*) the author describes the conversion experience using cultic language (Num 35:33; Jer 2:7). In similar but contrasting language, 1 Peter 1:4 is able to describe the anticipated heavenly inheritance as **without defilement** (*amiantos*). By implication the use of ceremonial language still includes the moral turpitude which he has riled against throughout this epistle. In this regard, the **escape** (*apephygeo*) that the author envisions here implies *eschatological* danger which involves fleeing from eternal damnation (3:6–7). The **world** (*kosmos*) here then is not the physical earth but rather the representation of the sinful nature or life outside of the sphere of God's saving jurisdiction, through Jesus Christ. This is the *world* that awaits God's judgment (3:7)!

The concept of **knowledge** (*gnōsis*) as stipulated here (and 1:2, 3, 8), with its ability to provide escape from the pollution of the world, is most likely what made earlier generations of 2 Peter interpreters to characterize the false-teachers in this letter as Gnostics. For Gnostics, salvation came through a secret knowledge, *gnōsis*, on the teachings of Jesus available only to the initiates of the group who had to undergo a special initiation process to gain the *gnōsis*. It was also an escape from the created world which, for Gnostics, had entrapped the human soul (*nous*).

Doubtless, the language of 2 Peter does sound quite Gnostic and if one dates the letter in the second century, there are grounds here on which to possibly build a case of Gnostic influence. However, there are still some aspects that would work against such an argument. For one, if the language here is drawing directly from Jude, which is a first century document, it undermines the Gnostic theory. Kelly has also pointed out that there is absence here of any notion of Gnostic dualism as it would flourish in the second century Gnostic teaching, and the pollutions in v. 18 are related to passions and evil impulses and not inherent in the world, as the Gnostics

would advocate.[61] And so, while 2 Peter here seems to emphasize the notion of **knowledge** as central to one's salvation, *gnōsis* in 2 Peter carries with it both moral concerns and eschatological expectations.[62]

Ultimately, this **knowledge** is not simply a general familiarity but a true apprehension of something in its entirety, together with all its implications. It is a full acknowledgment of and trust in something, such that one is fully transformed by it. This is the **saving knowledge** that 2 Peter is referring to. That is why the danger of having arrived at such a place in one's experience with Jesus Christ, who is both **Lord and Savior** (1:11; 3:2, 18), sets an even worse scenario for the apostates since the same knowledge would make it clear the fate that is to befall them. Similar warnings are found in the words of Jesus about the possible return of unclean spirits should they return to a person after they have been cast out—his condition is worse in the end than in the beginning (Matt 12:43–45; Luke 11:24–26). While it is still not clear *how* the last state of the apostates is worse than the first, it may be based on the understanding of an expression also used by Jesus that, "to whom much is given much is expected" (Luke 12:48). [63]

The language of hunting returns to explain the state of the false-teachers. Just like they **ensnared** the new converts, they themselves have been **entangled again and overpowered** by their own corruption, making their fate inevitable. They are so bound up in their sinfulness there is no hope of escape. The **way of righteousness** and the **commandments** represent the same thing as the Christian experience, based on the teachings and commands of God given by Jesus through the apostles (cf. 1:19–21; 2:2; 3:2).

The author then finally turns to two pointed proverbs to drive his point home—**"A dog returns to its vomit"** (from Prov 26:11) and **"A pig is bathed only to wallow in the mud."** The proverbs simply amplify the rhetoric in comparing the false-teachers to two derided animals (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8; 1 Kings 21:19) known to have habits of returning to filth after being cleaned or after they had regurgitated it. It is, therefore not meant primarily as an identification of the false-teachers with dogs and pigs—two animals known in Jewish tradition to be unclean and loathsome for their repugnant habits. It simply confirms what has already been said about them; they return to their prior way of life, which does not conform to the tenets of the Christian faith.

61. Kelly 1967: 348.
62. Sylva 2010: 91.
63. Green 2008: 304.

There is also a clear warning about apostasy, as verses 20–21 leave no doubt about those who have escaped the world's pollution but who turn around and return to their previous lives. To those, the warning is unequivocal—it will be worse for them in the end. The subject here is still the false-teachers and this warning leaves little doubt that the false-teachers were originally part of the Petrine community that have since broken links with the group and seek to convince others in the group to do the same.

Fusing the Horizons: Apostasy versus Election

A mainstay and often-debated part of covenant theology is the notion of election as central in the understanding of Christian salvation as the handiwork of God. This notion of election (that those who were eternally destined to be part the covenant community are the only ones who will eventually be saved) is also often presented in defense of "once saved always saved" theology that implies a guarantee of salvation. In fact, 2 Peter 2:9 can be adduced in support of such a perspective given the confirmation that God knows how to rescue and keep safe the righteous. God is able and does save those who are meant to be saved, and also retains for judgment those who have rejected the grace of God.

As such, texts that seem to imply the possibility of apostasy (2 Pet 2: 20–22, Heb 6:1–12, etc.) are interpreted with the understanding that those who apostatize do so because they were never meant to be part of the covenant community in the first place anyway. Such a view puts to question the genuineness of their initial conversion to the faith so that the end result would not be a genuine case of apostasy at all.

If all we had of the New Testament was 2 Peter, then there would be no question about the possibility of true believers abandoning the faith. The author of 2 Peter seems to leave no doubt about the initial conversion of the false-teachers (v. 20—they came to the saving **knowledge**—*epignosis*) who have now, according to his estimation, left the faith and are in danger of eternal damnation. Indeed, the tragedy for him is that they did come to a full understanding and acceptance of the teachings of Jesus Christ, but have now been ensnared by the corruption of the world so that they have fallen out of the way of truth, the path of righteousness, on which they had been. Like the third group in Jesus' parable of the sower, they had a genuine and

joyous conversion to the faith but got entangled by the cares of this world and abandoned the faith (Mark 4:16–17).

Without the possibility of apostasy, the encouragement to strive to keep the commands (1:5—"**master every effort** . . .") and warnings to be, careful about being waylaid by the false-teachers, would not be meaningful. If however, one was to simply focus on the two proverbs cited by the author (**"A dog returns to its vomit" and "A pig is bathed only to wallow in the mud."**), one may be left with the impression that these were not real converts. Therefore, the proverbs do not provide a theological stand but are meant as rhetorical punch lines to denigrate the false-teachers for their actions.

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2 PETER 3

Reminder to Readers to Be Vigilant (3:1–2)

> 1This now, beloved, is the second letter that I am writing to you. In them I stir up your remembrance of the pure thinking 2to remind you of the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the commandments of the lord and savior, [spoken] to you by the apostles.

Turning from announcing the fate of the false-teachers (**they**, **those**) to his addressees (**beloved**), the author now begins the concluding phase of his letter. He returns to his earlier focus; eschatological concerns that the false-teachers have misrepresented making effort to clarify matters and put the record straight. He refutes their claims about the delayed *parousia* showing how imprudent and dangerous the false-teachers' claims were. He reasserts the certainty and reliability of God's word and promise, assuring his readers of the certain and timely arrival of God's justice on the appointed time. The encouragement is for the readers to hold on to their faith, and count this period of seeming delay, as the period of God's mercy for those in need of salvation.

He mentions an earlier letter that he wrote to them (**the second letter that I am writing to you**), which some scholars presume to be reference to 1 Peter. This is true whether one thinks that 2 Peter is pseudepigraphical or not—if the former, then the pseudepigraphy seeks to appeal to the apostolic authority of Peter by connecting it to the more historically defensible Petrine authorship, and if the latter, then the claim is simply stating the fact.

If one holds both letters to be authentic then the understanding would be that they are the product of the same person. For those who hold both letters as inauthentic, then the reference is merely a strategic personal remark by the author of 2 Peter aimed at making the current letter sound authentic. For those who hold 1 Peter as authentic and 2 Peter as not, then the reference is an effort by the latter pseudepigraphical writer to piggyback on the first letter in order to gain authenticity.

Other possibilities suggested for the first letter include Jude (J. A. T. Robinson) or a lost letter (M. Green), both of which have failed to gain traction among scholars.[1] Jude would make sense as a background since most of 2 Peter 2 and sections of 2 Peter 3 (2, 3, 14, 18) draw heavily on Jude. However, there is no textual source that attributes the letter of Jude to Peter. And, given 2 Peter makes some significant reworking of Jude's material by omitting certain references and reconstructing some sentences it would make for an awkward pointer. The mention of the first letter seems calculated to not only show the closeness of the author with the intended audience but also to affirm that the things he says find support in the earlier letter as well.

The connection to 1 Peter is not, however, a secure one given that, with the exception of a shared eschatological outlook (1 Pet 4:7 and 2 Pet 3:14), 2 Peter hardly uses 1 Peter at all.[2] As early as the Patristic period, there was already recognition of differences in style between the letters, which originated the questioning of 2 Peter's authenticity.[3]

There are those who may argue that 2 Pet 3:1 is the beginning of a new letter, the second, with the first having ended with chapter two.[4] While plausible, the idea of chapter three starting a new letter does not have any manuscript support since all ancient manuscripts that we have of 2 Peter are complete, ending with chapter three.[5]

2 Peter's claim that in both letters he has sought to **stir up/awaken** (*diegerō*) **your remembrance** (*hypomnēsis*), need not be taken to fully represent the contents of both letters, resulting in disqualification of 1 Peter as a plausible candidate here.[6] Rather it has to be understood as reference to issues that the audience has already been introduced to, but which now are in danger of being either ignored or forgotten in the midst of the pernicious influence of the false-teachers. Since it is "purity of thought" (*eilikrinē dianoia*) that he seeks to reawaken them to, one must see in this the call to ethical purity already outlined in the previous reference to the virtuous conduct (1:5–7).

1. Robinson 1976; Green 1987.
2. Kelly 1969: 352; Bauckham 1983: 286.
3. McNamara 1960: 13.
4. Ibid., 14.
5. Schreiner 2003: 368.
6. Green 2008: 311.

The connection here is borne of the almost identical phrase in 1:3 (**by way of reminder**) which introduces the virtue list. And so, while the reference to the reminder of **words spoken earlier by holy prophets is** drawing from Jude 17, it also clearly harks back to 2 Pet 1:3 giving it a different context.

We have already shown that the similar reference to prophets in 1:16–21 and 2:1–3 could be to OT prophets and this remains true of this reference too. In this instance, however, the author combines the words of OT prophets with the apostles' presentation of the **commandments (***entolē***) of the lord and savior** [Jesus Christ]. Once again, the author adduces the two authoritative sources—prophets and apostles—earlier appealed to in defense of the teachings of the *parousia* (the Lord's eschatological appearance) that had been questioned by the false-teachers (1:16–21).

The prophets' message is described as **spoken words** (*rhemata*) while that of the apostles in called **commands** (*entolē*) of Jesus (also referred to in 2:21).[7] One wonders if there is any significance in the author's choice of vocabulary here: *Rhema* vs *Logos*? Both Plato (*Crat.* 425a) and Aristotle (*Poet.* 1456b 15) classify *logos* (usually translated as **word** or **speech**) as being able to be distinguished as either true or false, and divisible between noun (*onoma*) and verb (*rhema*) and may represent a body of teachings.[8] *Rhema* on the other hand is to be understood as an action word, literally "a thing said," whose use here may suggest, just like its appearance in 1 Pet 1:25, the never changing nature of God's plans and purposes.

However, in 2 Peter, the distinction is not maintained since in 1:16, he refers to the "*logos* **of the prophets**," which in essence is parallel to the "*rhema* of the holy prophets," used here. In contrast, the false-teachers are said to espouse **false** *logos* (2:3), which has to be contrasted with the *logos* **of God** (3:5–7) through which the heavens and the earth were formed (3:5), and are now being sustained awaiting the final judgment (3:7).

When *dianoia* (**clear minds/pure thinking—**its only other occurrence in the NT being Phil 1:10) appears in 1 Peter 1:13, it is also in the context of the author reminding the audience about the role of the prophets in communicating the message of the salvation (1 Pet 1:10–13), as it is here. In the former case, the instructions are to make the mind active in preparation for the coming salvation by reacquainting it with the past

7. In 1 Peter 1:25: the *rhema* of the Lord abides forever, alluding to the never changing nature of God's purpose for creation.

8. Guthrie 1969: 219–21.

message of prophets, while here, the emphasis is on *Eilikrinē* (lit. **judged in sunlight**) which describes the type of clarity or spotlessness that is visible in the bright sunlight.

The author expects that there would be no doubt in the audience about the words they received, just like a potter would be certain about the lack of cracks in a vase by holding it up against the sunlight. The purpose is to give a sense of confidence about what the audience already knows to be true and reliable given their source—the "lord and savior" via the apostles.

Lastly, the reference to the **commands of our Lord and Savior**, once again, is a politically charged denunciation of a claim to the community's lordship by the Roman emperors (see commentary on 1:11, above). In some respects, what would be later reflected in Pliny the Younger's concession to dealing with interrogation of Christians, seemed to boil down to whether the accused worshipped the emperor as lord and savior or Jesus.

Delay of *Parousia*: Evidence Against God's Promises And Judgment? (3:3–4)

> 3Above all, know this, that there will come in the last days scoffers, with scoffing, who while indulging their own lusts 4will ask, "Where is the promise of his coming? For, ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have from beginning of creation."

The phrase "**above all, know this"** raises the significance of what the author is about to say. Having confirmed the purpose of his writing to them as the need to remind them (2:1–2), he now points out that they need to **know** (*ginōskō*) what these **last days** (*eschatōn ton hēmerōn*), are going to produce. Consistent with his use of Jude, this passage is drawn from Jude 18 but the author of 2 Peter makes changes, replacing Jude's unusual phrase *eschatou tou chronou* (**at the end of time**). *Ginoskō* here carries the same weight that it does when used to describe the kind of saving knowledge that the readers ought to have (1:2; 2:20). It is knowledge with not a shade of doubt.

Having just remarked about listening to the words of the prophets, he now speaks as a prophet about the expected arrival of **mocking scoffers**, recognizing their arrival as an indicator that these are the end times. This

passage has rightfully been analyzed as a rallying call to resistance by the author against the claims of the scoffers.[9]

Are these "scoffers" same as the false-teachers? Both are expected to arrive in some future time. However, the future here may be relative to the time that the prediction of their coming was made, since the author understands the present to be the end of times (3:11–14). Classifying them as indulging strong **unbridled desires** (*epithymia*) harks back to the stereotyping of the false-teachers that we discussed earlier (see commentary on 2:10, 18, above. Cf. also Jude 16, 18) suggesting this is the same group.

What we are given here, however, is perhaps the reason that "scoffers" find no need for restraint: the promised *parousia* (**visitation**) has not materialized, and may never materialize (according to them), since things have been the same for generations. Once again, it leaves no doubt that these "scoffers," like the false-teachers, were initially part of the Petrine community whose questioning of the groups fundamental teachings has made them *persona non grata*.

It seems unlikely that the *parousia* would be referring to the initial advent of Jesus since it is already looking at the *eschaton* (**end**) in a manner that aligns with the promised return of Jesus in Acts 1:10–11. Instead, it may refer to the arrival of the Kingdom of God which Jesus had promised in the gospels (Matt 6:33; Mark 9:1), preached by apostles (1 Thess 2:19; 4:15), and of which the apostles enquired about even just before Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:8–9).[10] Verse 11, however makes it more likely that it is the **day of the Lord** that they may have in mind, which may not clarify which of the two events it refers to, and may even possibly have them combined as one eschatological event.

Either way, for the "scoffers," theirs is a feeling of betrayal *viz* the apostolic message given to them about the soon expected visitation of God, which as far as they are concerned has not taken place as promised. And if that message was wrong, they would argue, what else about Christianity would also be wrong? Without evidence of this central expectation of the message about Jesus, on what ground can the followers stand and maintain their hope for a glorious end? Why bother now, if there is nothing to look

9. Rodriguez 1997: 193–206. He argues that the call to recognize God as the controller of history provides grounds on which to resist those who reject the expectation of the *parousia*.

10. Davids 2006: 264.

forward to in the end or even evidence of it in the past? This is the attitude and belief reflected by the "scoffers."

In essence, they expected at least some transformation of things, even as they waited for the Lord's return but instead all they see is the same old, same old—**all things continue** (*diamenei*) **as they have from beginning of creation** (*ktiseōs*). That is why, according to Webb, it not merely the failed return of the Lord that the "scoffers" question, but its actual possibility.[11]

The scoffers, according to the author, also reference a group called **the fathers** who would have been the promulgators of the teaching about the *parousia* but who have since died, and it would seem, their teaching unfulfilled—**For, ever since the fathers** (*hoi pateres*) **died** (*ekoimēthesan*—lit. "**fell asleep"**). The fathers are either the apostles since they would have been, like Paul (1 Cor 4:15), the spiritual fathers of the community,[12] or the OT prophets through whom the initial *parousia* (**arrival**) of Christ was announced.[13] While majority of scholars maintain the former position, the latter is defended by some.

A third alternative has been offered by Gene Green who prefers to think that it refers generically to "ancestors" since the issue is the delay of the promise over a very long stretch of time.[14] However, the author's follow up with examples of classic events from the Hebrew Bible that showcase divine intervention during the times of ancient Israel, seems to favor the preference to OT prophets as the ones behind the author's thought in this instance.

God's Judgment Is Certain to Come (3:5–7)

> **5**For they wish to ignore the fact that, the heavens long ago existed and the earth out of water and through water came to existence, by the word of God; **6**through which also the whole world was flooded with water and destroyed. **7**But now, the heavens and the earth, by the same word, are preserved for fire, guarded until the Day of judgment, and the destruction of the ungodly humans.

The grammar in this section is challenging. Besides the larger contrast of the world coming to existence through water but now awaiting destruction

11. Webb 2012: 471.
12. Kelly 1969: 355–56; Bauckham 1983: 290.
13. Webb 2012: 474–75.
14. Green 2008: 318.

through fire, the sentence that describes the role of water makes for a difficult reading. It is not clear how water was instrumental (**through**, **by means of**) in the creation of the world with the exception that it evokes Genesis 1:6–9 where God separates the "waters above" from the "waters below," and gathers the waters below together, revealing land. However, since his focus so far has been on the performative **word** (*logos*) of God, he maintains the significance that *logos* played in all this (v. 5). The creative waters came about by the **word of God** and so will the fire of divine judgment, from the same **word**.

The "scoffers" (**they**) can only arrive at their faulty conclusion by deliberately **ignoring** (*lanthanei*) evidence (**words**) already present before them. An alternative translation has the "scoffers" not deliberately forgetting, but as forgetting, as a result of, their strong inclination to believe that God's promises are unfulfilled.[15] Either way, this forgetfulness of the "scoffers" anticipates the encouragement of the 2 Peter's readers not to be **ignorant** (*lanthanō*) concerning the judgment that will soon arrive with the **day of the Lord** (v. 8).

The author's interest here is to maintain the argument begun in 3:1, the role of the God's prophetic **word** (*logos*) reflected in the old prophet's **words** (*rhemata*) and the apostles' **commandments** (*entole*). So, not only did the prophets and apostles speak on behalf of God, at the very beginning it was this same **word of God** (*tou theou logō*) that brought into existence the whole of creation (v. 5). It was the same word also that brought judgment. God's **word** (*logos*) is the means of both creation (v. 5) and destruction (v. 7), while it also sustains creation. This imagery of an efficacious *logos*, reflects some parallels in the Gospel of John 1:1–4, where the *logos* is the means of creation.

Consequently, further elaboration is of what the "scoffers" fail to understand—the nature of the cosmos and God's involvement both in its creation and judgment. As the initial development of his argument about God's conception of time, 2 Peter reverts to the creation imagery that heavily draws on Jewish creation narratives (Gen 1, Job 28:25, Prov 8, *1 Enoch* 83:3). This section invokes the story of creation in Genesis 1, and also Genesis 6 where the antediluvian world was destroyed due to human disobedience.

The same event is referenced in 1 Peter 3:18–22, where the focus on judgment also relays the story of Noah's (and his family's) rescue which

15. Davids 2006: 267–68.

is compared to baptism. Here, 2 Peter does not mention baptism or even Noah, whom he had already mentioned in 2:5 as an example of the righteous person who can expect salvation at the time of judgment. So while emphasizing the role of water in this section, its role both in creation and judgment, 2 Peter is not influenced by 1 Peter 3:21's connection of the Noah event to baptism.

While there is no doubt that the creation myth from Genesis looms large in this section of 2 Peter, there is also the possibility that, due to the combination of water and fire imageries here, the background may be the Stoic teaching of elemental fire as source of all things which followed cyclical patters of dissolution, water-fire-water.[16] It is true that the image of fire as the instrument of judgment in the anticipated **day of the Lord** is reflected in some Jewish writings (Deut 32:22; Isa 33:11–12; Zeph 1:18; Zech 12:6, Mal 4:1).

However, 2 Peter still maintains that it is the same **word** (*logos*) that brought the waters of creation that will also bring the fire of destruction. While the water also did bring complete decimation of life in the world (Noah), it did not destroy the world. It is, therefore, unlikely that the fire would completely annihilate the world, but rather it would be expected to purge it of impurities.

The language of **destruction** (*apollymi*) and **judgment** (*kriseos*) is specific to the **ungodly** (*asebēs*) and not to creation as a whole, at least not in this section. Even the language in 3:9–12 about the **dissolving** (*lyō*) of the heavens and the melting of the elements by **heat** (*kausoō*) may not indicate the total annihilation of the present creation to be replaced by a totally different and new one (3:13). Rather, it points to a wiping clean of the creation, just like the flood did in wiping out the old and beginning anew, so that what is left is completely transformed and renewed.[17]

It would seem, then, that the author does not quite answer the issue of the delayed return of the Lord in the first response, focusing instead on the longevity of the creation. He alludes to the antediluvian destruction of the world during the time of Noah as a sure sign that divine judgment is certain to visit the ungodly again soon.

16. Adams 2005: 195–210.

17. Heide 1997: 37–56.

Meaning of Delayed *Parousia*? God's Patience And Mercy For Sinners! (3:8–10)

> **8**However, do not let this escape from you, beloved, for with the lord, "one day is like a thousand years, and one thousand years like one day!" **9**The lord is not slow on promises, as some may consider slowness to be, but is patient concerning you, not wishing any one to be destroyed but all to have room for repentance. **10**But the day of the lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens with a loud noise, will pass away and elements dissolved in intense heat. And the earth, with its entire works, will be exposed.

Turning his attention now to his audience, 2 Peter seeks to bring reassurance that God's promises are not annulled by our limited sense of understanding of time. What marks this transition is 2 Peter's direct address of his audience with the endearing term **beloved** (*agapetos*) which he repeats in the rest of this section (vv. 14, 15, 17). Additionally, in a pointed contrastive comparison with the "scoffers" who ignore the evidence of God's grace, he urges the audience not to ignore what the Scriptures have to say about the human inability to conceptualize divine time.

Indeed, for 2 Peter, we can only grasp partial aspects of time from our inadequate vantage point. Thus, we are not fit to account for divine timetables whose comprehension is outside of our scope of intellectual capacity. The use of the present indicative *bradynō* (**to be slow**) may also imply slowness caused by hesitation, as though one was unsure of their action.[18]

This questioning of the *parousia* is probably the one teaching that we can say with confidence was propagated by the false-teachers/"scoffers." This teaching is refuted by the author, who essentially reconstitutes the argument as one of changes in human perception rather than divine slipup. Impatience about the arrival of the **day of the Lord** is a failure to appreciate divine patience and grace. Yet, it remains clear that without doubt it will arrive, and unexpectedly—**like a thief** (v. 10). This concept of the day of the Lord arriving "like a thief" is drawn directly from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (5:2) which uses the exact same phrase, not surprising given the authors admission to familiarity with Paul's letters (3:15–16).

Neyrey has explained that at stake here is also the honor of God.[19] The question is whether God can keep God's word—**promise** (*epangelia*).

18. *BDAG* 183.

19. Neyrey 1980: 233–34.

To question divine promises is to question their source, God, and to cast doubt in God's ability to deliver is to expose ones' utter misunderstanding and dishonor of God. Therefore, 2 Peter, after showing how powerful the creative word of God is (vv. 5–7) makes it clear that God has not reneged on divine promise. As such, if there are any apparent changes in the promises of God, it is not God who has changed but rather the perceptions of people about those promises. God is honorable enough to keep God's word.

The metaphor referenced by the author, **one day is like a thousand years, and one thousand years like one day,** draws directly from Ps 90:4, where the subject of focus is God's eternity in contrast to fleeting human existence. Bauckham sees a common thread in Jewish apocalypse which 2 Peter follows, where this psalm has been adduced in support of arguments about the contrast between the "brevity of human life and God's eternity."[20] Ultimately, for 2 Peter, the use of the psalm quote is to encourage the ethical conduct he has outlined throughout the letter, in light of the brevity of the life we live.

The accusations of divine delay espoused by the "scoffers" have been shown to align with the attitude of the Epicureans who used it to argue against divine providence.[21] If this is the background, then the "scoffers" are not only complaining about the length the period that has lapsed but are essentially questioning God's providence. That is why it is significant that 2 Peter makes it clear that the delay, in fact, is part of God's providence in showing God's mercy.

Nonetheless, the early church, including Paul, had expected the return of the Lord within their lifetimes (1 Thess 4:13–18; Rom 16).[22] In turn, such an eschatological outlook produced the message that the early Christians preached about the soon return of the Jesus. The longer the time went on and this did not happen the more agitated the community of believers became and the more likely that there would arise dissenters who would question this position. This would be especially true if the earliest apostles would have started passing away and the lord would not have returned.

The author of 2 Peter then formulates what he considers a response to that scenario by appealing to this notion of time—"there is no present, past or future with God, and what may seem like a delay to us, is actually simply God's patience with humanity, not wishing anyone should perish." If this is

20. Bauckham 1983: 308–9.

21. Davids 2006: 278.

22. Paul could also envision dying before the return of the Lord in Phil 1 and 2 Cor 5.

God's perspective, then it may seem to contradict the author's perspective about the fate of the false-teachers whom he is convinced are already being chained with certainty of judgment anticipated (2:1–3). How can the destruction of the ungodly be so certain (3:7), while God is so patient and **longsuffering** (*makrothymia*)?

One may wonder, after all the castigation of the false-teachers in chapter two, and the "scoffers" (3:1–2), and the sure judgment awaiting them, whether 2 Peter here considers the possibility that **all** (*panta*) are able to repent. He has already made it clear that the ungodly would face **destruction** (*apōleias*) in v. 7; he now announces that God desires no one to face **destruction** (*apōleias*)**.**

He seems to open up the door for the possibility of anyone to repent. However, given what we have mentioned about the change of focus in his address toward his audience, these words are directed specifically towards his audience and not the "scoffers." The "scoffers"' end is certain judgment. They thus may not be part of this collective **all** referred to here. Further, in support of this reasoning is the use of the word *boulomai* (**to wish**)—God does not *wish* any to perish. It is God's desire or wish that none perish, however, this does not stop people from rejecting God's truth for falsehood and bringing divine judgment upon themselves.

As mentioned earlier, verse 10 may be directly dependent on 1 Thess 5:2—**For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night**, and harks back to the words of Jesus in the little apocalypse (Matt 24:43–44; Luke 12:39–40), and is also referenced in Rev 3:3, 16:15. Paul is exhorting the Thessalonians to remain vigilant in their faith as they look forward to the soon arrival of the day of the Lord by laying out ethical instruction utilizing body armor imagery. He implores them to remain sober as they await the arrival of the Lord.

Second Peter proceeds to describe this day as one wherein destruction of the created world as we know it would happen. After mentioning the destruction of the ungodly (v. 7) he now elaborates on the heavens **passing away** (*parechomai*) in a **loud voice** (*rhoizēdon*) and the dissolving of elements in **intense heat** (*kausoumai*). The day of the Lord will be sudden, and composed of loud noise and of intense heat. This continues the fire image in verse 7. This destruction of the heavens and the earth anticipates the arrival of new heaven and earth in verse 13.

Moreover, everything in earth will be judged, including that which is hidden, since **all its works will be exposed** (*euriskō*). Nothing will escape this judgment since, even **elements** (*stoicheia*)—the fabric of all created things—will melt in this heat.[23] Whatever it is that the "scoffers" doubted about the **day of the Lord**, its certainty is made sure here, and its comprehensiveness established. There will be no escaping.

Fusing the Horizons: The Coming of the *Day of the Lord*!

Over the years we have been exposed to the spectacle of one or another "Christian group"—driven by some misguided eschatological understanding and led by some domineering leader—trying to predict the end of the world as we know it. Without fail, they all are proved wrong when nothing happens and the world continues as it has been over millennia. And in most instances, like the tragic suicides led by Jim Jones in the 70s, the inferno in Waco, TX in the 80s where David Koresh and Branch Davidians perished, or the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandment in Uganda in 2000 in both a fairy inferno and poisoning, they end up in tragic deaths.

If the statement of Jesus in Mark 13:32 (Matt 24:36) and in Acts 1:7; about the inability of humans (even Jesus) to determine when the end would come had not been conveyed to the Petrine community, 2 Peter's paradoxical statement about God's conception of time makes the same point about the futility of humans trying to decipher divine timetables. Implicit in this human desire to know is the need for control. And so the second metaphor of the unexpected arrival of the thief (v. 10), also borrowed from the Gospels (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39) by 2 Peter, makes it rather clear that the most important thing is to seek a life that is faithful to God and of goodness to fellow humans.

Faith in God is a fundamental requirement for the covenant relationship with God and this is what is expected of believers, especially in the face of outside ridicule and questioning of the Christian teachings. This is the message that is central to 2 Peter's exhortation to the Petrine community to hold fast to the promises of God given through God's spokespersons and to trust that God's plans, even the so called delay, have a divine purpose behind them.

In fact, 2 Peter makes it clear that believers can play a direct role in hastening the arrival of the Day of the Lord, not by speculating about it,

23. Green 2008: 330; Davids 2006: 283–87.

but by their godly conduct in life (3:12) which has already been laid out for them in the list of virtues in 1:5–7. So, while we may not control the divine timetable, we may be able to influence it particularly if we conduct our lives in accordance with the godliness that is pleasing to God. In essence, what may be otherwise perceived as a fairly ordinary human action, godly conduct, turns out to have quite the extraordinary eschatological implications. And that is why the encouragement from the author to the readers is to make "every effort" (3:14) to live godly lives.

Mindful of the Approaching *Eschaton*, Maintain Holy Conduct (3:11–16)

> **11**Given that all things will be dissolved, what kind of lives ought you to live? In holy conduct and godliness, **12**awaiting expectantly and hastening the coming of the Day of the Lord, because of which, by fire, the heavens will be dissolved and the elements will be consumed by melting heat. **13**And in accordance with the promise, we earnestly await a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness is to dwell.

The question the author poses in verse 11 is crucial in pointing the reader to the primary reason for writing this epistle. After going through all the challenges that his audience is facing, he then steps back to outline the *anastrophe* (**conduct**) that are to be evident in the new eschatological outlook of the *parousia*. Eschatology, for the author, lays the groundwork for the ethics he formulates for the community.[24]

After explaining the kind of destruction awaiting the entire creation in the day of the Lord, the author now turns to the implications of such an understanding for the social reality of the community. Returning to the focus on ethics with which he commenced his letter (1 Pet 1:3–7), the author proceeds to lay down ethical expectations in light of the eschatological outlook he has formulated.

Essentially, the epistle has come full circle. This period of waiting must be characterized by constraint rather than the false-teachers' abandon and lack of self-control. Recalling what he had stated in the previous statement

24. See argument along similar lines in Webb 2012: 471–503.

concerning the fate of the world in a cataclysmic conflagration, the author then poses the question he would like to address—**what kind of lives ought you to live?** In other words, "Knowing what we now know, how should our day to day life look like?" He proceeds to highlight two virtues that essentially encapsulate the list of virtues he had already laid out earlier—**holy conduct** (*anastrophe*) and **godliness** (*eusebeia*).

In essence, this lifestyle has already been elaborated on by the author in 1:3–7, where the virtues that characterize holy conduct and lead to godliness are laid out. Remaining faithful to God by maintaining godly conduct is the best way to be sure that one will be found faithful when the day arrives like a thief. In other words, capitulating to what the "scoffers" advocate would only lead to destruction, given the guarantee that the **day of the Lord** will come.

The impact of this holy conduct and godliness that the readers should pursue is to quicken the arrival of **the day of God** (it is essentially equivalent to the day of the Lord [3:10] and the *parousia* [1:16; 3:4]). What the "scoffers" have grumbled about, the apparent delay of the **day of God**, the author says it can actually be speeded up (and perhaps conversely slowed down, 3:8–9) by the church's faithfulness to godly lives.[25]

This seems counterintuitive given that he has already reprimanded the "scoffers" that divine timing cannot be accounted for in the limited ability of humans to understand time from a divine vantage (3:8). But what the "scoffers" were doing is not only questioning its delay, but by implication, suggesting it will never come. So here, 2 Peter urges his readers to strive for godliness and holy conduct for these are what are going to **hasten the day of God**. This mention of how human conduct can influence divine timetables may have a Jewish background (Isa 60:22; *Sir.* 36:10; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 20:1–2; 54:1; 83:1), even though in those texts it is God who hastens the days.[26] Nonetheless, even when it is God who is said to hasten the day, it is still in reaction to human response, just like it is here in 2 Peter.

It is not clear what the provenance of the promise in verse 13 is that the author appeals to, but he seems to use the word *epangelia* (**promise**) here, and in 1:4, as an *inclusio* (a way of bracketing the entire book)—we started with a promise and we end with a promise. Yet it is also clear that he is

25. Lucas and Green 1995: 146. Juxtaposing this to the Lord's prayer, "Whenever we pray 'Your Kingdom come,' we are asking God to intervene in that final climactic way; but we are also committing ourselves to live as his subjects."

26. Davids 2006: 290.

using it to draw the contrast he has already addressed, about the "scoffer's" questioning of God's promise (3: 9). By shifting suddenly to the first person plural, **we**, at this point after so far addressing his audience directly, **you** (*humas*), the emphasis he makes is that he is included with those that share in the faith concerning the promises of God. By identifying with the audience, the author makes sure that he does not come out as aloof or privileged but as an equal; waiting, just like they are, on God's promises to be fulfilled.

The concept of a **new heaven and new earth** derives from Isa 65:17 and 66:22, and is also well developed in the book of Revelation (cf. 21:1). In Isaiah, the promise is in the context of the restoration following the Babylonian conquest and exile of the northern kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE. It is promises spoken during one of the darkest hours of the people of Israel, whose faith in God's faithfulness had been shattered by their exile from the Promised Land.

Thus the promise that this **new heaven and new earth** will be the dwelling of **righteousness**; that is, it will be the home of righteousness, is meant to remove any possibility that it will be like the first earth and first heaven, in the terminology of Revelation. Unlike the current state of affairs, where the will of God can be ignored and even rejected, in the new heaven and new earth, righteousness will be the essence of existence. Just like God is righteous, so will the new heaven and new earth.

> **14**Therefore, beloved, earnestly awaiting these things, make every effort to be found spotless and blameless by him in peace, and consider the patience of our Lord as salvation; **15**just as our beloved bother Paul, according to his wisdom, has written to you. **16**As also in all his letters, he speaks in them concerning this—there are in them things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist as also they do the rest of the writings/scripture, to their own destruction.

After including himself among those looking forward to the arrival of the new heaven and new earth, the author reverts to addressing his audience directly about his expectations of them. He uses cultic language and imagery (**spotless** [*aspilos*] **and blameless** [*amōmous*]) to describe the state they are to be found in, by the Lord (v. 14). First, one cannot miss contrast the author makes to the reference of the false-teachers whom he already described as *spilos kai momos* (**spotted and blemished**) in 2:13. He expects his readers to exemplify the exact opposite of moral unsoundness as has been shown by the false-teachers.

Secondly, this exhortation to cultic cleanness that makes one worthy of acceptance by God parallels the classification of sacrificial animals as **spotless and without blemish** (Exod 12:5; 29:1; Lev 1:3, 10; Num 6:14). Acceptance before God of the ancient animal sacrifices was premised on this criteria of spotlessness and cleanness, and that remains the same criterion for acceptance of the Petrine community before God. However, while the understanding in the Hebrew Bible was generally a literate application of this phrase to the sacrificial animals, in 2 Peter it becomes a metaphor for spiritual and moral uprightness before God.

Similar cultic language is applied to the church in Eph 5:27, Phil 2:15, Heb 9:14, and to Christ in 1 Pet 1:19. In Jude's benediction the author commits the church to the God who is able to make it stand **without blemish** (v. 24), while 2 Peter urges the church to strive to *be found* in the state of spotlessness and blamelessness. Considering that everything will be exposed on the Day of the Lord (3:10), the church then ought to be found in a spotless and blameless state.

Twice before, the author has used the same phrase—**to make every effort**: the first in 1:10 is in light of the issue of calling and elections, which he urges the readers to "make every effort," to confirm. The second instance he is the primary subject committing himself to "make every effort" to remind the community of the teachings he has imparted, even as he expect soon to depart from them permanently (1:15). In both instances, just as it is in this case, the focus is on the need to keep virtues that beget the metaphorical "sacrificial purity," in the eyes of God. And it is in that spirit that he will continue in verse 17, the injunction to the community to be on guard against error of lawlessness.

Being found spotless and blameless makes sense, especially as a metaphor to godliness, in 2 Peter's terminology. However, it is unclear why he includes the idea of being found **in peace** (*hēirene*) in verse 14. While the patience of our Lord can be understood in light of verse 9, where God's longsuffering is for the sake of salvation, it is not clear what the object of peace is here. If it is God, then it would be translated as being "**at peace with God**" (NIV). On the other hand, if is understood as a supplement of spotless and blameless, then focus would be on the community and the translation would be, "**found at peace, without spot or blemish**" (ASV, KJV).

There is, however, no reason to believe that there was an ongoing unease or upheaval in the community in spite of the highlighted activities

of the false-teachers/"scoffers." Nonetheless, it has been pointed out that the events described in the letter *should* be cause for upheaval in the community and so understanding peace as a virtue that the community should strive for, would make sense here.[27]

The reference to writings by Paul here (3:15), which seems to imply that there are by this point in time possibly a collection that circulates among the community, and also by virtue of the author's comparison of these writings to scripture makes the case for a late authorship. It has also been pointed out that Paul and Peter did not get along very well (Gal 1–2), and that it would be unlikely that Peter would refer so positively to Paul's letters. This last argument is weak since people do change and relationships do grow. As for the previous argument, the writings of Paul are still referred to as **letters** (*epistolē*), and so it is unclear which one or how many they would have been. It is possible that the false-teachers had misunderstood and misinterpreted Paul's teaching of freedom in the faith (Rom 3:8; 6:15; Gal 5:1, 13) and had allowed themselves to break the limits of conduct that are expected of Christian believers.[28]

It is these that the author describes as *amathēs astēriktos* which *BDAG* translates as **incompetent interpreters** (lit. **untaught and unstable**) who have failed to understand Paul's teaching.[29] Paul had definitely taught about the return of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians, and this letter seems to be familiar to the author as he makes reference to its teachings (3:10). Needless to say, Paul's own teachings are themselves declared to be **difficult to understand** (*dysnoētos*) and apparently only the well taught or trained can interpret them accurately.

The false-teachers then are portrayed as simpleton wannabe teachers who have misconstrued Pauline teachings which they should have sought help with, and instead they have gone ahead to declare themselves teachers even though what they teach is full of error. Worse still, it is not just the teachings of Paul that they misconstrue but other Scripture as well, meaning the obvious danger is judgment or as the author puts it, *apōleia* (**destruction**). This projected outcome would imply that the author believes that for the false-teacher, it is a deliberate **twisting** (*strebloō*) rather than the result of a genuine attempt to correctly understand Paul's teachings.

27. Davids 2006: 295–97.

28. Paul wrote more letter than are currently found in the New Testament as evidenced by the missing third letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:9) and the letter to Laodiceans (Col 4:16).

29. *BDAG* 49.

Final Exhortation and Conclusion (3:17–18)

> **17**You therefore, beloved, knowing beforehand, [continue to] guard yourselves against the misleading lawless error [which would cause you] to fall out of your foundation. **18**But grow in grace and knowledge of our lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever, amen.

The author brings his epistle to a close with an expression of confidence in both the knowledge that his readers have (thanks to his letter?) about the dangers surrounding them, and how to overcome them. He is confident they are in a secure spot. No doubt, his confidence is based on the conviction that he has now alerted them about the dangers that the false-teachers pause, especially with their teachings to which the **misleading lawless error (***athesmos planē***)** must refer. The phrase combines the idea of lawlessness and deception (2:7, 18), and most likely has as its subject the content of the false-teachers' teachings. There no longer is ignorance for his audience, and therefore, they should be able to deal with the highlighted dangers, and avoid falling from their solid foundation.

Theirs is a *stērigmos*, **a firmly fixed position**, which they should make every effort to maintain. Since the **knowledge** (*gnosis*) they had beforehand was sufficient to set them in the firm spot, growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Jesus would only further ground them in their secure place. It is the sure way to remain firmly rooted in the apostolic teachings and in the faith in the Lord Jesus.

He closes the letter in similar fashion to his opening—with a reference to the "Lord and Savior." We have already made the case for the political nature of this reference to Jesus as Lord and Savior (see comments on 1:11). The letter opened with the address to the readers as **To those equally honored (***isotimon*–hapax**) with us to receive (***lanchanō***) the faith in righteousness of** our God (*theou*) **and Savior, Jesus Christ**, and now closes with the author imploring them to **grow in grace and knowledge (***gnosis***) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. Assured that they are part of the elect community of God, the author now entreats them to make certain their foundation, by continuing to grow in the faith. Growth in a plant is the sure way to evidence its health and vitality. In the same way, the community's continued growth in the faith is thus represented as the sure way to stay grounded in the faith.

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