

# SEMĂNĂTORUL (THE SOWER)

The Journal of Ministry  
and Biblical Research

---

Volume 4, Number 2 - Supplement

---

Proceedings of the U.E.O. International  
Theological Conference “Remember Your  
Creator: The Meaning of Life in the  
Face of Death”

ISSUE EDITOR  
CORIN MIHĂILĂ

Emanuel University of Oradea, Romania  
2024

## APOSTASY: STRUCTURAL AND THEMATIC ELEMENTS IN THE LETTER OF JUDE

OVIDIU HANC<sup>1</sup>

*Emanuel University of Oradea*

**ABSTRACT:** The Gospel of John places great emphasis on understanding the identity and ministry of Jesus. This understanding requires a thorough hermeneutic focusing on the signs and symbolism that permeate the writing. This paper examines the interpretive challenges in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, particularly the use of symbols related to the birth of "water and the Spirit" in John 3:5. The paper explores various interpretations, including baptism, repentance and spiritual rebirth, and highlights the symbolic role of water as a representation of repentance rather than the physical act of baptism. By juxtaposing historical, linguistic and theological perspectives, this study highlights the complementary roles of human repentance and divine transformation in achieving spiritual rebirth. It concludes that Jesus' use of symbolism rather than ritual underscores the primacy of spiritual transformation over religious acts and offers a deeper understanding of the act of salvation.

**KEY WORDS:** John Gospel, hermeneutics, spiritual birth, water and spirit, repentance, Nicodemus, soteriology.

### **Introduction**

The Epistle of Jude is one of those canonical books which is characterised by its reduced size. In contrast to most of the canonical books of the New Testament, the Epistle of Jude, together with Philemon and 2-3 John, is one of the single chapter books. However, despite its small size, the theological content is by no means negligible. The writing revolves around the

<sup>1</sup> OVIDIU HANC PhD, MPhil, Queen's University, Belfast, BD Emanuel University of Oradea. Dr. Ovidiu Hanc currently lectures on the New Testament in Emanuel University of Oradea.

Christian faith, contrasting faith and apostasy. The message of the book is a call to be aware of the spiritual battle against apostasy. The term Jude uses to emphasise the defence of the faith is ἐπαγωνίζομαι (*epagōnizomai*) and describes an agonising struggle. The term is usually used in a military context (John 18:36, Eph. 6:12) or in reference to athletic contests (1 Cor. 9:25, 2 Tim. 4:7, Heb. 12:1).

The questions of author, recipient and date are important<sup>2</sup>, but less so in the context of the warning signal against falling away from the true faith. One structural element should be mentioned here.

In terms of composition, the striking similarity to 2 Peter 2:1-19 concerning false teachers and future judgement must be emphasised.<sup>3</sup> The close resemblance, from the level of common terminology to identical theological themes, leads us to understand that this connection is either at the level of the dependence of the writings on each other (Jude is a

2 The identification of Jude as a “servant of Jesus Christ” and brother of James (1:1) has led some scholars to argue that Jude is a brother of Jesus and a brother of James - the leader of the Jerusalem church. Other scholars argue that the letter should actually be seen as a pseudonym (see Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary (Yale University Press, 2008), 31. The fact that Jude speaks of the Lord’s apostles seems to some to be an indication that he does not belong to the group of apostles. See: Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 8; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1987), 354; Kevin B. McCrudden, “Faith as Freedom from Desire in the Epistle of Jude,” *Biblical Research* 61 (2016): 96–97. This letter was written in the second half of the first century, between the 60s and 80s, a time when the Church was struggling with the problem of internal apostasy rather than external persecution. Although we have no information about the location and identity of the addressees, the warm language suggests that there was a close personal relationship between the author and the addressees.

3 J. Daryl Charles, “The Use of Tradition-Material in the Epistle of Jude,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4, no. 1 (1994): 1–2; J. Daryl Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2005), 108; Robert L. Webb, “The Eschatology of the Epistle of Jude and Its Rhetorical and Social Functions,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6, no. 1 (1996): 139–51.

source for 2 Peter or vice versa)<sup>4</sup> or that there is a common source (oral or written tradition) behind these two writings.

### ***Challenges in Jude: extra-canonical quotations***

One of the great challenges of Jude is the quotations from extra-canonical writings. This book has been challenged because it quotes from two apocryphal books: *1 Enoch* and the *Exaltation of Moses*.<sup>5</sup> The problem of quoting extra-canonical sources is not unique to Jude. In the canonical writings we have some references to aspects related to biblical events and characters, without these details being found in the revelation of the original texts referred to.

In this sense, we find references or quotations in Scripture that are not found in Scripture (e.g., Paul mentions the names of the two magicians from Egypt in 2 Timothy 3:8, although the names are not given in Exodus; Paul refers in Colossians 4. 16 to the Epistle to the Laodiceans, an Epistle that is lost; Peter presents Noah as a preacher of righteousness in 2 Peter 2:5, although Genesis does not report Noah's preaching activity; Luke mentions in Acts 20:35 words of Jesus that are not found in the Gospels; James mentions in 5:17 that Elijah prayed for the rain to stop, without the texts of 1 Kings presenting Elijah's prayer life).

Another provocative aspect of the Epistle of Jude is his quoting from extra-canonical books (in v.9 he refers to *The Assumption of Moses* and in vv.14-15 he refers to *1 Enoch*). However, this is not unique in Scripture where we find several quotations from outside the canonical writings. In Acts 17:28a Paul quotes Epimenides, a Greek philosopher and poet of the

4 Wasserman has analysed in detail the literary relationship between 2 Peter and Jude. His position favours the priority of Jude over 2 Peter. See Tommy Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission*, Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 43 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006), 97–98.

5 J. Daryl Charles, "'Those' and 'These': The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle of Jude," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 12, no. 38 (1990): 109–10; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 403.

7th or 6th century BC - Acts 17:28 For in him we have life and motion and being - the work of Cretica (Κρητικά). In the same verse Paul also quotes Aratus - a Greek poet, a pantheist: Acts 17:28 ... as some of your poets have said, "We are of his kind...". In 1 Corinthians 15:33, Paul quotes Menander (4th-3rd century writer) when he says: "Do not be deceived: 'Bad habits spoil good habits. In Titus 1:12 Paul quotes Epimenides, a Greek philosopher and poet of the 7th or 6th century BC, when he says: "One of them, a prophet of theirs, said, 'The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slothful and greedy'" (this quote is known as the Epimenides paradox - a paradox of self-contradiction). Paul also refers to *The Apocalypse of Moses* (2 Cor 11:14) and the *Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres* (2 Tim 3:8).

### **Theological themes**

The particularity of Jude's message lies in its emphasis on the Lord God as a judge and disciplinarian. However, this is not in contrast to the message of God's love throughout the New Testament. Jude emphasises that false doctrine and living in sin have serious consequences.<sup>6</sup>

*Hamartiology*: One problem with false teachers is that they turn grace into corruption (v.4). Under the guise of grace, sin is no longer presented as sin. Instead, Jude emphasises that divine grace does not offer freedom from sin, but liberation from sin. Grace is not freedom without limits.

*Christology*: Along with a diminished hamartiology, Jude sounds the alarm about a diminished Christology. False teachers attack the uniqueness of Christ by denying his authority and lordship.

*Perseverance in faith*: The faith offered to the saints (v.3) must be preserved with integrity, but it cannot be preserved outside the apostolic body of doctrine. The teaching of apostates is contrary to the teaching of the apostles. True faith is based on the totality of the creeds offered to God's people.

---

<sup>6</sup> Schreiner, 1, 2 *Peter, Jude*, 403.

*The danger of false teachers:* The danger of false teachers is a danger from within. Jude describes a situation where false teachers have infiltrated the community of believers with their destructive teachings. The fate of the apostates will be similar to the history of the apostates in the Old Testament, but their work of apostasy is dangerous.

*Emphasis on authority and the theme of bondage:* An issue that goes beyond the debate about the physical identification of Judas as possibly one of Jesus' biological brothers (see Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3) is the contrast between the concepts of *slave* and *master*. Jesus is presented in a very precise way as Lord (κύριος) through a high Christology. In contrast, Judas is presented as a servant (δοῦλος). In this master-slave metaphor, the issue of faith is very important. Kevin McCrudden has rightly argued that the concept of faith is not only to be understood in an objective sense, as conformity to a dogmatic set, but also as a personal response of trust.<sup>7</sup> Faith has to do with personal belief as a concept, not just with dogmatic spiritual aspects. The primary meaning of the verb *to believe* is to be faithful, not to adhere to a set of doctrines.

In her study of the concept of faith (πίστις and fides), Teresa Morgan argues that although relationships have a dogmatic character, *pistis* is essentially a relational concept whose meaning is always partly defined by the relationship in which it operates.<sup>8</sup> She rightly points out that the

7 McCrudden, "Faith as Freedom from Desire in the Epistle of Jude," 96.

8 Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4. locating emerging Christianities in the social practices and mentalities of contemporary Judaism and the early Roman empire. This can, therefore, equally be read as a study of the operation of *pistis/fides* in the world of the early Roman principate, taking one small but relatively well-attested cult as a case study in how micro-societies within that world could treat it distinctively. Drawing on recent work in sociology and economics, the book traces the varying shapes taken by *pistis/fides* in Greek and Roman human and divine-human relationships: whom or what is represented as easy or difficult to trust or believe in; where *pistis/fides* is "deferred" and "reified" in practices

relational aspect is different in the slave-master, client-boss and believer-Christ relationships. If we analyse the way Jude emphasises the concept of faith, the relational aspect with Christ as master ontologically defines the aspect of faith under the doctrinal aspect. Jude presents himself as the brother of James, but what primarily defines him is his status as a slave (δοῦλος *doulos*) in relation to Christ as Master (δεσπότης *despotēs*) and Lord (κύριος *kurios*). The lack of identification in the possible family relationship with Jesus is to be seen not only in the author's key of humility (as in James 1:1), but also in the ontological relationship in relation to authority. Christ is Lord and Master, and faith in Christ means not only the teaching of the apostles (dogmatic corpus), but first of all faithfulness (πίστις and fides) to this Master.

Jude emphasises the tendency of apostates to defy God's established system of authority, one of the fundamental themes of the writing being that of bondage. Jesus is portrayed in Jude almost exclusively in language that uses terms of lordship vs. bondage: our only Lord (τὸν μόνον δεσπότην v.4) and our Lord (καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν v.4, 17, 21, 25). Jude takes the theme of slavery (believers as slaves: δοῦλοι) and Christ as Lord (κύριος; δεσπότης) further in a spiritual approach: angels who rebelled against authority v.6 the apostates who reject lordship (κυριότητα δὲ ἀθετοῦσιν v.8); the archangel Michael who does not rebuke the devil v.9; etc.

It is important to avoid the danger of an anachronistic interpretation of the question of slavery. The Roman Empire was an imperial system in which the reality of slavery was pervasive. The concept of slavery in the first century is different from slavery in modern terms. Bonar correctly points out that first-century slavery was characterized by: the importance of loyalty to the master; the master's authority to punish (see the parallels with the freedmen of Egypt v.5; angels v.6; cities v.7); and the

such as oaths and proofs; how pistis/fides is related to fear, doubt and scepticism; and which foundations of pistis/fides are treated as more or less secure. The book then traces the evolution of representations of human and divine-human pistis in the Septuagint, before turning to pistis/pisteuein in New Testament writings and their role in the development of early Christologies (incorporating a new interpretation of pistis Christou

master's prerogative to show mercy.<sup>9</sup> He analyses how the term δεσπότης was understood in the Greek and Roman world. In *Politics*, for example, Aristotle describes the function of δεσπότης not in terms of the acquisition of slaves but in terms of the exploitation of slaves (Pol. 1255b32-33).<sup>10</sup> Bonar's analysis suggests an examination of the concepts of mastery and slavery in the light of the material in Enoch and the account of the Watchers in 1 En. 1. One important aspect that Bonar emphasises very well is the way in which lordship is manifested in conjunction with mercy. „Jude's hearers are endowed with the ability to do mercy and save, just as Jesus does (vv. 5, 21), because of their loyal relation to the κύριος.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***Theological errors***

The Epistle of Jude is written to correct systemic theological errors. First, it corrects the misplaced emphasis on God's love at the expense of God's justice (vv. 5, 6, 7). The fact that God is a God of grace does not mean that God's holiness and justice are nullified. The example of the Exodus generation who perished in the wilderness is an example of a misunderstanding of who God is and how God works. The fact that God punished them for their unbelief proves that God's judgment and God's love are inseparable. Misplacing emphasis on God's love at the expense of holiness leads to ignoring God's judgment. Jude exemplifies (examples from Old Testament vv.5-11) and illustrates (examples from nature vv.12-13) the danger of ignoring God's holiness. Jude argues that it is wrong to think that we can claim that God loves us without understanding that this must also mean that God sanctifies us.

Another theological error that Jude seeks to correct is the misplaced emphasis on the body at the expense of the soul. Three times in this short letter the defilement of the body is mentioned (vv. 7, 8, 9). This teaching is consistent with the teaching of Jesus (e.g. Matthew 5:29) and the apos-

9 Chance E. Bonar, “Reading Slavery in the Epistle of Jude,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 142, no. 2 (2023): 325–42.

10 Bonar, 329.

11 Bonar, 341.



the Paul (e.g. 1 Corinthians 6:18).<sup>12</sup> The body can either be defiled (v.7), disregarded (v.8) or worshiped (v.9).

A third theological error that Jude addresses is the emphasis on narrative at the expense of the Word. The description of the apostates through the use of six metaphors (vv. 12-13) apparently uses terms found in 1 Enoch, a writing from the third century B.C. 300-200, which belongs to the period of apocalyptic literature.<sup>13</sup> The use of pesher exegesis (the root of the word means interpretation) is debated by scholars.<sup>14</sup> In early Jewish exegetical interpretation, the understanding of the message of Scripture is divided into two levels: the surface level - for readers with limited knowledge, and the depth level - for readers with special knowledge. This form of interpretation is also found in the Qumran texts. Jurgens analyses in detail the composition of Jude 5-19, particularly the arguments of Richard Bauckham, and argues that the text has the characteristic features of Pesher exegesis, but not to the extent he suggests.<sup>15</sup>

In a theological context that overemphasises the idea of a God of love, Jude argues the point of divine judgement for apostates. God is a God of love, but he is also just. In line with this argument, the quotation from 1 Enoch is a reinforcement of the theme of God's righteous judgement. If Jude's addressees are unwilling to believe the teaching of Scripture and the teaching of the apostles, then he appeals to the apocalyptic writings that were in vogue in the first century, writings that emphasise God's holiness and the punishment of evil. The quotation from 1 Enoch, followed

12 For the importance of the body in Paul's writings, see Corin Mihăilă, "The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus. An Argument beginning from First Corinthians 15" *Jurnal Teologic* vol.22, nr. 3 (2022): 9-31.

13 E.g. hidden reefs c.f. deep and narrow ravines of hard rock 1 Enoch 26:6; waterless clouds c.f. rain that is kept back c.f. 1 Enoch 80:2; fruitless trees in late autumn c.f. 1 Enoch 80:3; wandering stars c.f. 1 Enoch 80:5-6.

14 Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter and Jude*, Word Biblical Commentary 50 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 5.

15 Blake A. Jurgens, "Is It Pesher? Readdressing the Relationship between the Epistle of Jude and the Qumran Pesharim," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136, no. 2 (2017): 491-510.

immediately in the next verse (v. 17) by the contrast “but you” (Ὑμεῖς δέ) and the call to remember the words (ῥῆμα *rēma*) of the apostles, testify to the contrast between extra-biblical writings and the authority of the apostolic message. It is not desirable to bow to the fashionable apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental period as an explanation of and alternative to Scripture. The teaching of the apostles and the Scriptures remain the supreme authority. An extra-canonical writing may affirm something true, but this fact does not give the writing the quality of inspired writing.

***Structural elements: The judgement on apostasy: WOE (v.11a)***

The fact that Jude begins and ends in the same thematic key is an important indicator of a circular composition, more specifically a chiastic composition. Indeed, when we analyse the linguistic and theological elements, we find a parallel equivalent in the first and second parts of the book, too exact to be coincidental.

Landon Charles has undertaken an extremely painstaking textual-critical analysis of Jude. He points out very accurately that in this epistle we find at least 11 groups of catchwords in Jude, 19 occurrences of triadic illustration, 24 instances of synonymous parallelism, and 18 instances of contrast or antithesis. The abundance of synonymous elements in such a short piece of writing suggests a carefully constructed structure to the book rather than a collection of random elements. Landon has rightly emphasised the fact that the predominance of such stylistic features and a carefully designed midrashic rhetorical structure make Jude one of the most stylistically distinctive books in the New Testament.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that the theme of apostasy is the element that caused the author to change his original intention (vv. 3-4) suggests that it is the central thematic element. This is also evidenced by the fact that the central Woe!

---

16 Charles Landon, *A Text-Critical Study of the Epistle of Jude*, First Edition (London: Sheffield Academic Pr, 1996), 142. Another letter that may present a stylistic structure is 1 Corinthians. See the argument in Corin Mihăilă, “The ABA’ Strucure of Paul’s Argumentation in 1 Corinthians. Love as a Unifying Theme” *Semănătorul (The Sower)* 4.1 (2023): 77-113.

of the chiasmic structure is intended as a succinct expression of the fate of the apostates.

In what follows we will highlight in parallel the corresponding elements of the chiasm - a structure that will be highlighted at the end of the section-by-section analysis.

### **Section A (v.1) – A' (v.24-25)**

The circular composition of the terms keeping (τηρέω *tēreō* to keep, to protect) and guarding (φυλάσσω *fulassō* to keep/guard, to protect) not only frames the entire epistle from beginning (vv. 1-2) to end (vv. 24-25), but is found several times in the epistle (v. 6 twice; v. 13; v. 21). This theme is an essential theological theme of the book: we are kept for Jesus Christ (v.1), kept by God (v.24). But if we fall away from Him, just as the angels fell away from their position of authority (v.6a) and are now kept in chains for punishment (v.6b), we will be punished. The punishment for apostasy is to be kept in darkness forever (v.13). The exhortation in this context is to *hold* on to the love of God (v.21).

### **Section B (v.2) – B' (v.21-23)**

The theme of mercy ἔλεος (*eleos*) appears only at the beginning and end of the letter (three times in vv. 21-23).

### **Section C (v.3a) – C' (v.23, 25)**

The theme of salvation also appears only at the beginning and at the end. At the beginning the noun is σωτηρία (*sōtēria*) v.3a and at the end the author uses the verb σώζω (*sōzō*) v.23 and the noun σωτήρ (*sōtēr*) v.25. Linguistically, the terms belong to the same word family.

### Section D (v.3b) – D' (v.20)

This section contains several common linguistic elements, but also a unique combination. The term beloved ἀγαπητός (*agapētos*) in the plural vocative form occurs only at the beginning of the writing in v.3 and at the end in v.17 and 20.<sup>17</sup> The adversative conjunction in v.20 marks the transition of the text to the theme of the struggle for faith. This makes us realise that this theme is essential and is a key point both at the beginning and at the end of the epistle.

Charles Daryl has rightly emphasised the essential nature of the antithesis in Jude. He has argued that the fundamental dichotomy expressed in the epistle is the tension between the ungodly and the godly. This juxtaposing of opposites is a notable feature of OT wisdom literature.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the use of the vocative beloved, we can note the unique association between faith (πίστις *pistis*), which appears in this form<sup>19</sup> only in vv. 2 and 20, and the term holy (ἅγιος *hagios*), which appears in this sense only in verse 20.<sup>20</sup> So in this passage we can see not only the parallel occurrence of the terms, but also the unique parallel association of the terms. Your holy faith is in fact the message of the Gospel, which stands in contrast to the message of the false teachers, which produces immorality coupled with an antinomian approach.<sup>21</sup>

### Section E (v.4) – E' (v.18-19)

In this passage we find the correspondence of the terms ungodly (ἀσεβής *asebēs*). The term occurs four more times in v.15, where we

17 The verb form to love (ἀγαπάω *agapaō*) occurs in v.1 and the noun form (ἀγάπη *agapē*) occurs in vv.2, 12 and 21.

18 Charles, “‘Those’ and ‘These,’” 111.

19 The verb form to believe/trust in (πιστεύω *pisteuō*) occurs only once in v.5.

20 A related term saint (ἅγιος *hagios*) occurs only once in v.14.

21 Bauckham, 2 *Peter and Jude*, 113.

actually find it in a quotation from 1 Enoch. These godless people deny Christ (v.4) and do not have the Holy Spirit.

### Section F (v.5a) – F' (v.17)

In these corresponding verses Jude is giving the same challenge: to remember. In v.5 the term to remember (ὑπομνήσκω *hypomimnēskō*) is used, and in v.17 the verb to remember (μυμνήσκω *mimnēskō*) is used - the grammatical root of these terms is the same, only here it is used throughout the entire epistle.

### Section G (v.5b) – G' (v.14-16)

This passage reflects several identical concepts: in v.5b we are presented with the fact that the Lord stood by His people but destroyed those who disbelieved (v.5b), and in vv.14-16 in the prophecy of Enoch we are also told that the Lord stands by His saints but judges the wicked. The Lord helps and accompanies those who are His and punishes the rebellious. The thematic association between the deliverance from Egypt and the destruction of those who murmured evokes the punishment of all those who, after their deliverance, continued to murmur.

### Section H (v.6-8) – H' (v.12-13)

These related verses contain several corresponding thematic elements. Verses 6-8 speak of eternal chains and darkness for wayward angels and lawless cities, while verses 12-13 speak of the blackness of eternal darkness for the wayward and shameless (vv. 12-13). The concept of ζόφος (*zofos*) darkness is found only in v.6 and v.13. The verb τηρέω (*tēreō*) to keep/to guard occurs in a negative sense twice in v.6 and once in v.13. The other two positive occurrences of the verb are at the beginning and end of the letter (v.1 and v.21).

**Section I (v.9) – I' (v.11c)**

The common theme in vv. 9 and 11 is rebellion against authority. Michael the archangel resisted the devil over the body of Moses, but respected his authority (v.9). On the other hand, Korah resisted Moses and rebelled against his authority (v.11c). Moses appears explicitly in verse 9 and implicitly in v.11 in relation to Korah's rebellion.

**Section J (v.10a, c) – J' (v.11b)**

This section contains common thematic elements. The theme of blasphemy and the reference to the dumb beast is reflected in the example of Balaam, who was called to blaspheme the people and had the experience of talking to his donkey on the road.

**Section K (v.10b) – K' (v.11a)**

This passage shows us people who are destroyed by the very things they instinctively know. Cain is an example of this because he is presented to us in Scripture as someone who does things he knows without any reference to any particular revelation. In his dialogue with God about his brother, Cain says he doesn't know where he is, but in fact he knows very well.

One of the necessary questions to be asked about this passage concerns the order in which these three characters are presented: Cain, Balaam and Korah. Why does Jude not present them in chronological order? The order of these characters is: Cain (Genesis 4); Korah (Numbers 16) and Balaam (Numbers 22-24). The presentation of the characters out of chronological order has to do with the progression of the rebellion: the nouns presented *ὁδός* (*hodos*) the way of Cain; *πλάνη* (*planē*) Balaam's error and *ἀντιλογία* (*antilogia*) Korah's dispute/rebellion emphasise a progression of apostasy: a way, a wandering and a perishing. This progression is similar to the progression presented in Psalm 1: he who goes, stops and settles down.

### Central section (v.11a; see also *Fig. 1*)

At the centre of the chiastic structure of this book is the emphatic exclamation: οὐαὶ αὐτοῖς (Woe to them!). The expression occurs most often in Jesus' speech against the Pharisees. It occurs only once in Paul, when he makes the point that woe be to him if he does not preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16). Otherwise this exclamation has a strong message of judgement. The condemnation of the apostates makes us realise that the warning Jude is giving, and the grim fate of those who follow it, fully justifies the change of subject.

The utterance of woes is essentially the most succinct and severe form of divine judgement. In the Old Testament, the word הוֹי (hoy) occurs 51 times, and with one exception (1 Kgs 13:30), all occurrences are in the prophetic literature (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Zechariah). The closely related words woe! (oy - הוֹי) and Ah! (ho - הוֹי) are also preferred in prophetic or wisdom literature as a rebuke for iniquity, sin and folly (Proverbs and Psalms). The lamentations are expressions of judgement, but implicit in them is a call to repentance.

The particle οὐαὶ (*ouai*) woe! in the Epistle of Jude sums up the whole warning against living outside the perceptions of true faith. The warning is a condemnation of all those who have developed and practised a faith other than the holy faith offered to the saints. The examples from the past that represent the judgement of all those who lived in rebellion against God (the fallen angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, the unbelieving people, Cain, Balaam, Korah, etc.) are a strong argument for the seriousness with which life in the faith must be approached.

The fact that the book begins and ends with the assurance of abiding in God's grace is an assurance that the woe is a serious warning, but also a pitfall that can be avoided by rightly contending for the faith.

### **FIG. 1**

A Kept for Jesus Christ (v.1)

## OVIDIU HANC

B *Mercy* (v.2) *\*only here*

C *Salvation* (v.3a)

D *Beloved*, strive for *holy faith* (3b) *\*only here* faith + holiness

E Ungodly men (v.4 ... ἀσέβεια)

F I remind you ... (v.5a) *\*only here*

G The Lord is with his people, but he has destroyed those who disbelieved (v.5b)

H Everlasting chains and darkness for the wandering angels and the fornicating cities (v.6-8)

I Michael resisted the devil for the body of Moses, but respected his authority (v.9)

J Mockery [βλασφημέω (blasfēmeō)], animals without reason (v.10a, c)

K Loss by the things they know by nature (v.10b)

**L Woe to them! (v.11a)**

K' Cain [punished for things he knew by nature] (v.11a)

J' Balaam [called to curse; talking animal] (v.11b)

I' Korah opposed Moses, rebelling against his authority (v.11c)

H' The darkness of everlasting gloom for the wayward and the shameless (v.12-13)

G' The Lord is with his saints, but judges the wicked - Enoch's prophecy (v.14-16)

F' Remember ... (v.17) *\*only here*

E' Worldly men (v.18-19 ... ἀσέβεια)

D' *Beloved*, build yourselves on a *holy faith* (v.20) *\*only here* faith + holiness

C' Eternal life (v.21)

B' *Mercy* 3x (v.21, 22, 23) *\*only here*

A' Kept through Jesus Christ (v.24-25)

## Conclusion

The call to contend for the faith is a call for believers to avoid apostasy and to live their lives by the grace of Jesus Christ. Grace is the foundation



of eternal life, but this grace is under siege from either legalism or anti-nomianism. Believers are called to abide in the love of God through faith.

The secret of salvation, of the preservation of faith and holiness, and of the manifestation of love is to be kept by Christ and for Christ. This keeping is the framework that defines the writing from beginning to end. God's presence and help in the life of the believer is the form in which this keeping is manifested and is the antidote to apostasy. The warning against apostate teachers is not a hopeless one. Apostasy manifests itself in the distortion of the Christian faith, but it will end in the manifestation of God's judgment. The woe in verse 11 is the central structural element, emphasising the seriousness with which God treats all those who have not kept their place in God's plan. The historical examples given by Jude are representative in their condemnation of all forms of apostasy. The interjection Woe! is the most succinct expression of divine judgement. The purpose of this warning is not to frighten the believer, but to offer encouragement and assurance of a victorious life in the struggle for the Christian faith. The central woe (v.11) to those who have fallen and failed is contrasted with the assurance of preservation from every fall (v.24) and the final victory crowned with the glory of God.

### **Bibliography**

- Bauckham, Richard J. *2 Peter and Jude*. Word Biblical Commentary 50. Waco: Word Books, 1983.
- Bonar, Chance E. "Reading Slavery in the Epistle of Jude." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 142, no. 2 (2023): 325–42.
- Charles, J. Daryl. *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude*. Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2005.
- . "The Use of Tradition-Material in the Epistle of Jude." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4, no. 1 (1994): 1–14.
- . "'Those' and 'These': The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle of Jude." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 12, no. 38 (1990): 109–24.

- Green, Gene L. *Jude and 2 Peter*. Edited by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert Stein. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Jurgens, Blake A. "Is It Pesher? Readdressing the Relationship between the Epistle of Jude and the Qumran Pesharim." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136, no. 2 (2017): 491–510.
- Kistemaker, Simon J. *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1987.
- Landon, Charles. *A Text-Critical Study of the Epistle of Jude*. First Edition. London: Sheffield Academic Pr, 1996.
- McCrudden, Kevin B. "Faith as Freedom from Desire in the Epistle of Jude." *Biblical Research* 61 (2016): 96.
- Mihăilă, Corin "The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus. An Argument beginning from First Corinthians 15" *Jurnal Teologic* vol.22, nr. 3 (2022): 9-31.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The ABA' Strucure of Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians. Love as a Unifying Theme" *Semănătorul (The Sower)* 4.1 (2023): 77-113.
- Morgan, Teresa. *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Neyrey, Jerome H. *2 Peter, Jude*. The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary. Yale University Press, 2008.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003.
- Wasserman, Tommy. *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission*. Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 43. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006.
- Webb, Robert L. "The Eschatology of the Epistle of Jude and Its Rhetorical and Social Functions." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6, no. 1 (1996): 139–51.