

JUDE IN THE MIDDLE: HOW THE EPISTLE OF JUDE ILLUSTRATES GNOSTIC TIES
WITH JEWISH APOCALYPTICISM THROUGH EARLY CHRISTIANITY

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Boyd A. Hannold
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ABSTRACT

Jude in the Middle: How the Epistle of Jude Illustrates Gnostic Ties with Jewish
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Boyd A. Hannold

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Vasiliki Limberis Ph.D.

In the mid 1990's, Aarhus University's Per Bilde detailed a new hypothesis of how Judaism, Christianity and Gnosticism were connected. Bilde suggested that Christianity acted as a catalyst, propelling Jewish Apocalypticism into Gnosticism. This dissertation applies the epistle of Jude to Per Bilde's theory. Although Bilde is not the first to posit Judaism as a factor in the emergence of Gnosticism, his theory is unique in attempting to frame that connection in terms of a religious continuum. Jewish Apocalypticism, early Christianity, and Gnosticism represent three stages in a continual religio-historical development in which Gnosticism became the logical conclusion.

I propose that Bilde is essentially correct and that the epistle of Jude is written evidence that the author of the epistle experiences the phenomena. The author of Jude (from this point on referred to as Jude) sits in the middle of Bilde's progression and may be the most perceptive of New Testament writers in responding to the crisis. He looks behind to see the Jewish association with the Christ followers and seeks to maintain it. He looks forward to what he perceives as a shift from early orthodoxy and battles that shift.

My thesis is to use the text of the epistle of Jude to uncover its historical situation. I posit that it portrays an early church leader grounded in Jewish Apocalypticism and facing the beginnings of a new "heretical" movement. This is a thesis of connections, and the work lies in using the epistle of Jude to illustrate those connections.

This study is significant in two respects. First, it will clarify background issues of Jude. Earlier scrutiny of Jude focused on its unique aspects, such as Jude's use of the non-canonical texts of *I Enoch* and the *Testament of Moses*. More recent scholarship has centered on the literary and rhetorical analysis of the text. I will concentrate on using the text of Jude within the context of this theory in order to determine a clearer view of the historical setting in which Jude wrote.

Second, this work will further the theory of connections between Jewish Apocalypticism, early Christianity, and Gnosticism. Although much work has been done to validate the connections between Judaism and Gnosticism, less has been done specifically with regard to Jewish Apocalypticism and even less with Per Bilde's theory of the critical middle role of early Christianity. And no one has used Jude in this particular discussion.

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I give my most personal thanks to my family. My wife of 28 years, Donna, has maintained a home, worked full-time, and parented three children, mostly in my absence as I

passed from church facilities to library, sometimes with barely a nod in her direction. I can only thank her for her incredible loving support. I can never repay her. My children, Stephanie, Joel and Eric, have patiently survived this ordeal while never understanding why their father would take on such a project at his age. They may never comprehend the value of this education but they deserve my appreciation for their patient support.

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INTRODUCTION

For many years I have had a secret attraction to the epistle of Jude. The way in which the author flirts with non-canonical texts such as *I Enoch* and the even more spectacular *Testament of Moses*, the vehement attacks on his opponents, the recurring poetic triplets of description, all in the briefest of briefs have kept me wearing its pages thin. I have always been surprised at the lack of consideration given it by scholars.

Even so, I was well into my studies at Temple University before I decided to target Jude in my dissertation. In attempting to get a better grasp on Gnosticism and its origins, I read a short article by Aarhus University's Per Bilde, entitled "Gnosticism, Jewish Apocalypticism, and Early Christianity."¹ In the article the author was advancing the theory that Gnosticism originated from Jewish Apocalypticism through the medium of early Christianity.

There are many well-represented hypotheses concerning the origin of Gnosticism. It has been theorized as a product of Iranian dualism or Hermeticism. It is viewed by some as a further development of Platonic thought or a complex result of Pagan religious syncretism developed over some time. Seemingly, however, the two strongest positions among scholars are that it is either a Jewish or Christian heresy, and much has been written in support, and opposition, of these two positions.

What caught my attention from Bilde's article was the concept that Gnosticism could be tied to both of these related religions and that there is a progression that places early

¹ Per Bilde, "Gnosticism, Jewish Apocalypticism, and Early Christianity," in *In the Last Days: On Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic and its Period*, eds. Knud Jeppesen, Bent Rosendal, and Kirsten Nielsen (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994), 9-32.

Christianity at the critical center. The idea that Christianity was the essential catalyst to graduate Jewish apocalypticism into early Christian Gnosticism forced me to return to the worn pages of Jude.

As I reread Jude's twenty-five verses it occurred to me that Jude could actually have experienced what Per Bilde was presently theorizing. This early Christian author, with his roots of Jewish apocalypticism glaringly evident, was vigorously attempting to keep his ship righted in the early storms of developing Gnostic thought. That the pursuit to include the epistle of Jude as an essential piece of this theory was unique in academia did not entirely surprise me, with so few works produced on Jude over the years, but did completely thrill me. And as is typical with most new ideas, more questions than answers began to surface in my initial investigations. Was Jude's opposition philosophically Gnostic? Was Jude frightened by the potential he saw in this new diversion? Was Jude's apocalyptic perspective influential in his ability to perceive this growing digression more easily than other Christian authors? Did Jude see "right" ties between Jewish apocalypticism and Christianity and "wrong" ties between Christianity and Gnosticism, or for that matter between Jewish apocalypticism and Gnosticism?

Jude is an early Christian leader who illustrates the validity of the progression of Jewish apocalypticism to Gnosticism through the medium of early Christianity. In order to establish my thesis these questions need to be addressed. In order to address these questions, several steps need to be taken.

The first step is to understand Bilde's theory. Chapter two will explicate the theory that Gnosticism developed from Jewish apocalypticism through the medium of early Christianity. This chapter will be a thorough analysis that will have two parts. The first part

will investigate the evidence for the connection between Gnosticism and Judaism with an emphasis on Jewish apocalypticism, developing the connections between that movement and Gnosticism. The second part will advance how Christianity influenced and even hastened the process. I will define any necessary terms in this chapter.

The third chapter will introduce the book of Jude into the thesis. Gnosticism and Judaism share enough similarities to draw a significant connection between them. However, there are also some substantial discrepancies that would discourage the connection theory. The core of my argument is that early eschatological Christianity became the catalyst that moved a segment of Jewish apocalypticism into Gnosticism. And it is only early Christianity that can best explain both the similarities and discrepancies. The book of Jude is written by an early Jewish Christ-follower with an eschatological viewpoint tied to Jewish apocalypticism. Since this may be the earliest document that supports the thesis, I will spend this chapter detailing that support. Significant aspects of the book of Jude such as the apocalyptic background of the author and especially a clear understanding of the opposition he describes in his letter will be addressed.

Objections that might arise either from weaknesses within the connection theory or from the use of Jude in this discussion will also be dealt with in chapter three. My thesis embraces conclusions concerning the unnamed recipients of the letter of Jude as well as the worldview of the author. Since Jude is a short letter it may be assumed that it is more difficult to draw many conclusions concerning these issues that are well supported from the text. Yet these conclusions must nevertheless be drawn. It will be my purpose in this chapter to show that the brevity of the letter does not necessarily disadvantage either my conclusions or my methodology. The text gives us much from which to draw.

In chapter four, using the research presented in the previous two chapters, I will submit my succinct description of the historical situation represented by the book of Jude. Bilde's theory will be revisited with even greater depth with the specific goal of describing how the book of Jude illustrates it. Critical issues in this chapter will be the date of Jude's letter and an expanded understanding of the historical situation behind the letter. Jude fits my thesis better as an earlier Christian document that exhibits a more primitive eschatological Christian viewpoint. Scholarship on the whole however, has generally dated this epistle later. Even in applying Jude to Per Bilde's theory, a later date would seem to be a more likely context for Jude as the earlier you place Jude on the timeline, the less likely the letter is addressing Gnostic philosophy. A marriage between these naturally opposing dating issues raises critical questions that need resolution.

This final chapter serves both as conclusion and focus of this study. In it lies the description of the heart of Jude and the critical role the epistle holds. That description may be more comprehensive, and certainly more specific, than has been attempted by previous scholarship. I will define Jude's religious-cultural heritage, clarify his audience, summarize the identity of his opposition, and detail his structure and purpose. It is my desire to leave the reader with as thorough an understanding of the worldview of the author of Jude, as clear a definition of the context in which the letter was penned, and as unambiguous an appreciation of the purpose of the letter as is possible.

Within this introduction, however, it would be beneficial to talk briefly about defining Gnosticism and the difficulties associated with that task. Rarely does one read an article or book concerning Gnosticism that does not use the word "problem" in introductory paragraphs when defining the system. I have yet to read any two descriptions of Gnosticism that

completely agree. Yet it is impossible to start a study such as this without at least the attempt to identify a usable definition of the term.

Undoubtedly, the most specific definition comes from T.P. Van Baaren who lists sixteen characteristics of Gnosticism.² That definition comes from a conference in 1966 held in Messina discussing the origin of Gnosticism with the purpose of reaching a definition. The result was to differentiate between pre-Gnostic (those elements existing in pre-Christian times), proto-Gnostic (elements just preceding the fully developed Gnosticism of the second century), and Gnostic thought proper.

² Th. P Van Baaren, "Towards a Definition of Gnosticism" in *Le Origini Dello Gnosticimo, Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile 1966*, ed. U. Bianchi (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1967), 174-180. Baaren is as tentative as anyone in his definition but feels that a shorter definition leads to more perils. My shorter summary of his sixteen points are:

1. Gnosis is revelation and necessary for salvation.
2. Gnosis is connected to time and space and tends more to symbolization in space.
3. The Gnosis is secret.
4. The Old Testament is either rejected or interpreted allegorically.
5. God is transcendent.
6. The world is regarded pessimistically.
7. The world is dualistic with pneumatic elements, as opposed to material elements, finding their origin in God.
8. Humans are divided into three classes: pneumatics, those having pistis and those taken up with the material world.
9. There is a difference between pistis and gnosis.
10. Gnostic ethics are ascetic.
11. It is a religion of revolt.
12. It appeals to the desire to belong to the elite.
13. The heavenly savior and Jesus of Nazereth are differentiated.
14. Christ is the great point of reversal in the cosmic process.
15. The person of the savior is connected with the concept of the salvator salvatus.
16. Salvation results in the severing of all ties between the world and the spiritual.

Kurt Rudolph³ limits his definition by broadening his scope. He lists the essential features of Gnosticism as the availability of a secret salvific knowledge or gnosis, a divine spark within each one that needs redeeming, a dualistic view of the world which divides the cosmological and the anthropological, a specific cosmogony that explains evil through a dualistic worldview, a soteriology which includes a redeemer figure, and a strong eschatological framework for its theology.⁴

Helmut Koester makes it even more concise. Gnosticism is “a particular phenomenon that is characterized by the discovery of the divine self in the individual and, at the same time, a radical rejection not only of the ‘world’ in all its physical realities, but also of the body, the social fabric of the society, and of all its institutions—regardless of the presence or absence of any elaborate Gnostic mythology.”⁵ Koester’s thoughts become helpful in more concisely identifying those critical factors that can be observed within all that we know of Gnosticism.

Karen King’s latest book on the subject entitled *What is Gnosticism*, never answers her own question. But that is purposeful as she attempts to assist scholarship in understanding the enormity of the task in defining such a flexible philosophy. Yet her observations are both accurate and helpful.

I have tried to show that religions are not fixed entities with a determinate essence or decisive moment of pure origination. They are constructions that require assiduous, ongoing labor to maintain in the face of both contested power relations within, and

³ Rudolph is responsible for the definition of Gnosticism found in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2 (1992):1033-1040.

⁴ Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), 57-59.

⁵ Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 2000), 213.

porous, overlapping boundaries with traditions without. Relations among such traditions therefore cannot properly be conceived as stable or neat.⁶

I lean toward a broader view that allows the greatest inclusion of available texts and sources. As one of the early researchers of Gnosticism, Robert McLaren Wilson's five-point summary of Gnosticism may be best.

1. A radical cosmic dualism that rejects this world and all that belongs to it.
2. A distinction between the unknown and transcendent true God and the creator or Demiurge.
3. The belief that the human race is essentially akin to the divine, being a spark of heavenly light imprisoned in a material body.
4. A myth to account for the human predicament.
5. A saving *gnosis* by which deliverance is effected.⁷

From the above discussion, the only thing that is clear is that conciseness and consensus in defining the Gnostic movement has proved to be elusive. However, when I refer to Gnosticism in this paper, it will be with Wilson's five defining points as the foundation but with King's caution in hand. These five points give us a general, but specific enough, understanding of Gnostic thought. Yet it needs to be clarified at the onset that I also understand that when referring to Gnosticism, even in a religious context, we are not discussing a singular, monolithic philosophy or religion as much as we are a worldview, a specifically religious way of looking at the world.

Yet it is also key to understand that a specific and concise definition of Gnosticism is not necessary for this dissertation. What I need to establish is a connection between this Gnostic worldview, however defined, and Judaism in Gnosticism's formative stage and to

⁶ Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 229-230.

⁷ Robert McLaren Wilson, "Gnosticism" in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World: A Survey of Recent Scholarship*, eds. Dan Cohn-Sherbok and John M. Court; Sheffield (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 177-178.

show that Judaism first and Christianity second were two of the main “traditions without” with which Gnosticism shared “porous, overlapping boundaries.” Even though the Gnosticism of the second century on is a religion in its own right, drawing from a wide range of philosophical and religious contexts, I believe that it has early and stronger ties to Judaism than any other religion outside of Christianity. My thesis is not to show that Gnosticism is either a Christian heresy or a Jewish heresy but rather a development that has its deepest roots in Judaism, which then incorporated the new Christian idealism in its interdependent route to be what we know of it from the second century onward.

CHAPTER 1

CONNECTIONS: FROM JEWISH APOCALYPTICISM TO GNOSTICISM THROUGH EARLY CHRISTIANITY

The Jewish-Gnostic Connection

Carl Smith states that three critical issues are involved in the search for Gnostic origins: the religious and intellectual context out of which Gnosticism emerged; its primary geographical setting; and the chronology of its development.⁸ In this chapter I am concerned primarily with Smith's first and third points. Although I should note outright that, along with most scholars today, I believe that Gnosticism is a syncretistic philosophy emerging from a complex religio-philosophical context. This paper is not an attempt to limit the origin of the expansive worldview of Gnosticism to one source. It is a product of a diverse and complex socio-religious setting. Yet with many others I also think that its strongest ties reach back specifically into Judaism.

This view that Gnosticism, with its anti-Jewish precepts, could have its origin in Judaism is not as new a concept as its current popularity suggests. Although the attention this thesis enjoys more lately is unrivaled, the theory was brought to academia in the nineteenth century by, among others, two German scholars, Manuel Joël and Heinrich Graetz.⁹ It was in

⁸ Carl Smith, *No Longer Jews: The Search for Gnostic Origins* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 2.

⁹ Joël's treatise was entitled, *Blicke in die Religionsgeschichte zu Anfang des zweiten christlichen Jahrhunderts 1* (Breslau: Schottlander, 1880). Graetz's book, published almost four decades earlier, is called, *Gnosticismus und Judenthum* (Krotoschin: B.L. Monasch & Sohm, 1846).

1898, however, that Moritz Friedländer in his relatively disregarded book, *Der vorchristlich jüdische Gnosticismus*, established a strong argument for a pre-Christian Gnosticism that had more than a simple relationship with Judaism, as those before him had suggested. Friedländer theorized that Gnosticism actually evolved out of antinomian circles in the Jewish population of Alexandria, Egypt.¹⁰ According to Friedländer, the first to engage this early Gnostic movement were Jewish scholars, specifically Philo and more generally the early rabbinic writers.¹¹ Friedländer suggested that Christian Gnosticism was actually a secondary version of this older Gnosticism. This groundbreaking hypothesis would mean that there was a pre-Christian Gnosticism. It would later develop into a clearer Christian “heresy” through interaction with the early Christian movement. Since the first step in my thesis of establishing early Christianity as the catalyst that propelled variants of Jewish apocalypticism into Gnosticism must be to confirm a credible link between Judaism and Gnosticism, it would be helpful to understand Friedländer’s argument.¹²

¹⁰ Moritz Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898).

¹¹ Wilhelm Bousset (1861-1931) also understands Philo to be addressing a pre-Christian Gnostic movement. Although Bousset does not extend his views, as Friedländer does, to accept a Jewish origin to Gnostic thought, he does assume the movement predates Christianity. In defining the term for the 1910 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* (XII), 155, Bousset writes, “Gnosticism is first of all a pre-Christian movement which has its roots in itself. It is therefore to be understood in the first place in its own terms and not as an offshoot or a by product of the Christian religion.”

¹² Recent publications have made note of Friedländer’s work. Harvard University’s Karen King notes the significance of Friedländer’s efforts in *What is Gnosticism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 175f. Birger Pearson reviews some of Friedländer’s points in the first chapter of his book *Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). He also has a much more thorough critique of those points than I wish to include here. However, Pearson’s resting point coincides with mine. “Although much of the detail of Friedländer’s argument is open to question, he has

Friedländer focuses on the pre-Jesus Jewish Diaspora with an emphasis on Alexandria. That becomes a place and time where the development of the allegorical method of interpretation rapidly accelerates and causes division between these new writers and well-established, more conservative Jewish scholars. The development of sects within Judaism that were highly allegorical in their interpretation of Hebrew Scriptures could have been anticipated as they struggled to maintain meaning apart from the centrality of a destroyed temple. That they were allegorical did not necessarily result in their being considered heretical. There was a wide range of acceptable interpretations of Jewish texts that would fall within the boundaries of Judaism proper. A more definitive break occurred when these groups also became antinomian, rejecting completely the letter of the law. Friedländer specifies the Ophites, Cainites, Sethians, and Melchizedekians as those groups that were Jewish antinomians (and thus also heretical) and became the first-step faction of pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism.¹³ Eventually, these groups become the objects of early Christian polemicists such as Origen, Eusebius and Irenaeus, but Friedländer finds them first addressed as *Jewish* heresies in the writings of Philo and the Talmud.

Friedländer quotes several passages from Philo to show that Philo was speaking against a special *gnosis* that did not reveal itself through godly righteousness.¹⁴ As such, it could fall into the more general category of antinomianism. However, Philo also berates this group for their practice of reserving this *gnosis* for only the initiated. In Friedländer's opinion

been vindicated in his basic contention, that Gnosticism is a pre-Christian phenomenon that developed on Jewish soil." (p. 28)

¹³ Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche*. This is scattered throughout chapter one with the most concentrated information on pages 19-35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52-58.

that challenge is specific enough to be classified as a Gnostic characteristic rather than as a more general antinomianism. This is critical for the purpose of this dissertation on two fronts. If Friedländer's analysis is accepted, then it both pits the early Gnostic thought directly against Judaism and it is not directly associated with Christianity.

Friedländer's interpretation of Talmudic and Midrashic passages highlights the terms *mînîm* and *mînût*, which he believes is referring to Gnostics and Gnosticism. These terms are sometimes understood to refer to Christians and Christianity and Friedländer's cites several midrashes in his effort to break down that view.¹⁵ A typical example of Friedländer's line of reasoning is found in his understanding of a specific Midrash.¹⁶ The *mînîm* view that the world was created with the language of cursing is refuted by remembering that the very first letter of the Torah, which describes the creation of the world, was the Hebrew letter *bêt* (ב), the same letter starting the word blessing (ברכה), and not the Hebrew letter *aleph* (א), which initiates the word representing cursing (ארורה). To Friedländer this makes little sense if *mînîm* is interpreted as Christian and complete sense if the *mînîm* are the Gnostics. It was dualistic Gnostic thought that differentiated between the God of the Hebrew Scriptures and the one of Christian writings, ultimately designating the former as the Demiurge and condemning the physical creation as evil.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 59-79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁷ I do not intend this paper to serve as part of an orthodox/heresy debate, which is the original purpose of most of the early sources I cite. I am simply referencing that the debate existed, establishing that debate as both pre-Christian and Gnostic-Jewish in nature.

Friedländer's point is not simply that Judaism engaged pre-Gnosticism but that pre-Gnosticism began with the Hellenization of Judaism in the Diaspora.¹⁸ Friedländer believes that the debate lies *within* the ranks of Judaism. That debate starts earlier than, or at least concurrent to, Christianity. And it is a debate outside the ranks of Christianity. Why else would the defenders of Judaism just prior to the emergence of Christianity be tackling these questions? It would not have been a great enough concern to them to do so had Gnosticism not already affected their ranks.¹⁹

Much has been written since Friedländer's original arguments to expand on this position. And the number of scholarly voices heard on the subject has increased proportionately with the successful translation and study of the texts discovered at Nag Hammadi. George McRae serves as a typical example. McRae is convinced that Gnosticism arose out of Jewish apocalyptic and wisdom tradition. "However radical the revolt against the Jewish matrix may have been, it is now very broadly acknowledged, especially in view of the prominent Jewish elements in the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts."²⁰ In fact, today almost all

¹⁸ Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche*, 44. "Wenn wir nach dem Ursprung des Jüdischen Gnosticismus forschen, so finden wir, dass derselbe mit der Hellenisierung des Judenthums in der Diaspora seinen Anfang nahm."

¹⁹ What is even more significant about Friedländer is that his work represents a scholarly position prior to the discovery at Nag Hammadi and the impressive advances in Gnostic research that have followed that discovery in the succeeding decades. Those advances, although bringing corrective light to some of Friedländer's specific claims, have actually served more to strengthen Friedländer's overall contention.

²⁰ George McRae, "Apocalyptic Eschatology in Gnosticism." in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism*, ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), 317-328,

scholars would at least acknowledge the strong Judaic influences on Gnosticism, even if they do not find Gnostic origins in that religion as a result of the Nag Hammadi texts.²¹

Obviously, the texts uncovered and translated that were originally found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt have become the most critical development in the progress of all studies connected with Gnosticism. They are equally critical to this study. It is important then to include them at the very outset of this paper.

Since its discovery in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, the Coptic Gnostic Library has been the focus of research into Gnostic origins. The library, consisting of twelve full codices as well as eight pages of a thirteenth, has proved to be a treasure of fourth century Gnostic writings containing fifty-two tractates. Although the corpus represents a variety of different authors and time periods, originally composed in Greek, the Coptic translations found were written and buried all together in the fourth century C.E. in the town of its namesake.

There is more significant disagreement as to when the original Greek versions were written. However, with regard to this thesis it is appropriate to summarize that no scholar conclusively relegates any of the Nag Hammadi texts to a pre-Christian date. And that is significant because we have no physical *textual* evidence of a pre-Gnosticism existing prior to

²¹ Dr. James M. Robinson, writes, “There is a long-standing debate among historians of religion as to whether Gnosticism is to be understood as only an inner-Christian development or as a movement broader than, and hence independent of, and perhaps even prior to Christianity. This debate seems to be resolving itself, *on the basis of the Nag Hammadi library* (italics mine), in favor of understanding Gnosticism as a much broader phenomenon than the Christian Gnosticism documented by the heresiologists.” James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 6. Even this theory’s harshest opponent, Simone Pétrement, who sees Christianity as the earliest significant influence on Gnostic development, and with whom I will deal later, would at least attest to the indirect Jewish influence on Gnosticism through early Christianity. See page 12 of *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. Carol Harrison (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

the extensive development of Christianity. The Nag Hammadi texts can be directly associated with Judaism by their content. However, they cannot be as directly connected by their context. That does not detract, however, from their importance to my thesis.

At the very least these texts have significantly broadened the understanding of Gnosticism in its complexity. Before the Nag Hammadi discovery Friedländer would have been considered to be member of an insignificant minority as the majority of scholarship relegated Gnosticism to be a direct Christian heresy. Nag Hammadi changed that. If there is yet no consensus as to Gnosticism's direct relationship to Judaism, there is, as a result of research on the Nag Hammadi texts, at least a consensus that Gnostic origins are far too complex to relegate it to a simple derivation of early Christianity. And the greatest revelation derived from these texts is the more prominent role that Judaism must take in any consideration of the early influences on Gnosticism.

I have, therefore, selected three of the Nag Hammadi tractates to illustrate clear and direct Jewish influence on these writings.²² These three texts demonstrate that influence most clearly, consistently and substantially. And it is substantial enough to posit a direct line between the two movements of Judaism and Gnosticism.

The *Testimony of Truth* (*TestTruth*) is the third manuscript from Codex IX and one of the more poorly preserved tractates of the Nag Hammadi collection. Almost half of the text is lost. What remains, however, is clear enough to understand a fairly complete picture of the

²² Charles W. Hedrick writes, "While there may be no extant Gnostic manuscripts from the early first century C.E. to show that there existed a pre-Christian Gnosticism in a chronological sense, these texts clearly demonstrate the existence of pre Christian Gnosticism in an ideological sense." Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr., eds., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, & Early Christianity* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 9.

content and purpose of the author. The structure of the argument consists of two parts. The first part is a written homily on the subject of truth versus falsehood. The second part is more random with miscellaneous additions and comments on the original homily. It is a very critical polemic against Jewish Law, Christians, and even other Gnostics, including Valentinus and Basilides, while espousing the virtues of a somewhat radical monastic lifestyle, including sexual abstinence. The author of the treatise centers the foundation of his condemnation on both the incorrect readings of the Hebrew Bible and the inappropriate significance given to Jewish historical figures. In other words, his strongest objections are aimed at Judaism and he focuses his attacks against Jewish sources.²³

This focus can be seen clearly in the opening paragraphs of the tractate.

I will speak to those who know to hear not with the ears of the body but with the ears of the mind. For many have sought after the truth and have not been able to find it; because there has taken hold of them the old leaven of the Pharisees and the scribes of the Law. And the leaven is the errant desire of the angels and the demons and the stars. As for the Pharisees and the scribes, it is they who belong to the archons who have authority over them.

For no one who is under the Law will be able to look up to the truth, for they will not be able to serve two masters. For the defilement of the Law is manifest; but undefilement belongs to the light. The Law commands (one) to take a husband (or) to take a wife, and to beget, to multiply like the sand of the sea. But passion, which is a delight to them, constrains the souls of those who are begotten in this place, those who defile and those who are defiled, in order that the Law might be fulfilled through them. And they show that they are assisting the world; and they turn away from the light, who are unable to pass by the archon of darkness until they pay the last penny.

²³ “The midrash itself appears to have originated in a Jewish environment. It serves as a prime example of the revolt against the religious traditions of the Old Testament that typifies early Gnosticism.” PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1993), 158.

Birger Pearson brings out several key points in this discussion.²⁴ In a lengthy section (45.25-48.25) dealing with events described in Genesis 3, the author of the *TestTruth* uses a distinctively Jewish method of midrash in taking the Genesis passage and interpreting it. Perhaps even more important, the author most probably has incorporated a Jewish midrash in this section.

Genesis Rabbah 20:11 And the man called his wife's name Eve – Hawwah, i.e., life (Gen. 3:2). She was given to him for an adviser, but she played the eavesdropper like the serpent. [Another interpretation]: He showed her how many generations she had destroyed. R. Aha interpreted it: The serpent was thy [Eve's] serpent [i.e., seducer], and thou are Adam's serpent.

TestTruth 48.18 And in one place Moses writes, “[He] made the devil a serpent for [those] whom he has in his generation.”

The *TestTruth* also identifies the tree of knowledge as a fig tree in 46.20-21: “And he said, ‘Adam, where are you?’ He answered and said, ‘I have come under the fig tree.’ And at that very moment God knew that he had eaten from the tree of which he had commanded him.”

This identification of the Tree of Knowledge with the fig tree is a widespread Jewish tradition. It can be found in the midrashes *Genesis Rabbah* and *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* but most clearly in the *Apocalypse of Moses* 20.4-5 “And I began to seek, in my nakedness, in my part for leaves to hide my shame, but I found none, for, as soon as I had eaten, the leaves showered down from all the trees in my part, except the fig tree only. But I took leaves from it and made for myself a girdle and it was from the very same plant of which I had eaten.”

The *TestTruth* author's greatest discomfort is with Judaism. He uses only Jewish sources in his diatribe. He uses Jewish rhetoric. And as Carl Smith has noted, the author's arguments in this tractate against the Christians are specifically because they have a close

²⁴ Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity*, 39-51.

relationship with Judaism and read the Jewish texts incorrectly.²⁵ Jews, as well as those Christians who accept the traditional interpretation of the Jewish texts, wrongly accept the hero status of Hebrew Bible characters such as Moses and David when in this author's world they are demons to be shunned.²⁶ In essence, the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, encompassing the Law and the stories of old, is to be used as examples of those that "hear with the ears of the body rather than the ears of the mind." What should be a spiritual exercise of discerning and reinterpreting of inspired texts is condemned in view of a lazy acceptance of truths that appear only on the surface by those who take these texts literally. That the attacks on Christendom by this author actually relate back to their acceptance of Jewish texts is critical to understand. "This in itself suggests that Gnosticism's primary argument was with Judaism and its creator-archon God, and with Christianity only as it manifested Jewish traits."²⁷

The *Apocalypse of Adam* (*ApocAdam*) is a second tractate from Nag Hammadi that supports this view. This is a revelation that Adam receives from three heavenly beings and passes on to his son Seth. As such it clearly belongs to the specific Sethian branch of Gnosticism. Adam explains to his son how it came about that he and Eve experienced the loss of saving knowledge but how Seth himself is the key to its preservation and transmission. This revelation, passed on orally from father to son shortly before Adam's death, is also

²⁵ Smith, *No Longer Jews*, 202. "Great is the blindness of those who read, and they did not know him" (48.1-2). "Him" refers to the Jewish God. Specifically this means that those that read do not know that this God is malicious, ignorant and jealous. They blindly follow the teachings of Moses and the Hebrew heroes.

²⁶ 70.1-9 describes David and Solomon in such terms. It also pictures the release of a multitude of demons from the Temple when it was destroyed by the Romans.

²⁷ Smith, *No Longer Jews*, 203.

hidden on a high mountain. Part of the apocalypse recounts God's hand in acts of salvation beginning with Noah and part of it is a prophetic outline of future salvation. The key figure is the future and final savior of mankind, the "Illuminator." The reason I include this text is the consensus among scholars that this piece does not borrow from Christian tradition even though it has a developed redeemer theme.²⁸ It also reveals a close dependence on Jewish apocalypticism that I will return to later in this paper.

It is clear again in this text that the sources used by the author are Jewish in origin. There are considerable similarities between this tractate and the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, a subsection of the Jewish Apocalyptic *I Enoch* (93:1-10). Both speak of three judgments. In those judgments, in both cases, the first is by water and the second is by fire. For both, the third judgment is final. Both apocalypses also spend significant time on the fate of the elect. In the *ApocAdam* these elect are the Gnostics. In *I Enoch* they are more simply "the sons of righteousness." Preservation of God's people is also a theme spelled out in each judgment. In *I Enoch* Noah is saved through the flood, Elijah is delivered from the wicked generation and the elect are selected out of Israel to be spared the final judgment. In the *ApocAdam* the children of Seth are delivered from the flood. The same children of Seth, now expanded, are protected by angels during the second judgment by fire and then, finally, the true Sethians or Gnostics are saved at the third judgment.²⁹

²⁸ George MacRae, translator of the *ApocAdam*, adds that, "its close dependence on Jewish apocalyptic tradition suggests that it may represent a transitional stage in an evolution from Jewish to Gnostic apocalyptic. In *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 277.

²⁹ George W.E. Nickelsburg has done some tedious and helpful work in this comparison. See George W.E. Nickelsburg, "Some Related Traditions in the Apocalypse of

There are differences between these two ancient texts as well. Only in the *Apocalypse of Adam* is the second judgment likened to Sodom and Gomorrah. *1 Enoch* reflects on the salvific history of the elect in a more linear way, starting with Noah. Yet these differences seem minor in comparison with the strength of the similarities.

There are fewer but just as clear similarities between *ApocAdam* and the Jewish pseudepigraphical writing, the *Life of Adam and Eve*. In both cases the vision of God and the revelation concerning the first two judgments are mediated by angels. In both cases the angels are male. And in both cases (but to a much lesser degree and only in part in the *Life of Adam and Eve*) Adam is giving Seth an account of future prophecy that ends with a reference to water rituals and a blessing.

On the other hand, there is only one section of the *ApocAdam* that suggests ties to a specifically Christian view of salvation. In lines 77.1-18, the “Illuminator,” or final savior (actually the third of three), will perform signs and wonders, face a conspiracy, and be punished. The quick conclusion is to see this illuminator as a reference to the Christian figure of the Christ. However, as both Pearson and Nickelburg note, such ideology could just as easily come from Isaiah 52-53 and from Wisdom 1-6.³⁰ It does not necessarily have to be connected with the later Christian version of a redeemer. And with such a strong Redeemer theme coursing through it, one would expect the *ApocAdam* to display much greater and clearer connection to Christian myth or even give the Illuminator his title of Christ.

Adam, the Books of Adam and Eve, and 1 Enoch,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1981), 515-539.

³⁰ Birger Pearson, “The Problem with ‘Jewish Gnostic’ Literature,” 15-36 and George W.E. Nickelburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1972), 48-111.

Working closely with George MacRae who translated the apocalypse, Douglass Parrott comes to the conclusion that “it is difficult to see any compelling reason to identify this figure with Christ.”³¹ This illuminator comes in glory by bringing the knowledge (γνώσις) of the eternal God and by performing signs and wonders. This will anger the god of powers. The glory is then withdrawn and the illuminator, in the flesh, will be punished. There is no indication of the form of punishment that will be used. It is not even clear whether or not this punishment ends in death. And we are not told of any subsequent resurrection. This is simply the description of a dynamically charismatic figure who angered the authorities and was punished.

It is possible that the origin of this apocalypse is pre-Christian, even though we have no textual evidence that such is the case. However, that is less important for the purpose of this thesis. It is not my purpose to prove a pre-Christian date of composition as much as it is to show direct links between Gnosticism and Judaism. And without necessarily assigning an early date to the manuscript, Helmut Koester comes to the conclusion of linking this text more directly to Judaism in his *Introduction to the New Testament*.³² And even Gedaliahu Strousma, who also does not argue for an early date, concludes that the two earlier judgments

³¹ D. M. Parrott, “The Apocalypse of Adam,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3rd, ed. J. R. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 278.

³² He writes, “Since this book contains no reference to specific Christian names, themes or traditions, it should be assigned to a Gnostic baptismal sect with Jewish roots.” In Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: de Gruyter, 2000), 2:217.

recorded in the apocalypse reached Gnostic circles “*directly* from Jewish sources, without the mediation of Christian literature and traditions.”³³

A third and final document from the Nag Hammadi corpus in support of my thesis is the *Apocryphon of John (ApJohn)*.³⁴ It is a revelation given to the apostle John by Christ himself and offers a Gnostic view of creation, the fall and salvation. It uses the beginnings chapters of the book of Genesis extensively as it seeks to explain the origin of evil and how to escape that evil. The apocryphon attempts to create a mysterious cosmogony in which the highest deity is simply defined by the term of perfection. Such perfection can never be lowered to include an anthropomorphic description or to ever be involved in this present physical world. Several other beings emanate from this god, including both Sophia and Christ. It is Sophia’s error that precipitates the fall. Her desire to give birth results in the creation of a lesser god named Ialdabaoth (sometimes spelled Yaldabaoth). From Ialdabaoth’s activities come the angels, the creation of man, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. Three versions come to us from Nag Hammadi, two of which are translated into the Coptic from a shorter Greek document, while one is the Coptic translation of a longer Greek version. There is a fourth account found within the Berlin Codex.³⁵

³³ Gedaliahu A.G. Strousma, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J.Brill, 1984), 110.

³⁴ Harvard’s Karen King, who is suspicious of attempts to clearly distinguish the origin of Gnosticism, does indeed note the importance of this apocryphon. “The Apocryphon of John, a work found in both the Berlin Codex and at Nag Hammadi, does provide a framework within which practices and choices can be oriented and made meaningful.” Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 10.

³⁵ The version used here is the longer version in the Nag Hammadi corpus, translated by Frederik Wisse as found in James Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*.

In order to see clearly the Jewish nature of the tractate, it is helpful to outline its basic contents.

- I. Preamble introducing the apocalyptic framework
- II. Revelation describing the author's theosophy and cosmogony
- III. Dialogue concerning the author's soteriology
- IV. Title

Pearson, probably the strongest proponent of a Jewish origin to Gnosticism, has provided a theory regarding the composition of the *ApJohn* that, in essence, disassociates it with Christianity. He insists that this is a Jewish Gnostic document with "a Christian veneer."³⁶ The theory suggests that the original document was much shorter, consisting primarily of the middle two sections and existing without the preamble, title and various "glosses." It was built upon non-Christian sources and only Christianized during a later redaction. Pearson's thoughts on the *ApJohn* are exemplary and pertinent to this study. It is significant to look at this apocryphon because it exposes a Gnostic tendency to expand on Hebrew Scripture texts, even though Gnosticism is burdened with a reputation of disassociation with those texts in favor of New Testament ideas. It is also noteworthy because this particular document is apocalyptic in form.

Pearson's arguments are strong ones.³⁷ Irenaeus describes the doctrine of the "Barbelognostics" in *Haer I.29*. Pearson, as well as other scholars, has noted that Irenaeus has only the first part of the apocryphon, usually referred to as the revelation discourse.

³⁶ Pearson, "The Problem," 25. Actually, he is strong in his statement that this veneer was applied in the work's final redaction and "is a thin one indeed."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 19-25 and Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 29-38.

Obviously, this gives considerable credence to Pearson's stance that the "Christian veneer" to *ApJohn* was added later. Pearson also calls attention to the fact that the references and allusions to Christ and Christianity are not consistently in every manuscript. For example, the heavenly aeon Autogenes is identified with the pre-existent Christ in the revelation (7.10-11) but this is not in the Codex II version. Comparing the Berlin Codex 2:60,16-61,2 and the Nag Hammadi Codex II 1:23, 26-28 one can also note that the Berlin Codex has a manifestation of Sophia teaching Adam and Eve about the forbidden tree, while in Codex II it is Christ. Finally, Jewish sources can be clearly detected in *ApJohn*. From canonized text to apocryphal literature to commentary to midrashim, the *ApJohn* relies heavily on Jewish sources, as the following list suggests.

1. The dialogue of the tractate section is a discourse on Genesis 1-6.
2. The section commenting on the sons of God from Gen. 6:1-4 is undoubtedly dependent upon 1 Enoch 6-8.³⁸

³⁸ From the *ApJohn*: And he made a plan with his powers. He sent his angels to the daughters of men, that they might take some of them for themselves and raise offspring for their enjoyment. And at first they did not succeed. When they had no success, they gathered together again and they made a plan together.

From *1Enoch*: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men 3 and beget us children.' And Semjaza, who was their leader, said unto them: 'I fear ye will not 4 indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.' And they all answered him and said: 'Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations 5 not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.'

From *ApJohn*: They brought gold and silver and a gift and copper and iron and metal and all kinds of things. And they steered the people who had followed them into great troubles, by leading them astray with many deceptions. They (the people) became old without having enjoyment. They died, not having found truth and without knowing the God of truth. And thus the whole creation became enslaved forever, from the foundation of the world until now.

3. The four angelic beings beneath the throne of God seem to come from Ezekiel 1:4-21, if not completely in description, at least in number.
4. The creation of man is accomplished not by God, or in this case, the mother Sophia, but relegated to lesser angels (15.1f). This is first expressed in Philo of Alexandria.³⁹
5. Philo can be cited as a source of this author in a second point. In the *ApJohn* the first man was created by the archons but the spirit was breathed into him by Ialdabaoth, the Gnostic creator God, from a heavenly source. Specifically, Ialdabaoth was to “blow into his face.” (19.20-25) Philo, in *De Somniis*, writes, “and especially according to the statement of Moses, who says, ‘God breathed in his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.’” (Book 1, 34)

From *1 Enoch*: And Azazel taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields, and breastplates, and made known to them the metals of the earth and the art of working them, and bracelets, and ornaments, and the use of antimony, and the beautifying of the eyelids, and all kinds of costly stones, and all 2 colouring tinctures. And there arose much godlessness, and they committed fornication, and they 3 were led astray, and became corrupt in all their ways.

Strousma adds that the concept of angels assuming the likenesses of the husbands of the daughters of men in order to accomplish their purpose can be found in *T. Reub. 5:5-7* and the mention of gold and silver that the angels brought to the women is from *1 Enoch 8:1*. He then writes, “The story as told in *Ap.John* clearly reveals an unintentional contamination between two traditions attested in Jewish literature.” Strousma, *Another Seed*, 37-38.

³⁹ In his treatise *De fuga et inventione* he writes, “Here, therefore, the Father is conversing with his own powers, to whom he has assigned the task of making the mortal part of our soul, acting in imitation of his own skill while he was fashioning the rational part within us, thinking it right that the dominant part within the soul should be the work of the ruler of all things, but that the part which is to be kept in subjection should be made by those who are subject to him.... Therefore, he thought it necessary to assign the origin of evil to other workmen than himself, but to retain the generation of good for himself alone.” (68-70)

6. That the first man created was lifeless for some time until divine breath was given (19.1f) is also seen in various midrashim.⁴⁰

Pearson's point is valuable to both Bilde's position and my own. The *ApJohn*, at least in its original form, is a deviation of Judaism rather than Christianity. The author of this document is clearly attacking the traditions of Judaism found both in canonized and non-canonized literature. It was Christianized in a later edition as others besides Pearson have also attested.⁴¹ Perkins takes this position even deeper. She believes that not only has the *ApJohn* been Christianized "but it has also been molded by a Platonizing asceticism that sought to ward off the instability of the passions."⁴²

In addition to these three specific texts from Nag Hammadi it is worthwhile to investigate the Gnostic development of the Jewish figure Seth, specifically in Gnostic writings. Klijn and Pearson have both done considerable work in this area.⁴³ Seth becomes an important figure in Gnosticism. In fact, "Sethians" are considered to be one of the earliest

⁴⁰ Compare *Genesis Rabbah* 8.1f and 14.8. More significantly, to quote the teaching of R. Yohanan bar Hanina in the Babylonian Talmud, "During the first hour of the day, the dust from which he [Adam] was formed was gathered; during the second hour, the dust was formed into a lifeless mass; during the third hour, Adam's limbs were shaped; during the fourth hour, his soul was cast into him..." *Tractate Sanhedrin 38B* Babylonian Talmud. I used the Steinsaltz Edition 17 (New York: Random House, 1998) 81.

⁴¹ Even Strousma, who does not align himself as strongly with those who see Jewish origins in Gnosticism, writes, "It can therefore be safely assumed that the author—or the redactor—of *ApJohn* knew and used the Jewish traditions embodied in various pseudepigraphic works and integrated them into his own version of the myth, albeit not always wisely." Strousma, *Another Seed*, 38.

⁴² PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament*, 27.

⁴³ A.F.J. KLIJN, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977) and PEARSON, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 52-83.

organized groups of Gnostics. Two of the tractates that we have looked at above, *ApocAdam* and the *ApJohn*, are considered to be Sethian texts. And Seth can be found in so many of the Nag Hammadi documents that initially Jean Doresse, one of the first scholars to work on Nag Hammadi manuscripts, called the entire find at Nag Hammadi more specifically a Sethian-Gnostic library.⁴⁴ Besides the *ApocAdam* and the *ApJohn*, Seth is mentioned or developed in *Melchizedek*, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, *The Three Steles of Seth*, *Zostrianos*, and *The Thought of Norea*.

Seth becomes a monumental figure in early Gnosticism, as these texts demonstrate. He is called the “Great Seth” in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, where he is not only the author of that document but initiates the salvation of the elect.⁴⁵ But it is in the *ApocAdam* that we find Seth in his most important aspect, that of progenitor of the Gnostic race. The *ApocAdam* describes the beginning of the Sethians, their survival through the flood, and their eventual final salvation through the coming of the “Illuminator.” *The Three Steles of Seth* also calls Seth the father of the “unshakeable race” (118, 12-13).

It is these designations of Seth as originator of the elect race and ultimately, in some sense, as the initiator of their salvation, that can be traced to Jewish Apocalyptic thought. In Enoch’s second dream vision recorded in *I Enoch* 85-90, the world’s history from birth to the coming of the Messiah is given. In that section Seth is described as a white bull. The rest of

⁴⁴ Jean Doress, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* (trans. Philip Mairret; London: Hollis & Carter, 1960), 250.

⁴⁵ Pearson, in *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, provides an excellent and succinct summary of the many titles for Seth on pages 63-79. I mention only a couple of those titles here but have drawn heavily on that section concerning Seth as the originator of the Gnostic race.

Israel is described as a nation of white bulls, and the Messiah himself is a white bull. All the rest of humanity are black oxen.⁴⁶ Plainly humanity represents a two-tier system of the smaller group of “called” and all the rest, representing the majority of the world. Israel becomes “the called” and Seth is the reason. Adam lost the $\gamma\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ which falls to Seth. Seth begins the elect race of God and ultimately saves the elect.

Even the simple observation that Gnosticism considered the role of Seth to be important aligns it more with Judaism than Christianity. Josephus and Philo both write about him. Jorgen Verner Hansen has shown that Gnostics used Seth to determine critical genealogical roles.⁴⁷ For example, even though Jesus is associated with the “Son of Man” (also referred to as *Autogenes*) in *ApJohn*, by following the description of the birth of Seth in that document, *Adamas* is actually the Son of Man and his son is Seth. There are even Jewish traditions that accept that Seth wrote down revelations divinely given to him (*2 Enoch* 33:10). Whereas “there are no Christian sources that ascribe any special knowledge to Seth.”⁴⁸ On the contrary, and even more to the point, Seth is at best a forgotten figure in the latter world of Christianity. In Christian literature, it is the Christ, the one who succeeds in manifesting God’s design for humanity, rather than Seth, who becomes the figure contrasted with the first Adam, who failed to accomplish God’s initial intentions.

⁴⁶ See Klijn, *Seth in Jewish*, 20-23 and George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 364-367.

⁴⁷Jorgen Verner Hansen, “Adamas and the Four Illuminators in Sethian Gnosticism,” in *Rethinking Religion: Studies in the Hellenistic Process*, ed. J. Podemann Sorensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1989), 62-63.

⁴⁸ Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 76.

Years earlier Friedländer posited that Gnosticism had its beginnings in Judaism rather than in Christianity. That declaration was pre-Nag Hammadi. Now, with such textual examples as these from Nag Hammadi, the list of authorities that see Jewish roots showing through Gnostic writings continues to swell. Differing only in degree, those that see a Jewish-Gnosticism continuum include Gedaliahu Stroumsa, Robert McLaren Wilson, Gilles Quispel, Alan Segal, George MacRae, Kurt Rudolph, Birger Pearson, Henry Green, Jarl Fossum, Edwin Yamauchi, and Carl Smith.

In addition to what has been described above, Carl Smith believes some of the strongest arguments for a Jewish origin for Gnosticism is its preoccupation with themes and terms derived from the Hebrew Bible and Jewish speculation. Everyone agrees that the best information to gather for such conclusions should come from the Gnostics themselves, from their own texts and the self-designations that the Gnostics used in those texts. Upon observation, it is fairly obvious that these Gnostic terms have a Jewish origin, such as the Gnostics' absorption of the terms "elect," "seed," and "sons of light." There is also the existence of Hebrew puns and plays on words in the Gnostic texts that indicate that the authors knew Hebrew, since such usages would not transfer in translation.⁴⁹

Alan Segal's thesis is unique in that he proposes that the "radicalization of Gnosticism" (a term in itself that intimates connection) was a product of an ongoing battle between the Rabbis, the Christians, and various other sectarians who were struggling over the

⁴⁹ Smith, *No Longer Jews*, 39. See similar thoughts from Pearson in Birger Pearson, "Jewish Sources in Gnostic Literature," In *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, M. Stone, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 443-81.

idea of two heavenly powers.⁵⁰ A good deal of his research deals with rabbinic writings from the early tannaitic period that deal with the obvious Jewish understanding of how two powers in heaven would be viewed as heresy. That makes the problem early, perhaps earlier than was originally thought and possibly even pre-Christian.

PHEME PERKINS IS STRONGER IN HER CONVICTIONS REGARDING THIS ISSUE. She adds that not only do the Gnostic storytellers use terms and wordplays that are Jewish but even their borrowing of literary models and exegetical methods belie a Semitic speaking background.⁵¹ Noting that Gnostic stories portray the Old Testament God in negative, even vicious, terms, Perkins finds it easy to read this as the language of revolt rather than simple disagreement.⁵² If Christianity, with its Jewish roots, has been sometimes labeled as anti-Semitic, simply on the reading of its texts, then Gnosticism should more easily be labeled as such. Gnostic language is both more specific and more caustic. Perkins is convinced that both Gnosticism and Christianity emerged from the same environment during the same time and that Gnosticism does not represent a second-century Hellenizing of Christianity. Only in the texts does Perkins believe that Christianity emerges more quickly.⁵³

⁵⁰ Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1977).

⁵¹ Perkins, *Gnosticism and the New Testament*, 28-29.

⁵² PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 16-17.

⁵³ In *The Gnostic Dialogue* Perkins writes, “We suggest that the hostility and ambivalence toward Judaism in Gnostic writings—so similar to the Johannine version that some have taken it as evidence of Gnostic influence on John—seem to us to derive from a similar experience in which *the Jewish community* (italics mine) acted violently and decisively against such speculation.” (p. 18)

And George MacRae summarizes where he believes all scholarship should be on this issue.

The fact that Gnosticism arose out of Jewish apocalyptic (and wisdom) tradition, however radical the revolt against the Jewish matrix may have been, is now very broadly acknowledged, especially in view of the prominent Jewish elements in the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts....The evidence of Jewish traditions in *every* known form of Gnostic thought in that period is too overwhelming to be ignored.⁵⁴

Objections to the Thread of Connection

In spite of MacRae's clear position, there are those that would challenge the opinion that Gnosticism's ties are to Judaism first, and Christianity second. To this end no voice is louder than Simone Pétrement. Pétrement believes in a purely Christian origin to Gnosticism, an origin that is post New Testament. She finds no Jewish origins in the Gnostic texts nor does she find clues in the New Testament that indicate the existence of Gnostic opposition to the early church. Even with its broadest definition, including non-Christian Gnosticism, Pétrement states, "Given the fact that all the forms of non-Christian Gnosticism seem to be attested later than Christian Gnosticism – not counting the fact that properly Gnostic ideas are less pronounced and less distinctive in the former than in the latter – one cannot be sure that Gnosticism was not initially Christian."⁵⁵

However, it is revealing to look at her specific objections, especially to the texts we have evaluated above. Pétrement takes issue with the view that the *ApJohn* was Christianized

⁵⁴ George MacRae, "Apocalyptic Eschatology in Gnosticism" In *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism*. (Ed. By David Hellholm. Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989) 319.

⁵⁵ Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism* Translated by Carol Harrison (San Francisco, CA : Harper, 1990) 4.

at a later date. That puts her into an extreme minority. Specifically, she believes the four illuminators in the text are influenced by Valentinian thinking, in spite of what I have presented above to the contrary.⁵⁶ However, she does not actually refute the specific argument presented above and her logic is difficult and tedious. In fact she ultimately acknowledges two things. First, she writes that little can be determined, at least in a way that could be categorized as certain. Second, she is candid in revealing that almost all scholars understand that the illuminators are “the most certain proof that this work cannot be a development of Valentinianism, but on the contrary is witness to an earlier doctrine from which Valentinianism derived.”⁵⁷ And more surprisingly, she ultimately admits that the source of the illuminators could come from *I Enoch* and Ezekiel, two Jewish texts.⁵⁸ Her treatment of explaining how the demiurge and Sophia have later, Valentinian influence, is more convincing. Yet it is still a subjective argument and ultimately, in comparing the two texts, she finds considerable differences in the *Apocryphon*'s description of the divine world and that of Valentinianism. She writes, “In the description of the divine world, there are more differences between the doctrine of the *Apocryphon* and Valentinianism than in the myth of Sophia. Of these differences some seem unimportant, but others seem at first sight to imply that there is something really new in the *Apocryphon*.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 388-406.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 392.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 410. She does not, however, go on to explain what she means by “new.” It seems to be just “different.”

Pétrément objects as well to the theory that the *ApocAdam* has been designated as one of the Nag Hammadi's collection of non-Christian texts. Part of her argument resembles the same issue concerning the *ApJohn* in that she sees the Illuminator in the text as representative of Christ.⁶⁰ Her strongest argument with this text revolves around the ending of the document, which reads, "Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus, living water." Pétrément sees in this an obvious contortion of the title "Jesus of Nazereth."⁶¹ It is in fact a reasonable if not compelling argument. It would be more compelling, however, if that ending only had the initial two words – Yesseus Mazareus. But that is not the case. There is a third word, Yessedekus, that she has no comment on. It is at least equally compelling that this is not a distortion and the title does indeed include all three words and designates someone other than Jesus. And even if we were to accept Pétrément's view, the positioning of the words could easily be relegated to a later redaction.

Her final argument with this manuscript is to claim that the ideas in it are drawn from the *ApJohn* which is, according to her previous contention, Valentinian in theology.⁶² But the argument is circular and of her own creation. First, she tediously establishes a questionable link from Valentinianism to the *ApJohn*. Then she claims the use of the *ApJohn* by the author of the *ApocAdam*. Finally, without demonstrating either textual or philosophical connections, she claims the *ApocAdam* as Valentinian. Few recognize the validity of the proposal and the majority, if not nearly all scholars, would embrace the opposite chronological framework.

⁶⁰ I have dealt with that above in the immediately preceding paragraph as well as page 23.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 435-436.

I believe Simone Pétrement's work is nevertheless valuable and significant for other reasons. She has made a substantial case for how closely Gnosticism is related to Christianity. However, if all theories that suggest a single origin for this syncretistic movement have the critical weakness assessed to them of being short sighted, then this one suffers most from it. Those claiming a Jewish origin to Gnosticism may have blinders on in some aspects of their theory but they do not disregard the important part that Christianity played in the process. Few if any scholars claim Judaism as the single origin of Gnosticism while disregarding Christianity's important role in the process. Their disagreement with Pétrement is as much chronological as it is ideological.⁶³ In simple terms, Jewish-origin theorists include Christianity in the larger scheme of the development of Gnosticism while Pétrement does not return the favor. And in this dissertation, I am not insisting that at a later time Christianity was not critically engaged in a religious battle against Gnosticism. In fact that seems to be exactly the case. But we are dealing with origins in this thesis, early beginnings and incipient ideas that would expand over time, and rapidly at that. From what has been presented thus far, it is much more reasonable to see direct rather than indirect lines from Judaism to Gnosticism.

⁶³ Even Bultmann, controversial on this topic as he may be, in the 1950's understood that, chronologically speaking, Gnosticism was developing before Christianity. "It first appeared and attracted the attention of scholars as a movement within the Christian religion, and for a long time it was regarded as a purely Christian movement, a perversion of the Christian faith into a speculative theology, the "acute" Hellenization of Christianity. Further research has, however, made it abundantly clear that it was really a religious movement of pre-Christian origin, invading the West from the Orient as a competitor of Christianity." Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957) 162.

In supporting her position, Pétrement asks several questions to challenge anyone positing a theory of origins contrary to hers. Why is the appearance of Gnosticism so closely tied (time-wise) to the appearance of Christianity? Where would the figure of a savior best come from? Why was Gnosticism rejected as a specifically Christian heresy? What better explanation of the reversal of Jewish values concerning the physical world and the resultant blatant dualism of Gnosticism can there be than the crucifixion of Christ and Pauline theology of the cross? These are excellent and indispensable questions. And some of them will be answered in this paper. However, none of these questions need to address the *initial* point on the continuum of religious development connecting Jewish Apocalypticism, Christianity and Gnosticism. In each instance her answer and mine are the same – Christianity. However, in each case I would explain that Christianity acts *as a catalyst* propelling pre-Gnostics away from their Jewish apocalyptic roots. In fact, this is the best explanation of how and when those specifically non-Jewish elements of Gnosticism came about so quickly.⁶⁴ Most would agree that more fully developed Gnosticism has strong Christian associations. But pre- or proto- or incipient Gnosticism has Jewish roots.

I must also address Karen King's view as she takes exception to the Jewish origin theory but for different reasons. King's difficulty is methodological and is summarized as follows:

To be clear, my point is not to locate the origins of Gnosticism apart from Judaism; indeed, that would be impossible, both because Gnosticism is not a monolithic phenomenon with a single point of origin, and because ancient cultural hybridity does not allow for one tradition to originate wholly within or outside of another. Although

⁶⁴ My one objection would be to question four. Even Friedländer has shown that although Gnosticism has its greatest opponent in Christianity, it is not solely dismissed as a Christian heresy but previously as a Jewish heresy.

I am arguing against the Jewish origin of Gnosticism, I do not intend to defend some other essentialized religion as an alternative site for Gnostic origins.⁶⁵

In essence, for King the discussion itself is a wasted effort. Her somewhat postmodern methodological stance does not allow room for creating historical lines of connection that can be clarified. In fact, it is her purpose to blur those lines. Although she does accept the findings of these discussions as having “lasting importance,” King does not mince words in declaring the search for “the” origin of Gnosticism as folly. “Any attempt to resolve the multifarious materials into a single origin and linear genealogy is doomed to fail on its own premise. Such an approach cannot solve the problem of the origin of Gnosticism because no such monolithic entity ever existed.”⁶⁶

As intelligible as this criticism sounds, I firmly believe that at its root it is a matter of semantics, specifically concerning the word “origin.” That Gnosticism is syncretistic is a non-indubitable position and I do not believe any scholar holding to the Jewish origin theory would differ with this. No one is arguing that the development of Gnosticism occurred in a Jewish vacuum. Origination does not seek to identify the first, “pure,” unentangled concept. Origination is asking at what point and under what circumstances did a group of people begin to create new ideas or drift away from their formative context. And that question *always* has an answer, regardless of how difficult it is to attain. No one is picturing an individual or group conceptualizing a new movement “from scratch.” But we are all seeking to answer, as best as possible, what group, from what context, after exposure to a variety of new contexts or even crisis experiences, began to make modifications to their current worldview. Carl

⁶⁵ King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 188.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

Smith's thoughts echo mine. He points out that the "multiplicity of proposals" that have been suggested for Gnostic origins, each one with some degree of validity, should not be taken as King would propose that the quest for the origin of Gnosticism is hopeless and should be abandoned. Rather it simply reemphasizes that Gnosticism is both complex and syncretistic while simultaneously exhibiting a unique underlying myth. The anti-cosmism and concept of the demiurge that are absolutely essential to its existence signal the religious uniqueness of Gnosticism. But should that mean that searching for origins is hopeless and therefore to be abandoned? No. But it does accentuate the fact that the effort will at the very least be challenging. Yet the challenge is not to find a single or definitive source for Gnosticism. "Rather, what may be determined is *a* ripe intellectual and historical (and perhaps geographical) context in which the innovation of Gnosticism could have occurred, resulting in the creative Gnostic religion of the early second century C.E."⁶⁷

Furthermore, those supporting a Jewish context to the origin of Gnosticism are not positing that it came from only a textual Judaism but rather that version of practicing "Judaisms" present at the time, syncretistic in its own right. No scholar today can speak intelligently about a monolithic Judaism. The diversity exhibited within Judaism has been successfully delineated over the last two decades. In the case of this thesis it is specifically apocalyptic Judaism that serves as the original context from which those modifications developed.⁶⁸ And even the study of Jewish apocalypticism has resulted in the understanding of that phenomenon in the light of a highly syncretistic context, including influences from but

⁶⁷ Carl Smith, *No Longer Jews*, 18.

⁶⁸ That differs significantly from those demanding a strictly Christian origin to Gnosticism which then, in fact, does have to ignore one of the external contexts – Judaism.

not exclusive to, Babylon, Persia, Assyria and Egypt. King is setting up a straw man that does not exist, or even worse, is already existent in the mind of all scholars.

King also wrongly interprets motivations behind a great deal of the research done by all sides in attempting to discern clearer origins for Gnosticism. It appears that she believes the research is done with a bias toward Christianity. She states, “it is aimed at delimiting the normative boundaries and definition of Christianity.”⁶⁹ And the overarching result, according to King, is that the social and historical processes become distorted. The purpose of determining the origin of Gnosticism becomes “less historical than rhetorical.”⁷⁰

It is hard to see how King can make such a claim, unless she is starting with the perception and then moving backward to justify it. This sounds more like a criticism that could legitimately be aimed at the early church fathers. It seems unfounded to suggest this of modern scholarship. She seems to feel that the study done to determine the origin of Gnosticism has put Christianity into a superior position and Gnosticism in a less strong or less favorable light. Then she determines that such a position is “less historical” than it should be. Therefore the research is more rhetorical than historical. She gives no examples of her claim and the idea that scholars like Pearson, Jonas, Grant, Smith, and others, with strong positions that tie Gnosticism to Judaism, rather than Christianity, are attempting to “delimit the normative boundaries and definition of Christianity” is as groundless as is the claim that such scholars are more interested in rhetoric than history.

⁶⁹ King, *What is Gnosticism*, 189.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Even Closer Ties Between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism

So far we have been considering the Gnostic ties to Judaism in a more general way. When looked at in the more specific light of Jewish apocalypticism and its development, the connection between Gnosticism and Judaism is even more probable. It also presents us with a reasonable timeline to perceive this as a continuum, albeit a loosely held one. In four very specific ways, Jewish apocalypticism affords us an even stronger context that supports a close connection to Gnosticism: the use of titles, the particular style of writing, the use of liturgy, and its terms of self-definition.⁷¹ It is these four areas I now wish to examine and in these four areas I will move from the general to the specific.

First, a simple observation can be made as to the Jewish origin of document titles found at Nag Hammadi. I use the word “simple” intentionally here. This is not an observation that needs detailed explication. Neither is it a point to be completely ignored. There are only two reasonable origins to the titles of the Nag Hammadi texts. They are either borrowed from early Christian or first century Jewish usage. Both solutions are acceptable to my theory. However, it seems more reasonable to me, with the dominance of apocalyptic style found in those texts, that the terms “apocryphon” and “apocalypse” are borrowed specifically from Jewish Apocalyptic sources. The term “gospel,” on the other hand, is of Christian origin. Of the three most common genre titles of Nag Hammadi texts (gospel,

⁷¹ The categories I explicate here are an expansion of a more succinct study by David Frankfurter, “The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories,” in James C. VanderKam and William Adler, eds., *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 150-162.

apocryphon and apocalypse), the latter two were first used in Jewish writings. And of all three, the most common is the title of “Apocalypse.”⁷²

Second, it is easy to see lines of continuity between Gnostic texts and Jewish apocalyptic texts by the style of writing used in securing religious truths. The Nag Hammadi documents can be separated somewhat accurately into two styles: those where an otherworldly mediator divulges truth in a monologue form and those where truths are given by those mediators as answers to questions posed by a human component.⁷³ Both of these styles can be seen in, and just as likely understood to derive from, Jewish apocalypses. *1 Enoch* (particularly the opening section known as the Book of the Watchers), *3 Baruch* and *4 Ezra* are examples of truth ascertained through a human mediator posing questions. *Daniel* and *2 Baruch* are examples of lengthy monologues given by angels.

George Nicklburg has written a thorough commentary on the book of *1 Enoch*. He has found the stylistic similarities between that document and Gnostic texts to be quite

⁷² Worth noting is Gershom Scholem’s article entitled, “Jaldabaoth Reconsidered” [In *Mélanges D’Histoire des Religions Offerts a Henri-Charles Puech*. Paul Lévy and Etienne Wolff, eds. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974) 405-429]. Scholem’s work deals with the term “Jaldabaoth.” Although not used as a title of any text, Jaldabaoth is a critical term in Gnostic cosmology, referring to the Demiurge. Scholem makes connections between this term and its Jewish roots. Ultimately, Scholem sees this as a distortion of the term “Sabaoth.” His fairly elaborate analysis leads him to believe that the term owes its invention to a Jew familiar with Aramaic who in the context of the Ophitic myth, created it as a secret name of Samuel. A key here is that it refers to an early time when Jews in the *pre-Christian period* (italics mine) used the plural Sebaoth to represent the totality of heavenly beings and powers.

⁷³ Frankfurter refers to these two forms as the dialogue and the discourse. “The Legacy,” 155.

exact.⁷⁴ These observations have their most specific expressions when comparing *I Enoch* to the *ApJohn*, *On the Origin of the World* and *Pistis Sophia*.

Four major elements that appear in both *I Enoch* and *The ApJohn* are the plot, the mating of heavenly beings with earthly women, the revelation of special secrets and the punishments. *On the Origin of the World* follows the same story line in *I Enoch* where evil other worldly beings live among humans in order to purposefully teach error. *Pistis Sophia* even seems to refer to *I Enoch* 32 where Enoch is at the tree of wisdom. The author of *Pistis Sophia* expands on that event by claiming Enoch's authorship of the two books of Jeu at that time. Like classic Gnostic thought, *I Enoch* offers salvation through revealed wisdom transmitted in sacred writings. In similar fashion, the content of the Enochic revelations centers on a powerful dualism between the heavenly and the earthly realms, spelled out in a mythology that narrates a primordial fall of divine beings. In *I Enoch* the watchers give birth to those who inherit their evil nature and continue to exist on earth as evil spirits. In the Gnostic myths evil matter filters down and becomes constitutive of the evil world and its inhabitants, who are dominated by a variety of archons. In both cases the evil must await eschatological judgment. These are significant similarities that must be ignored when Christianity, rather than Jewish apocalypticism, becomes the starting point. According to Nickelburg, the Enochic and Gnostic myths may go back to a common story that counterposed two races, the Sethian begotten by Adam and the Cainite begotten by Satan.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ George Nickelburg, *I Enoch*, 98-99.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Frankfurter also stresses these “connections of style” in his analysis of the *ApocAdam*.⁷⁶ He believes that this apocalypse is so identical in style to what earlier Jewish works referred to as “Testaments” that it cannot responsibly be ignored. From the preface of the text, where Adam is teaching his son Seth, the style is intended to “trigger the audience’s associations with testament literature.”⁷⁷ For Frankfurter, the *ApocAdam* represents a transition, or in his words “an evolution,” from Jewish apocalypse to Gnostic apocalypse.

PHEME PERKINS not only agrees with Frankfurter but is stronger in her emphasis. She believes that the *Apoc. Adam* can only be read intelligently when read in the context of the same literary patterns developed in intertestamental Jewish literature. These she specifically identifies as the apocalyptic testament, periodized history and exaltation-judgment scene, along with parallels to Jewish haggadic traditions. Her conclusion concerning the author of the *Apoc. Adam* is that “the author has taken over the format of a testament of Adam and reversed the roles and values of the main characters so that Adam, in the end, reveals the futility of serving the god of Israel.”⁷⁸

BIRGER PEARSON states just as boldly that in style, the *ApocAdam* is Jewish in its genre. It is apocalyptic in that it is revealed through heavenly beings and a testament since it is a speech given by Adam to his son shortly before his death.⁷⁹ And both apocalypse and testament are specifically Jewish styles of literature.

⁷⁶ Frankfurter, “The Legacy,” 158.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ PHEME PERKINS, “Apocalypse of Adam: The Genre and Function of a Gnostic Apocalypse” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39:3 (1977), 394.

⁷⁹ Birger Pearson, “The Problem of ‘Jewish Gnostic’ Literature,” 28.

Pearson has further clarified four aspects of Jewish apocalyptic style that have evolved into Gnostic cosmology.⁸⁰ Jewish apocalyptic texts deal with what is above (cosmology), what is beneath, what was beforetime (cosmogony), and what is to come.⁸¹ A great deal of the material found in Jewish apocalyptic texts is cosmological in its focus and explanation. *I Enoch* is filled with details of the sun, moon, other heavenly bodies and God himself. That text also includes visions of underworld (ch. 21 and 27) as do the apocalyptic texts of *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. A majority of Jewish apocalyptic texts show detailed interest in the primordial past and especially in the Genesis interpretation of that past. And although the interest in what is to come is not confined only to Jewish Apocalyptic texts, it certainly is a critical ingredient in them.

These four categories are also seen in the Gnostic texts we have. *ApJohn* is detailed in its depiction of God and heaven as is another document from Nag Hammadi, *Allogenes*. *ApJohn* also has a treatment of the underworld. Many of the Gnostic texts, as has already been noted, are not only concerned with what was beforehand but are concerned in the same way as the Jewish Apocalypticists with the Genesis account of it, albeit if only to redirect that account. Of course eschatology is a prime ingredient in Gnostic writings. For Pearson, of course, these comparisons clarify once again that “one can say the same thing about Gnosticism as about Christianity: both of them emerged out of a Jewish matrix.”⁸²

⁸⁰ All of the following can be found in Pearson, “From Jewish,” 156-159. In this section, Pearson also refers to chapters 4-7 of Christopher Rowland’s book, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

⁸¹ The actual categories are taken from a Mishnaic quote from *M. Hag. 2.1*.

⁸² Pearson, “From Jewish,” 159.

In addition, Frankfurter has observed that the use of liturgy within revelatory texts, found extensively in the Gnostic texts, is of Jewish origin.⁸³ In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* there is significant attention given to hymns, recitations and even a baptismal chant. The *Books of Jeu* include hymns. *Pistis Sophia* also has hymns occurring throughout the text. This enigma seems rooted in earlier Jewish tradition. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* as well as the Qumran Sabbath Songs not only include hymns but elevate their importance in the process of reciters who seek to join those heaven bound. The Egyptian *2 Enoch* and the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* include liturgy as part of the revelation. Frankfurter's point is not that liturgy cannot be found throughout Mediterranean cultures but that the inclusion of it in heavenly revealed texts begins with Judaism and flows to Gnosticism. It provides us with one more link between the two systems.

Finally, Gnostic writings have clearly borrowed Jewish terms for the purpose of self-definition.⁸⁴ It is simply impossible to believe that Gnostic writers, frequently referencing Jewish texts in their work, did not borrow these terms from the texts they critique. These terms were clearly originally used by Jewish writers to define Judaism, prior to any possible association of those same terms with Christian contexts. Some of the more critical terms are "elect," "saints," and "children of light." The use of the term "elect" occurs repeatedly not only in the Hebrew Bible (1 Chronicles 16:13, Psalm 105:6, Isaiah 43:20, etc.) but also in extra-biblical Jewish apocalyptic literature such as the book of *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch* as well

⁸³ Frankfurter, "The Legacy," 154-155.

⁸⁴ Birger Pearson has pointed out several of these terms in "Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of Gnostic Self-Definition," In *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, E.P. Sanders, ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 151-160.

as sectarian texts such as Qumran *Community Rule* (1QS). “Saints” (found in Daniel 7:18 and *The War Rule* or 1QM 10:10) and “children of light” (1QM 1:1 and 1QS 1:9) are even more apocalyptic in their Jewish origin and are used in several of the Nag Hammadi texts in reference to those experiencing special *gnosis*.

The term “seed” is also significant. In numerous documents recovered from Nag Hammadi, particularly those designated as Sethian, the Gnostics apply the term to themselves. And the importance of the term is based on their interpretation of Genesis 4:25, “And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, ‘For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.’” In comparing the Gnostic documents with Philo’s treatise on this verse the resemblance is remarkable.⁸⁵ Philo states that those who love virtue and piety may all be classed under Seth as the author of their race (*Post.* 42) and that Seth is indeed the seed of human virtue who will never quit the race of mankind. (*Post.* 173).⁸⁶ Although the Gnostics would ultimately see themselves even as the “seed” of God himself, the reason a sub group of Gnosticism has been labeled the Sethian Gnostics is for this very same use of Genesis 4:25. Sethian Gnostics see a special office given to Seth and view themselves as his seed.⁸⁷

It really should not be surprising that scholarship continues to lean more favorably toward Judaism, and even more specifically toward Jewish Apocalypticism, in its attempt to

⁸⁵ “The Posterity and Exile of Cain,” In C. D. Yonge, trans., *The Works of Philo*. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 132-151.

⁸⁶ Also note Pearson’s comments on this issue. Pearson, “Jewish Elements,” 157.

⁸⁷ See *Apocryphon of John* II.9.15 as well as the Gospel of the Egyptians III.54.9-11 and 59.25f. However, special note should be take concerning the *Apocalypse of Adam*. The treatise itself is a special revelation of Adam given to Seth as the special seed given by God.

understand the evolution of the Gnostic movement. The connections are significant in both number and interpretation. And the more we learn from the Nag Hammadi texts the stronger the conviction becomes. Even Jean Magne in his book interestingly entitled, *From Christianity to Gnosis and From Gnosis to Christianity*, actually begins with Judaism. Although his point is to show the mutual influence between Christianity and Gnosticism, Magne sees the initial starting point of Gnosticism to be indissolubly linked to the Bible and Judaism, so those with Gnostic views originally would wish to convert the Jews, and the Jews defend their faith against the new Gnostics, with the Bible, becoming the main arena of theological combat.⁸⁸

The Jewish Apocalyptic movement adds more proof to this idea. The rapid development of Jewish Apocalypticism in the last two centuries before and the century following the birth of the Christian era serves to strengthen the possibility of a direct line between that apocalyptic movement and pre-Christian Gnostic thought. We should not be surprised by the views of both Frankfurter and Pearson.

Frankfurter's analysis is clearly critical for my own theory as he proposes a continuity or continuum, albeit a literary one, running from Jewish Apocalypticism through Gnosticism.⁸⁹ According to Frankfurter, the trajectory of apocalypticism in Egypt began with a literary process of apocalyptic composition and redaction already practiced among Jewish circles in Palestine and beyond since the Hellenistic period. Christian apocalypticism and Gnostic myth then also developed from Jewish apocalypticism. Although he clearly outlines

⁸⁸ Jean Magne, *From Christianity to Gnosis and From Gnosis to Christianity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 65.

⁸⁹ Frankfurter, "The Legacy," 143.

a chronological movement, for Frankfurter, the matrix from which all three movements developed is first of all geographical, generally beginning and growing in Asia Minor, and then moving to Egypt.

Pearson's assessment is similar in that he believes what is surmised about the development of Christianity can be identically duplicated for Gnosticism. That may be a simplistic way of stating his case but in essence, both Christianity and Gnosticism emerged out of a Jewish matrix. Although he is less concerned about geography than Frankfurter, the movement from Jewish apocalypticism to Gnosis should be understood in the historical context of the movement from Judaism to Gnosticism.⁹⁰

Carl Smith is one of the more recent scholars that has taken the time to posit a very specific context for the movement away from Jewish Apocalypticism and toward Gnosticism.⁹¹ He supposes that a crisis propelled Gnosticism to rise out of Judaism and he puts the timing of that crisis anywhere between 200 B.C.E. to 150 C.E. Smith's "crisis theory" is his way of answering the one question that continues to haunt those positing a Jewish origin of Gnosticism. Since there are no precedents of Jewish sectarianism that invert Jewish values so flagrantly, the credibility of the theory that Gnosticism, with its radically anti-Jewish philosophy, grew out of Judaism is weakened considerably. Smith believes that a significant crisis was needed to provide the context necessary for such drastic change.⁹² In his hypothesis much of Gnosticism could have developed without any specific crisis.

⁹⁰ Pearson, "From Jewish Apocalypticism," 159.

⁹¹ Carl B. Smith, *No Longer Jews*, Although the entire book deals with the theory, his specific suggestion can be found on pages 244f.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 48.

Hermeneutics, for example, could have inspired much of the Gnostic innovations that led to such distinctions as Docetism and the unique Gnostic mythological theories of emanations. But the development of the most radical feature of Gnosticism when comparing it to Judaism, that of the strong anti-cosmic dualism and the harsh reversal of the image of the Jewish God of the Hebrew Bible, could only occur within the context of a serious crisis within Judaism. And the crisis would have had to be of such a proportion to cause a profound enough disappointment that would result in a departure from one's faith. He then notes that in the three and a half centuries mentioned above, Judaism weaved its way through a tumultuous period that resulted in a multitude of internal innovations, including the Maccabean Revolt, the development of the Qumran community, the Jewish temple of Onias in Egypt, three Jewish sects of Josephus, Christianity, the Sicarii, and rabbinic Judaism.⁹³

Although his belief is that the crisis that was most reasonable to propose was the 115-117 C.E. revolt in Cyrenaic and Egypt against Trajan, he admits that there are a number of events that could have served as that crisis.⁹⁴ The question I would pose to Smith is this: What if the crisis Smith seeks was more simply the rise of Christianity?

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁹⁴ Smith includes a helpful summary of those other positions as proposed by their original supporters: Douglas Parrott's theory and the Hasmonean period, Kurt Rudolph choosing first-century Palestine, Robert Grant's work around the Jewish revolt of 66-74 C.E., Nils Dahl in the period between the Jewish revolts and Edwin Yamauchi's, Stephen Wilson's and Alan Segal's slightly differing proposals for the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and Birger Pearson and his view that this occurred in Egypt among Hellenized Jews just prior to the Christian era. *No Longer Jews*, 44-71.

Christianity as the Definitive Catalyst

In 1994, Aarhus University's Per Bilde advanced the theory that Gnosticism originated from Jewish Apocalypticism through the medium of early Christianity.⁹⁵ Bilde's theory was unique in attempting to frame the connection in terms of space and time by inserting Christianity as the decisive catalyst. Bilde answers the how, where, and when aspects of the hypotheses by pointing to Jesus, Paul, and John. Jewish Apocalypticism, early Christianity, and Gnosticism represent three stages in a continual religio-historical development in which Gnosticism is the climactic or "logical" conclusion. Obviously, it is crucial for my thesis to understand Bilde's proposal in detail.

Bilde accepts the theory that Gnostic roots are buried in Judaism, and particularly Jewish Apocalypticism.⁹⁶ Bilde also recognizes that such a theory raises contradictory issues already discussed. How can Judaism, with a positive attitude to this world and its creator, be reconciled with the philosophical rejection of the world that we find so strongly held in all Gnostic teaching? And how do we get from Judaism to the well-developed Gnosticism of the second century, which is so blatantly anti-Jewish? Bilde answers these questions through the insertion of early Christianity into the chronological timeline.

⁹⁵ Per Bilde, "Gnosticism, Jewish Apocalypticism, and Early Christianity," in Jeppesen, Knud, Bent Rosendal and Kirsten Nielsen, eds., *In the Last Days: On Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic and its Period* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994), 9-32.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-10. Bilde writes, "To me there can be little doubt about the solid historical connections between these two religious currents.... Accordingly, today the general Jewish influence on Gnosticism seems to be an established fact in no need to be demonstrated once again."

For Bilde, one does not get to Gnosticism from Jewish Apocalypticism except through early Christianity. In actuality, Bilde's methodology is to combine the best of the two most accepted theories: that Gnosticism developed from Jewish Apocalypticism and that it developed from Christianity. One movement (Jewish Apocalypticism) provides the roots while the other (early Christianity) provides the context. In this short article, Bilde does a very efficient job of analyzing and comparing the fundamental elements of the three systems (Jewish Apocalypticism, early Christianity, and Gnosticism) and then drawing conclusions from his work that tie them together.

Choosing to ignore the current trend of scholars to divide Gnosticism into specific sub-divisions (theological, philosophical, phenomenological, sociological, etc.), Bilde's method to develop his thesis is to initially focus on what he calls the overarching "essence of Gnosticism."⁹⁷ This essence is characterized by five fundamental elements. The first element is captured in the idea of *gnosis*. Natural knowledge is not true knowledge. A precise revealed knowledge is necessary for proper understanding and acceptance. The second element is that of a cosmic dualism that is developed through a particular mythology. This mythology is very specific and re-interprets older texts and thought. Thirdly, Gnosticism is in need of a revealer figure or teacher who becomes the mediator of the gnosis that is necessary for salvation. There is a point, and person, in time that serves as a revealer of divinity to humanity. In addition, the movement is esoteric. The obscure mysteries that lead to

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13. By "essence," Bilde means the fundamental phenomenological elements of the Gnostic religious currents, the basic ideological structure included in these religious currents, the dominating attitudes of the Gnostics, and the existential or psycho-sociological experiences out of which both attitudes and ideology has grown. As you will see above, Bilde outlines five fundamental phenomenological elements that in themselves describe the ideological structure, attitudes and existential experiences of Gnostics.

salvation, when revealed and accepted, lead to a closed community. Lastly, Gnosticism is anti-cosmic. The present, tangible world is evil and meaningless and leaves the true Gnostic, at best, uncomfortable in it, and at worst, falling prey to it.⁹⁸

Bilde then does a similar analysis of the fundamental elements of Jewish Apocalypticism.⁹⁹ He finds the first element in the word “apocalypticism” itself. That word is usually translated as “to reveal,” or “to disclose,” or “to unveil.” In particular, that which is being revealed are the secret plans of God. Secondly, the revealer is significant in Jewish Apocalypticism, whether it be an Enoch, Daniel, John, or the Teacher of Righteousness. There is a person in time that plays that significant role. A third element is the audience. The audience is an exclusive group. It may be the exiled Jews in Babylon or the Qumran community. It may be followers of John or even Jesus. But the audience is always esoteric, separated from the community at large.

Bilde then points out that the aim and socio-psychological context of the message is generally one of consolation and/or exhortation. The apocalyptic writers are addressing a community in crisis that finds itself in spiritual distress. The listeners are struggling to find their footing personally and they are struggling with their faith in a God who is becoming more difficult to understand. Finally, the content of the apocalyptic message seeks to address these struggles of the audience by reinterpreting the promises of God and encouraging the hearers that their present suffering is not the last word of God on the subject. The texts remain the same. The interpretation of them expands. Bilde also notes that in this content

⁹⁸ Note the similarity between Per Bilde’s five characteristics of Gnosticism and those of McLaren Wilson that I use as the basis for this paper (page 7 of my introduction).

⁹⁹ Bilde, “Gnosticism,” 20-23.

there is a growing clarity of the separation of God from the world. Apocalypticism not only reinterprets God's ultimate intervention in the world but also seeks to show that the trials presently suffered are a result of God currently pulling back from the world and allowing Satan to gain control.

Although there is clearly debate among scholars as to the specific elements that Bilde has chosen for the descriptions of Gnosticism and Jewish Apocalypticism, it must be remembered that he is summarizing those elements that characterize the ideological structure, attitudes and existential experiences of these groups. He is not attempting to specifically define every aspect of the two movements but rather gather all those aspects into more general descriptions. I summarize Bilde's analysis here so that the similarity between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism can be readily seen. The consistency of the similarities becomes even more clear when set side by side. I have done so on the following table.

Jewish Apocalypticism	Gnosticism
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reveals the secret plans of God 2. Includes a significant “revealer.” 3. Given to an exclusive group, separated from the world and living in distress 4. Involves a re-interpretation of Scripture 5. Includes encouragement to those finding themselves displaced and marginalized 6. Explains a God that is pulling back from the world, creating a dualistic cosmic outlook 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gnosis is special knowledge which requires special revelation 2. Needs a mediator of the gnosis 3. The obscure mysteries are only revealed to an esoteric group 4. Creates a new mythology from an older one 5. Leaves the believer uncomfortable in this present tangible world 6. Includes a clear cosmic dualism

Table 1: Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism

Specifically, Bilde delineates six characteristics that he finds in both movements: the idea of new interpretation, the role of the teaching prophetic revealer, an esoteric community living in distress, a solution that re-formulates a traditional mythology, a community not feeling at home in the world, and cosmological as well as social dualism.¹⁰⁰

In this first part of Bilde’s article, then, he has competently shown what many others have claimed. The similarities between Gnosticism and Jewish Apocalypticism exist to such

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

an extent that the question of the former originating from the later can be reasonably deduced. In addition, Bilde has also shown that the seed of cosmic dualism that is such a strong element in Gnostic thought was inherent in Jewish Apocalypticism. The seemingly significant “leap” from Judaism to Gnosticism in this particular area becomes more easily evident.

There remained for Bilde to explain, however, the two areas of disassociation between Jewish apocalypticism and Gnosticism that critics cite: the actual figure of the Gnostic Demiurge and the harsh Gnostic attitude towards Judaism. In this theory of connections, these two issues are significantly larger hurdles to overcome than the move to cosmic dualism. This is where Bilde cleverly introduces early Christianity into his argument. And this is where Christianity is most clearly seen in the role as the catalyst between Jewish apocalypticism and Gnosticism.

First, Bilde puts Christianity through the same comparative filter we have just observed and finds the same fundamental elements in early Christianity as he did in both Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism.¹⁰¹ Corresponding to the apocalypticist’s “revelation” and the Gnostic’s “gnosis” is the Christian “gospel.” The divine secrets concerning salvation have been unveiled in this gospel of the kingdom. And this gospel is clearly the only media for salvation. It closely corresponds to the revelation of Jewish Apocalypticism and the *gnosis* of Gnosticism. In early Christianity the prophetic revealer is also of great importance. Only Jesus is the Christ and he becomes the indispensable mediator of a divine knowledge.¹⁰² In this mediator is a revision or a re-interpretation of traditional religious (Jewish) ideology.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 26-28.

¹⁰² In fact, in early Christianity the role of Jesus is even more central than that of the revealer in Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism.

This re-interpretation is in both in his person and his teaching, both of which became stumbling blocks for the established Judaism. As only the chosen few can interpret the apocalyptic revelations of Judaism or receive the *gnosis* of Gnosticism, so the road to understanding through the Christ was narrow. The early Christian community was also esoteric. They were the children of light among children of the darkness. This was an eschatological group of elect that others dared not join easily. Also in similar fashion, the followers of this new way were socially marginalized. In fact, it is precisely because of their new-found faith that they saw themselves as separate from the world, becoming the “called out ones.” They actually rejoiced in the special designation, even if it was misunderstood or caused them suffering. This naturally resulted in a presupposition that the world is fallen and evil, something to be lived in but not accepted; something to be passed through but not counted as “home.” Adding Bilde’s analysis of Christianity to the table above would give us the following comparison, illustrated in Table 2.

Jewish Apocalypticism	Early Christianity	Gnosticism
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reveals the secret plans of God 2. Includes a significant “revealer.” 3. Given to an exclusive group, separated from the world and living in distress 4. Involves a re-interpretation of Scripture 5. Includes encouragement to those finding themselves displaced and marginalized 6. Explains a God that is pulling back from the world, creating a dualistic cosmic outlook 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divine secrets unveiled in this gospel. 2. The prophetic revealer is of greatest importance 3. The community was esoteric. 4. Involves a revision of traditional Jewish ideology 5. The followers of this new way were socially marginalized. 6. The world is evil and temporary 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gnosis is special knowledge which requires special revelation 2. Needs a mediator of the gnosis 3. The obscure mysteries are only revealed to an esoteric group 4. Creates a new mythology from an older one 5. Leaves the believer uncomfortable in this present tangible world 6. Includes a clear cosmic dualism

Table 2: Jewish Apocalypticism, Early Christianity, and Gnosticism

Again, Bilde's point is that we are looking at three interrelated systems of the same type and structure.¹⁰³ This continues to build the case for the religio-philosophical as well as the chronological connections between the three movements. It is at this point that Bilde asks a more specific question, and one addressed by this paper. In early Christianity do we find anything corresponding to the Gnostic idea of the Demiurge and to the strong anti-Jewish attitude of Gnosticism that could bridge the harsh break between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism?¹⁰⁴ Bilde believes this to be the case.¹⁰⁵ He sees in early Christianity the embryonic ideas of the Demiurge and a negative attitude to Judaism. It is first in Christianity and its canon that the "world" is not only interpreted as alien to God but is actually attributed to an evil power opposed to God. The words attributed to Jesus in Matthew 4:8-9 describe Satan as the "master of this world." Jesus even prays for his followers in John 17 not to be taken from the world but to be protected in it, signifying that it is not home territory for the righteous and in fact could be dangerous. It is the "god of this world" that has blinded the minds of unbelievers in 2 Corinthians 4:4. The author of John several times refers to Satan as "the prince of this world" (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In 1 John 5:19 the world is described as being "in the power of the evil one." This is clearly a harsher view toward the world than previous Jewish thought could embrace.

Similarly, at least in part, an opposition to Judaism proper, as seen in the Jewish Apocalypticism of the community of Qumran, is carried into the Christian canon (Matthew

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 28-31.

23; John 8:44; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16) and becomes more pronounced in Gnosticism.

Christianity actually developed into an independent religion through its conflict with Judaism.

And Bilde does not see this anti-Jewish attitude as marginal. Rather it is “absolutely essential and constitutive in Early Christianity.”¹⁰⁶

If you are convinced that the master of this world is not God, but Satan, that the father of the Jewish people is not Abraham, but Satan (John 8:44), and that it was not God who gave the Law, but (evil) angelic powers, then it is not illogical to conclude that Yahweh as the creator of this world, as the father of the Jewish people and as the giver of the Law is the same as Satan.¹⁰⁷

Bilde’s conclusion is of paramount importance to my thesis. He agrees with many that both early Christianity and Gnosticism have their origins primarily in Jewish Apocalypticism. However, he believes that early Christianity also served as a catalyst between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism so that they all serve as three stages in a single religio-historical development that started with Jewish Apocalypticism and reached its logical climax in Gnosticism. The fulcrum of the development was the opposition against traditional Judaism. And Christianity supplies the answers to the most crucial obstacle in the theory. It provided the impetus to become both anti-world and anti-Jewish.

Bilde actually sees this opposition beginning with the Qumran community within Jewish Apocalypticism, growing stronger through early Christianity, and settling within

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 30. At this point Bilde refers to Marcion, who being extremely anti-Jewish, considered himself nothing more or less than a disciple of Paul. I should also note here that in this point I take a different position than Bilde. In my estimation I do not believe that early Christianity was as anti-Jewish as Bilde posits. However, I do believe that the early texts of first century Christianity can be interpreted that way.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

Gnosticism.¹⁰⁸ This development was impossible without Christianity. It became plausible because of Christianity. Eventually it moved through Christianity. And the lines between these three large movements are less rigid and more fluid.

I have spent considerable time on Bilde's theory since it is succinct and relevant to the background of the book of Jude. However, others have added to the scholarship developing around the growing initiative to understand Gnosticism's historical path of development. James VanderKam believes that the growing evidence connecting Gnosticism to Judaism will have to include further study on the linkage between those two and Christianity while blurring the lines between all three. In fact, he believes that the communities responsible for writing *I Enoch* may have been the same communities that wrote early Gnostic texts.¹⁰⁹ Menahem Mansoor, as part of a historic gathering to discuss the origins of Gnosticism in Messina in April of 1966 noted that the Dead Sea Scrolls validate the assumption that the evolution of Jewish and Christian Gnosticism was an internal process.¹¹⁰ Such a statement belies both his belief that there was a pre-Christian Gnosticism directly related to Judaism and that the

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰⁹ He writes, "This influence should not be taken merely in the sense of one religion's use of another's texts. The presence of Gnostic biblical pseudepigrapha with no or little Christian editing (especially the Apocalypse of Adam) and the cogent scholarly proposition of a Jewish proto-Gnosticism should demonstrate that in the Roman period the actual lines between the communities that produced the Enoch literature and those that produced Gnostic texts were probably quite vague, if existing at all. The Gnostic texts probably represent the evolution of communities rather than the importation of others' texts. Moreover, allusions to biblical apocrypha in the writings of the Alexandrian fathers Clement, Origen, and Didymus the Blind suggest that Gnostics constituted only one of a number of lines of development from an originally Jewish Alexandrian 'apocalypticism'." James Vanderkam, *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage*, 162.

¹¹⁰ Menahem Mansoor, "The Nature of Gnosticism in Qumran," in Ugo Bianchi, ed., *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 398.

development of Gnosticism should be considered within the circle of Judaism-Christianity-Gnosticism. Robert McLaren Wilson declares that “there is no question that a major factor in the development of the classic second-century systems was the Christian movement.”¹¹¹ Wilson specifically means that even though current research is solidifying the connection between Gnosticism and Judaism, it still took an active interaction with Christianity to produce the Gnosticism that we now know. Van Groningen adds interesting support.¹¹² He believes that both the Talmudic and Apocalyptic literature arose from the mainstream of Judaism. Both were unique but fell within the accepted norms of Judaism. However, once the Christians began to appeal to the Jews’ own interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies and apocalyptic literature as substantiation for the claims of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, Judaism began to reject their own writings. This fits well with Bilde’s proposal. As Christianity rose up and appealed to Jewish Apocalyptic writings, which resulted in the distancing between Christianity and Judaism, so this emboldened Gnosticism to do the same. Christianity serves as catalyst.

Riemer Roukema, New Testament professor at Kampen Theological University in the Netherlands, also strongly believes that Gnosticism came out of Judaism. But in his scenario, early Greek Christians expedited the process. These Greek Christians, coming into contact with the Old Testament had questions about the relationship between that God, who seemed to act toward humanity unfairly, and the God they had experienced in converting to

¹¹¹ Robert McLaren Wilson, “Gnosticism,” in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World*, eds. Dan Cohn-Sherbok and John M. Court (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 181.

¹¹² G. Van. Groningen, *First Century Gnosticism: Its Origin and Motifs* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 46-48.

Christianity. At this point in time there were no New Testament texts. Therefore, the early church experience included the exposition of these difficult to accept Old Testament texts. If these Greek Christians had a Platonic background, then, according to Roukema, it would be easy for them to refuse to identify the God of the Old Testament with the highest God but instead, with a lower Creator from Platonism.¹¹³ The next step—becoming even more critical toward the Old Testament God and describing him in greater negative terms—would not be difficult to imagine and would be a natural step to take. Roukema believes that such radical, Platonic interpretations of the Old Testament may have already existed within Judaism even before early Christian influence.¹¹⁴

Pearson, of course, sets his focus on Alexandria and Egyptian Christianity as the area with the most potential for such a development to take place. He has written several monographs to explain his position. By the second century that area of the world had become religiously diverse. Jewish Christianity, apocalyptically oriented Christianity, several types of Christian Gnosticism, proto-orthodox Christianity, and Christian Platonism were some of the movements existing there. Yet in speaking of those groups, Pearson notes, “some of these groups represent *continuities* with varieties of Alexandrian Judaism.”¹¹⁵ In this area of the world, where Gnosticism would flourish, it is the “continuities” that we are focusing on and that hold the key to our understanding of the development of the Gnostic movement.

¹¹³ Riemer Roukema, *Gnosis and Faith in Early Christianity* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999) 117.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Pearson, “Earliest Christianity,” 105.

Kurt Rudolph gives Jewish Apocalypticism more credit than many as to the influence of the Gnostic mindset. He believes that the seeds of Gnostic skepticism were already in the Jewish mind before Christianity. Citing Jewish wisdom teaching, such as the book of Ecclesiastes, where literally everything the author experiences in this world is vain, and the discovered scrolls of Qumran, highly critical of current Jerusalem Judaism, Rudolph believes that the eschatological viewpoint expressed in these factions already had a “pronounced dualistic-pessimistic world view” that saw the present age, or aeon, as temporary and perishing, only to be followed by a future age of redemption.¹¹⁶ As such, Rudolph believes that Jewish Apocalypticism was of itself, prior to Christianity, esoteric, revealed wisdom with the resulting knowledge having an immediate relation to redemption. The movement from this to Gnosticism is easy to grasp. But even Rudolph realizes the part that early Christianity plays when he makes the key assertion that “the process which is plain from the New Testament itself is twofold, the Christianising of Gnosis and the gnosticising of Christianity.”¹¹⁷ You cannot make the jump directly from Jewish Apocalypticism to Gnosticism without Christianity. But, as Rudolph realizes, placing Christianity in the equation brings a logical evolution to the process.

Robert Grant converges on Paul and John as the key authors that unwittingly bridged the Jewish-Gnostic gap. Although Paul does not speak in strong Gnostic terms concerning the animosity existing between the created world and God, he does use the term “world” in an unfavorable sense and he does attribute the present control of the world to the hands of Satan.

¹¹⁶ Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 278, 280-281.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

Grant sees John as taking Pauline language closer to classic Gnostic thought. In John's world God made the cosmos and loved it (John 3:16) and wanted to save it. Yet it was governed by Satan, an archon. Grant believes that for Paul, Satan was the archon of this age while for John he became the archon of this world. John places the Jews, since the advent of Christ, in the realm of the unbelievers. Thus they become the "children of the devil" and "of this world." Only the disciples become those "begotten of God," those born again by water and the spirit. They alone are of God and "not of this world."¹¹⁸ For Grant the conclusion is that the early Christian movement helped pave the way for Gnostic thought. The writings of Paul and John move away from Jewish Apocalypticism and move toward Gnosticism. Both authors retain a Jewish dualism that is temporal and ethical but edge closer to Gnosticism by developing a dualism that is on the threshold of becoming physical and metaphysical.¹¹⁹

Karl-Wolfgang Tröger's work is helpful here as well. Tröger is careful not to attribute too much of Gnostic thought directly to Christian influence. He understands the complex syncretistic context of the times and that other religious and magic movements had their part.¹²⁰ However, he is just as careful to point out the key role that Christianity played. In fact, Tröger believes that many Jewish elements passed into the Gnostic religion by way of

¹¹⁸ Robert Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 176.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹²⁰ And I remind the reader that I also see Gnostic development as complex and syncretistic with a diversity of religious and philosophical thought that was ripe during these early centuries. Remember that my point is not to exclude all other religions beside Judaism and Christianity. My point is that the insertion of Christianity among this diversity is the best explanation for the two contradictory distinctions (anti-Jewish attitude and the Demiurge) of a Gnosticism that has such strong Jewish roots.

Christianity “which, to be sure, has not produced the Gnostic religion but provided the basic and ‘fertile soil’ for the development of certain Gnostic branches.”¹²¹ And Tröger makes this claim while specifically attempting to explain the un-Jewish notion of the Demiurge and its centrality in Gnosticism.

Michael Williams focuses on only one aspect of the Gnostic-Judaism controversy, that of the “demonizing of the Demiurge.”¹²² His comments are helpful here, not because he agrees with Bilde that Christianity is greatly responsible for the separation of good and evil through the creation of a Demiurge but because he imagines that the development of the Demiurge was the result of a process rather than of a crisis.

No one imagines that at some point in antiquity all the Gnostic myths known to us simply appeared overnight. A certain amount of gradual development must naturally be assumed in any theory of Gnostic origins. But it is important to avoid the temptation to imagine this as a unified process, ratcheting irreversibly forward one notch at a time.¹²³

This again is what Bilde is suggesting. The gradual drifting from Jewish Apocalypticism into Gnosticism was anything but “a unified process, ratcheting irreversibly forward one notch at a time.” Bilde’s theory is that Christianity was surprisingly thrown into the mix, a mix that brought new factors to consider into incipient Gnostic thinking, including the idea that the God of this world may not be the God who should be served.

¹²¹ Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, “The Attitude of the Gnostic Religion towards Judaism as Viewed in a Variety of Perspectives,” In *Colloque International sur Les Textes De Nag Hammadi*, Bernard Barc, ed. (Québec: Les Presses de L’Université Laval, 1978), 98.

¹²² See his article by that title. Michael A. Williams “The Demonizing of the Demiurge: The Innovation of Gnostic Myth” in *Innovations in Religious Traditions*, Michael A. Williams, Collett Cox, and Martin S. Jaffee, ed. (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 73-107.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 81.

Williams does believe that Gnosticism has Jewish roots but wants to steer clear of any specific social crisis as an explanation of the move to the belief in a demiurge. For him a crisis could have occurred but may not have been necessary. He believes that religious traditions are simply more volatile than is usually realized and “that constituent elements of the traditions themselves may function as the most significant catalysts for innovation.”¹²⁴ The arguments are weak for linking Gnostic innovation to any specific social crisis. Most of the situations proposed are either not significant enough or not well suited, chronologically speaking. In fact, Williams is skeptical of ever finding a “smoking gun” in any one particular socio-political or socio-economical situation that can clearly be linked to the development of the Demiurge.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, Williams sees the connections.

This links into Bilde and his theory. Bilde argues not for a particular crisis but rather for the rise of a comparative and competitive system between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism. Bilde’s outlook is evolutionary in that he sees a gradual progression of thought inclusive of the various elements of religious diversity present at the time. Although there is clearly a progression in Bilde’s system, there is not a clear linear progression. The lines of connection are philosophically flexible and even somewhat chronologically flexible as well. Bilde would agree with Williams.

In any event, Gnosticism is at least one instance of religious innovation where any satisfactory explanation of its origins needs fully to allow for the dynamic character of religious discourse itself, the capability of people within a tradition to raise new questions about their religious traditions, see new problems, or sense the inadequacy of old attempted solutions to old problems.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

Even Carl Smith, who is convinced of the Jewish roots of Gnosticism and believes the probability to be high that the evolution came through a crisis-development within Judaism, allows for Christianity to be the possible vehicle for this transition. When describing the necessary conditions that would provide a ripe context for the move from Jewish Apocalypticism to Gnosticism, Smith argues against a single source and a definitive context. A syncretistic religion (Gnosticism) developed in a syncretistic environment. Even the multiplicity of proposals generated by scholarship for the origin of Gnosticism gives validity to the idea that there was “a ripe intellectual and historical (and perhaps geographical) context in which the innovation of Gnosticism could have occurred, resulting in the creative Gnostic religion of the early second century C.E.”¹²⁷

Smith has chosen to provide a sociological crisis (the rebellion under Trajan) as the catalyst in his theory that accelerated Gnostic thought. For him it simply makes the most sense. But why could he not be describing the early Christian movement of the first century? The answer, of course, is that he could. And he realizes that this is a strong possibility. According to Smith, Jewish Christianity in the first century that was threatened by traditional Jewish ideology could have easily overstated its rhetoric as part of its defense, thus creating a stronger anti-Judaism polemic. This seems to be the case of the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Because of this it is very possible that Gnosticism developed from Jewish Christians looking for a way to distance themselves from their parent faith. Judaism was not only their primary opponent but a significant source of much of the social and political unrest

¹²⁷ Smith, *No Longer Jews*, 18.

in that area of the world as well. So their strategy was to make Judaism “seem even less appealing through their extreme polemic.”¹²⁸

Smith even couches the language of his conclusion in such a way that strengthens Bilde’s proposal and my argument.

It seems a logical step to conclude that Gnosticism arose in a context in which all three currents were present. That Judaism is absolutely fundamental to Gnosticism is a relative given; yet, one cannot discuss Gnosticism for long without Christianity and Platonism entering the conversation. In fact, Gnosticism seems almost inconceivable without the anti-Judaism and redeemer conceptions that Christianity was developing in the late first and early second centuries.¹²⁹

That Gnosticism “seems almost inconceivable without the anti-Judaism conceptions that Christianity was developing” is just the point. It is the contemporaneous rise of Christianity out of Judaism, rather than the untimely uprising of Jews under Trajan, that supplies a context for that specific distinction of Gnosticism, with its Jewish roots, that is difficult to explain—its strong anti-Judaism tone.

Ithamar Gruenwald and PHEME PERKINS, however, have provided the most support, among current scholarship, for Bilde’s position. Both arrived at their conclusions before the appearance of Bilde’s article. Both are convinced of the Jewish roots of Gnosticism and Christianity’s key role in its development.

Ithamar Gruenwald begins with Paul, as others have, in his analysis of how significant the rise of Christianity is to the development of key anti-Jewish facets of Gnosticism. It is very likely, according to Gruenwald, that the Gnostic attitude towards Judaism owes more

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

than a little to writers of early Christian literature, like Paul, who criticized Jewish writings.¹³⁰ For example, in Acts 7, Galatians 3 and Hebrews 2 the Law is described as a revelation delivered by angels. Although such thought is Jewish in origin, in each of these cases, the meaning is that the Law is inferior to other (more current) revelation. Gruenwald sees that as the type of attitude developed further in the *Epistle of Barnabas* 4:4 where those delivering angels are more crassly identified as evil.¹³¹

Gruenwald is fairly unique in that he believes that Gnosticism began to develop rapidly in the first half of the first century before the destruction of Jerusalem. His uniqueness here is more in the aspect of the speed of development rather than the timing of it. He believes that many of the factors necessary for Gnostic thought were already present in Jewish circles at that time. And it is only in Judaism that such thought existed. Only Jews could possibly understand or be interested in the conspicuous Gnostic inversion of Jewish values. For most other contexts present at that time such thought would not be so striking. And the harsh anti-Jewish Gnostic rhetoric seems to be due, at least partly, to the intention of these ex-Jews to distance themselves from their previous Jewish world. According to Gruenwald, for whatever reason unspecified by him, “the Gnostic attitude towards Judaism can best be characterized by the radical positions it took and it may also be viewed as playing an important role in the process of disconnecting the ties that bound certain Jewish-Christian

¹³⁰ Ithamar Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1988) 223.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

groups to the mother religion.”¹³² In fact, it may be that Gnosticism started independently of “its later Christological bent.”¹³³ However, if that indeed was the case then the role of early Christianity according to Gruenwald is critical to my thesis.

One may argue that only when the Christian point of view was annexed to or superimposed on, the original Gnostic point of view, did the final break with Judaism occur. In some cases that break with Judaism was as decisive and final as it could be; in other cases such as in that of the Jewish Christian, the break was not carried through to its radical consequences.¹³⁴

This is exactly what Bilde describes and to what I adhere. It took the early Christian movement with its tendencies, intended or not, toward an anti-Jewish flavor and a pessimistic view of the world, to ignite “the final break.” And, as I will show shortly in the experience of the author of *Jude*, for many “the break was not carried through to its radical consequences.” Some Jewish Apocalypticists moved into early eschatological Christianity. Others kept moving into Gnosticism.

In several publications, Pheme Perkins suggests an interesting setting depicting both the ties between the three movements of Jewish Apocalypticism, early Christianity and Gnosticism as well as their respective influences on each other. She is particularly aware of the hostility between the three. In the first century heterodox Jews would find their way into Christian circles. Here they would experience Jewish tradition to be both accepted and

¹³² Gruenwald goes on further. “Their abundantly rich references to Jewish ideas and notions are balanced out by the hostile attitude which they showed to some of the basic assumptions implied in that material. In other words, the intense antagonism shown by some Christian and by the Gnostic writers towards their Jewish religio-cultural background may be explained as overreaction stimulated by the realization of their spiritual indebtedness to that background.” In Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, 259

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

rejected. For Perkins, this provides the context in which Gnostic exegesis of the Old Testament arose.

Those who moved into Christian circles gained confidence for their attack from the Christian view that God had rejected the unbelieving Jews in favor of a new people of God. When Christians refused to accept the Gnostic readings of the Old Testament, a whole new area of controversy arose. This controversy is the one for which we have evidence in patristic writers and, from the Gnostic side, in many Nag Hammadi writings.¹³⁵

Perkins understands the three movements to be closely related and inter-relating during this time period. And it is her specific suggestion as to how they inter-related that is helpful to understand. Since it is clear that Judaism, in all its variations, is chronologically primary, then Perkins would also understand that “in their second century forms both Gnosticism and Christianity appear to be unlikely offshoots of Judaism.”¹³⁶ And that develops into her specific theory of how early Christianity and Gnosticism develop and rebound off each other. Both movements desire to break with their mother traditions. Both claim a revealer and a redeemer that was rejected by the tradition. Both claim that an internal personal enlightenment leads to freedom from tradition.¹³⁷ In each of these cases, different terminology is coined but from similar thought. And yet, at least textually, it is clear that Christianity developed at a much faster rate than Gnosticism, making it essentially chronologically secondary in the three-link chain. And as Gnosticism takes a direction further from its Jewish roots and more distant from early Christian ideology, the battle rages more specifically between the two Jewish siblings of Gnosticism and Christianity.

¹³⁵ Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 18.

¹³⁶ Perkins, *Gnosticism and the New Testament*, 3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

The key to Perkin's scholarship, for my purpose, is twofold. First, Perkins strengthens the thesis that the three movements are more than simultaneously existent. They are related, and closely so. In a diverse world of ideas, Jewish Apocalypticism, early Christianity and Gnosticism share a closer bond than other existing movements and worldviews. They are not independent of other influences. They are affected by a variety of traditions and developing thought. But they are more closely connected to each other than other outside factors. Secondly, the chronological, as well as philosophical centering of Christianity between the other two movements in this continuum lends credence to the proposal that Christianity was a catalyst for Gnosticism. Without this centerpiece of Christianity there is no philosophical bridge to cross in order to develop such a harsh anti-Jewish rhetoric and create the demonizing of the Demiurge as an opposing evil deity.

Strangely enough, it would be good to revisit Simone Pétrement here. Pétrement finds the origin of Gnosticism in Christianity alone. I have shown earlier that she not only stands against most scholars in such a position but that her arguments to disassociate Gnosticism with Judaism are weak. However, her thoughts on Gnostic-Christian ties are helpful when taken in the context of a Judaism-Christianity-Gnosticism continuum. If we look at her handling of the two issues, addressed throughout this paper, of the harsh anti-Jewish tone of Gnostic writings and the figure of the Demiurge, we find that essentially she supports the thesis of this paper. Concerning the former issue, the Gnostic questioning of the Old Testament, Pétrement believes that such questioning was "prepared for by Paul's criticism of the Law and John's anti-Jewish polemics" as a result of a growing tension between first

century Judaism and Christianity.¹³⁸ That is both astounding and astute. I could not agree with her more. Concerning the critical Gnostic dualism that results in the Demiurge, Pétrement states the following.

The figures of the Demiurge and Sophia certainly come from Judaism; but the characteristics ascribed to these figures, which are so different from those which Judaism attributes to them, show that they do not derive from it directly. These characteristics can only be explained by a radicalized idea of the difference between Christianity and Judaism; and of the superiority of the first over the second.¹³⁹

This is actually quite an incredible statement from Pétrement. She is plainly attributing the distinct Gnostic element of the Demiurge to the Christian reinterpretation of Jewish ideology. She does so only to show the connection between Christianity and Gnosticism. Yet such a deduction fits nicely within Bilde's theory.

To reiterate, this is again where Bilde injects early Christianity into the discussion. It was through an initial Christian reinterpretation of Jewish texts and theology that the "god of this world" became more estranged. But the seeds of dissident thought started in Jewish Apocalypticism. The Christian reinterpretation was needed for incipient Gnosticism to respond with the innovation of a separate god, a Demiurge. Without that reinterpretation there is too great a jump. With it, there is created a logical link and a more than reasonable explanation for the Gnostic Demiurge.

In referring to Simone Pétrement, Michael Williams renders his own helpful interpretation of her work.

¹³⁸ Pétrement, *A Separate God*, 211.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

Pétrement believes that such a revolution, the decisive transition leading to the demiurgical separation of true God from creator God, must be traced to the Pauline theology of the Cross. She does not consider Paul to have been a “Gnostic” in the full sense, but she thinks that it is only this symbolism of the Cross, with its emphasis on the blindness of the powers of the cosmos who killed “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8), that can account for “the transformation from a temporal dualism within the world to a dualism of the Gnostic type.”¹⁴⁰

For Pétrement, these critical characteristics of the Demiurge and Sophia “can only” be explained by understanding the difference between Judaism and Christianity. We agree. Clearly, Christianity is the essential catalyst in this development. Bilde emphasizes this. My proposal rides on it. But Pétrement just as clearly sees original Jewish influence when she admits that these ideas “certainly come from Judaism.

So here is an artificial, simple, but well-supported scenario that I am initially proposing for the background of the book of Jude. This will be developed extensively in the last chapter. Over the centuries Judaism developed and diversified so much from 100 BCE – 100 CE that it is accepted terminology to refer to Jewish thought as “Judaisms” rather than the singular “Judaism.” It became easier for traditional Jewish thought to be influenced by more current philosophy. One of these branches of Judaism was Jewish Apocalypticism. Radically reinterpreting Jewish texts to explain the harsh realities of a rapidly changing world, the apocalypticists developed a new message of the secret plans of God that included his present, but not eternal, withdrawing from the world. It was, in fact, the only way to explain their harsh context. The community in Qumran represents one of the more organized groups within this branch.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 230.

Although many would claim Jesus as representative of this movement within Judaism, he actually marks a significant historic shift. Clearly apocalyptic, Jesus' reinterpretation of Jewish traditions and scripture is radical enough to significantly marginalize both him and his followers. A new movement was born and was immediately misunderstood. Nevertheless, it grew and made considerable progress even after the martyrdom of its leader. Followed quickly by a new generation of leaders such as Paul and later by the gospel writers, Christianity began to take shape and wean itself from its Jewish beginnings. This early Christianity was bold and eschatological (read that as apocalyptic). Many of its adherents shared a Jewish Apocalyptic background but sought the face of God in a fresh way since the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. This is a time period, of course, where apocalypticism flourished in a variety of religious contexts and Jewish Apocalypticists was finding everywhere a rich soil for new ideas, many of which were growingly anti-traditional and becoming increasingly affected by Greek philosophy.

Meanwhile, the emergent rabbinical movement within Judaism was attempting to solidify their traditional values and interpretations through the written word. It was a strict discipline with varying results. There was a growing divide and hostility between traditional and new interpreters of Jewish values. Jewish Apocalypticists, being exposed to Platonism and Eastern Magic Cults were becoming more critical of both the rabbinical system and its ideology. Influenced most greatly by a quickly expanding early Christian movement that sounds a lot like themselves, they took note that the success of this Christian movement was marked by a divorce from the traditional Jewish interpretation of the Law, a redeemer figure in the person of Christ, and a dualistic view of the present world and the "world to come." Jewish Apocalypticists close to, but not aligned with Christianity, as well as those Jewish

apocalypticists newly converted to Christianity, felt that there was much more to learn than Christianity had to offer. The Christian movement fell short of all there was to be known in order to experience complete salvation. There was an unsettledness in this worldview that sought expansion. So apocalypticists from within and without Christianity began a journey, a more secret one, in which this advanced knowledge, or *gnosis*, would be the key. And it was specifically to the Jewish Apocalyptic Christ-followers from within this early Christian movement, still seeing the significance of Christ as the Revealer of *gnosis* but have moved on to what we now label as Gnosticism that the book of Jude was written.

CHAPTER 2

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE: COMBATING AN INCIPIENT GNOSTIC MOVEMENT

The Letter

¹Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to the called ones, having been loved in God the Father and having been kept by Jesus Christ. ²May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

³Loved Ones, while making all haste to write to you concerning our common salvation, I felt a compulsion to write to you, encouraging you to contend for the faith entrusted to the saints, once for all. ⁴For some men have secretly slipped in, the impious ones having been written about in terms of judgment long ago, changing the grace of our God into unbridled living and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

⁵But I want to remind you, even though having known this, that the Lord, after delivering all the people out of Egypt, once or all destroyed those, a second time, that were unbelieving. ⁶And the angels, the ones not keeping their dominion but forsaking their own dwelling place, have been kept in eternal bonds in darkness for judgment on the great day. ⁷Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and those towns around them, in a similar way, indulging in excessive immorality and going after the flesh, are lying before us as another example of those suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

⁸Likewise, notwithstanding, these dreamers defile the flesh, despise authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. ⁹But the archangel Michael when disputing with the devil, and had argued concerning the body of Moses, did not dare to bring an accusation of blasphemy, but said, "May the Lord rebuke you." ¹⁰But these men, on the one hand, blaspheme what things they do not know, while on the other hand, what things they understand by instinct,

like unreasoning animals; they are ruined by these things. ¹¹Woe to them because they have gone the path of Cain, and have been poured out in the error of the profit of Balaam, and have perished in the rebellion of Korah.

¹²These ones are the spots in your love feasts, feasting together without fear, shepherding only themselves, waterless clouds being carried by winds, late autumn trees without fruit and being uprooted, twice dying. ¹³They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame, wandering stars for which eternal darkest gloom has been reserved. ¹⁴And also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them saying, Behold, the Lord comes with a myriad of his holy ones, ¹⁵to make judgment against all of them and to convict all the irreverent ones concerning all of their irreverent works of which they were ungodly, and concerning all of the harsh things which ungodly sinners spoke against him. ¹⁶These ones are grumblers, complaining about their lot, going ahead with their own lusts, while their mouth is saying excessively flattering things for the sake of profit.

¹⁷But you, beloved ones, remember those things having been foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸They said to you at the end of time mockers will come, followers of godlessness, according to their own lusts. ¹⁹These are those who are creating division, natural-minded, not having the spirit.

²⁰But you beloved, be building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. ²¹Keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternity. ²²On the one hand show mercy to those doubting. ²³And on the other hand, save those, snatching them from fire, but showing mercy with fear, hating even the clothing stained by the flesh.

²⁴But to the one who is able to guard you from stumbling and to place you before the face of his glory without blame and with great rejoicing, ²⁵to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, strength and power from the beginning before all ages, now and forever. Amen.¹⁴¹

An Introduction to the Letter

It would be helpful to briefly look at Jude's letter. My intention in this section is to provide a framework of general understanding of the structure and content of the letter. In essence this is an annotated outline of the epistle. I do not purpose here to give a detailed exegesis of the letter or to answer all questions concerning authorship, date, or the identification of the opposition faced by Jude. Those are all critical issues to be dealt with later in this paper. My purpose is for the reader to get a brief "feel" for Jude's concern and methodology. I have broken the letter down into the following logical outline:

- I. Address and Greeting (1-2)
- II. Occasion of the letter (3-4)
- III. Exposure and condemnation of the ungodly (5-19)
- IV. Exhortation to the believers (20-23)
- V. Closing and doxology (24-25)

I. Address and Greeting (1-2)

The author follows the prescribed Jewish form for a letter of his day. He opens by identifying himself as the sender, the recipients to whom he is writing, and includes a

¹⁴¹ This is my own translation of the passage.

salutation.¹⁴² Although he is specific as to his own identity, he is vaguely general about his recipients. As a result, there is debate concerning whether this was a general letter to be passed to several congregations or written to one specific church. From this brief opening, all we know of these recipients is that they are believers, specifically called, loved and kept by God the Father and Jesus the Son.¹⁴³

II. Occasion of the letter (3-4)

Here there is a change of plans. Jude most desired to write to the recipients about the recipients. He wanted to encourage them about the salvation they had experienced, perhaps recently. However, in Jude's estimation, the situation had become so dire that he was forced, presumably by his conscience, to write to the recipients instead about an infiltrating enemy that needed direct attention. The situation was of critical importance and the recipients needed to become much more aggressive in both recognizing and eliminating the threat. In fact, the tone seems to indicate a very sudden decision on the part of the author, almost as if discarding the first draft and rewriting with a new focus. The action called for will be spelled out in the following verses in which he will spend the majority of his effort in critique of his opponents. However, in essence what Jude demands is the recognition of the false disciples among them and the active personal attention called for in verses 20-23.

¹⁴² Most scholars believe the James referred to in this verse is the brother of Jesus and leader of the early Jerusalem church. If that is true, the author is claiming to be Jude, the brother of James and Jesus. However, since the identity of the author of the book of Jude is not critical to this dissertation, I leave the debate within the various commentaries. I will deal with this later when addressing the date of the letter. For the sake of simplicity throughout this chapter, I will simply refer to the author as "Jude."

¹⁴³ Even at the outset, there is an eschatological tone to the letter. That the believers are "kept" (τηρῆω) is particularly referring to the Parousia of Christ.

In this early section, the opponents are characterized by labels and descriptions. They are deceptive, breaching the sanctity of the church. They are both condemned and ungodly, the latter resulting in the former. The condemnation was foretold long before the present time, which is pivotal for Jude and he will explain this in the sentences to follow. For Jude, the ungodly are actually anti-godly. They stand against all that God in his goodness and righteousness, as well as his mercy, represent. In particular, the opponents' ungodliness is celebrated in two ways. First, they are the licentious. Grace is turned into unbridled living. Seemingly, what is meant is that Christian liberty is interpreted as license for immoral living, particularly sexual indulgence. Even at this early stage of the church the ramifications of living by faith and not by the law has led some to see the two systems as diametrically opposed rather than in juxtaposition, which seems to be Jude's understanding. This particular brand of opposition is living, and teaching, freedom from standards held by the Mosaic Law. But that is not the only problem. They also deny Jesus, which is not necessarily the more critical problem for Jude. Jude does not specify what exactly about Jesus it is that they deny. It could be a moral issue, such as the licentious lifestyle just discussed, or a doctrinal error, such as a particular aspect of the person or work of Christ that Jude considers part of the accepted faith of the early church. It could even be aspects of both. The prior charge of turning grace into unbridled living certainly points to a moral abrogation of the Christian faith but the natural reading of Jude's claim would allow for a second charge in addition to licentious living. This is a key part of Jude's letter that will be dealt with later.

The readers' response is critical and Jude wants to assist the recipients in understanding that. This is a fight for the faith, the true, accepted faith entrusted to

believers.¹⁴⁴ There is significant debate as to the phrase “the faith entrusted to the saints, once for all.” The debate will be addressed in some detail later but it should be at least noted here that such wording should not automatically be assumed to indicate a later date for Jude. Some understand Jude’s particular use of “the faith” here to stand for a set body of doctrine rather than a more fluid system of belief as would be evidenced in the early church. Thus the phrase becomes evidence of a later date for this letter. But that is not necessarily the case. Paul often used the word “faith” to indicate the specific content of the gospel and the confession of the church (Romans 10:8; Galatians 1:23 and 6:10; 1 Corinthians 16:13).¹⁴⁵

In this “fight” Jude cannot be present to assist the recipients. Thus we have the occasion for the letter. There is no indication in the letter as to why that is the case. But it is clear that Jude can only send a written warning. The action to be taken must be the response of the recipients alone. After further descriptions of these opponents, Jude will give specific advice on the particular response he believes the recipients should take.

III. Exposure and condemnation of the ungodly (5-19)

This is the main body of the letter and the detailing of the purpose of Jude’s writing. In this section Jude draws freely from a variety of Jewish sources to create sets of parallels

¹⁴⁴ The word for fight here is ἐπαγωνιζεσθαι, one of fourteen *hapex legomena* in this short letter. Jude seems to be very individualistic in his writing. He has his own style. He also uses participles often – 34 times in these 25 verses. In note 159 below I mention his penchant for triplets as it pertains to textual variations. Charles has found 25 sets of triplets in the 25 verses. See J. Daryl Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Letter of Jude* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993), 41. I will return to Jude’s use of triplets in the final section of my paper when I describe the setting of the letter more thoroughly.

¹⁴⁵ See Jerome Neyrey’s comment on this in *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible Commentaries 37C, New York, 1993), 55.

between present day and ancient sinners and their consequent judgments. Jude's polemic is sharp and intended to produce a response.

He begins with a set of three Hebrew Bible examples of how God deals with rebellious people. This is the first of two triplets that Jude uses in describing his opponents. The second set comes in verse 11. In addition, Jude shows his fondness for threes in verse eight by condemning three aspects of the false intruders.

This first triplet of examples in Jude 5-7 involves three distinct groups. The first deals with the people of Israel, the second involves angels, and the third concerns those outside the Jewish faith. The three illustrations also involve three different issues of condemnation.

The Israelites who came out of Egypt were judged for their unfaithfulness to God, in spite of the fact that he had preciously shown them his power and was presently demonstrating his mercy.¹⁴⁶ Jude is referring to the story as it is recorded in Numbers 14 and his point is a strong one. Even believers can fall into disbelief and be judged. The same people that came out of Egypt also died in the wilderness. It should be noted that there is an important textual variant here. Most manuscripts use the subject "Lord" (κύριος) in verse five as the one leading and punishing the Israelites who came out of Egypt. However, several of the manuscripts insert "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς). Although this should be considered a significant theological variation, it is nonetheless not significant for this thesis.

¹⁴⁶ For more information see Richard Bauckham's note on this verse on page 43 of his commentary entitled, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco: Word Books, 1983).

The angels who descended, also known in Jewish tradition as the “Watchers,” were condemned for their disobedience to authority by not keeping their place.¹⁴⁷ The allusion is to Genesis 6:1-4. However, this story can be found in greater detail in several other texts including, but not limited to, the book of *Jubilees*, *the Apocalypse of Baruch*, and the *Testament of Naphtali*. Undoubtedly, as Jude will betray with his direct reference to Enoch in verse 14, he took this story from *1 Enoch*. *1 Enoch’s* version (*1 Enoch* 6-19) has by far the most detail. Enoch records that 200 angels rebelled under the leadership of Semyaza and Azazel, left heaven and descended to earth. The angels taught magic to humans, gave them knowledge about weapons, and had intercourse with women. Eventually, God had to respond to such disregard for his own design for mankind. The world was then flooded by God and these angels kept imprisoned until the day of judgment. As noted above, “keeping” is a strong theme in this letter. Jude’s interest in being “kept” is intensified here as the angels did not “keep” their place and are thus “kept” for judgment.

The pagans of Sodom and Gomorrah become Jude’s third illustration from Biblical history. They were judged because of their sexual immorality. The story of these two cities can be found throughout Jewish literature. Jude’s reference could be to the Hebrew Bible’s version in Genesis 19. Interestingly, the surrounding towns were also swept into the judgment and Jude takes note of that fact. This is used seemingly to imply that judgment, at least that which comes from God, is all encompassing.

¹⁴⁷ See notes on this in both Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, page 51 and Steven J. Kraftchick, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Jude and 2 Peter* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002), 38-39.

Then in verse eight, the application is made to Jude's present day opponents. They are specifically called "dreamers." As with much of Jude, this is a key designation for my proposed thesis. So although it will not be dealt with here, we will revisit it later.

In the same vein of the ancient illustrations, the new opponents defile the flesh (like the Sodomites), resist authority (like the angels), and insult the glorious ones. This final denunciation raises questions, both as to the parallel, or lack thereof, with the previous examples and because "the glorious ones" are not defined.¹⁴⁸ Some clarification is given by Jude's following example of the archangel Michael and the Devil.¹⁴⁹ The source of this story is important to my point and will be dealt with in greater detail later. However, Michael is a popular figure. He is twice referred to in Daniel (10:13 and 12:1) as well as in the Babylonian Talmud (*Menah. 110^a*). His epitaph, ἀρχάγγελος, occurs only here and 1 Thess. 4:16 in the New Testament. In short, the story of Michael's dispute with the devil over the body of Moses is not derived from the Hebrew Bible but rather comes either from the *Assumption of Moses* or the *Testament of Moses* or both. Both of these writings appear in ancient lists of noncanonical books. The actual source is not extant, thus making it difficult to determine. Clement of Alexandria identifies this story as coming from the *Assumption*. It is very possible that the *Assumption* is a larger work that incorporates the *Testament*. It is even possible that they are one and the same document with two titles. For the sake of clarity, in this paper I will refer to it as the *Assumption of Moses*.

¹⁴⁸ The resolution of this difficulty is important to my thesis and will be addressed as we work through the book of Jude.

¹⁴⁹ See the comments in Neyrey, *2 Peter and Jude*, 65-66, and in A.R.C. Leaney, *The Letter of Peter and Jude* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), 90. But especially note Bauckham's in depth and meticulous study in *Jude, 2 Peter*, 65-76.

For Jude’s purpose, even one so close to God and at the upper ranges of heavenly hierarchy, as Michael was, would not dare to curse or bring judgment upon the devil. Instead, Michael simply committed the judgment to “the Lord.” It would be his authority alone that would be sufficient. Since the raising of this example follows close behind Jude’s reference to his current opposition “insulting glorious ones,” this would seem to help define that action. In some way, the opponents are challenging or speaking against heavenly beings. This could mean something as simple as their libertine lifestyles bringing disrespect to heavenly standards. Or it could mean that they are indeed actually challenging the authority of angels, be they good or evil. The following condemnation, in verse ten, would seem to suggest the latter.¹⁵⁰ That this opposition blasphemes what they do not understand seems to indicate that they are verbally abusing angelic beings, which they know very little about, while at the same time wallowing like animals in what they do understand, that is sexual immorality.¹⁵¹ In referring to his opposition Jude uses the pronoun οὗτοι. This is the second of six times that

¹⁵⁰ Gnostics, of course, attributed the creation of the world to angels. If that is indeed what Jude’s opposition is doing then this would most easily explain Jude’s language here. For Jude, these angels are good. For his opponents they are evil since the physical world was in essence evil. Both Jude and his opponents may equally understand the intermediary position of angels in the creation of the world. However, where Jude would see that as something positive, in obedience to God’s direction, his opponents would identify their action as evil. Thus Jude’s condemnation of the opposition as ones who “insult glorious ones,” is basically alerting the reader to the fact that these foes “speak abusively against whatever they do not understand.”

¹⁵¹ Jude’s use of μὲν...δὲ...δὲ in his verse eight condemnation is worth mentioning here. It is as if Jude is separating the three points into two areas. First, they “defile the flesh” (μὲν) and then they “despise authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones” (δὲ). In essence, the first action relates to Jude’s first declaration of his opponents’ error in verse four in that they “change the grace of our God into unbridled living” while the second two actions correspond to Jude’s second declaration in verse four that they “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 59.

Jude refers to his opponents by simply using a contemptuous pronoun such as “these” or “these men” (v. 8, 10, 11, 12 16, 19).

Following this is another triplet from the Hebrew Bible, this time used in strong censure of the opponents. These antagonists are likened to Cain, Balaam and Korah. Cain, of course, is not the first sinner of the Bible but he is the first murderer. He seems to have never come to a complete repentance for his actions against Abel and in first century thought he was described variously as a man of lust, avarice, self-indulgence and treachery.¹⁵² Jude may be thinking of a tradition, found in the Targums, which portrays Cain as the first heretic whose murder of his brother was the result of an argument about the righteousness of God.¹⁵³ Balaam, like Cain, is a Hebrew Bible character who gets a good deal of negative press, bordering on the cultic, including from such well known Jewish writers as Philo and Josephus. His greed in attempting to claim Balak’s bribe even after being warned by God, described in Numbers 22 and 24, affords Jude a good parallel to draw against his opponents as he will shortly accuse them of flattering others for their own gain. Balaam’s final advice after being unable to curse Israel was to suggest that Balak allow his Midianite women to come in with the Israelites. This would weaken the Israelites commitment to their religion and bring judgment upon them from their God. As a result, Balaam was considered to be responsible for Israel’s apostasy recorded in Numbers 25. The similarity of the story of Balaam to his present day rivals is easily coaxed by Jude. The insidious nature of the opponents as they worm their way into the church, if unchecked, will lead to a similar apostasy. In a sense,

¹⁵² Daniel C. Arichea and Howard A. Hatton, *The Letter from Jude and The Second Letter from Peter* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 35.

¹⁵³ See Bauckham’s lengthy comment in *Jude, 2 Peter*, 79-80.

although Jude uses Balaam as the type for these opponents, they are equally similar to the Midianite women from the original story.

The final parallel is the rebellion of Korah, a story found in Numbers 16. Like Balaam, Korah's negative caricature is not infrequent in other Jewish literature.¹⁵⁴ In fact, the abundance of references to Korah and subsequent lessons attached to his actions deserves some explanation. Philo's explanation of the incident portrays Korah as one attempting to supplant God's chosen priesthood (*Praem.* 75; *Fuga* 145). Josephus refers to the incident as well, giving background to Korah and emphasizing his arrogance. According to Josephus Korah was ambitious for leadership because of his conviction that he was of superior birth, wealth and age (*Ant.* 4.14-34). The tradition in *Sifre Num.* 117 sets up a contrast between the avenues to honor which Aaron and Korah took. Aaron was ascribed honor by God without seeking it. Korah claimed honor on his own before receiving it. Sirach labels and condemns Korah's action as envy (45:18). Several targums refer to Korah as well. Some of them describe the incident involving Korah in terms of national unity, or more precisely the lack of unity, as Korah was responsible for causing a division in his rivalry of Moses and Aaron for honor and status (*Tg. Neof.* Num 16:1; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Num 26:9). Korah led many who had come out of Egypt into rebellion against Moses and Aaron, God's chosen political and religious leaders. As such, Korah exhibits Jude's current enemies' anti-authoritarian behavior and, if left to Jude, Korah's final judgment as well.

These three illustrations are applied by Jude to his situation in a straightforward manner – οὐαὶ αὐτοῖς – “Woe to them!” Such a denunciation is typical in the prophets of

¹⁵⁴ These are all summarized nicely in Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 73.

Israel and appropriately labeled a “woe oracle.” Such oracles anticipated penalty and judgment, usually ending in death. Characteristically, the woe oracle would include a proclamation of the woe (10a), the specific behaviors that prompt the pronouncement (8-10), and the pronouncement of judgment (14-16).¹⁵⁵ Jude expands on this by his large selection of illustrations, all coming from Jewish history.

Continuing with colorful language, Jude now turns his words directly to the intruders in verses 12-13. These enemies of the “true faith” most probably were taking the position of teachers in this young congregation(s) as Jude labels them to be “shepherds.” However, Jude’s condemnation is that they are not shepherding the flock but rather only themselves. The charge resonates from Ezekiel 34:2, where the prophet condemns the leaders of Israel as shepherds whom only take care of themselves. This could mean anything from looking out for themselves and their own profit, as Balaam did, to teaching doctrines that tear down rather than build up the church. In this case, it probably refers to both aspects. Unfortunately, as far as Jude is concerned, at the very least these shepherds have developed a close relationship with the believers and join them at their feasts.

Jude follows this with four natural metaphors as further illustrations of the waywardness of these opponents. First, they are clouds without rain. In other words, they carry no productive value and are easily blown away by the wind. Second, they are autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted. As such they have no hope of bearing fruit, neither in the near or far future. Third, they are like wild waves of the sea, having lots of foam but never making progress, and leaving only filthy debris on the shore. Their words have little depth and no worth. Fourth, they are wandering stars, reserved for a judgment of darkness.

¹⁵⁵ Kraftchick, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 45-46.

Although the first three metaphors are somewhat self-explanatory from observance of nature, the fourth seems to come directly from *I Enoch*.¹⁵⁶ In *I Enoch* 18:13-16 and 21:3-6 the Watchers are seen as seven stars. Much later in the *I Enoch* (83-90) these stars are cast from heaven into the darkness of the abyss and bound there for judgment on the last day when they will be subjected to the lake of fire.

Not surprisingly, then, Jude refers directly to Enoch in verse 14. The prophecy referred to comes from *I Enoch* 1:9.¹⁵⁷ It would appear that for Jude, and on the basis of his use of the text for his readers as well, *I Enoch* is scripture. This book is God-given and the prophetic words from Enoch are to be taken as truth. It remains for Jude to “retell” the Enochic story in such a way that it applies to Jude’s present situation. This he does, and masterfully at that. It would be easy for early Christ-followers coming from a Jewish background to understand such prophecies in light of the belief of the early church that Jesus would return as judge in the near future. For Jude, it is a simple matter to understand Enoch’s prediction of coming doom to refer to the return of Jesus with the angels. And as everything else that Jude has referred to in this letter, this prophecy is specifically applied to his opponents in verse 16. With few yet cutting words, Jude writes his final words describing

¹⁵⁶ Bauckham notes that “the theme of the section is that the works of God in nature conform to the laws which God has ordained for them, but contrast to the wicked who transgress God’s law.” *Jude, 2 Peter*, 90.

¹⁵⁷ There are four versions we have of the text, some of which are fragmented: Aramaic, from Qumran, Greek, in the Codex Panopolitanus, Ethiopic, and a Latin version. Jude’s quotation agrees exactly with none. Bauckham has done a detailed comparison and summarizes his conclusion by writing, “Jude knew the Greek version, but made his own translation from the Aramaic.” *Ibid.*, 96.

these men. They are grumblers, complainers, following their lusts, arrogant, and flattering others for their own gain.

Verses 17-19 become a transition for Jude as he moves away from description of the opposition to direction for the faithful. He graduates from the more ancient prophecy of Enoch to a more current rendition from the apostles and he does so emphatically with the phrase “But you” (Ὑμεῖς δέ) and by the use of the imperative (μνησθήτε). By using this apostolic reminder Jude maintains an authority over against his opponents, who appear to have only their own experience to claim as authoritative.¹⁵⁸

This is Jude’s first and only reference to the apostles in this letter. The title has a general use as well as a specific use in the early church. More commonly it was used to refer to Christian missionaries, evangelists and other “front line” Christian workers (Acts 15:5; Rom. 16:7; 2 Cor. 8:23). It is more specifically used in reference to the first disciples of Jesus including Matthias (Acts 1:26). It would seem that for Jude’s purposes here that the more specific sense is in mind. Jude’s reference to the apostles has been a key point in dating this letter late into the first century. The debate is relevant to this thesis and the reasoning is far from definitive. Jude could indeed be looking far back to the apostles in this claim. Or he could be referencing much more recent prophecy from Paul (2 Thess. 2:5f) or “Pseudo-Paul” (1 Tim. 4:1f) of such events. I will deal with this in chapter four of this paper.

Jude’s eschatological expectations are clear. This current generation is at “the end of time” predicted by prophets of all ages. He has affirmed this by the reference to the prophet

¹⁵⁸ See comments on Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 89, Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 103, and Arichea, *The Letter from Jude*, 48-49.

Enoch in the far past and the apostles of our Lord in the near past. And this is reason enough to live all the more appropriately.

Jude's parting shot at his opponents takes the form of his final triplet. He reminds the faithful that "these men" cause division, follow natural instincts, and lack the Spirit of God. The division caused by the opponents must be within the church as these men continue to join in the Christian feasts. The charge of following the natural instincts of the flesh rather than the supernatural urgings of the Spirit is not new in this letter. However, this is the first time that Jude clearly claims that these opponents lack God's personal presence through his spirit. The terms used here for natural (*ψυχικοί*) and spirit (*πνεῦμα*) are critical to understand Jude's opponents more specifically and will be explained below.

IV. Exhortation to the believers (20-23)

In this short conclusion, Jude finally gives directives for the recipients. It is broken into two sections.¹⁵⁹ In the opening section, Jude instructs the hearers to focus on themselves. In the latter section his instructions concern directions dealing with the opponents.

¹⁵⁹ Verses 22-23a of this section are difficult to determine. There are several variants in the manuscripts with almost no consistency among them. The controversy is complex with very different Greek versions available but can be summarized as revolving around either a two or three clause text.

Snatch some from the fire,
And have mercy on the doubters, trembling as you touch them.

or

Show mercy to those doubting.
Save those, snatching them from fire,
Show mercy with fear, hating even the clothing stained by the flesh.

Surprisingly, Jude's commands in this first section are fourfold rather than in his traditional form of a triplet. The believers are to build themselves up in their faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep themselves in God's love, and wait for the mercy of Christ. The concept of the church as continually needing building up is not a new one and the idea is plural rather than singular. This is not about each one building him/herself up but rather as a community, each one doing his part to bring the group along. And both the source and the object of the building is "the most holy faith" as opposed to the false teaching of the opponents. Equally opposed to Jude's enemies is the second command to pray in the Spirit, of whom the opponents have no personal experience. The third instruction centers around a key word in this letter – τηρήσατε – "keep" yourselves in God's love. It parallels the opening where Jude described these believers as those "kept" by Jesus. It contrasts with the angels in verse six who did not "keep" their position. There is a sense of place attached to the work "keep." As Jude's followers keep themselves in the right place, specifically in the place of God's love, they will be kept from a much lower place, where the angels in verse six found themselves as a result of not keeping themselves in a place of purity with God.¹⁶⁰

Jude has come full circle, beginning and ending with "the faithful," whom God will not forsake. The "waiting" for mercy implies the time of judgment and faithfulness to the true God and his doctrines necessitates a continuity until the end of time. Through the middle

I have translated the entire three-clause text in my translation above. An argument can be made to accept the shorter version simply because it is usually possible to explain longer versions on the basis of expansion for the sake of clarity by later scribes. The passage is not critical to my thesis and I see no need to address it any more than what I have noted here. I chose the three-clause version for two reasons. It matches Jude's attraction for triplets and it allows the reader of this dissertation to see the full possibility of Jude's complete text. Bauckham has a detailed summary in *Jude, 2 Peter*, 108-111.

¹⁶⁰ See comments by Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 91.

sections he has drawn a stark contrast between the recipients of his letter and the opposition he describes. Neyrey creates a helpful comparison of the “beloved” as opposed to the “godless” that Jude sets out in verses 17-23 and I have included it as Table 3 below.¹⁶¹

Godless	Beloved
1. “Scoffers” who reject the tradition	1. “Rememberers,” who are faithful to what they were told
2. They create “division,” tearing down the group	2. They “build themselves up,” in unity of faith
3. They go “the way of godless desires”	3. Their way is “the most sacred faithfulness”
4. They are “physical”	4. They “hate even the garment stained by the flesh”
5. They “have no Spirit”	5. They “pray in the Holy Spirit”
6. They are “proscribed for judgment”	6. They “await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ”

Table 3: Comparison of the godless and beloved in Jude

V. Closing and doxology (24-25)

In the typical form of a letter, this serves as Jude’s closing. The uniqueness comes in the form of a doxology, focusing on God, rather than a benediction, focusing on the

¹⁶¹ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 85

recipients. As Jude began with Jesus “keeping” the believers, he ends with God “keeping” the believers from falling. This is critical for Jude and even more crucial for his readers to understand. The Jesus of Jude 1 is the God of Jude 24. This indeed is the only God and, as such, everything – glory, majesty, power, authority – belong to him. They belong to him through Jesus and they belong to him for all eternity. Jude’s recipients can belong to him as well. And the bulk of the responsibility remains with God. He is able to keep what has already been purposefully committed to him. It is that clear and substantial a foundation that the recipients of Jude’s letter can put their faith in, a faith that will be misplaced if focused on the opposition and their erroneous teaching.

My intention in this excursus was to briefly provide a general understanding of the structure and content of the letter of Jude. In this we are able to understand the concerns of the author as well as briefly grasp his strategy and style. All of this will help us in understanding some of the more critical issues of the letter that must be dealt with in much greater detail in order to understand the letter’s setting in reference to Bilde’s theory. It is proper to turn to those issues now.

Jude: A Jewish Apocalyptic Convert to Christianity

There are two critical pieces to understand concerning the letter of Jude and the author in order to substantiate my position that Jude is writing in the middle of a historical continuum starting with Jewish Apocalypticism, running through Christianity and developing into Gnosticism. We need to have both a clearer grasp on who is writing and also about whom he is writing. To understand the background of the author of Jude is a first step in

relating the book of Jude to this hypothesis. Secondly, and most critically, it is important to more clearly identify the Οὔτοι or opponents that Jude is concerned with.

It is neither difficult nor unessential to appreciate more details about this author. Jude, a leader in the first century Christian movement, and concerned about the direction that the church, or at least one specific church, is taking, is Jewish and has a strong apocalyptic worldview. It is hard to imagine any other author of a New Testament document whose background we can so clearly define with so few verses with which to use. Nevertheless, Jude's letter gives us ample material to make the claims that will follow.

Although the place of origin of the letter is under some dispute, there is a much stronger consensus concerning the Jewish Apocalyptic worldview of the author.¹⁶² Daryl Charles writes, "Aside from the epistle to the Hebrews and arguable the Apocalypse, James and Jude are the most 'Jewish' among the writings of the NT."¹⁶³ Charles' work in analyzing the literary structure of Jude is groundbreaking. He notes, as many others do, that Jude is essentially midrashic in writing style.¹⁶⁴

Midrash, as a specifically Jewish creation, is the art of using ancient texts to clarify present situations. It is not simply quoting sacred texts but reinterpreting, expounding, and/or

¹⁶² There are three well-argued suggestions as to origin. I will deal with all of them later in this paper. John Gunther represents the Alexandrian view in "The Alexandrian Epistle of Jude," *New Testament Studies* 30, no. 4 (October 1984), 549-562. Bauckham presents Jude as originating in Palestine (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 3-17). Koester suggests Syria as the best option. See Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 246-247.

¹⁶³ J. Daryl Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Letter of Jude* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993), 74.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

expanding them in order to first see their timeless veracity so that their immediate relevance can also be appreciated. “When one studies how an ancient tradition functions in relation to the needs of the community, he is studying midrash.”¹⁶⁵ It is a broad enough style that more specificity than this in defining it is difficult. But at the center of the midrashist’s work is the ancient text. That text is sacred. In that text is divinely revealed truth and there are secrets needing to be unlocked, and able to be unlocked, by the determined reader. It is foundational to understand this. A simple reading of sacred text will not allow the reader to grasp all that is in that text. There needs to be a deeper clarity brought to it. Ultimately, it is the unlocking of those texts, and how they are shown to be presently relevant that makes the writing midrashic in style.¹⁶⁶ And by the use of traditional and accepted texts rather than original materials it speaks to both the author and the audience. There is indeed originality in any midrash but that originality comes in the interpretation. The midrashist is able to make use of paradigms that are already understood by the audience and provide them as proverbial examples of moral virtue to be utilized presently.¹⁶⁷

Jude’s repetitive tendency to take Jewish illustrations from the past, from texts considered to be sacred by him and his audience, and then apply them to the present situation is a specifically midrashic style. He takes an ancient story, interprets it in a typological sense, then transports it to be used as a present illustration of what his audience is experiencing. Cain, the Watchers, and Sodom and Gomorrah remain the same in their story, but through

¹⁶⁵ James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2005), xi.

¹⁶⁶ Gary Porton, “Midrash,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* v. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 818-821.

¹⁶⁷ Charles, *Literary Structure in the Epistle of Jude*, 72.

Jude's typology spring to the present with relative force. God knew in the past, and saw fit to have it recorded in ancient texts, exactly what would transpire in the present. The theology of a God that possesses characteristics of foreknowledge and predestination is an expressly Jewish concept and Jude utilizes that to the full extent.¹⁶⁸

This typological style that Jude uses emphasizes his Jewish background and thought. Where the Greeks more primarily used allegory, myth, and symbolism, typology was much more distinctly Jewish.¹⁶⁹ And, as will come into discussion when deliberating the geographical origin of this letter, it was even more specifically Palestinian. Whereas Alexandrian exegesis was primarily symbolic and allegorical, Palestinian writings, particularly those that were rabbinic and pseudepigraphal, were more literal-typological.¹⁷⁰

The initial triplet of examples that Jude uses (the rebellion in the wilderness, the Watchers, and Sodom and Gomorrah) belongs to popular Jewish tradition. Similar sayings can be found in Ben Sira 16:5-15, Jubilees 20:2-7, 3 Maccabees 2:3-7, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs 2:8-4:3, the Damascus Document 2:14-3:12, and the Mishnah (m.Sanh. 10:3).¹⁷¹ In each case, lessons about the hardheartedness and apostasy of those who oppose God are drawn from those stories. In using these examples, Jude remains faithful to his

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 100. Charles notes that three words with the prefix pro—προγεγραμμένοι (v. 4), προεφήτευσεν (v. 14) and προεφήτευσεν (v. 17)—accentuate the theme of sovereign and eternal purpose. Even the opening of the letter has that flavor.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

understanding of that purpose but corresponds the hardheartedness and apostasy not just to those in the past but also to his present opponents.

However, like all midrashists, Jude has his unique style based on a specific purpose. In all the texts mentioned above, the list of these events always appear in the same historical order as they do in the Pentateuch. The chronological order is from the Watchers, to Sodom and Gomorrah to the rebellion in the wilderness. That is not the case with Jude. He mentions Israel in the wilderness first. Obviously, the change is intentional and this unique change in order best serves his purpose. The climax he wants to create concerns the degree of punishment. For Jude what is critical to see is how the intensity of punishment will grow respectively with each succeeding “failure” by his opponents. So Jude starts with the rebellion in the wilderness because the consequential punishment was destruction in this life. Then the Watchers are used to show there is an escalation of punishment. The Watchers were captured in chains, eternal chains at that. Finally, Sodom and Gomorrah serve as the pinnacle of horror, that of punishment by eternal fire.¹⁷² A double point could be made here that not only are the examples chosen by Jude illustrative of his Jewish background, but even his style of literary license is midrashic or Jewish in nature.

Jude’s love for triplets as well is typical of a first century Jewish style of writing. It was a clear Hebrew Bible value to understand the importance of two or three witnesses in validating any claim (Num. 35:30; Dt. 17:6; 19:15). This reliance on a threesome for verification worked its way into New Testament writings through Jesus’ directive (Mt. 18:16).

¹⁷² Stephan J. Joubert, “Facing the Past,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 42 (1998), 59.

This would, of course, only make such a value an even stronger principle in the mind of a very Jewish, early church leader.

Jude was fond of *I Enoch* and most certainly considered it a sacred text. I will say much more on this shortly but I refer to it here because it is very possible that Jude used an Aramaic version of *I Enoch*. This is far from clear and controversial at best since the quote in Jude's letter does not match any extant version in any language.¹⁷³ But Jude's minor addition of "Lord" as the subject and his purpose of highlighting the judgment elements of those texts he quotes would make this a very close match to the Aramaic version of *I Enoch*, the fragments of which were recovered in Qumran.¹⁷⁴ I mention this here for two reasons. First, the use and adaptation of the Enochic text again affirms the midrashic nature of Jude's writings. As such it also affirms the Jewish nature of his writing style. He claims the authority of the text while feeling at ease in restructuring it for his specific use. Second, even though Jude writes his epistle in Greek, and relatively good Greek at that, it is possible that he was more familiar with the text as it was written in Aramaic. Whether that familiarity was the result of his Jewish background or his present comfort level, it could be one more indicator that the author of this book was Jewish.

Jude's comfort with Aramaic may be confirmed by his concluding doxology. He writes in Jude 24, "But to the one who is able to guard you from stumbling and to place you before the face of his glory without blame and with great rejoicing." That phrase is

¹⁷³ See my note 152 above for more details.

¹⁷⁴ Carol Osburn, "Discourse Analysis and Jewish Apocalyptic in the Epistle of Jude," in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. David Allen Black (Nashville: Broadman Press 1992), 305.

characteristic of the Targums.¹⁷⁵ These Aramaic translations of Hebrew Scriptures, many written centuries before Jude was written, are alluded to in other New Testament writings and Jude may be another canonized book that does so. It was a distinctive of the Targums to preserve the dignity of God in the translation by avoiding anthropomorphisms. For example, in Isaiah 6:1 in the Hebrew version, Isaiah is recorded as saying, “I saw *the Lord* seated on a throne.” The Isaiah Targum translates the phrase as “I saw *the glory of God* seated on a throne.” It was a typical Targum method to substitute “glory” for the name of God. In turning to the phrase in Jude 24, you can observe that there is a similar methodology followed by Jude. For Jude, God may have a “face” but not one to be referred to in the text. So his audience, if they remain faithful, will not be placed before God’s face but rather more properly before the face of “his glory.”

Simply to list the references and illustrations from which Jude draws in this short letter gives the reader an overwhelming sense that the author is Jewish. The deliverance from Egypt and consequential judgment of the people of Israel, the angels or Watchers who sinned, Sodom and Gomorrah, the story of Michael debating Satan over the body of Moses, Cain, Balaam, Korah, and Enoch and his prophecy are enough to conclude how important Jewish history and sources are for Jude.

When we look at some of these examples more carefully and add to this even more subtle indications of the use of Jewish traditions and texts in the letter the strength of the argument grows. Jude’s use of the Watchers refers to Genesis 6:1-4. However, his use of the

¹⁷⁵ The following explanation in the above paragraph comes from Randel Harris, “Traces of Targumism in the New Testament,” in James Hastings, ed., *The Expository Times* 32 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, April 1921), 373-376.

story and description of the incident clearly echoes other Jewish traditions. That the angels left a place assigned to them and that they are held in eternal chains for the final judgment day is not in the Hebrew Bible but in Jewish tradition, particularly detailed in *1 Enoch*. Jude's use of Sodom and Gomorrah is clearly taken from the Genesis account, as Jude includes the reference to the surrounding cities. Yet the eternal punishment that is assigned those cities probably came from other Jewish literature. The men of Sodom will have no share in the future life according to Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3. The *Testament of Asher*, in 7:1, records that they perished forever. In 3 Maccabees 2:5 the men of Sodom were destroyed by fire to be an example for others for all time.¹⁷⁶

There are more subtle indications of this author's Jewish background as well. Perhaps the reference to "the only God" in Jude's final verse may reflect the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4. This uniquely Jewish confession was the heart and soul of Judaism. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! At the time that Jude was written this confession was represented by the shortened version of "God is one," or as was commonly found in Greek ἕις ὁ θεός or μόνος θεός.¹⁷⁷ Jude 25 reads, "to the only God (μόνῳ θεῷ) our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, strength and power from the beginning before all ages, now and forever."

Within this doxology is another Jewish aspect of this author: his use of the word "glory" (δόξα). In the Hebrew Bible "glory" is reserved for God. That differs decidedly

¹⁷⁶ T. R. Wolthuis, "Jude and Jewish Traditions" in Lyle Bierma, ed., *Calvin Theological Journal* 22 (April 1987), 25-29, 39. Wolthuis concludes that "the book of Jude is steeped in Jewish traditions."

¹⁷⁷ Vernon Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), 36-37.

from the more customary secular use of the term where it can denote human “opinion” or “honor.”¹⁷⁸ In Hebrew Bible usage “glory” indicates the majesty and radiance of God (Exodus 24:16f; Deuteronomy 5:24; 2 Chronicles 5:14; Isaiah 6:3; Ezekiel 1:28). Jude uses the word three times, in verses 8, 24, and 25. In the first instance it is taken more in the apocalyptic style as it refers to angels, which may seem to contradict my point. Yet this use of the term still reflects the principle, but in a very Jewish sense where angels were vehicles for conveying the divine glory. The latter usages by Jude are reserved for God in the doxology. And he is explicit that this “glory” belongs only to God. The faithful will experience it as they stand before his presence but God alone will be the one who “receives glory, honor, dominion and majesty.”

But the worldview of Jude is distinctively apocalyptic as well and this is critical to understand. Daryl Charles crystallizes the difference between prophets and apocalypticists according to their view of their present context.¹⁷⁹ The prophets understood that God was thoroughly involved in the present situation even if that situation seemed contrary to what God’s people believed it should be. God was working through the kingdoms of this earth, even those outside of Israel, to accomplish his purposes. The later apocalypticists did not consider it possible that those opposed by God could actually be a part of God’s purpose. Their world was much more crystallized into distinct lines of right and wrong, good and evil. It was not possible for a holy God to use unholy vehicles. God was not presently involved but he also was not completely absent. Ultimately, he alone could bring the scales of justice to bear. Deliverance from the wicked was called for and that would take divine intervention.

¹⁷⁸ See Charles’ comments on this in *Literary Strategy*, 102-103.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

Jude is an apocalypticist. In Jude's view the only intervention into the world's affairs that is significant is that of God. From Jude's first sentence ("having been kept by Jesus Christ") to his final benediction ("to the one who is able to guard you from stumbling and to place you before the face of his glory") he sees God as the deliverer. God did not use Egypt but intervened to right a wrong. No one but God could stop the angels who disobeyed. Sodom and Gomorrah were not used by God to accomplish his purposes but only to serve as examples of the divine judgment reserved for those who transgress God's laws. Not even one with as much authority as Michael can stop injustice. Only the Lord himself can rebuke Satan. It is reserved for God alone to bring final resolution to the problem of evil, prophesied in Enoch's day but revealing itself in Jude's present.

The preoccupation of Jude with judgment and the end of days is characteristic of an apocalyptic worldview. In fact, this is probably the most distinguishing characteristic of that genre and is the foundational characteristic for calling any text an Apocalypse. In Jude's world "all humanity is kept either in mercy or in judgment."¹⁸⁰ This world would continue to always be a world of struggle and the only just, righteous and perfect world comes later through the intervention of God. Arguably, Jude sees that latter, and final, stage as coming quickly, as was typical for the early church. It is the reason for sending his letter at this time. The recipients had to understand the crucial nature of their present situation as it related to a

¹⁸⁰ Kenneth R. Lyle, *Ethical Admonition in the Epistle of Jude* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1998), 83. Lyle makes it clear that "Jude is not an apocalypse but the letter might helpfully be classified as an argumentative text which expresses an apocalyptic-eschatological perspective. While the Epistle of Jude does not fulfill the requirements of the genre apocalypse, the letter betrays an eschatological perspective which can be recognized by analogy with the eschatological perspective of much apocalyptic literature." *Ibid.*, 73.

God's timeline. His letter betrays his fixation on the last days and their theological importance. His readers are compelled to understand.

Dualism between good and evil, so characteristic of apocalyptic literature, is clear in Jude as well. There are no gray areas between godliness and ungodliness. In Jude it is them (οἱ τοῖ) against you (ἡμεῖς). There are only two lifestyles: ungodliness or faithfulness. One follows the Lord or Satan. One either becomes clouds without rain, fruitless trees, wild waves and wandering stars or you build yourself up in faith, pray in the Holy Spirit and keep yourself in God's love. And there is no middle in which to meet. We are on God's side and they are not. And if they oppose God, then they also oppose us. No one is caught in the middle. Those choosing the wrong side are enemies. We may have to wait for God's intervention for deliverance but defenses must be erected in the time of waiting.

Then there is the use of sources in this short letter. From allusions to illustrations to references to quotations, the abundance of apocalyptic literature used by Jude has led to the author being charged with being a "consumer" of apocalyptic literature.¹⁸¹ It is of significant notice that in such a short letter Jude makes reference to two apocalyptic and noncanonical texts: *The Assumption of Moses* and *I Enoch*.

His use of the Michael/Satan dispute in verse nine actually gives us a missing piece of the *Assumption of Moses*, allowing us a better picture of that fragmented document, the only copy of which we have in Latin from the sixth century. But the reference to that dispute, and particularly the parting words of Michael to Satan ("The Lord rebuke you!"), is echoed in at least two other texts, both of which are Jewish Apocalyptic in genre. The condemnation is

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

found in the apocalyptic vision of the final Hebrew Bible book of Zechariah (3:2) where, according to your interpretation, either the angel of the Lord or the Lord himself utters the rebuke. The book of *Jubilees* also records an argument between Michael and Satan (17:15-18:16) in which the argument is over Abraham and his attempted sacrifice of Isaac. The debate rises again in *Jubilees* in chapter 48, this time focusing on Moses. Charles finds a connection between Jude and the apocalyptic community of Qumran through Jude's use of this story.¹⁸² Michael is mentioned twice in one document from Qumran (1QM 9:15 and 17:6). Although those two references are almost given in passing, Charles believes that it would be irresponsible scholarship to ignore the connection between the two texts. Taking into consideration the tenor of Jude 9, the reference to a battle in Jude 3, Jude's mention of the last days in verse 18, allusions to building and praying in the spirit in verse 20, Jude 24 where believers having fought are then made to stand, combined with Jude's affection for Enoch, it is reasonable to see the connection between Jude and the apocalyptic Qumran community.¹⁸³

Jude's use of οὗτοι may also have ties to Qumran and certainly has an apocalyptic character to it. Similar statements about the unfaithful can be found in 4QpIsa^b 2:6 and 2:10 ("These are the scoffers").¹⁸⁴ Jude's tendency to lift a historic example and make present application by the use of οὗτοι (i.e. "This is...these are...") is formulaic in apocalyptic literature. Daniel uses it in the interpretation of King Belshazzar's dream (Dan. 5:25-26). It appears in Zechariah's dream of the man in the myrtle trees (Zech. 1:9-10) and the vision of

¹⁸² Charles, *Literary Strategy*, 151.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Bauckham has an extensive note on Jude's use of οὗτοι (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 45).

four horns (Zech. 1:19-20). It occurs in Revelation 7:13-14 in John's vision of the great multitude in white robes and again in later chapters in Revelation (11:4 and 14:4). Even *I Enoch* (46:3) uses the term in this way.

But Jude's allusion to Enoch and his prophecy is the capstone of Jude's apocalyptic "consumerism" and it is this text that influences Jude the most. *I Enoch* is a lengthy Jewish Apocalyptic work written originally in Aramaic in the period between the third and the middle of the first century B.C.E.¹⁸⁵ As an anthology of five compositions, Aramaic fragments of all parts of *I Enoch* except one, the *Similitudes*, have been found in Qumran.¹⁸⁶ Although the book is a complex compilation of dreams, visions, theology and narrative, the main theme running through its pages is one of final judgment. In fact, the judgment that is spoken of or inferred in every major section of the book is none other than the final judgment that will happen on the last day.¹⁸⁷

Both the work and its proclaimed author, Enoch, have a rich and well accepted tradition in Jewish circles, even to this day. The text was critical enough to be kept among the Qumran scrolls and is included as part of the Ethiopic Church Canon. Enoch himself has a

¹⁸⁵ Although the only extant version is in Ethiopic.

¹⁸⁶ John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1987), 33.

¹⁸⁷ In my opinion, no one has done more on the study, translation and explanation of the book than Nickelburg. See his introduction in George W.E. Nickelburg, *I Enoch 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001). Among much more he offers on the background of the book, he writes, "The finality of the judgment in 1 Enoch is indicated in several ways: the typology of flood and judgment, each concluding a wicked age; the location of this judgment at the end of two recitations of human history; the assertion in these historical reviews and elsewhere that the judgment ushers in a new creation that will recapitulate and make permanent the divine intentions and the conditions that were essential to the first creation; the promise of a resurrection that transcends the finality of death." (p. 55).

very diverse reputation in Jewish tradition. Mentioned only in Genesis 5:21-24 in the Hebrew Bible, there Enoch poses as the model of righteousness, and is one of only two Hebrew Bible characters, along with Elijah, that are translated into heaven, bypassing death. That carries considerable weight in Jewish Apocalyptic thought. In other Jewish Apocalyptic literature he is an example of repentance (*Sirach* 44:16), a sage (*Jubilees* 4:17), a prophet (*Testimony of Levi* 14:2), and an oracle-giver and keeper of secrets (*Testimony of Naphtali* 4:1 and *Jubilees* 4:19). Within the text of *I Enoch* he is also an intercessor (10:10; 83:8 and 84:2-6) and a scribe in heaven (81:2 and 89:76).¹⁸⁸

And for Jude, both the author of the book and the book are important. Jude quotes from *I Enoch* 1:9 but he also refers to the accepted author of the text in Jude 14 as “the seventh from Adam.” The quote plays a critical role in that it contains Jude’s dual emphasis on ungodliness and judgment.¹⁸⁹ The number seven and its significance in Jewish tradition lends an even more sacrosanct aspect to Enoch and to Jude’s argument that his opponents are doomed according to Enoch’s prophecy. And Jude desires that this sacredness of the text of *I Enoch* should become as important to his readers as it is for himself. For the early church fathers and even for more modern scholarship the question of canonicity of Enoch was raised by Jude’s use of that text. But for Jude, there was no question. *I Enoch* was Scripture. This was heaven sent. Enoch was God’s man. And Jude is as apocalyptic as Enoch. But for Jude Jesus, God in the flesh, becomes the subject of the judgment.

There is one other aspect of apocalypticism that sometimes goes unnoticed. Because of its intense mood and its focus on the judgment of evil and the righting of wrong, it is

¹⁸⁸ Charles, *Literary Strategy*, 153-154.

¹⁸⁹ Wolthuis, “Jude and Jewish Traditions,” 37-38.

sometimes overlooked that apocalyptic literature is also the literature of hope.¹⁹⁰ Ultimately, apocalyptic literature is concerned with God's vindication and seeks to provide an encouragement for the faithful that such vindication is both on God's mind and will work on the faithful's behalf. In fact, the development of this genre circled around the need for hope. It was in dire circumstances, where traditional interpretations fell short, that a reinterpretation of sacred texts was initiated. All the promises of God will be consummated, even if it takes a route unanticipated by the readers. The apocalyptic vision in Daniel ultimately concludes with the words, "But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered" (Daniel 12:1b). In the final chapter of Zechariah, the final day of the Lord described by the visionary as one of war and destruction, ultimately leads to a focus on the city of Jerusalem where "it will never attain be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure" (Zechariah 14:11). In the New Testament book of Revelation the concluding two chapters following the horrors of the final judgment of God are descriptions of the new Jerusalem and the River of Life reserved for believers.

Jude is also about hope, and written in the same vein as other apocalyptic texts. And while, like other apocalyptic literature, Jude commits the major portion of his letter to the condemnation of the wicked, his final words are words of hope. The judgment of condemnation is the inheritance of the wicked but the letter is written to the faithful. Jude concludes his letter beginning with instructions of encouragement with the words, "But you dear friends..." (Jude 20-23), and then concluding with a doxology where the ability of God to keep the readers from falling is the focus.

¹⁹⁰ D.S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 18.

So Jude is an apocalypticist who understands and lives within that point of view. He is a believer in Yahweh and a former follower of the Law within the confines of Judaism. He understands the flexibility of the Jewish system with its evolution of interpretations, the latest of which, Jewish Apocalypticism, being his own point of view. But within that apocalyptic framework he remains faithful to the sacred Jewish texts. He has also become a follower of Jesus and begins to reinterpret his apocalyptic worldview around Jesus. So for this particular thesis it is important to appreciate that Jude would understand those who are disappointed with a more traditional interpretation of Judaism. He would also understand those who struggle, even with an apocalyptic mindset, to stay within any branch of Judaism. But unlike an incipient Gnostic movement, Jude is content with his new Jesus-centered, one-God, Jewish Christianity. Developing Gnosticism, advancing from Jewish Apocalypticism, would not be so content. The question is whether Jude sees that further development of the pre-Gnostics and makes them the object of his letter. Who are Jude's οὐτοί?

The οὐτοί as Incipient Gnostics

Just as there is debate concerning the origins of Gnosticism, there is debate as to Gnosticism's influence on the New Testament. One of the greatest factors considered by those doubting any Gnostic impact on the New Testament is chronology. A second century derivation allows no room for first century influence. However, I have shown the strong probability of Gnosticism's ties to Jewish Apocalypticism in the first chapter of this dissertation. Along with that is the possibility, and even likelihood, of an incipient Gnosticism developing in the same century as the New Testament letters, if not before. I believe there is ample evidence of Gnosticism's influence on some of the New Testament

writers, and more specifically on the first century churches to which they wrote. And I believe the Epistle of Jude is one of those letters that was specifically written with these early Gnostics in mind.

Obviously, the most significant information used for identification should come from the text, specifically from characteristics expressed by the author. Through denunciation, Jude gives us several characteristics of his opponents. They are godless, specifically in a morally licentious way and they deny Jesus (v. 4). They are dreamers, sexually impure, anti-authoritarian and slanderers angels (v.8). They are unconcerned about the church but feed only themselves (v. 12). They are grumblers and faultfinders and boasters (16). They lack the Spirit of God and follow natural instincts (v. 19).¹⁹¹

We can also discern more from Jude's use of stories to exemplify these opponents. Like the slaves coming from Egypt, they lack faithfulness to the truth or the True One (v. 5). They are unrepentant of their "heresy" as was Cain (v. 11). They insidiously lead others to apostasy, against God's clear direction, just as Balaam did (v. 11).

Perhaps there are many groups in the first century that could fill such a description, especially if we take the language of Jude to be somewhat hyperbolic. An antinomian group may indeed be the culprit as was the case in other first century churches. But given the letter's background, the specific language and illustrations, the list of traits given above, the close connections these opponents had to the church, and the magnitude of the perceived

¹⁹¹ Several of these characteristics are re-emphasized throughout the letter such as with the example of Sodom and Gomorrah in verse 7, the story of the Watchers in Jude 6, and the example of Korah in verse 11.

threat, it is difficult to imagine any other faction fitting the description better than incipient Gnosticism.¹⁹² Hence it is important to look more closely at this description.

One of Jude's main charges against the opposition that is repeated in various ways is that they are morally lax, living licentiously. In fact, this appears to be the most pressing problem. Jude's opponents live without constraint and blatantly reject all authority, moral or otherwise. The short triplet of descriptive elements given in Jude 8 is most likely connected to their lifestyle and would be the basis of their appeal. They may justify their way of life by appealing to inspired visions, according to Jude's denunciation that "these dreamers defile the flesh," by throwing off all moral restraint, such as the Mosaic law, when they "despise authority," and by ascribing the deliverance of that law to malevolent angels as they could be interpreted as doing when they "blaspheme the glorious ones."

Certainly, one of the characteristics that set Gnostics apart from both Judaism and Christianity, and ultimately why they are designated as Gnostics, is their complete reliance on an individual revelation of *gnosis* that enlightened them to unseen realities. Spiritual progress could be made but was limited without this *gnosis* and as such, the reception of this *gnosis* became their focus. Therefore, those who received this revelation considered themselves to be pneumatics, spiritual beings differentiated from the psychics, those devoid of knowledge. As a rule, the pneumatic morality was displayed by a disdain for everything physical, including all that was represented in this present world, eventually culminating in the strong

¹⁹² Bauckham, who has probably done more work on the book of Jude than any other scholar, reflects that "throughout the history of scholarship the opponents in Jude have normally been regarded as in some sense Gnostics." It is only recently that there have been some objections to this view. R.J. Bauckham, "The Letter of Jude: An Account of Research," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*. Vol. 2/25/5, ed. W. Hasse (New York: de Gruyter, 1988, 3791-3826), 3809.

cosmic dualism of the full-blown Gnosticism of the second century. Unsurprisingly however, this disdain for the physical resulted in two polarizing attitudes: asceticism and libertinism. Some branches of Gnosticism understood that the possession of this *gnosis* required a pulling back from the world in order to avoid further contamination. They were the ascetics and the controlling of the natural desires was their practical response to *gnosis*. This particular response seems to be the route taken by the majority of Gnostics and is the response called for in most of their own writings. Other Gnostics, however, understood that the creator of the physical universe, the Demiurge, was also the creator of the moral laws, and most specifically the Mosaic Law as dictated through angels. To violate those laws, then, would not only signify one's disdain for the physical but also constitute complete freedom. Since the pneumatic is saved by *gnosis*, then he is above threats of judgment from the Demiurge. In addition, this freedom is not simply an indifference to the moral laws, handed down by evil angels, but rather there is incentive to intentionally violate those laws.¹⁹³ There is even a

¹⁹³ A quote from Irenaeus is helpful here. It is understood that his experience comes much later than that of Jude. It is also understood that these are charges made against Gnostics as opposed to writings of the Gnostics themselves. The use of Irenaeus here is not to be taken anachronistically. However, that latter fact helps us to understand Jude's letter in that we are interpreting accusations made against his opposition and trying to determine the specific nature of that opposition.

“Psychical men are instructed in the things psychical, and they are steadied by works and simple faith and do not possess the perfect knowledge. These are we of the church. To us, therefore, they maintain, a moral life is necessary for salvation. They themselves, however, according to their teaching, would be saved absolutely and under all circumstances, not through works but through the mere fact of their being by nature “spiritual.” For, as it is impossible for the earthly element to partake in salvation, not being susceptible of it, so it is impossible for the spiritual element (which they pretend to be themselves) to suffer corruption, whatever actions they may have indulged in. As gold sunk in filth will not lose its beauty but preserve its own nature...so nothing can injure them.... Therefore the most perfect among them do unabashed all the forbidden things of which Scripture assures us that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (*Adv. Haer.* I.6. 2-3)

section of *The Testimony of Truth* that addresses those that have *gnosis*, having already received revelation, that are living in a more libertine lifestyle and are being rebuked for it. These Gnostics have children and continue to have intercourse while nursing, are “gratified by unrighteous mammon,” and do not work.”¹⁹⁴ The point here is not whether this libertine lifestyle was a proper or improper response to *gnosis* but that it was a historical and evidenced response. It was an existing lifestyle for at least some of the Gnostics.

Jude’s concern against the libertinistic lifestyle of his opposition could resonate with a variety of philosophies, religions, and sects that flourished in the Hellenistic-Jewish-Christian world of Jude. It is not necessary to identify Gnosticism as the only group these words could describe. But certainly, Gnosticism would be included as a likely object of Jude’s polemic. Their close association with early Christianity would make it even more likely that this is the group observed by Jude. Francois Viljoen makes the point that even though this group is morally inconsistent with the Christian movement, they seem to be involved in the community of believers and able to use Scripture. According to Jude, they are dishonoring God with their lifestyle but they do not seem to be atheists.¹⁹⁵ Given its accepted close ties with early Christianity and Jewish Apocalypticism, incipient Gnosticism becomes as likely a candidate as any.

But Jude was also concerned that these opponents denied Christ (Jude 4), an unspecified accusation with critical importance to this thesis. That the opponents were

¹⁹⁴ Testimony of Truth 67.10-68.8.

¹⁹⁵ Francois P Viljoen, “Faithful Christian living amidst scoffers of the Judgment Day: Ethics and ethos in Jude and 2 Peter,” in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 2006), 515.

members, or even teachers within the church, limits the scope of the charge on the negative side. Obviously, these men cannot be denying something essential to the salvific nature of Christ. They cannot be denying that Jesus is central and essential to the work of salvation that defined the church. Otherwise they would have been excluded from fellowship and believers would have little reason to follow their teaching.

With an abundance of speculation and limited text to work with, it appears that there are three possibilities to consider.¹⁹⁶ First, Jude could be referring to the libertine lifestyle discussed above as the testimony of denying Jesus' teaching and authority to judge. In other words, Jude's second accusation is in actuality simply a reiteration of his first. Second, the denial of Jesus may be intended in the more general sense of being anti-authoritarian. The followers of this new way are simply disregarding accepted authority, be it in the sacred texts or the present chosen leadership. Last, this could be a specific and theological charge. In addition to immoral living the opponents deny some precise aspect of Jesus as the church's "only Master and Lord."

The argument for the first position, that Jude is referring to the opponent's morally expanded lifestyle as the point of denial, is simple. This charge seems to be foremost in Jude's mind as he repeatedly warns the readers, through polemic and illustration, to beware of such libertinism (Jude 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 19). In this case, verse four could be seen as parallelism. "They change the grace of our God into unbridled living and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ," could be read as, "They change the grace of our God into unbridled living and *in so doing* deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." However,

¹⁹⁶ Bauckham limits the possibilities to two: ethical or doctrinal. *Jude, 2 Peter*, 40.

given Jude's penchant for triplets, this makes little grammatical sense for an author who has taken such great care in crafting his argument. Why would Jude start with a doublet when he has clearly written the rest of his polemic with triplets in mind? It is also uncommon to find within Scripture the use of the term "denying Christ" to refer to an ungodly lifestyle. With the exception of Titus 1:16 and Matthew 7:21-23, and there only vaguely, there is no other reference to the denial of Christ through deeds.¹⁹⁷

The second position is a more general, non-specific accusation of anti-authoritarianism. In this epistle, the opponents are compared to angels who did not keep their positions of authority (Jude 6), are specifically denounced for rejecting authority (Jude 8), and accused of "blaspheming the glories" (Jude 8). The denying of Jesus, specifically as "master" (ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ) could lend itself to this interpretation. The difficulty with this opinion is that it is so general that both an argument for or against is difficult to substantiate. An appealing aspect of this position is that if understood this way then verse four acts as an introduction to the rest of the letter. Basically, every accusation against the opponents in the epistle can be summarized as either a libertine lifestyle ("They change the grace of our God into unbridled living...") or an anti-authoritarian attitude ("...and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ"). The difficulty with this stance is twofold. First, if verse four is an introduction to what follows and summarizes the entirety of the offenses into two areas, then the author has done a poor job in structuring the letter to explain those two areas. A reader of the letter does not naturally deduce that all the accusations can be summarized in two points. In fact, there are so many specific charges leveled and illustrations raised that to sum up those charges in

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* And even with this admission by Bauckham, he actually maintains this view as his interpretation of Jude 4.

two areas is the most unnatural conclusion to make. And the reader would expect a similar two-point conclusion where none is offered. Second, it fails structurally where the first option failed in that Jude has a style that revolves around triplets. It would be odd that his opening statement is a doublet while in the rest of his letter he never uses that structure again.

The third option is that the denial of Jesus is a separate and theological charge. It neither acts as an introductory term that could include many of the following accusations, nor is it generally alluding to the opponents' immoral lifestyle. We have already mentioned above that such a denial would have to be a subtle one that would allow these opponents to maintain fellowship with believers. If the denial was clearly blasphemous, the letter would be unnecessary since the recipients would have already recognized the error. However, the charge must have had enough substance that a more experienced Christian leader, such as Jude, would not just simply point it out but interpret it as denying the very center of Christianity, Jesus Christ.

With this in mind we also know that the mature Gnosticism of the second century on had two drastic points of separation from Judaism and Christianity. First, Gnostics developed a cosmic dualism that separated the physical from the spiritual. Everything physical was evil, including the body. This was the foundation for the two opposing responses that eventually developed among Gnostics that was discussed above. Some Gnostic groups practiced asceticism while others chose a libertine lifestyle. Second, and closely associated with the first, they developed a God of creation, the Demiurge, apart from the true God of salvation. The first development of understanding the physical world as evil would evolve in one branch of Gnosticism into a docetic view of Christ. If indeed the body is evil then Christ coming in the flesh had to be explained. For some, the explanation rested on the denial of the physical

body to the Christ figure.¹⁹⁸ In the *Apocalypse of Peter* (81:4-24), Peter is given a vision of the crucifixion. When Peter asks what he is seeing, the Christ gives this answer. “He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute, being put to shame, he who came into being in his likeness.” Later in the vision Peter is told that the one they crucified is the “home of demons, and the stony vessel in which they dwell.” For these Gnostics, the Christ came to bring the saving gnosis to the world. But he only appeared to come in the form of a human Jesus with a physical body. The Christian heresiologists of later centuries would write quite decisively against these issues. However, a more incipient, growing Gnostic theology that Jude faced may have lacked clear definition and terminology while the seeds of such a belief explained above would be germinating. Such a scenario could quite easily fit the book of Jude.

Jude specifically says that these opponents “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (καὶ τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἀρνούμενοι). Such an indictment would be legitimate for those speaking in any way against the actual physical appearance of Christ.¹⁹⁹ This seems to be the very case we are presented with in the letters of John (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). In fact, this is very close to the charge John makes against his opponents in 1 John 2:22 where the denial is that of rejecting that Jesus is the Christ, which is

¹⁹⁸ Karen King deals in depth with the Docetic Christology of the Gnostics. King, *What is Gnosticism*, 208-217.

¹⁹⁹ So would be the view of Gerd Lüdemann who, carefully analyzing Jude 4, believes that Jude’s opponents deny Jesus. “As we look at the letter it appears that they deny the full humanity of Jesus.” Gerd Lüdemann, *Intolerance and the Gospel* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2007), 175.

exactly what the Gnostics did. And Jude in verse four links the earthly name of the physical Savior, Jesus, to his anointed title, Christ, in antithesis to what a docetic Gnostic would do.

Concerning the developing Gnostic idea that there were two Gods, Jude's use of the term δεσπότης (master) is a strong one. The term is rarely seen in New Testament use and linked to Jesus is found only in 2 Peter among the canonical books. When preceded by μόνου (only), Jude's claim for Jesus as the only master makes a powerful creedal statement against any incipient dualism that would eventually result in the creation of a second inferior God of creation or a docetic view of Christ.

There does exist an argument from silence against this view. If indeed Jude is dealing with an opponent that is, even incipiently, either docetic or dualistic, would he not have spoken more specifically to this in his letter? The answer of course is maybe, as is usually the case in arguments from silence. Such an argument does little to aid us in deciding between the three positions presented here. In fact, placed at the beginning of the epistle in this way, this phrase could indeed be Jude's opening and most significant charge against his opposition, given with as much detail as any of the following charges.

The attraction of this option is that it makes sense for an author who does not waste his words in this short letter. If anything, Jude is specific. Neither of the first two options fit the remaining style or structure of the author of this letter as well as this one.

A third and strikingly odd charge of Jude against his opposition is that they are "dreamers." The word used is in the participial form (ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι) and would refer to all three verbs in the phrase found in verse eight.²⁰⁰ An appropriate translation might be, "In

²⁰⁰ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 55.

the same way, dreaming, these men pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander the glorious ones.” So the dreaming to which Jude refers covers all three main distinctions of the opponents – immorality, anti-authoritarianism, and slandering angels. Although there are minor differences, most scholars commenting on this verse understand the dreaming to refer to prophetic revelation. It would not have to mean authentic revelation and certainly Jude does not use it in that sense. The term just as often refers to false revelation (Deut. 13:2; Isa. 56:10; Jer. 23:25) as it does to true revelation (Dan. 2:1; Joel 2:28).

This is both critical and revealing. Although there were many morally licentious groups in Jude’s day, there were few that based their lifestyle on prophetic visions.²⁰¹ These opponents apparently did. Unsurprisingly, so did Gnosticism. The composition of prophetic myths was an ongoing attribute of Gnosticism. The expression of essential and basic beliefs were put into story form and expressed through apocalypses, apocryphons, and other literary types. But it is important to remember that these constructions came through dreams and visions. In fact, this was the ultimate claim to authority for these beliefs and resultant lifestyles. Gnostic sources, such as those found in Nag Hammadi, are helpful resources here. *The Paraphrase of Shem*, the *Apocryphon of John*, and the *Apocalypse of James* are only three of many that specifically claim to have been received through a vision. The accusations of the church fathers dwell heavily on this aspect of Gnosticism as well, albeit in a critical tenor.²⁰²

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²⁰² Pearson claims mythopoeia, the construction of elaborate myths, as one of the chief characteristics of Gnosticism. Birger Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 14.

That Jude would use this term of “dreamers” as a charge against his opponents would make sense only if something like incipient Gnosticism were in view. It is true that visionary revelations were common in Jude’s day in contemporary paganism.²⁰³ But it was much less common among groups that mingled among Christian groups, specifically that also match the other accusations recorded in Jude’s letter. We have before us, in Jude’s eyes, a group that acknowledged the centrality of Jesus for salvation, while claiming visionary authority for a libertine lifestyle and a harsh view of angels. It is difficult to imagine that Jude is looking at anything other than the early stages of Gnosticism.

In this light it is also necessary to understand Jude’s next charge against his opponents, that of slandering the glorious ones. As I explained above the term δόξας here most probably refers to angels. This is widely accepted by scholars as it is attested to in the Dead Sea Scrolls, apocalyptic literature and Gnostic literature.²⁰⁴ The charge is again specific even if the details are lacking. The opponents blaspheme or slander angels. And unlike verse four where there is room to interpret the phrase “denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” to mean that such a denial is the consequence of immoral living, this charge must be taken in a more literal sense. In some way, the offenders are speaking unfavorably of the angels. This is unique in the New Testament as a charge against heretics, which is all the more reason to understand the accusation in a specific manner.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 56.

²⁰⁴ See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 57 for a summary of sources.

²⁰⁵ As Bauckham notes (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 57). The exception would be 2 Peter 2:10 where Jude is incorporated, almost in its entirety, for use by the author of 2 Peter.

So what is the allegation exactly? This group has a poor view of angels, either evil angels or good angels or both. It is possible that it is against evil angels that the opponents speak. The trailing example in Jude 9 concerning Michael's hesitancy to slander the devil could be used to support such a view. Even the devil, being of the highest order of evil or fallen angels, is not to be spoken of disparagingly. But this is a weak argument. First, it seems strange that Jude would have difficulty with anyone using harsh language against evil angels. Would it really matter if these opponents spoke and taught against Satan and his demons? Second, taking the illustration of Michael in this sense, that Michael treated the devil with respect and therefore so should we, seems stranger still. Is Jude's point that we should be polite to the devil? And is he upset that his opponents are not? It seems as if the illustration of Michael and the devil is used to teach that only the Lord has the authority to judge in these matters.²⁰⁶ Therefore, since even one as high as an ἀρχάγγελος defers to God in these matters, humans have no choice but to do the same. So this seems to be an accusation of speaking evil of the angelic order in general and not only of those fallen angels.

Gnosticism reviled the angelic world. Angels were responsible for the created order as well as the giving of the Law through Moses.²⁰⁷ Since there is a clear division of physical and spiritual in Gnosticism, salvation from the physical world is one's ultimate goal. Therefore, anything that comes from the angels is the antithesis of goodness and salvation.

²⁰⁶ So interprets Mayor, Joseph B Mayor, *The Epistle of St. Jude and the Second Epistle of St. Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 35-36, Bauckham [*Jude*, 2 *Peter*, 61], and Neyrey [*2 Peter*, *Jude*, 66].

²⁰⁷ This is well attested in both Gnostic literature and the early church fathers. Jonas has a good summary of what is shared above. See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), 132-136.

Granted that the Gnostic view of angels seems to be more “contemptible than sinister,”²⁰⁸ angels are still spoken of in critical terms, sometimes harshly so. They usurped authority from the true God and as a result, their creations of the world and the Law, are illustrious of their inferior nature to that true God.

Can it be clearer that this is the charge brought by Jude against his opponents in verse eight? I realize that the description above is of what we know of Gnosticism in its more established form, which would be evidenced in later centuries. Yet, even in its incipient nature in the first century, this Gnostic attitude toward angels would most probably have begun to develop and show. And the fact that Jude does not explain this accusation any more specifically than he does would support the fact that this belief against angels is in its seminal rather than fully developed state.

There is one more major characteristic expressed by Jude concerning his opposition to be dealt with. In Jude 19 the opponents are labeled as natural (ψυχικοί) rather than spiritual (πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες). Since this accusation comes near the end of the letter it is possible that Jude is concluding that in review of all that is wrong with the opposition, in both their lifestyle and teaching, it is clear that they do not have the Holy Spirit and are thus, living according to natural instincts.

However, there is another possibility. It has been mentioned several times that Gnosticism had a clearly defined dualism between physical and spiritual. The physical body or physical human (ψυχικοί) was the creation of the Demiurge and the spiritual essence or

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

spiritual human (πνευματικοί) was the work of Sophia or the true God.²⁰⁹ The receiving of *gnosis* was the dividing line that moved one from physical to spiritual. And it became regular terminology in various strains of Gnosticism. Πνευματικοί were the higher, “saved” status of humanity while ψυχικοί were the lower nature of humankind. It is a clear possibility that Jude is making reference to this distinction. It becomes a stronger possibility with the consideration of two additional factors. First, the use of the terms themselves may indicate that Jude is attempting to “turn the tables.” As Paul similarly may have done in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, Jude may be taking terminology used by his opponents and reversing their meaning. It is not that the faithful are the ψυχικοί, as the opponents suggest, but rather the opponents who are, with their lifestyle giving evidence to that fact. Second, the accusation immediately preceding this natural/spiritual distinction is that the opponents are “those who are creating division.” Some might interpret this as meaning the opponent’s teaching is causing a rift within the believers so there are squabbles and sides are being drawn up. But the word that Jude uses for “division” (ἀποδιорίζουτες) is unique and one of the many *hapex legomena* of his work. As such it is difficult to know exactly what it means and what Jude intends. The word ἀποδιорίζω can mean to make a distinction or mark off by separating.²¹⁰ Perhaps this is not a separate charge but rather should be closely connected to the phrase with which we have been dealing. These opponents are making distinctions between individuals within the

²⁰⁹ See an early study done by Birger Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians* (Montana: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1973). The entire work details my rather succinct ideas. But especially see Pearson’s comments on pages 70-73, 76-77, 82-85.

²¹⁰ Walter Baur, W.F.Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 110.

group of believers by labeling some as spiritual and others as physical. Jude may indeed be using the opponent's own language against them and verse 19 could just as easily read, "These are the ones who make distinctions (between natural and spiritual) but who themselves are actually the natural-minded and not having the spirit."

There are several other minor points to consider in determining the nature of Jude's opponents. The first of which is the realization that these opponents are on "the inside" (Jude 4). A century after this time the battle with Gnosticism would rage within the church. At that time, even with its more clearly defined theology and mythology, Gnosticism would still be dealt with as a "heresy." How much more, then, is it understandable that an incipient Gnosticism in Jude's day would be a group growing within the church.

Second, Helmet Koester makes an interesting point concerning the name of the author. Koester is convinced that the opponents of Jude are early Gnostics. He is not as convinced, however, that Jude, the actual brother of James (and Jesus), wrote this epistle. If Koester is correct, his reason for the author selecting the name of Jude as a pseudonym is notable.

The use of this name is still somewhat curious. Considering the obviously anti-gnostic character of the writing, there is another possible explanation for the name. Judas Thomas (the twin) was recognized as an authority in Gnostic circles and was later also called the brother of Jesus. One may therefore ask whether the use of this authority by gnostics was the reason for the choice of the pseudonym.²¹¹

Third, the tone of the letter is obviously grave. And in the opening Jude reflects the seriousness of the issue when he states that he would rather have written on another topic but

²¹¹ Helmet Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 247.

found that impossible in light of the weight of the current situation (Jude 3). In addition, the recipients are never named. We are uncertain as to the destination and whether this is a letter to a specific congregation or a general letter to be circulated among many congregations. The possibility of its being a general letter speaks to the widespread influence of this opposing group. The fact that the situation is critical to address speaks to the seriousness of the threat. Bringing these thoughts together leaves us with the possibility that Jude catches the beginnings of a religious movement that Christians would eventually categorize as heresy. And incipient Gnosticism could fit that bill.

Finally, it would be helpful to understand who the early fathers of the church thought was the object of Jude's polemic. Peter Jones has written a volume on the oldest commentaries on Jude that are extant today.²¹² He works specifically with five documents: The *Hypotyposes on Jude* by Clement of Alexandria, the *Commentary on Jude* by Didymus of Alexandria, a *Catena of Scholia* on Jude published by John Cramer, the *Commentary on Jude* by Oecumenius (whom Russell refers to as Pseudo-Oecumenius), and the *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles* by Bede. These writers cover an extensive period of time beginning with Clement in the second century and ending with either Bede in the early eighth century or Oecumenius, dated variously by scholars in the sixth or tenth centuries C.E. The only one of real significance for this study is Clement as he is the only author close to Jude's time period.

However, it is worthy to note who all these writers interpreted to be the opposition that

²¹² Peter Russell Jones, *The Epistle of Jude as Expounded by the Fathers – Clement of Alexandria, Didymus of Alexandria, The Scholia of Cramer's Catena, Pseudo-Oecumenius, and Bede* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001). What I have written above is a summary of Russell's findings as it relates to the identification of Jude's opponents.

Jude faced. By the fourth verse of Jude, Oecumenius is convinced that Nicolaus, Valentinus and Simon Magus are those that Jude had in mind when writing his epistle, all three of which are associated with Gnosticism.²¹³ Didymus, in his commentary, waits until his comments on Jude 5-7 to name the opponents as Simon Magus, the Nicolaitans and three other groups of Gnostics, the Marcionites, Valentinians, and the Sethians.²¹⁴ When the story of Michael and his debate with the devil is addressed, at least two of the *scholion* are convinced the opponents are Gnostic.²¹⁵ A longer *scholion* names the Valentinians, Marionites, and Manichaeans, all Gnostics, as the adversaries. A shorter work is less specific, regarding the dispute over Moses as a rebuke simply to “Gnostic teaching.” Near the end of Jude’s polemic, in verse 19, as Jude uses the terms ψυχικοί and πνευματικοί, Clement finally reveals his understanding of Jude’s rivals as Gnostics, clearly understanding the terms to refer to Gnostic teaching on the separation of the physical from the spiritual, which would lead to libertine behavior.²¹⁶ Of all the fathers surveyed by Russell, only Bede refrains from naming Gnosticism, in some form, as the adversary in Jude’s epistle. But Bede names no specific group as the opposition.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

I would like to look more closely at Clement and his comments on Jude. Alexandria in the second century was fertile soil for Gnosticism and to understand the works of Clement apart from this is impossible. Although he opposed Gnostic thought, his methodology was different from what one would read in *Adversus Haereses* by Irenaeus. Irenaeus was much harsher. Clement was more engaging with Gnosticism. His thoughts here on the book of Jude are simple and short. Unfortunately, we do not have his writings in Greek but only a Latin translation by Cassiodorus from the sixth century.

Throughout most of his short essay, Clement simply quotes Jude and only moderately, and not for every verse, adds his own commentary to Jude. Interestingly, Clement accepts the self-designation of the author in Jude 1 as authentic, calling him the brother of James and the son of Joseph.²¹⁷ Clement also makes reference to the *Assumption of Moses* and *I Enoch*. Either because these works are cited by Jude or because Clement already accepted their authenticity and felt it confirmed by Jude, Clement understands Jude as confirming both the *Assumption of Moses* and the prophecies of *I Enoch*.

However, it is verse 19 and Clement's comments on it that is most telling for this thesis. Where Jude is referring to the opposition and claiming that they cause divisions (ἀποδιορίζοντες), Clement comments that these opponents "separate the faithful from the unfaithful" (*segregantes fideles ab infidelibus*). This would seem to be a compliment given to the opponents. They are doing Jude a favor. But the compliment is a sarcastic one since it is the unfaithful that are doing the separating. The favor they are providing is allowing true

²¹⁷ My comments are made based on the English translation by William Wilson found in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers 2*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1951), 573-574.

believers to see the error of the opponents' lifestyle and so be enabled to label them as "unfaithful." And exactly who they are becomes more evident with Clement's next comment on the verse. The opponents "separate from their flesh" (*discernentes a carunibus*), perhaps better translated as "separate from their bodies."²¹⁸ As has been noted repeatedly in this paper, Gnostics separate the physical realm from the spiritual realm. In a personal way, that separation was what led some factions into a libertine lifestyle since whatever was attempted in the body had no consequence for the spirit.²¹⁹

Of course it is understood that the early church fathers were influenced, as all are in every generation, by their immediate context. The struggles the church was experiencing during their leadership had an effect on their discernment of their own situation and how to apply God's Word to it. And for many of them, particularly Clement and Irenaeus, their context was one where a strong and growing Gnosticism existed. Such a framework affects their interpretation of Scripture, including Jude.

However, to disregard their point of view for that reason would be unscholarly at best and foolish at worst. Their view is as valid as ours. We also are affected by our context. Secondly, these church leaders, even those surveyed who appear significantly later than Jude, would have "a better view from where they sit," than we would today, chronologically speaking, as to how long Gnostic thought had been around. On this point it is significant to note that later writers such as Oecumenius, who were not undergoing such a difficult struggle

²¹⁸ The translator, William Wilson, seems to have been confused by this comment and calls it "either displaced or corrupted or both." *Ibid.*, 573. Understanding Clement's situation in dealing with the Gnostic movement makes the statement clear.

²¹⁹ See comments on this by Peter Jones, *The Epistle of Jude as Expounded by the Fathers*, 48.

against Gnosticism and so were not as “colored” in their thinking based on their own context, still understood the Gnostics to be the most likely opponent that Jude was facing. And when you bring into play the comments of Clement, living only one century separate from the first century church, the possibility that some form of incipient Gnosticism was developing at the time Jude penned his letter is dramatically increased. If Clement considered Jude to be the brother of Jesus then he understood this to be a first century composition. Why would he then understand these first century opponents to be Gnostics unless he actually understood that their existence preceded his century?

Objections to the Incipient Gnostic Opponent Proposal

Several specific objections to my theory have been dealt with above. However, as in the earlier section on the Jewish roots of Gnosticism when the specific objections of two of the stronger opponents of such a view, Simone Pétrement and Karen King, were analyzed, so it would be helpful to view the objections of Carroll Osburn and Frederik Wisse.²²⁰ Neither of these scholars would agree with my proposal above.

Osburn seeks to distinguish between Jude’s more forthright descriptions of his opponents and the apocalyptic warnings.²²¹ The references and images taken from apocalyptic sources are not used to illuminate the opponents. They serve only as a backdrop

²²⁰ Osburn and Wisse have strong objections to labeling Jude’s opponents as Gnostic. There are others who choose not to see Gnosticism as the focus of Jude’s attack, such as Richard Bauckham. However, like Bauckham, these others deal more simply with the understanding of the specific accusations of Jude and choose to identify no specific group within its verses.

²²¹ Osburn, “Discourse Analysis,” 288.

of impending judgment. Only Jude's direct charges are descriptive. As Carroll does this, he finds little to commend the idea that Gnostic thought is behind Jude's epistle. Strangely, Osburn's list of characteristics of Jude's opponents is longer than most. These infiltrators are ungodly, licentious, rejecting Christ, in delusion, sexually improper, rejecting lordship, mocking the spiritual domain, insidious, carousing unashamedly, taking care only of themselves, disenchanted, obdurate, verbally harsh, flattering others for selfish advantage, divisive, and unspiritual.²²² Just as strangely, Osburn believes that the opponents were not actually part of the church (i.e., "members") but were outsiders, remaining "decidedly secular."²²³ Osburn provides very few specific arguments against the possible finding of incipient Gnosticism within the text of Jude and his fears of others doing so can be summed up with his comment concerning Jude 19. In discussing the two terms used above, ψυχικοί and πνευματικοί, he warns of reading this verse "in the light of later constructs."²²⁴ He is quick to remind the reader that these were terms used within Gnosticism at a later time than when Jude was written. However, he continues by also reminding the reader that the relevant questions to address are whether these two terms are actual technical terms used in the New Testament period and whether Jude intended those same meanings in his letter. Osburn falls into the category of those who caution us to not "read back into" the historical situation of Jude in the first century. In agreement, he even quotes Robert McLaren Wilson when he observes that "Gnosis in the broader sense is not yet Gnosticism, and to interpret New

²²² *Ibid.*, 312.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 289.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

Testament texts which *may* reflect Gnosis in terms of the later Gnosticism is to run the risk of distorting the whole picture.”²²⁵ Finally, Osburn has this to say. “Although it has become increasingly clear that the Epistle of Jude exhibits no trace of the important tenets of mature second-century Gnostic systems, it remains to be proven that the “ungodly intruders” of Jude 4 were in fact primitive precursors of those systems.”²²⁶ Osborn believes that to view the description of Jude’s opposition, described in verses 4-19, as prime indicators of an early Gnostic development lacks proof. It is too simple to combine the accusation of a libertine lifestyle with the doctrinal error of what we know of later Gnostics to make any rational conclusion concerning the opposition addressed in Jude. The passage just does not lend itself easily to that deduction. Since the origin of Gnosticism is so uncertain any such claim “amounts to little more than a mass of disorganized parallels to Jude.”²²⁷

Although Osburn’s position is noteworthy, and his caution of reading history anachronistically worthy of receipt, his arguments are weak concerning this thesis. First, there is no attempt here, or for that matter among any current scholarship, to read a “mature second century Gnostic system” back into the world of Jude. This is about incipient Gnostics and the likelihood of Jude’s encounter with them. We are speaking of embryonic Gnostic thought in an early developmental stage. To my knowledge, there are no scholars who understand any New Testament opponent to be of the same nature as second century Gnostics. But the flip side of the coin needs to be stated as well. Equally to my knowledge, any developed system of the second century should have more primitive, incipient evidence in

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 309.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 310.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

preceding centuries. And as was quoted immediately above, Osburn admits that an incipient Gnostic scenario is, at least, more likely.

Second, if indeed we are talking about a Gnostic idea without strict definition and terminology then even Osburn's objection to the terminology used in Jude 19 is vulnerable. The terms ψυχικοί and πνευματικοί may not have been in use in the first century, or indeed they may have. And yet that is not even the point. The point is that in dealing with any incipient movement, we are dealing with *aspects* presently evolving more than we are with *terms* that develop later. It is less about the specific terminology and more about the probable characteristics that early Gnostic thought would exhibit. And it is very possible that early Gnostics would, in some way, seek to distinguish the spiritual from the natural and thus elevate their own understanding of salvation in the minds of their audience. Even in Corinth we have those who seem to delineate levels of spirituality based on the use or absence of the miraculous spiritual gifts. Why would we not find the same concept arising within the early strains of Gnosticism?

Third, Osburn's agreement with Wilson that "Gnosis in the broader sense is not yet Gnosticism, and to interpret New Testament texts which *may* reflect Gnosis in terms of the later Gnosticism is to run the risk of distorting the whole picture" is not entirely true. It is true that we must always be aware of the danger of confusing historical contexts. But the key to Wilson's statement is his first phrase. Gnosis in the broader sense is not yet Gnosticism. It may be improper and distorting to interpret New Testament texts in the context of *later* Gnosticism, but it is irresponsible scholarship to neglect the possibility of the existence of Gnosis in the broader sense (read that as the "early sense") and the probability that the New Testament was written in that context.

Finally, it is difficult to understand how Osburn could consider the argument for incipient Gnostic opposition in Jude that I have outlined above and summarize it as amounting “to little more than a mass of disorganized parallels.” The evidence is not only substantial but the “parallels” engulf every aspect of Jude’s characterization. It is possible that Osburn’s criticisms are leveled at those who sought to find Gnosticism behind every problem associated with the New Testament letters. If so then his work may be more understandable but his conclusions just as spurious.

Frederik Wisse is equally skeptical of finding any form of Gnostic thought in Jude. But Wisse’s approach is unique. “The letter could be a tract to the church at large in pseudo-epistolary form, dealing with the eschatological false prophets, the antichrists and demonic enemies of God who were to appear in the last days.”²²⁸ Wisse eliminates all specific historical references in Jude’s description of his opponents. He interprets the characteristics as “stock phrases taken from the description of the eschatological false prophets in Jewish and early Christian literature.”²²⁹ In essence, the epistle of Jude becomes a catholic letter addressed to the church at large for all time. It was never intended for one group of recipients. Neither was the purpose of the letter to clarify a specific opposition.

The difficulty with this position is that it is easy to assume and problematic to defend. And in defending his position, Wisse falls into the trap of circular reasoning. For example, after determining the opening words and initial illustrations are global rather than specific in

²²⁸ Frederik Wisse, “The Epistle of Jude in the History of Heresiology,” in ed. Martin Krause, *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972, 133-143), 136.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

nature, in verse eight, Wisse dismisses the Gnostic visionary interpretation of “dreamers” by stating that “it is most improbable that we suddenly get here a historical reference among otherwise prophetic and symbolic statements.”²³⁰ But by verse eight, Wisse has already globalized several possible historical references, all of which I have dealt with above in showing their relationship to specific Gnostic thought. Even worse, Wisse avoids even commenting on the more critical characteristic of blaspheming angels in the same verse. It is almost impossible to interpret that outside of a specific historical context.

What we learn from Osburn and Wisse is that it is difficult and takes great care to interpret ancient texts within their context. But their contribution to the study of Jude takes us backward rather than forward. To be certain in historical interpretation is impossible. But to avoid the attempt is irresponsible. The wealth of evidence supports a specific opposition in the letter of Jude. And the sheer preponderance of correspondence between Jude’s description and incipient Gnosticism is impossible to neglect. It still remains the single best proposal for Jude’s historical context.

Almost the entirety of scholarship deals with the possibility of a Gnostic opposition when commenting on Jude’s letter. In fact, one of the critical points of debate concerning the epistle is the date of its writing. And the reason this is controversial is that so many are so thoroughly convinced that Jude was dealing with some form of early Gnostic thought that they cannot accept a date for the letter earlier than the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century. In other words, the characteristics of the opposition in Jude seem to be so closely aligned with those of Gnosticism that it is more reasonable for scholars to ignore

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

the self-designation of the author and assign a later date to the letter than it is to surrender the idea that Jude is opposing some form of Gnostic thought.

Few, if any, however, argue that it is Gnosticism proper with which Jude is dealing. And my thesis is clear that an early, embryonic Gnosticism is the context. Bauckham lists those that believe Jude is dealing with incipient Gnosticism as Loconte, Sidebottom, Hahn, Bruce, Eybers, Moffatt, Wikenhauser, Farrar, Ermoni and Cantinat.²³¹ And that list is not exhaustive. Helmet Koester writes that “the origin and date of this brief writing are uncertain, but its employment of apocalyptic material against Gnosticism is so obvious that it is best treated in this context.”²³²

Perhaps Joseph Mayor’s view best reflects the position of this paper.

Strong as is St Jude’s language, it would probably have been stronger still if the evil had reached this height when he wrote. Like the other N.T. writers he saw the germs of intellectual license and moral laxity which were destined to show such a frightful development in a later generation.²³³

It is the “germs” of Gnostic development that Jude is aware of. And as Koester asserts above, Jude employs an apocalyptic worldview against that development, which makes the epistle of Jude a prime work that supports Bilde’s theory of Jewish Apocalypticism lending itself to the formation of Gnosticism with the aid of early, eschatological Christianity.

²³¹ Richard Bauckham, “An Account of Research,” 3810.

²³² Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 246.

²³³ Mayor, *The Epistle of St. Jude*, clxxx.

CHAPTER 3

JUDE AND BILDE: IN THE CONTINUUM

At this point, we have established Gnosticism's ties with Judaism and specifically Jewish Apocalypticism. We have also looked at the critical background issues of the book of Jude and found the author to be a Jewish Apocalyptic convert to Christianity and his opponents to be from an incipient Gnostic worldview. With this milieu of Jude in mind we need to revisit Bilde's theory to understand Jude's relationship to it. Remember that Bilde is seeking to fill in critical blanks in a Jewish Apocalypticism-Christianity-Gnosticism continuum. If there is merit to the hypothesis that Gnosticism's origin, at least significantly, lies within Jewish Apocalypticism, then Bilde tries to explain two substantial Gnostic developments difficult to account for: the strong anti-Jewish sentiment and the Demiurge.

Bilde does this, as was shown above, through the medium of Christianity.

“Gnosticism – or, at least, a decisive part of Gnostic language and ideology – originated in Jewish Apocalypticism, though not directly, but through the mediation of Early Christianity.”²³⁴ Jewish Apocalypticism accounts for a good deal of the background, methodology, content and eschatological outlook of Gnosticism, as has been amply demonstrated above. However, as Christianity is birthed it affords Gnosticism with the religious attitudes of both a critical reinterpretation of Jewish theology and society and a harsher attitude toward “the world.”

These two critical pieces are primarily developed by Bilde through an examination of gospel sayings, Paul's letters, and the writings of John. It is in these particular New Testament documents Bilde finds the essential bridge between Jewish Apocalypticism and

²³⁴ Bilde, *Gnosticism*, 12.

Gnosticism. Although the actual anti-Jewish nature of the New Testament documents are debated, it is not debated that many of the New Testament statements can be interpreted in an anti-Semitic light. And the categorically strong denunciation of the “world” and its ruler (Satan) within these writings easily lends itself to the furthering of a cosmic dualism. This is why Bilde concludes in the way that he does. “Early Christianity and Gnosticism were squarely anti-Jewish, and this anti-Jewish attitude of theirs appears to have been decisive in the development of both religions.”²³⁵

However, not once does Bilde refer to the Epistle of Jude in his argument. Specifically, he references one instance in the book of Matthew and several verses from the Gospel of John. He alludes to Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, as well as John’s first epistle. For the purpose of his proposal, however, Bilde has done exactly as he should have. Bilde uses these texts to explain, or demonstrate, how the Christian movement, and particularly its writings, became the key ingredient that allowed a more radical element of Jewish Apocalypticists to re-interpret key passages from Hebrew Scripture with a more distinct dualistic methodology. These New Testament passages provide the support for the formation of these two radical Gnostic developments (the anti-Jewish attitude and the Demiurge) at the heart of Bilde’s argument. My purpose for bringing Jude into the dialogue is not to give added support to the Gnostic anti-Jewish attitude and their concept of the Demiurge but rather to give support to Bilde and his hypothesis.

Jude does not aid us in seeing *how* Jewish Apocalypticism developed into Gnosticism through Christianity but only that it did and that Jude was experiencing the beginnings of that

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30. I need to add here that I do not necessarily share Bilde’s position on Christianity being anti-Jewish. What I do believe is that it can be read that way from the texts, many of which Bilde uses to support his theory.

development. Jude does not support Bilde's theory directly, in the way the aforementioned passages do. Rather Jude supports Bilde's theory by illustrating it. That there are clear connections between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism has been sufficiently demonstrated. That the rise of Christianity provides the best option for catalyzing the movement from Jewish Apocalypticism to Gnosticism has also been well presented. Jude simply becomes the personal illustration of one experiencing the shift in momentum from those who saw Jesus and early Christianity as the ultimate culmination of their apocalyptic hope and those that absorbed the fresh "rebellion" of Christianity into the more radical and dualistic world of Gnosticism.

In order to make this clear in this final section I need to develop three areas. First, I want to briefly speak to the reason Bilde brings Christianity into the center of this continuum and the evidence that Jude sees the same factors. According to Bilde, Christianity provided an easier path for the development of the Gnostic Demiurge and their strong anti-Jewish posture than any other considered factor. If Jude indeed saw the opening stages of this then we should be able to discern that in his letter. Second, the timing of Jude's writing is significant. It would be hard to conceive that Jude would have recognized as much as I propose he did concerning an incipient Gnostic movement, especially one that is directly affecting the early Christian church, if Jude's letter is placed too early on the first century timetable. At the same time, it would hardly be an incipient Gnostic movement that Jude addresses if the epistle is dated into the second century. Third, but only after the dating of Jude is properly addressed, the situation of both the author and the audience needs to be expanded more clearly. This final section will serve somewhat as an appendix to this dissertation. Building off of what has been established in this dissertation, I want to leave the

reader with a concisely inflated picture of all the major background issues of the letter. We have dealt in the previous chapter with the Jewish background of the author of Jude and the religious association of his opponents. We will have gone into great detail to explain Jude's position chronologically and theologically. It would be extremely helpful now to understand the setting of the book of Jude in an extended format, with more specifics being drawn concerning the audience and purpose of the writing.

Jude, the Demiurge, and Anti-Jewish Fervor

This will be a brief but critical section. It is not my purpose to repeat much that has been said already concerning these two aspects of the incipient Gnostic character of Jude's opponents. However, remembering my thesis, that Jude was experiencing and observing the shift from Jewish Apocalypticism to Gnosticism, it is necessary to demonstrate that Jude perceived and opposed these two aspects that early Christianity obliged Gnosticism in the latter's development.

Clearly the letter of Jude exudes a love for ancient Jewish texts. The intensely Jewish character of the letter has been repeatedly noted. This could be due to the background habits of the author with no particular purpose in mind. The Jewishness of the author has already been thoroughly outlined. His letter could simply be a by-product of his own environment and viewpoint. However, as has been mentioned above and will be detailed below, this short letter literally explodes with purpose. To discredit the author of this short epistle with the claim that any Jewish references, illustrations, or style is derived simply from his milieu and not part of his strategy would be both unfair and unscholarly. Jude is not only addressing the opponents with Jewish texts but attempting to rejuvenate a love for those texts among the

recipients. And he has shown convincingly that these texts are relevant for today. In fact, they speak of today. Whether by example, when a story from the *Assumption of Moses* is used to show how present problems are repetitions of ancient sins, or by fulfillment, as when specific prophesies from 1 Enoch are shown to be satisfied in the life of the recipients, the texts of Judaism are to be read and received in a serious manner.

It is also notable that Jude uses the book of Genesis extensively. The Watchers, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Cain, as well as Enoch's genealogy are all referred to in Genesis. So much of what will be written in Gnostic mythology stems from a new interpretation of that opening book of the Hebrew Bible and Jude is quick to show that the stories found in Genesis support the early church as against the Gnostic infiltrators. I am not proposing here that Jude is actually addressing Gnostic texts. It would be anachronistic to believe that Jude was debating actual Gnostic texts or even Gnostic oral traditions not yet written down. But it is very possible that these particular opponents who seem to speak excessively for their own gain (Jude 16) and are grumbling (Jude 16) and lecturing against angels (Jude 8) were indeed reinterpreting known Jewish traditions, including those found in Genesis.

Jude's emphasis on the oneness of God is also notable in this short letter. Any thought of a deistic dualism is addressed in the opening verse where Jude places the responsibility of calling and keeping believers equally on God the Father and Jesus Christ. Likewise, Jude closes his letter by lacing the instructions to the recipients with "God's love" and "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" in the same sentence (Jude 21). If that was insufficient the concluding verse and doxology again reiterate the unity of Father and Son as all are instructed to ascribe glory, majesty, power and authority to God the Father "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Jude 25). Jesus is designated as the only (μόνον) Master and Lord. There is no other,

albeit inferior deity. And immediately preceding that declaration of the Son in this verse is the accusation that the opponents are demeaning the grace of God, presumably the Father, into a license for sexual immorality (Jude 4). The title “Lord” is applied to Jesus (Jude 4), God (Jude 5) and the final Judge prophesied by Enoch (Jude 14), obviously indicating that these three are indeed one and the same. And if there remained any dubiousness to the cosmic order, throughout his letter Jude places God the Father, Jesus Christ and the angels above all suspicion and all equally into the realm of the “good.” They are uniformly above criticism and understanding and any attempt to do so simply displays the ignorance of the perpetrator. Even Jude’s horror at a libertine lifestyle speaks against any physical/spiritual dualism that could emanate from a coming Gnostic theology of a greater and lesser God, particularly one that would take the physical elements of the world so lightly.

It could be proposed that the examples just given, particularly the use of blessings from God the Father and Jesus given in the introduction and conclusion, had less to do with purpose than form. It was typical to begin and end letters with such designations. But such a conclusion circumvents all that has been presented in this thesis thus far concerning the situation and opposition that Jude experienced as well as the clarity with which he strategically addresses the problem. The author of this letter may have had little to grasp in the way of handles for this incipient Gnostic group but he clearly discerned what was at the root of their practice. And even if we accept the obvious fact that the letter follows norms of the day, authors, like Jude, still infused those norms with specific and purposeful meaning.

Dating the Epistle

The date of the epistle of Jude is one of several aspects of this neglected letter that remains unsettled. In fact, the range of dates given the letter vary by over a century, with the earliest date given it by Renan at 54 C.E. and the latest given by Barns and Pfeleiderer at sometime after 160 C.E.²³⁶ Taking into consideration the lack of any historical events referred to in the letter as well as few direct or indirect indications of the date by the author, this issue is not likely to be resolved easily. In spite of this, more recent scholarship has narrowed the more probable solutions to sometime between 60 and 120 C.E.²³⁷ It is important and possible to bring a more decisive clarity to this debate and those dates will form the outside boundaries for the discussion below.

With the lack of clear internal evidence, most of the debate unsurprisingly revolves around authenticity of authorship and opposition dealt with in the letter. Those seeking to maintain Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, as the author seek an earlier date while those more closely aligning Jude's opposition with Gnosticism are more likely to assign a date that will hover around the turn of the century. Since there is very little direct internal evidence for the date, it is only natural to attempt to resolve the dating based on other clearer and more critical factors in the letter, such as determining the identification of Jude's opponents. To a point, in this section I will do likewise. However, it is not an overwhelming task to bring all

²³⁶ Bauckham actually lists every scholar and their assigned date. Bauckham, "The Letter of Jude: An Account of Research," 3812-3813.

²³⁷ Bauckham stays at the early end of these margins. Sidebottom, Kummel and Schrage choose the early second century as the date of the book. Others such as Hahn, Kukelman and Fuchs place the letter in the latter part of the first century C.E.

considerations together, giving appropriate weight to each, in order to more precisely arrive at a probable date for this letter.

There are several reasons to date this letter late, from 80 to 120 C.E. The strongest internal argument for a later date is the distinct way that Jude uses the word “faith” in both verse three and verse twenty. There is a strong air of finality in verse three where Jude exhorts the readers to contend for the faith that was “once and for all entrusted to the saints.” Those do not appear to be the words of an early leader in the midst of a developing church and discovering with others what faithfully following Christ looks like. Jude’s use of the term sounds more formalized. “Faith” in verse three seems to be used by Jude to refer to a body of beliefs or a set of doctrines that would not have been so well established early in the first century. Kelly calls it “a formalized view of the Church’s message as a clearly defined and authoritatively transmitted deposit.”²³⁸ Others agree. Scholars use terms like codified, orthodoxy and tradition when expounding on Jude’s use of the word.²³⁹ It sounds much more like writings of the second century onward than it does, for example, an early Paul. Many believe that Jude’s classification of the “faith handed down” rings more of a settled core of doctrine than it does a developing set of beliefs that were debated and formed between texts such as those of Paul and James in the first century.

²³⁸ J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (New York: HarperCollins, 1969), 248.

²³⁹ Sidebottom writes that the writer of this epistle clearly understands, according to Jude 3, that the Christian life “has been codified and hardened into a rule of faith, an orthodoxy.” E.M. Sidebottom, *James, Jude and 2 Peter* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1981), 78. Moffatt calls it “the fixed and final Christian tradition.” J. Moffatt, *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1918), 346.

Other internal evidence revolves around Jude's setting of the apostles into the past with his use of language concerning them. Jude 17-18 reads, "But you, beloved ones, remember those things having been foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you at the end of time mockers will come, followers of godlessness, according to their own lusts." On a timeline, Jude has placed himself and his readers at "the end of time" while putting the prophecy that was given by the apostles at a much earlier time. And for some commentators this "prophecy" sounds as ancient as the one used by Jude from Enoch. This is a distant rather than a near past. Such chronological distance would be significant enough to account for the letter being composed after the apostolic period.

Third, the precise structure of the writing and the high quality of Greek used lends less credence to the idea that a member of Jesus' family of uneducated Hebrew laborers was the author. If indeed the letter is pseudonymous, one of the strongest arguments given for dating the letter early, that of accepting the authorship of the letter as stated in Jude 1, would be dismissed. The ability to write at a superior level eliminates the possibility that this letter was produced by someone whose mother tongue was not Greek. And that also eliminates the strongest reason for appropriating an early date for the epistle of Jude.

Fourth, Jude's style has sometimes been more favorably compared to the writings of the early fathers, starting with the second century, than to first century Christian writings. That association is seen in several aspects. In place of the strong apologetic Christology of early New Testament letters, there is a polemical defense of already established doctrine. And the author's labeling of the faith he is defending in Jude 3 as that "which was once for all delivered to the saints" lends credence to the claim. In Jude's apologetic, the reader does not find the reasoned arguments of Paul but rather the denunciation of opposition that is more

typical of the very early church fathers.²⁴⁰ Jude is often interpreted as a strongly, even violently, polemical letter noted by the absence of reasoning and the prolific presence of threats. Kummel takes this position when he labels Jude's concept of faith as "primitive catholic" and declares Jude to "stand in irreconcilable discord with the understanding of faith in the principal New Testament witnesses."²⁴¹ There is little declaration of Christ, his work on the cross, or his resurrection, and the censure of Jude's opposition does not easily fit the typical New Testament struggle against other false teachers, such as earlier Judaizers. Such an approach seems more at home in an environment where doctrine begins to supersede the person of Christ as the focal point of debate. That places the book more comfortably in the post-apostolic period.

Finally, there is, of course, the question of whom the opposition is that Jude faces. The clarity of the internal evidence pointing to some form of Gnostic followers as the opposition supplants any argument for an early date that comes from much weaker evidence. The earlier the letter, the less likely it is that incipient Gnosticism is the object of Jude's vendetta. And the accuracy of claiming a Gnostic presence carries greater weight than establishing an earlier date for the letter without it.

On the surface there appears to be few arguments for an early date for this letter other than the attempt to take the author's self-identification in Jude 1 literally. That identification is, of course, strong internal evidence as to the name of the author. However, the exact identification of the author is not a simple issue. There is more than one Jude, or its more

²⁴⁰ So Moffatt first and much more recently Krodel and Kummel.

²⁴¹ Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 300.

typical spelling of Judas, to account for possible authorship and their actual identifications are not as easy a matter as one would think. A succinct summary of the five possibilities that have been considered as strong candidates are as follows:

1. The Judas mentioned in Acts 1:13 that would be best translated as the son of James.
2. The Judas mentioned as one of the apostles in Luke 6:16 (who is also the son of James and possibly the same Judas as the one mentioned in Acts 1:13).
3. The apostle Thomas who in Syrian tradition is known as Judas Thomas.
4. Judas Barsabbas of Acts 15:22.
5. Judas brother of Jesus as named in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55.²⁴²

From this list most scholars who accept the accuracy of Jude 1 have opted for Judas the brother of Jesus. Since the point of seeking to identify the author is through the declaration of the first verse of the book, then the only “Jude” that fits that description perfectly is Judas, the brother of Jesus. That Judas, according to both Matthew and Mark, is also the brother of James, and is the only Jude in Scripture that is so designated, as is the author of the epistle of Jude. Since it can be assumed that this Jude would be roughly the same age as Jesus, it can also be assumed that he did not live through the first century. Thus an earlier date is called for.

The question that has been raised concerning this designation is why Jude would identify himself not by aligning himself with Jesus but with another brother, James. Since

²⁴² Bauckham provides a summary list, longer than mine, of the choices made by the various scholars over the last decade. See Bauckham, *The Letter of Jude: An Account of Research*, 3815-1816.

this paper is not a defense of this particular position, it is not my purpose to attempt to answer all the questions about authorship but only those that pertain to my thesis. However, it is possible that a level of humility or respect for the Christ would cause Jude to refrain from such a close identification with Jesus, preferring rather to call himself a servant of Jesus, while making it clear, through James, that there was a connection.

But there are other factors to consider as well. It is difficult to atone for the strong eschatological tone of the letter when trying to place it later on the timeline. As I have outlined thoroughly above Jude was a strong Jewish Apocalypticist with a clear view that he was in the “last days” (Jude 18) facing the scoffers foretold by Enoch. That strong end-time eschatology was more prevalent earlier in the first century than it was later. This concept can be seen even in Pauline writings. Paul’s earlier letters, such as his first epistle to the Thessalonians, sounded much more like Jude than did later books attributed to him, such as the Pastoral Epistles.

Consideration must also be given to the use of Jude by 2 Peter. There is consistent agreement among scholars that there is an interdependence between these two writings. The similarities are so identical that it is clear that one of these authors used the other’s writings.²⁴³ Although I do not seek to open the debate here as to which letter was written first, it is accurate to declare that the majority of scholarship believes that Jude is primary and was used at a later date by the author of 2 Peter.²⁴⁴ For those arguing for an early date to Jude, this

²⁴³ Although it is possible to hypothesize that both used a common, and now lost, third source.

²⁴⁴ The list includes, but is not exclusive to, Mayor, Chaine, Sidebotton, Grundmann, Bauckham, Schelkle and Neyrey. See summaries of this point in Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 141-143, and Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 120-122.

assists in setting the latest date for the epistle prior to the date of 2 Peter. The weakness of this argument rests on the observation that scholars are as uncertain and wide varied on the dating of 2 Peter as they are with the epistle under discussion in this paper.

Finally, that the letter was declared to be written by one so obscure as Jude argues for the authenticity of the author as well as against the late dating. If one was writing later in the first century or early second century and wanted to impress the readers with the authority associated with your name, why choose such an obscure authority? Why not declare yourself to be Paul or Peter or John or even your much more well known brother James? And if this was a later letter written pseudonymously, why would the author declare himself to be the brother of James rather than Jesus. At that later point, when Jude would be minimalized in memory, respect would be gained by a more direct line to Jesus. This letter makes the most sense only if the author is indeed Jude. And that puts the letter earlier rather than later.

Although the debate over the date of the letter seems to be between two obviously contradictory positions, I do not believe they come from contradictory factors. Several of these points from both camps can be brought together to support a date that coincides with the position of this paper. Yet each of the above factors should be considered appropriately. In other words, they are not all equally strong. Apposite “weight” must be given to each.

The arguments for a second century nature and style of the letter of Jude are weak. Such a designation excludes several characteristics that scholars who make this claim must ignore in order to maintain their position. One would have to disregard the fact that there is no diminishing of a strong apocalyptic theology in Jude as well as the absence of any hint of an existing church hierarchy, both of which are critical features of the writings of the church fathers beginning with the second century. This is vitally important. As we move into the

second century there is a weakening of the strong eschatological stance of the early church. This is not to say that there was not a Christian apocalyptic worldview after the first century. But the strong sense of living in the last days before Christ's imminent return for judgment subsides considerably as we move into the second century.²⁴⁵ Even when looking at New Testament writings from the first century, this is a factor that cannot be ignored. Paul's earliest letter to the Thessalonians focuses on the imminent return of Jesus while in later letters (Philippians 1:19-26 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-10) he speaks as if he will not be alive to see the return of the Christ. To maintain that the clear eschatological hope expressed in Jude was penned after the turn of the century is to make it more of an anomaly for that time period rather than a typical example. Secondly, and just as important, is the lack of a clear church hierarchy in the letter of Jude. With the exception of Jude's reference to the apostles in verse 17 there is no mention of earthly authority. But that reference cannot be taken to refer to a specific hierarchy of leadership in the church. The reference to the apostles is prophetic and apocalyptic, not structural, just as are Jude's references to the sacred texts and Enoch. The only authority that Jude argues for is that of God the Father and Christ.

And to entitle Jude as a polemic of denunciation is to treat this letter much more simply than it deserves. That it is polemical is beyond doubt. Yet in relation to this particular argument, two points should be made. First, that point does not necessarily assist in the dating of the letter to the second century. Second, that Jude offers no characteristics of early writing outside of a strong polemic is unacceptable.

²⁴⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins' article entitled "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 279-292 is an excellent summary of the points made here.

It is inaccurate, at best, to declare first century Christian writings as non-polemical. The second letter to the Thessalonians, particularly in its second chapter, has a similar tone as Jude with a strong denunciation of ungodliness written with an even stronger eschatological worldview, and concluding with a plea for the righteous to persevere. Consider the following excerpts.

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.²⁴⁶

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.²⁴⁷

The sharpness of the tone of the letter can also be compared to the epistle of James, as is evidenced by the following passage.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble and oppressed." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9a.

²⁴⁷ 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

²⁴⁸ James 4:4-9.

James is generally agreed upon to have quite an early first century date.²⁴⁹ Similar comparisons can be made with the letters of 2 Peter and Titus. The point is that Jude's particularly polemical style probably allows us a more defining look into the author's personality than it does in assisting us in dating the letter.

With recent studies on the style and structure of Jude, fewer scholars hold to the position that labels Jude as either "simple" or "polemic." There is a complex Jewish midrashic argument in play here that defies such a statement. The author is carefully weaving in sacred texts to support his position and in so doing is revealing to his recipients a good deal of what he considers to be orthodox. Jude is not simply denouncing the opposition but revealing them as those who were condemned in prophecies long ago. And he does this in an almost poetic style, with word plays and triplets to not only catch the reader's attention but to assist the reader in remembering these accusations.²⁵⁰ There is no unchallenged, and therefore adequate, reason to place this letter with the early fathers of the church writing in the second and third centuries.

Closely tied to that issue is Jude's use of the word "faith" in Jude 3 and 20. At best it is difficult to define "faith" as it is used in the canonical books in only one way. The criticism is that Paul stands as the example of first century Christianity in his understanding of "faith." Jude would then represent a more evolved use of the same word and that would place him much later. Yet, even in the writings of Paul the word is used with a similar meaning as that

²⁴⁹ And we should not fail to note that those proposing the letter of Jude to be written pseudonymously, would still accept that the author at least intended to be the brother of the author of the epistle of James, thus mimicking a first century Christian style.

²⁵⁰ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 152.

of Jude. In Galatians 1:23 Paul writes, “They only heard the report: ‘The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching *the faith* he once tried to destroy.’” In Philippians 1:27 it has a similar sound. “Whatever happens, as citizens of heaven live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together with one accord for *the faith* of the gospel.” In general, Jude’s use of “faith” may be different from Paul’s. However, that does not hold true in every case. And even in those instances where a difference is accurately cited, it does not necessarily assist in dating the epistle. “Granted that Jude does not use *faith* in a manner typical for Paul, it does not follow that the use is *later* than Paul.”²⁵¹

The argument from Jude 17-18 that Jude places himself in a later timeframe than the apostles is also weak. In verse 17 Jude clearly speaks of prophecy or foretelling by the apostles. That may indeed put the prophecy of the apostles in the past with reference to Jude’s present writing, but we cannot conclude that those who spoke the prophecies are also in a time prior to Jude. In fact, the natural reading of verse 18 is that such prophecy was given directly to the recipients of this letter. “They said *to you* at the end of time mockers will come, followers of godlessness, according to their own lusts.” That the apostles are used as authorities concerning the end of days does not preclude that their words closely preceded Jude’s own. In fact, that seems to be the case.

In addition, a question must be raised if we are to accept the reading of Jude 17 that places the author well after the time of the apostles. Why would this pseudonymous author, writing later but claiming to live earlier, be careful enough to assert to be the brother of

²⁵¹ David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 866.

James, and be wise enough to accurately not include himself to be among the apostles, and then make this obvious anachronistic mistake?²⁵² Although the scenario is a possible one, it certainly weakens the argument.

Given this particular interpretation we are looking at a first century date. That being the case, it is very possible to bring in elements of those arguing for an early date without settling into as early a date as they propose. Although it is not critical to my thesis to accept the self-identification of the author of this epistle in Jude 1, there is nothing prohibitive in doing so. For the sake of argument, let us assume the accuracy of Jude 1. If this is indeed Judas the brother of Jesus he could have lived through the late first century. The fact that he is listed third among four brothers in Mark 6:3 and fourth in Matthew 13:55 may place him ten to fifteen years younger than Jesus. It is more than possible that he lived to 80 or 90 C.E. It is even possible that he saw the turn of the second century. Therefore, strictly on the issue of age it is not unlikely that Jude could be a 60 year old man writing in the year 80 C.E.

And although the argument that the author's ability in the Greek language surpasses what can be expected of a Galilean laborer is a legitimate one, it too is difficult to maintain. How can we responsibly make this judgment of someone we know little if anything about? Could he not have developed the ability in the decades that followed his brother's death? That is particularly believable considering what we know of how common spoken Greek was in the first century.²⁵³ And just how skilled in Greek was this author? His ability to weave

²⁵² See Charles Bigg, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1903), 314.

²⁵³ See the study done by J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D." in *A Wandering Aramaean: Collected Aramaic Essays* in the SBL Monograph Series 25 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 29-56.

together an impressive and cohesive argument is accepted. Yet there is anything but consensus over the issue of how skilled in Greek the author of this letter was since the sentence construction is rather simple while the vocabulary is varied.²⁵⁴ There is even the possibility that he wrote through a scribe, simply dictating the letter but not writing it himself. In that case the expertise of the author is in his ability to discern the doctrinal deviation his recipients are experiencing and his capacity to weave together the texts he considers important in order to address them. Putting the argument into writing would fall to the scribe.

As stated earlier, the identity of the author is not as important as when he wrote. However, taking all of this into consideration gives us the following scenario. In essence, all factors are considered when a date of 70-80 C.E. is given to the letter.²⁵⁵ Such a date allows for Jude to be the perfect illustration of Bilde's theory. First, it could very possibly have come through the hand of Jude, the brother of Jesus.²⁵⁶ There is no significant reason to disregard the veracity of the author. That would also account for the choice of the name, which makes less sense the later the letter is dated. Second, and most importantly, an incipient Gnosticism as I have carefully described previously could be a factor in the churches at this time. Remember that I am agreeing with Bilde that Christianity did not entirely precede Gnosticism but rather rose with it and acted as a catalyst to create the pieces missing from Jewish Apocalypticism that would eventually define the Gnosticism of the second

²⁵⁴ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 6.

²⁵⁵ With the exception of the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude. If the priority of Jude is assumed then the date of 2 Peter would have to be later than this. That is possible if 2 Peter was written pseudonymously. If the priority of Jude is not assumed then the relationship does not factor into this date.

²⁵⁶ Yet even more possible in my estimation that it came through the hand of Jude but through the pen of a scribe.

century onwards. Gnostic thought was developing throughout the first century. Its initial ties are with Jewish Apocalypticism. Its secondary, and undoubtedly stronger, ties are with Christianity. Third, the obvious apocalyptic worldview of the author of Jude would not be misplaced in this timeframe. The later the date of the letter the less you would expect the leadership of the early church to sustain that keen “last days” mentality that is evident in Jude. A date in the 70-80 C.E. decade is not too late for this aspect of Jude’s worldview. Such eschatological fervor may have diminished from the previous few decades but it would not have subsided.

There is another reason why I have chosen a post-70 C.E. date for the epistle. Certainly the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. would add support for my position. Such an incredible upheaval for both Jew and Christian alike would of itself act as a catalyst for the Gnostic movement. If the birth of Christianity affords incipient Gnostics with the elements of an anti-Judaism attitude and a harsh view of this world, then the destruction of the Temple would afford those moving in that direction with the final disillusionment with Judaism and its God. And as an incipient Gnostic faction gains strength on its own, all the more reason to see it affecting the church of the late first century. I am not arguing, as Carl Smith does with the rebellion under Trajan, for a particular historical event that crushed the hopes of Jewish Apocalypticists, catapulting them into Gnosticism. However, I am also not discounting the importance of such events in the developmental timeline of Gnosticism, in this case the Roman destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. In addition, the destruction of the Temple would also act as a catalyst for apocalyptic thought in general. No crisis within Judaism would more strongly require a reinterpretation of traditional positions and sacred texts than the removal of the centerpiece of the Jewish faith.

I would question an earlier date than this when Jude's opposition is kept in view. Although I believe strongly in Bilde's theory and slate the second century as too late a start for the development of Gnostic thought, even I would find it difficult to conclude that incipient Gnosticism developed very early in the first century. And the problem seems to be of sufficient proportion in Jude's eyes that it is necessary to change his original plan for the letter and deal with this crisis. That speaks both to the newness of the phenomenon as well as the strength of it. I would question a later date since we are clearly not dealing with the developed Gnosticism of the second century and later. Jude is battling ideas and behaviors that, although they are gaining followers rapidly, are more loosely connected rather than part of an more clearly organized system.

The dating of the letter between 70-80 C.E. substantiates how Jude illustrates Bilde's theory. It should be kept in mind that the thesis of this dissertation is how Jude *illustrates* Bilde's position. Bilde refers to Galatians, the books of Corinthians, Matthew and John to show how early Christian texts that eventually were canonized had a critical attitude toward Judaism and the world. This accounts for how Christianity could be the key catalyst between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism. I bring Jude into the debate as an early Christian leader who sees such a development and is alarmed enough to address it in a letter. With the possible exception of the Gospel of John, Jude was composed later than any of the New Testament books referenced by Bilde. Gnosticism gained ground through interpretations of attitudes toward Judaism and the world through early Christian teaching and writings propagated before Jude wrote his letter. As he sees this developing into incipient Gnostic thought, Jude responds. He gives nothing to Gnosticism. And he becomes the earliest evidence that Bilde is correct.

The Background of the Epistle of Jude

This section will draw on all that has been presented so far to expand on the situation of both the author and the audience more clearly. My overall purpose in this dissertation was to not only clarify Jude's position in the hypothesis of Bilde and his placement in the Jewish Apocalypticism-Christian-Gnosticism chronology but then to use that information to expand and detail the background issues and context of Jude in as complete a format as has ever been presented. My purpose here is to understand the setting of the book of Jude as specifically as is feasible, with as many details as possible being drawn concerning the audience and purpose of the writing. In essence this will serve as both a synthesis and summary of the dissertation.

The format for this section will be similar to that in an introductory textbook on the New Testament with the following categories: author, date, provenance, audience, occasion, and character of the letter. The noted exception in this list is a section on the opposition. That has been thoroughly explained earlier in this paper. However, under each of these headings, and particularly under the occasion of the letter, some description of opposition will need to be detailed to support my position in those areas.²⁵⁷

Author

The author is a Christian leader of the mid-to-late first century. He is not an apostle, or at least does not consider himself to be one. Yet he is well enough accepted with at least a section of the early church that he can speak frankly and expect to be heard. If he is Judas,

²⁵⁷ These are general classifications. It would be impossible, of course, to keep the lines between these categories completely separate. One cannot precisely explain the background of the author without some mention of the character of his writing. There will, therefore, be necessary crossover between categories but for the most part, the headings are accurate.

brother of Jesus and James, he may have traveled widely as a missionary according to Paul's claim in 1 Corinthians 9:5.²⁵⁸ Born and raised as a Jew in Palestine, his theology developed along the lines of Jewish Apocalypticism, which he easily sustains after coming into the new Christian movement. For him the Hebrew "Scriptures," inclusive of those texts canonized, canonized later or never canonized, are specifically relevant to his own time period, which he considers to be the last days. These Scriptures are accepted as heavenly inspired but are interpreted to be pointing forward in time to judgment and justice that he is now experiencing. His present opponents were spoken of in these Scriptures and they become the culminating focus of God's judgment that the people of God have waited for.

He is well acquainted with the full variety of accepted texts of Judaism, although that acquaintance with some of those texts would be more with the Hebrew and Aramaic versions than other translations such as the Septuagint, which puts him among a unique class of New Testament authors.²⁵⁹ His favorite texts are, of course, apocalyptic in nature. He uses the *Assumption of Moses* in relating the story of the Archangel Michael's dispute over the body of Moses, one of his many references to Jewish tradition, but *1 Enoch* is the book he seems most familiar and comfortable with. He not only quotes directly from the first chapter of *1 Enoch*

²⁵⁸ In defending his right to room and board, Paul complains, "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" If this includes our author, he may also have been married.

Note: As I will be summarizing material already presented and footnoted, as well as incorporating new material in this section, I will only be footnoting the new material used here.

²⁵⁹ It is even suggested by Maier that the book of Jude was originally written in Aramaic. Friedrich Maier, *Der Judasbrief: Sien Echtheit, Abfassungszeit und Leser: Ein Beitrag zur Einleitung in die katholischen Briefe* (Freiburg im Breisgau : Herder, 1906), 171.

but he knows the background of Enoch (see Jude 14). He also alludes to other sections of *I Enoch* in his letter.²⁶⁰ The four images from nature used in Jude 12-13 mirrors *I Enoch* 2:1-5:4. Since in that section of *I Enoch* the author uses nature to show the *contrast* between God's good order and the lawlessness of the wicked while Jude uses the wildness of nature to *compare* to the wicked, Jude demonstrates his literary skill and methodology as he skillfully blends *I Enoch* 2:1-5:4 with the later passage of *I Enoch* 72-82 where in the last days even nature will turn lawless and destructive.

As expressed immediately above, Jude is skilled in weaving ancient texts together for very specific purposes. He may have been schooled as a rabbi as he has a command of midrashic methodology of interpretation. If he was not educated in the rabbinic system, which is probably the more likely case, then his decades of experience in Judaism and leadership in the young Christian movement afforded him with a working knowledge of the texts and rhetorical methodology. In this latter case he may have written this letter through the use of a scribe. It is just as likely, however, that he wrote this letter himself. It has been suggested that the author of this letter comes from an urban retainer class rather than from a more elite status as his ability in Greek represents one who is an adequately good writer in a mother tongue but a more exceptional author for one who has learned Greek as a second language.²⁶¹ Such workers were "retained" by the elite, either as slaves or freedmen. In that case, he could have received training for his considerable ability in Greek under the tutelage of his owner or employer.

²⁶⁰ See Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 191-196.

²⁶¹ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 35.

Certain aspects of his writing are unique when comparing the letter to other New Testament texts. His vocabulary is limited but distinctive, the letter enlisting only 227 words but including 14 *hapex legomena*.²⁶² It would be appropriate to call him an accomplished writer had we more examples of his work. As has been mentioned above his penchant is for triplets, giving instructions and enlisting illustrations in groups of three. It is actually quite stunning to see how skillfully this technique is employed as the following table illustrates.²⁶³

²⁶² Andrew Chester and Ralph Martin, *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 65.

²⁶³ Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Letter of Jude*, 122-123. I have adapted some of his terms by not including all of his suggestions and by replacing them with my own words from my translation of the passage.

Jude 1 Identification of the addressees	“beloved...called...kept”
Jude 2 Benediction	“Mercy and peace and love”
Jude 4 Identification of the opponents	“Impious...unbridled living...deny Jesus”
Jude 5-7 Precedents of sinners judged	Israel, angels, Sodom and Gomorrah
Jude 8 Identification of the opponents	“Defile...despise...blaspheme”
Jude 11 Woe to three sinners judged	Cain, Balaam, and Korah
Jude 12 Metaphors of vanity	“Waterless clouds...trees without fruit...twice dying”
Jude 14-15 The judgment of the Lord	“Comes...make judgment...convict”
Jude 16 Identification of the opponents	“Grumblers...complaining...going ahead with their own lusts”
Jude 19 Vices of the opponents	“Creating division...natural-minded...not having the spirit”
Jude 20-21 Virtues of the faithful	“Building...praying...wait”
Jude 20-23 On dealing with the opponents	“Snatching...showing mercy...hating”
Jude 25 Duration of God’s honor	“From the beginning...now...forever”

Table 4: The triplets of Jude

The sheer volume of these triplets inform us of the author’s intentionality of “amplification by accumulation.”²⁶⁴ They serve to escalate the urgency of the author’s message.

His volume in the use of triplets contrasts with the singleness of purpose for which he uses them. They point to the certainty of judgment. In using these triplets, specifically for illustrations of closely pending judgment, he follows a standard pattern of Jewish interpretive tradition, which would use from two to seven examples in order to confirm the accusation.

²⁶⁴ Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style*, 42.

This was particularly true when the examples used were given in the context of judgment, as Jude does in verses 5-7 of his letter.²⁶⁵ But his uniqueness in this area is shown in his use of those illustrations not only as examples but also as eschatological types.²⁶⁶ The illustrations from Israel's past foreshadow the final judgment of evil men, specifically his opponents, at the end of time. In this he demonstrates again not only his thoroughly Jewish background but his consistent tendency toward apocalyptic thought.

He does have a clearly apocalyptic worldview. Based on his angelology (Jude 6), demonology (Jude 9), nature symbolism (Jude 12f), predicted calamities (Jude 14f), and Messianic figure (Jude 14f), Rowston actually classifies this letter in the genre of Jewish-Christian apocalyptic.²⁶⁷ Although, it is highly challengeable that Jude writes in that genre, it is absolutely unquestionable that he lives in that world. His world is one in which everything appears in the black and white. God and Satan both exist. He, his recipients, and his opposition are either "them" (οὗτοι) or "us" (ἡμεῖς). In fact, the entire world seems to be "in" or "out" depending on their acceptance or rejection of the norms of Jude's traditions. One serves the living God or denies him and so receives salvation or judgment, respectively. Everyone is either being kept by God (Jude 1) or has chosen not to keep his assigned place (Jude 6). The latter group has the harrowing experience of having no place of foundation at

²⁶⁵ Compare Sirach 16:7-10, the Damascus Rule 2:17-3:12, 3 Maccabees 2:4-7, and Testament of Naphtali 3:4-5.

²⁶⁶ See Bauckham's explanation in Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 187.

²⁶⁷ Douglas J. Rowston, "The Most Neglected Book in the New Testament" in *New Testament Studies* 21 (July 1975): 554-563. In Rowston's view, however, since he dates Jude much later than I do, Jude is not actually an apocalypticist because of worldview as much as out of necessity. In using an apocalyptic style, Jude is attempting to revitalize an old tactic in order to "turn back the clock from gnosticism to apocalyptic."

all, but are rootless and uprooted (Jude 12) pushed around like clouds and under no control, like waves of the sea. The number of times Jude clarifies the stark differences between true believers and his opponents in this brief letter is revealing of his apocalyptic style, as Table 5 illustrates.²⁶⁸

Recipients	Opponents
1. Holy (v. 3, 20, 24)	1. Godlessness (v. 4, 15, 18)
2. Await mercy (v. 2, 21, 22-23)	2. Await judgment (v. 4, 6, 9, 15)
3. In fear (v. 23)	3. Fearlessness (v. 12)
4. Unblemished (v. 24)	4. Defiled/Stained (v. 8, 12, 23)
5. Pray in the Spirit (v. 20)	5. Do not have the Spirit (v. 19)
6. Build up (v. 20)	6. Divide (v. 19)
7. Stand before God (v. 24)	7. Stumble
8. Are saved (v. 25)	8. Are destroyed (v. 5, 11)
9. Honor God (v. 24-25)	9. Challenge God (v. 4, 17)

Table 5: Contrast of recipients and opponents in Jude

The only blurring of these lines comes because of the situation that results in the writing of the letter: those from the right column are seeking acceptance by those in the left column.

Jude’s drastic dualistic worldview extends beyond a specific classification of people to their roles and their places. Believers are indeed being kept by God but they must also contend for that place (Jude 3) and build themselves up into it (Jude 20). The opponents,

²⁶⁸ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 37-38.

meanwhile, are where they do not belong when seeking a place within the church (Jude 4) and more generally have no set place in which to exist but are more like clouds, wandering stars and waves of the ocean. And with this Jude lays out in his letter the clear authorities that are to be honored, including Jesus as the only Master and Lord, angels and Jude himself. But the opposition refuses to follow these authorities (Jude 4, 8, 11, 16) and thus are presented as rebels to tradition.

And the time of judgment is at hand, as has been mentioned above. The prophets of old and the more recent apostles all understood, as does Jude, that Jude and his compatriots are presently experiencing the last days, or end of time. The secrets of prophetic literature, like *I Enoch*, were speaking specifically of Jude's generation. A cataclysmic judgment will take place righting all wrong and rewarding the faithful. And it will take God's direct intervention in the administration of judgment for righteousness to prevail. This judgment is absolutely necessary and very imminent. The world as God has designed it is under siege. If left unchecked, evil will infect good. And most urgently, the group to which he writes is in danger of being infected by those who Jude considers infiltrators. Therefore, it is all the more urgent to note the times and respond strongly and accordingly.

Above all Jude is discerning and if this paper has accomplished anything it is the realization of that fact. What the early church fathers of the second century on fought so vigorously, Jude was able to perceive in its embryonic stage years earlier. Jude was most probably the earliest Christian author to see past the individual symptoms and recognize the possible threat that incipient Gnosticism, as a larger movement, could bring to the church and its future. That is not to say that Jude pre-recognized Gnosticism as a distinct body of beliefs that would embrace a large number of followers. Yet he did see this as something so out of

the ordinary for the early church that the only writing we have from his hand strongly combats it. And the letter of Jude stands as the only New Testament book that, in its entirety, addresses the issue. The critical nature of the problem was seen so clearly by this author that it caused him to alter the purpose of his writing (Jude 3). Initially intending to encourage the church with the understanding and promises of salvation, Jude considered it of utmost importance to change the objective of his letter and deal with these early Gnostics.

Date

There are several helpful indications of when the letter was composed. Much has been written concerning apocalyptic literature and its place in the Jewish-Christian matrix. And although there is some flexibility here, the apocalyptic mindset of the author of Jude places him most securely within the first century. Although not completely ruling out a later date, his eschatological outlook would be typical of earlier first century Christianity and be, at best, waning by the turn of that century. This hinges not only on the apocalyptic worldview of Jude but also on the currency of his eschatology, his inclination to believe that the present generation was experiencing the “final days.” It is for this very reason that James VanderKam specifically dates the book of Jude in the second half of the first century.²⁶⁹ Jude’s unembarrassing use of apocalyptic literature and dependence on *I Enoch* is compared by VanderKam to the *Epistle of Barnabas*, also dated by most scholars as a later first century document.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ VanderKam, *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage*, 35.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

However, as the author of the book of Revelation demonstrates, a late first century date is not inappropriate for the creation of Christian apocalyptic literature, or a Jewish-Christian apocalyptic worldview. In fact, although many would consider the end of the first century to signal the death of Jewish Apocalypticism, the genre does show up in later Hekalot literature.²⁷¹ And in Christianity, the genre prospered even in the second century C.E. However, the eschatological fervor that Jude exudes is the definitive characteristic that determines it to be much better suited for the first century C.E.

The author's reference to the apostles in Jude 17-18 is a second factor to consider. Some have seriously misinterpreted this reference to conclude that Jude looks upon the age of the apostles as being in the distant past. But that determination is based on, at best, a cursory reading of the text. It is true that in Jude 17, the author chronologically places himself and his audience after the apostles when he refers to their previous prophecies. However, the next verse is more than helpful in expanding the understanding of that statement. Jude 18 seems to place the readers of the letter within the same timeframe as the apostles, since it was "to you" that the apostles spoke. A synthesis of the two verses not only clarifies the issue of time but should certainly be understood as how the author intended as he placed them together. It would not appear that Jude is far removed from the time of the apostles. Perhaps, and most likely, some had passed away. However, others were probably still in existence and in established positions within the church since the current audience to whom the letter is addressed had heard directly from them.

Obviously, the identification of the author in the opening sentence of the letter needs to be considered in this discussion. Whether or not this self-identification of the author in

²⁷¹ See the discussion by Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 206ff.

Jude 1 is to be taken literally, a first century date is the most reasonable for a letter written by “Jude.” If this is indeed a brother of James then we cannot place him in the second century. However, even if the letter is to be taken as authored pseudonymously, it would still be more reasonable to expect the recipients to accept its authority and the accuracy of the first verse identification if the letter is dated in the first century. The obscurity of the writer and the obtuse way he links himself directly with James but only by association with Jesus would make less sense to any recipients the later it is dated.

Even the strong Jewish background of the author and his seeming desire to connect his present Christian faith with his Jewish background and Jewish texts is a factor in dating this letter in the first century. Those tight Jewish-Christian connections would fade as the church moved into the second and third centuries. It is possible that all, and certainly true that most, of the authors of the New Testament books were Jews. Yet of the early church fathers from the second century on it is uncertain if any were Jewish.²⁷² But Jude was written by one who believes in his Jewish background and sees intimate connections between the texts of his upbringing and his present faith. He most certainly wants his readers to share the same appreciation. Amazingly, this factor is usually ignored by those seeking to place Jude in the early second century.

There is the opposition to consider as well in determining the date of Jude. As detailed in this paper, and not to be belabored here, the object of Jude’s letter is an incipient Gnostic group infiltrating the church. They participate in church activity (Jude 12) while propagating a libertine lifestyle (Jude 4). They deny an aspect of Christ critical enough to

²⁷² Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude*, 66.

address while attempting to interpret it in the confines of the church (Jude 4). They justify their belief and lifestyle through visionary revelation (Jude 8). They revile the angelic world (Jude 8). They distinguish between the spiritual and psychical believer (Jude 19). It is not difficult to see the beginnings of Gnosticism here. It is difficult to match such a list of characteristics with any other group.

Yet an important disclaimer should be noted with this position. I have been purposeful in declaring the opposition to be of the incipient Gnostic variety as opposed to the more developed Gnosticism of the second century. It is difficult to understand the Gnostics of Jude as those that are spoken against by the early church fathers beginning in the second century. Jude's avoidance of the term *gnosis* and his lack of reference to any specific Gnostic teaching or terminology as such, are evidence that what Jude faces is only the initial stage of what comes later. Again, this would place the letter earlier than the second century but later in the first.

As always, examination of the external evidence must also be considered. Two late second century references should be noted. Clement of Alexandria mentions the book of Jude in his *Hypotyposes of Jude* and the epistle of Jude is included in the Muratorian Canon. This inclusion in the latter document is all the more telling when understood that Jude is only one of three of the general epistles listed there. That would hardly have been the case with a second century document. Some time later, Tertullian also speaks of the epistle of Jude and accepts it as inspired Scripture. Interestingly, Tertullian's purpose in referring to Jude, obviously accepted by his readers, is to authenticate the use of *I Enoch*.²⁷³ Jude's letter

²⁷³ Tertullian (*De cultu fem.* i. 3)

would have to come significantly earlier than these texts for it to be considered by all of them to be inspired Scripture.

It seems reasonable to place the letter sometime between 70-80 C.E. That places the author in the apostolic period but in the latter portion of it. It is not too late, however, to still maintain a strong apocalyptic/eschatological Jewish-Christian perspective. It is late enough for incipient Gnostic thought to begin creeping into the church but earlier than more formal Gnosticism that is clearly not what the author opposes. It places the letter well ahead of comments by Clement and accounts for its inclusion in the Muratorian Canon list. Finally, it allows a reasonable timeframe for the self-identification of the author to be accepted by the recipients.

There is another reason to choose this date. I believe that the destruction of the second Temple in 70 C.E. is relevant to the situation that Jude faces, more indirectly than directly. In this dissertation I have attempted to support the connection between Gnosticism and Jewish Apocalypticism. That connection is detailed above. Early Christianity adds impetus to the development of Gnostic thought in its denunciation of the world and what could be interpreted as a harsh attitude towards Judaism. Many scholars who hold a similar position depend on a crisis within Judaism to support their position. Although I have not claimed a particular crisis within Judaism as being necessary to initiate the movement away from Jewish Apocalypticism and toward Gnosticism, I do believe that such a crisis may have assisted Jewish Apocalypticists in both breaking with Judaism and in the growing disillusionment with traditional Jewish hope. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. would give an accelerated stimulus to the development of Gnostic thought that could help create the specific crisis that Jude discerns. What would have been slowly progressing in the early decades of the first

century would now begin to hasten into the developed Gnosticism of the second century with assistance from Christianity and the fall of Jerusalem. And after 70 C.E. it would become a greater problem in the churches.

And Collins makes an additional point connected with this catastrophe. Christianity did not produce apocalypses before 70 C.E.²⁷⁴ Though as stated above we have declined to assign the letter of Jude to the genre of apocalypses, it is noteworthy to understand the increase in interest in apocalyptic thought within the Christian worldview after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Jude's letter would have struck a louder cord later rather than earlier in the first century.

For the reasons stated above the letter falls comfortably into the decade of 70-80 C.E. However, with the addition of this last factor, the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 C.E., I would more accurately place the letter in the latter half of the eighth decade, between 75-80 C.E.

Provenance

There are two likely origins of the epistle of Jude: Palestine and Alexandria, Egypt.²⁷⁵ We will look at this closely in this section but by way of introduction, the author uses a variety of texts, including 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. He is more than capable with the Greek language. He is well versed in Jewish texts and style of exegesis with a strong

²⁷⁴ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 206.

²⁷⁵ Syria is a third origin suggested, originally by Helmet Koester (*History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 246-247). I find his arguments weaker than those for either Palestine or Alexandria. However, there are stronger reasons to believe that Syria may have been the area of destination for the letter and I will deal with those in a later section.

apocalyptic worldview. Both a Palestine and Alexandrian provenance best satisfy these aspects.

Looking closely at the opponents Jude faces would make the more likely origin to be Alexandria, where Gnosticism flourished within and without the church. And the high appreciation of *I Enoch* would also support an Alexandrian origin where Enoch literature became unusually popular.²⁷⁶ And as for any other literature and sources Jude resourced, Alexandria was the literature capital of the world, leading the nations in collecting and translating books from all over the world. Alexandria was a very international city. If the author of Jude was well versed and well read in two or more languages, which seems to be the case, then there is a good chance he was part of the Diaspora. That would place him outside of Palestine and the appeal of the city of Alexandria as the place of origin, even above any other Diaspora city, would be heightened. Remember too that it was Clement of Alexandria who was Jude's earliest known supporter. And certainly Jude's apocalyptic outlook would fit in well with this city.

However, the arguments for a Palestinian origin are stronger. That Jude's opponents were Gnostic and that Gnosticism was stronger in Alexandria than in Palestine, is actually more of a matter to consider when speaking of destination or audience rather than origin. And it is not the case that Gnostic ideas did not appear in Palestine. In fact, Gnostic ideas infiltrated the churches throughout all possible areas discussed in this section.

Bauckham, in defending a Palestine provenance, has also made a good case for a pesher style of interpretation used by Jude, similar to what has been found in Qumran,

²⁷⁶ John J. Gunther, "The Alexandrian Epistle of Jude," in *New Testament Studies* 30, no. 4 (October 1984), 550.

particularly among the thematic peshers.²⁷⁷ Jude's conviction that the ancient texts he interprets are eschatological and his consistent use of οὗτοι as introducing the interpretation of those texts are similar to Qumran pesharim such as 4QpIsa^b and 4QFlor. As I stated earlier in this paper, Jude seemed to be comfortable in Aramaic, perhaps utilizing an Aramaic version of *I Enoch* and most probably being familiar with early Targums. All of these factors would favor a Palestinian origin.

Weight must also be given to the "Jewishness" of this author. Without repeating much discussed above, with the exception of the book of Hebrews, and possible the letter of James, Jude is probably the most Jewish New Testament document with illustrations of Michael, Moses, Cain, Sodom and Gommorah, the Watchers, the redemption of the slaves from Egypt, Balaam, and Korah. In particular, his use of the exodus illustration and consequent judgment of Korah would support a Palestine origin as opposed to an Alexandrian one. The story of the exodus and God's prior judgment upon Egypt would be much better accepted in Israel than in Alexandria. Jude's sources are entirely from the world of contemporaneous Judaism and all of them are equally sacred. His midrashic style of interpretation would most probably have been learned in Palestine as well as practiced there.

There is the issue of authenticity of authorship, as well, that is also relevant to provenance. According to the letter, this is Jude, the brother of James. Regardless of whether this authenticity is accepted today, the recipients were to be expected to accept that designation. Whether the recipients were in Palestine or not is not the point. They would have expected the brother of James and the family of Jesus to be resident there. Less

²⁷⁷ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 5.

suspicion would be generated by any readers of the letter, intended or not, had the letter originated in Palestine rather than in Alexandria. Of course, if the letter is authentic then the question of origin is settled. If this is the brother of James and the brother of Jesus, then Palestine is the only logical derivation for the epistle.

There are two less cogent issues that should be noted in the debate about provenance. The first is the relationship between Jude and 2 Peter. The issue of interdependence of these two letters has not been addressed in this paper since it has little overall relevance to the topic. But that interdependence is unquestionable. And regardless of whether one believes that 2 Peter made use of Jude or vice versa, the fact of interdependence does become a factor in the question of origin. It is much more likely that the two had common origins. It is less likely that one was written in Alexandria and one in Palestine. It is most unlikely that both were written in Alexandria. For many of the same reasons, Palestine is as much a more likely origin for 2 Peter as it is for Jude.

The second issue is Jude's comment concerning Sodom and Gomorrah "and the towns around them."²⁷⁸ The actual text (Genesis 19:28-29) talks about Sodom and Gomorrah and "the valley" they occupy. It does not mention other nearby towns. But in Palestine, there was a strategic and economic relationship between all major cities and the smaller towns or villages that surrounded them. The author seems to know this or at least assume it in spite of its absence in the text. That would fit the description of a local resident. Hence, for these reasons, I surmise that the letter was written in Palestine.

²⁷⁸ See comments on this in Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 34.

Audience

If there is little internal evidence for origin, there is even less evidence to rely on in determining destination. If we can assume anything, we can assume that the recipients were Jewish Christians. It is possible that the author of the letter is so absorbed in his own contextual social situation that the Jewish content and apocalyptic nature of the letter are simply inevitable. Jude may have unconsciously remained in this context while assembling a letter that admittedly was constructed hastily in response to a crisis. Yet this does not belie the author as a skillful exegete who has an accomplished plan for communicating his urgent message. Although he may have been limited in time, he was careful in construction. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that Jude's intentionality in using Jewish texts and illustrations is not directly related to his audience. The letter would make little sense if the readers were unfamiliar with *I Enoch*, the Genesis stories, or the *Assumption of Moses*. It would make even less sense if they were unappreciative of them. It makes the most sense if this is a Jewish Christian audience.

The initial question that should be addressed is whether this letter is a general, or circular letter, or one written to a specific congregation. Was this intended to be a letter that was to be rotated through several congregations, giving general guidance concerning a specific problem but not focused on any one particular congregation? Or did Jude actually have a specific group of recipients in mind, and his words of exhortation were personal ones to that one group?

It is tempting to consider this a circular letter. There is a significant lack of a personal touch in this letter. No individual or household is named in the introductory portion of the letter. No one is specifically cited in the body of the text, neither on the opponent's side of

the equation nor those who were the recipients. And there are no personal greetings in the conclusion. Outside of his identification in Jude 1, the author includes no personal information. Given the intensity that Jude conveys in his tract, one would think that someone would be named in the letter if this was sent to one group of believers. Why was not the leader of the opposition singled out? Why did Jude not plead on a personal level with the “pastor” of this group? The opponents, with their Gnostic ideas, were so widespread that limiting it to one congregation is not attractive. Jude could very well have diagnosed what has been insisted in this paper as an early Gnostic problem developing in one specific congregation and written this letter to them. However, the possibility of that being the case seems unlikely. Everything in this letter suggests that the epistle of Jude was written about a major issue, rather than a minor one, in which at least one individual among the leadership of the early church was compelled to respond. If Jude was discerning the issue to be of such a magnitude that he chose to write an intensely strong polemic, then it calls into question whether he could be so narrowly focused that he would only see it developing in one church. Would he have even felt the enormity of the crisis that seems evident in the letter if this was only evidenced in a single church?

Yet there are reasons to believe that the letter had a designated destination as well. That the letter lacks a personal touch, such as the absence of personal greetings, does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that it was a circular letter. It could very possibly be that Jude is writing to a congregation that he had no previous contact with. It is likely that Jude did not start this church. His reference to the apostles who “said to you at the end of time mockers will come” (Jude 18) can be understood to mean that this particular congregation was indeed started by the apostles or by an apostle at an earlier date who then were the

original “pastors” or teachers of this group. And in fact, never does the author of this letter claim to be the one who started the church. At the same time, there are enough specifics in this letter to signify that a precise congregation is targeted. Jude knows that these opponents “have secretly slipped in” (Jude 4) and that they are intimately involved in the life of the church since they “are the spots in your love feasts” (Jude 12).

What I propose is that it is both. I have strongly argued in this dissertation that Jude is a particularly discerning early Christian leader who may be the first to understand the severity of incipient Gnostic thought. He certainly understands the dangerous deviations involved. And we have written confirmation of that scenario through his letter. This issue will be widespread in this early Christian world and Jude perceives that. But Jude’s diagnosis for the larger body of Christendom is spawned by his observation in the microcosm of a particular church, or more probably a group of churches that he writes to. Yes, the letter is personal enough to address something that has specifically been observed either by Jude or someone reporting to Jude. But the lack of personal greeting or even details about the destination that would be expected to accompany a personal letter to a particular group, especially coming from a writer who does not lack details in his theological argument, is telling. Both aspects can be explained if the author was very intentionally addressing the critical specifics about the opposition but encasing those specifics into a framework that allowed the letter to be of use to the greater body for whom the author feared.

The second question to answer is, of course, where were these congregations located. Admittedly, this is somewhat speculative. Any indications of a specific destination are minimal. However, just as it is improbable that Jude started this church, or churches, neither does it seem likely that the recipients were close enough for Jude to visit. He does not seem

to have visited them prior to this letter and he gives no clue that he has any intention of visiting them in the future to help sort out this problem. It would not be wrong to assume that distance is involved. Yet as we have stated earlier, the recipients must either have a Jewish background or they reside in a setting where there is respect and possible access to Jewish documents. The thoroughly Jewish nature of Jude's argument necessitates that the readers would be impressed rather than confused by the sources referenced and illustrations chosen. And the fact that Jude almost exclusively refers to Jewish texts as his authority as opposed to references to the apostles or their writings only strengthens the case that the recipients had a Jewish background. This most probably was a Jewish Christian community.

The possibilities among choices of destination are significant. Palestine, Syria, a multitude of cities in Asia Minor, and Egypt are all potential locations, each with various levels of support. However, Palestine affords us the largest selection of strongly Jewish Christian communities that seem obviously necessary to consider for the most reasonable audience. The disadvantages of Palestine are twofold. First, Palestine was not an early fertile ground for Gnostic ideas. Even in the second century this was not the primary area of Gnostic controversy. That makes it more difficult to envision that Jude would be dealing with an incipient Gnostic group in Palestine in 75 C.E. It does present us with the most likely place that Jude would observe any deviation in the early Christian movement since that is where he is resident. As such, Palestine is not the most viable location for an early Gnostic problem. Second, and more importantly, a Palestinian location conflicts with the concept that Jude was unfamiliar with the group to whom he was writing and the probability is low that he neither visited them previously nor intended to in the near future. Any Christian leader of some stature, especially one that may have been in a significant position of leadership for some

time, would almost certainly have visited or been more personally involved with churches in his area. It is possible that Jude, intending this to be a circular letter, would have purposefully refrained from personal comments and the references to former or future visits. It simply does not seem to be the best solution available. There is a third but less significant factor that distracts from choosing Palestine as the destination. For those that revered the Law so highly, as Jewish Christians would have, the attraction of a libertine lifestyle that this faction of early Gnostics was propagating is hard to imagine. It is possible that those originally tied to the Law, when given a certain extent of freedom under the gospel and the decision by the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15, would have found such possibilities tempting. It is more than likely, however, that such a standard of licentious living would have been abhorred.²⁷⁹ It is hard to imagine that a Palestine congregation would have allowed a libertine group to continue to enjoy uncontested fellowship.

The Samaritan section of Palestine may be a more likely destination. Simon Magus is one of the purported early designers of Gnostic thought. What we know of Simon is questionable. What we can read of him is more substantial. Justin Martyr, from Samaria, confirms that Simon Magus worked in the area of Samaria.²⁸⁰ Simon, as well as his immediate successors lived in this area.²⁸¹ Irenaeus treats him as a Gnostic and spends considerable effort in attempting to refute a good deal of his teaching.²⁸² Much later,

²⁷⁹ Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 233-244.

²⁸⁰ Justin, *Apology I*, 26, 1-3.

²⁸¹ G. Van Groningen, *First Century Gnosticism: Its Origin and Motifs*, 128.

²⁸² Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer. I*, 23:1-4.

Hippolytus details Simon’s doctrine, referring primarily to a treatise by Simon.²⁸³ And although the key texts of Gnosticism were found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, it has been hypothesized that many of those texts had a Syrian origin.²⁸⁴ What we can assume concerning the historical Simon Magus is “that he founded a Gnostic community in Samaria which was considered by expanding Christianity as a serious competitor, especially as the Simonians themselves annexed Christian doctrines.”²⁸⁵ Strengthening this case further is the belief that Simon’s “brand” of Gnostic practice included a libertine lifestyle, so clearly opposed in the letter of Jude.²⁸⁶ Yet the probability that the opposition, as I have outlined them in this paper, may have been present in Samaria is the only indicator that Jude’s letter was addressed to congregations there. The proximity of this congregation to Jude again becomes an issue since it would have been easily conceivable that Jude could and would have visited them. Neither does the strong Jewish content of the letter seem appealing to a Christian Samaritan church.

Syria provides us with Jewish Christian communities that could be likely recipients. Although bordering on Palestine, it still presents us with an appropriate distance, separating author and recipient, that makes the absence of a visit more reasonable. Syria may also have been an early breeding ground for Gnosticism. One of Simon Magus’ disciples, Menander,

²⁸³ Hippolytus, *Refutatio VI*, 9-18.

²⁸⁴ Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 209.

²⁸⁵ Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 297.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 295.

was born in Samaria but worked in Antioch of Syria until his death about 80 C.E.²⁸⁷ The date of his death coinciding with my dating of the Epistle of Jude adds support to the hypothesis that the timing is ideal for Jude to have written to congregations in Syria. Menander's teaching would have had ample time to "infiltrate" churches by the time of his death. Add to this the name of another early Gnostic thinker, Saturninus, who was from Syria, and the possibility looms larger that Syria was the destination of the epistle of Jude. With Saturninus' teaching we may even be speaking of a more directly Christian Gnosis.²⁸⁸ One of the drawbacks to a Syrian destination is identical to what was stated for Palestine. There is no evidence that libertine Gnostic practice was ever a problem in Syria.²⁸⁹ The greatest drawback to Syria as the destination, however, actually has to do with the issue of the canonization of the book of Jude. While Alexandria seems to have been the locale of warmest reception for the authenticity of the epistle, Syria exudes the coldest response. In fact, it was the only region of the later church, particularly when debates concerning the canonicity of various books were in process, that did not accept Jude as canonical, waiting until the sixth century to do so.²⁹⁰ It is very difficult to comprehend that the recipients of a letter who would welcome and follow its advice would, in generations to follow, be the single area that would not accept its authority.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 298.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ Gunther, "The Alexandrian Epistle of Jude," 549.

²⁹⁰ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 16. Also see Gunther, "The Alexandrian Epistle of Jude," 549.

There were large Jewish communities in Asia Minor with many churches started among them as is attested to by the letters of Paul and a survey of the book of Acts.²⁹¹ Ephesus is a worthy possibility, and strangely enough it has been virtually ignored by scholars. The Egyptian Cerinthus is purported to have started an early Gnostic school in Asia and Ephesus has been suggested as the location. Although we have very little documentation of Cerinthus' life, he is listed by Irenaeus as one of the founders of the Gnostic movement. One particular story that Irenaeus records about Polycarp describes the elder Christian statesman as entering a bathhouse in Ephesus only to come out screaming, "Let us fly lest the baths fall in, since Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within."²⁹² Ephesus affords us with a major city of significant proportion, which included an ethnic and religious diversity. Although it prided itself on the worship of Diana, or Artemus, there was a substantial diversity of religious thought present. The first Christian presence was that of Paul, who started the church there. This would fit our scenario for Jude who did not plant or visit the church to whom he writes but does record that the apostles "said to you at the end of time mockers will come, followers of godlessness, according to their own lusts" (Jude 18). Such a declaration, according to Jude, is apostolic but the specific quote has a considerable Pauline ring to it. The pastoral letters to Timothy were written to the head of the church in Ephesus. Of all the New Testament writings the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy are most frequently identified as those that are suspected of attempting to combat incipient Gnostic thought. 1 Timothy 6:20 specifically warns Timothy to avoid babblings and contradictions that are

²⁹¹ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 16.

²⁹² Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer. III*, 3,4.

falsely called *gnosis* (γνώσις). Timothy is to avoid the fables and genealogies that cause division (1 Timothy 1:4) and the false teachers are in some way speaking against the Law (1 Timothy 1:7-8).

However, there is very little internal evidence from Biblical texts to suggest that Ephesus was a destination worthy of Jude's letter of protestation against an incipient Gnostic movement. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians there is no clear evidence of a Gnostic cult at work and there is a lack of Gnostic characteristics in the letter written to the church in Ephesus recorded much later in the group of seven letters recorded in the Revelation of John. Ephesus does not seem to have been an early site for Gnosticism even after the second century.

There is also Alexandria in Egypt. Much of what John Gunther has suggested concerning the Alexandrian origin of the letter is more noteworthy when considering Alexandria as the destination of the letter.²⁹³ First, Jude identifies himself as the brother of James. There are two writings outside the New Testament that claim James as their author, the Book (Protoevangelium) of James and the Coptic apocryphal letter of James. Both are suggested to be of Egyptian origin. The use by Jude of James' name, rather than Jesus' name, to support his standing makes the most sense if Jude is writing to an area where James was held in high esteem. Second, and perhaps the strongest argument for an Alexandrian destination, the authority of Jude was quickly accepted in Alexandria. As mentioned above, Clement of Alexandria accepted the authority of the epistle of Jude and extensively commented on the letter in his *Hypotyposes on Jude*. Later, Origen, likewise from

²⁹³ Most of the points that follow are taken from Gunther, "The Alexandrian Epistle of Jude," 549-562.

Alexandria, would express his acknowledgment of Jude's inspiration and canonicity in saying that the author of the letter "wrote a letter of few lines, it is true, but filled with the healthful words of heavenly grace."²⁹⁴ Third, as also stated earlier, Jude's prolific use of other sources and texts would be completely acceptable in Alexandria which was the center for collecting and translating books. There would be ample knowledge of texts such as *I Enoch* and *The Assumption of Moses* as well as the good possibility of access to those documents. Jude's references to those who came out of Egypt but were destroyed because of their rebellion (Jude 5) and the specific reference to Korah (Jude 11) would carry considerable weight in the Alexandrian community.

There was a large Jewish population in Alexandria and Apocalypticism flourished there as well.²⁹⁵ Jewish immigration into the city started as early as the sixth century B.C.E. and by the time that Jude penned this letter the Jewish population in Alexandria numbered in the hundreds of thousands.²⁹⁶ Jewish Apocalyptic writings were preserved by the more Hellenized Jews of Alexandria.²⁹⁷ Enoch literature in particular was popular in the city. The first Christians in Alexandria were Jewish and probably emigrated from Palestine. In fact, the

²⁹⁴ Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, X, 17.

²⁹⁵ Birger Pearson, a strong advocate of the Jewish origin of Gnosticism, writes that it was probably the Jewish community in Alexandria that provided the setting for the development of both Christianity and Gnosticism in the first century. Pearson, *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 283.

²⁹⁶ Birger Pearson, "Alexandria," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 1*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 152-157. Several of the points in this paragraph are from this source.

²⁹⁷ D.S. Russell, "The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic" (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 34.

early Christians most probably had more comfortable and congenial ties with Judaism in Alexandria than in Palestine. By the century following Jude's letter the church had become a significant presence in the city. It is easily conceivable that Jude's Jewish Christian community lived here. It is all the more likely to explain why Jude would have used *I Enoch* as a resource and wrote in such an apocalyptic tenor.

Gnosticism thrived in Alexandria as well. Carpocrates was an early Alexandrian libertine Gnostic. Chronologically, he was later than Jude but the seeds of thought that would blossom with Carpocrates may have been present earlier.²⁹⁸ Gunther notes that both the Carpocratians and another Egyptian sect, the Cainites, have all the similarities to the accusations made by Jude.²⁹⁹ They already held a cosmic dualism, had a licentious lifestyle, and taught against enslaving angels. Much later Gnosticism would find a healthy home in Alexandria through its most well known protagonists Basilides and the Alexandrian educated Valentinus.³⁰⁰ That makes Alexandria a possible venue for an earlier incipient Gnostic thought as well.

However, that does not mean that an early incipient Gnosticism was likely. The one glaring weakness of an Alexandrian destination lies in the crucial area of chronology. There is ample evidence of the existence of the socio-religious context described above from the second century onward. There is much less evidence of this in the first century. It makes

²⁹⁸ F.F. Bruce believed that Jude was addressing the predecessors of the Carpocratians. See F.F. Bruce, *The Secret Gospel of Mark* (London: Athlone Press, 1974), 18.

²⁹⁹ Gunther, "The Alexandrian Epistle of Jude," 554.

³⁰⁰ Christoph Marksches, *Gnosis* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 79-94.

historical sense that the Alexandrian society of the first century is accurately depicted in the above paragraphs. But there is little evidence to support it.

Yet I believe that Alexandria was the original destination of a letter that was intended to be circulated among as many churches as necessary. These are congregations that Jude would have little chance to visit, unlike congregations in Palestine and Syria. The socio-religious environment is ideal for the scenario that has been written in this dissertation concerning the epistle of Jude. Jewish Apocalypticism and its literary sources would be revered. The young Christian group would be growing primarily among the large Jewish population. The specific details of this incipient Gnostic infiltration that Jude describes is precisely what would be found in early Gnostic thought in Alexandria. A libertine lifestyle would be less abhorrent in the Alexandrian diversity than it would be in Palestine. Perhaps, most importantly, Jude and his letter find acceptance here much earlier than in other likely destinations.

Syria is a sound contender for the destination simply because the evidence is stronger there for a Gnostic problem in the early church. However, the immediacy of the Syrian churches to Jude's location, the lack of a libertine strand of Gnosticism there, and the lack of acceptance of the letter of Jude until the sixth century all force me to distance myself from Syria as the original destination of Jude's letter. Keeping in mind that this is a circular letter with only a specific cite selected for the initial destination, does allow for the possibility that Syria was a secondary destination in the mind of the author. Alexandria, however, remains the most convincing first choice for the destination of the epistle of Jude.

Occasion

The purpose for the letter has been detailed above since the position of this dissertation is that Jude saw and understood an incipient Gnostic movement that was creeping into the church. He wrote to clarify the discrepancies that this new teaching brought to the church and to stifle its growth. Jude is too early to see this threat as a systematized way of thinking that will include its own sacred texts and mythology, but he did discriminate that this was something that was wider than one locality. This had the potential to affect the church on a larger scale. And Jude's personal worldview, so steeped in Jewish Apocalypticism and more recently laced with Christian perspective was at the heart of his ability to address the issue.

What Jude is responding to is what Bilde has analyzed correctly. Speaking somewhat anachronistically, early Christianity has afforded incipient Gnosticism with the two aspects that are so contrary to the Jewish Apocalypticism that forms a major foundation of the Gnostic belief system: a world that is under contrary lordship and a critical view of Judaism. Several decades have passed since the beginning of the church and divergences within that church begin to surface and gel. Jude has been there from the beginning and has not only witnessed but probably dealt with deviating interpretations of the words of Jesus, Paul, Peter and James. He may have responded to many of these with a personal visit or letter. This particular situation is different. He has watched first as those with an apocalyptic worldview have begun to speak out more strongly against the Mosaic Law and the angelic world that is responsible for its inception. He has seen the divisive nature of the new movement as they maintain a strong separation from "the world" but also create a division among those called out of the world by designating a necessary next step or revelation attested to by their own

visionary prophecies. And he is horrified by their ridicule of any moral standard attached to the regulation of the functions of the physical body. By the time he replies with a letter he is able to succinctly define the characteristics of this new group. They deny Jesus (Jude 4), and blaspheme angels (Jude 8). They live licentiously (Jude 4) and follow their natural instincts (Jude 7). They become spots on the love feasts (Jude 12) and set up divisions within the church (Jude 19). They are dreamers (Jude 8) and grumblers (Jude 16) and take money for their own profit (Jude 16). “They are, therefore, advocates of a Gnostic trend, which contended that the real pneumatic being is not touched by what the flesh does. This characteristic does not fit any specific Gnostic system of the second century.”³⁰¹ But it would characterize an early “Gnostic trend,” an incipient Gnosticism that may have been withstood in the Revelation 2 letters to Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira, or in the churches represented by the letter of 1 Corinthians and the Pastoral Epistles.

So Jude responds because he understands. He is an apocalyptic. He is Jewish. He understands the relevant message of the ancient texts. He grasps the importance and finality of the gospel, the “faith entrusted to the saints, once for all” (Jude 3) and that any further *gnosis* is unnecessary and divisive. He is convinced that Christ’s coming has initiated his eschatological hope and that nothing remains but to stay faithful to the person of the Christ who alone will keep those who trust until the final judgment (Jude 1). He has also anticipated, through his understanding of those ancient texts, that there will be those in the end who will oppose the truth and he now sees that occurring in the churches to which he writes. And so the twenty-five verses of the epistle of Jude is his response.

³⁰¹ Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 300.

Character of the Letter

More needs to be said about the character of the letter of Jude. It is such a specific letter addressed to such an exclusive situation that it tends to get overlooked in the theology and praxis of the present day church. And yet the very fact that it was penned in such a specific context makes it all the more valuable to understand. The letter is theological in its nature and practical in its conclusion. It expresses the faith and understanding of Christ in the world of the early church from a decidedly clear and young Christian worldview. There is also a specific style and strategy that has been alluded to often in this paper but not yet developed to the extent that it should be. And understanding the situation of the letter as it has been developed in this paper allows us to unearth a clarity and profundity of its character in a much sharper way than has been attempted in the past.

There is a theological depth to the letter of Jude that can be missed if viewed too cursorily. The strength of Jude's denunciation of his opponents detracts from a simple observance of Jude's Christian worldview. Jude has a firm grasp of a strong apostolically established set of rules that are confirmed by sacred scripture. Again, this does not date him into the second century but certainly strengthens the case that Jude is writing in the later first century. This is the "faith entrusted to the saints, once for all" (Jude 3). This is not a faith that is developing. This is a faith "that enshrined the tenets of Christian salvation and that must be defended and not surrendered."³⁰² And it is this "holy faith" with which his readers are to build themselves up (Jude 20). That faith is confirmed by scripture. In fact, all the

³⁰² Andrew Chester and Ralph Martin, *The Theology of the Letter of James, Peter, and Jude* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.), 76.

ancient texts confirm that this is the only legitimate faith. There is little space allowed in Jude's world in which to deviate.

On the opposite end of the spectrum Jude does not seem to sense a strong division between Judaism and its offspring, Christianity. His sense of the finality of the context of the Christian faith did not affect his look back into history. Christianity and Judaism are closely related, if not of the same strain. His faith is clearly Christian, centering on Jesus, but his mindset remains Jewish. While maintaining the respect for the apostles (Jude 17), Jude relies much more keenly on Hebrew Bible texts and other Jewish writings for the authority he needs to dispel the intruders. Jude is a Jewish Christian who would not understand our use of the term. In his world the terms "Jewish" and "Christian" not only go hand-in-hand, but the former, properly interpreted, leads to the latter. In fact, the reason he is able to accept the teaching of the apostles is that it is so clearly derived from its mother texts.

But he is Christian in the sense that Jesus takes a prominent place in his theology. He is a servant of Jesus Christ rather than of God (Jude 1a). He places God the Father and Jesus in juxtaposition (Jude 1b, 21, 25). Jesus is "our only Master and Lord" (Jude 4). Jude uses all the Jewish titles associated with a divine Jesus: Messiah, or anointed one, in the term "Christ," "Lord," and most surprisingly "Master" or "Sovereign" (δεσπότης). And he is strategic in the use of those titles. Jude uses "Christ" in conjunction with Jesus only in the opening and closing of the letter while reserving the term "Lord" for the main argument of the letter.³⁰³ That Jesus is anointed is critical for the readers to grasp. That he is Lord, who cannot be fooled or ignored when it comes to doctrinal and moral issues, is what his

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

opponents need to come to grips with. God’s moral authority is exercised in the Lordship of Christ. Clearly, Jude’s use of “Lord” for Jesus climaxes in the realization that Jesus is the ultimate eschatological judge (Jude 14), prophesied by Enoch and waited on by the faithful. This judgment is certain and even the timing is more clear than in ages past when the prophecies were first written.

The final of the three terms mentioned above, δεσπότης, is unique to Jude in New Testament writings with the exception of 2 Peter, a work recognized as being dependent on Jude.³⁰⁴ Understanding its exclusive use here sheds additional light on Jude’s Christology. The term in Greek normally refers to a master of a household or to a ruler.³⁰⁵ Both of these uses refer to someone with unlimited authority over their subjects. Jews generally objected to the term when used for any person as it was understood that such unquestioned authority lay with God alone. The reason that Jude would use the term is worth studying. It could be used by Jude in the same way that Jude uses Lord (κύριος) as the Divine and supreme ruler of the cosmos. The Septuagint substitutes the use of the tetragrammaton (יהוה) with the word κύριος. κύριος could then be the Jewish understanding for the almighty and holy God. Jude understands that and so intersperses κύριος with δεσπότης simply for variety. But it would be imprudent to relegate to variety the work of one as selective and careful of language as the author of the letter of Jude. It seems even less likely when both terms κύριος and δεσπότης are used in close association with each other in Jude 4 as designations for Jesus. The terms

³⁰⁴ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 282.

³⁰⁵ The thoughts here come mostly from K.H. Rengstorf, “δεσπότης, οἰκοδεσπότης, οἰκοδεσποτέω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. G. Kittel and G.W. Bromiley, 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 44-49.

most likely reinforce each other but work as a minor crescendo, the latter term intensifying the former. Not only is Jesus Lord, but he is also master or sovereign, with unquestionable power and authority, be it over the world, inclusive of the opposition, or the household, specifically inclusive of the recipients of the letter. Christ is equal to and with God. “It is not that Christ is identical with God the Father, still less that his lordship is in competition with or replaces that of God the Father, but that the lordship he exercises is the exclusive lordship of the one God.”³⁰⁶

This ultimate lordship of Jesus and the strength associated with it is firmly established in each part of Jude’s letter, the introduction, main argument and conclusion. With it he solidifies his authority to call his opponents to accountability. However, the powerful judge is tempered with the bookend use of the word “mercy” attached to Jesus in the opening and closing of the letter. Jude desires mercy to the recipients even before specifying the purpose of the letter (Jude 2) and he reminds them that mercy is what awaits those who faithfully persevere until the judgment time (Jude 21). Even the response sought for by Jude from the recipients is one of mercy to those who struggle (Jude 22). The Christology of Jude is one of a merciful despot. Jesus is indeed their δεσπότης but chooses mercy for those that maintain the faith handed down to the church.

The nature of the Christian life for Jude is closely related to his concept of Christ as a merciful despot. The life of a follower of Jesus is one of maintaining a “bulwark against deviation and falling away.”³⁰⁷ With respect to themselves, the readers are to keep

³⁰⁶ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 307.

³⁰⁷ Chester, *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter and Jude*, 79.

themselves in the love of God (Jude 21). This is their responsibility and they fulfill it by building themselves up in the faith and praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20). With respect to their opponents the readers are to snatch them from the fire (Jude 23), if they can. And ultimately it will be this Jesus, the merciful Lord, who will be “able to guard you from stumbling and to place you before the face of his glory without blame and with great rejoicing” (Jude 24). True to his apocalyptic worldview, Jude sees it all in black and white. The job of the Christ follower is to stay in the “white.” Jude’s gospel is one that distinguishes purity from pollution. And for Jude this seems to be as much about “place” as it is about activity.³⁰⁸ You fail, as the angels did, when you do not keep your place. You succeed as you are able to keep yourself in the place of God’s love. The evidence of one’s choice is always obvious since Jude’s faith is not just a matter of the heart but includes a distinct lifestyle. Salvation is neither quick nor cheap. Such an effort is life long and strenuous.

It needs only a brief reminder here, as much has been written already, that Jude’s belief that Jesus’ return, and the seat of ultimate judgment that it includes, is imminent. It is this eschatological hope in the background that dominates the strong harsh rebuke of the opposition and the specific call to purity for the faithful. The readers are to be persistent because time is on the side of the pure and is passing at a rapid rate for the polluted. In a sense this makes Jude less apocalyptic than the author of Revelation.³⁰⁹ Jude’s concern is not with a disintegrating cosmos. He does not speak of stars falling and plagues descending. Jude’s concern is with one issue: judgment. The judgment focuses on morality and belief and

³⁰⁸ William F. Brosend, *James and Jude* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 188.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 189.

serves as one of two bookends. Along with the second bookend of a strong portrayal of Christ, the judgment serves in framing the commands and challenges of the letter both to the recipients and concerning the opposition.

The structure of the letter has been analyzed in several ways and the bulk of those will not be dealt with here. However, Watson has done an exceptional service in his scrutiny of the letter that helps clarify the structure of Jude's argument and assists in its understanding for the modern reader.³¹⁰ In a close comparison with classical rhetoric, Jude's letter includes an *exordium*, a *narratio*, a *probatio*, and a *peroratio*. In the *exordium*, which is used to describe the author's intention, Jude does so with an economy of words. He befriends the audience, introduces himself, describes why he should be taken seriously, and asks for a listening ear (Jude 1-3). In the *narratio*, typically a stating of the author's case, Jude strikingly calls attention to the subject matter at hand while accenting the serious nature of it (Jude 4). The *probatio* is the argument itself or the proof of the problem. Jude outlines four main points of proof that there is a problem and its seriousness (Jude 5-16). The lifestyle of the opponents, the examples from the past of similar unacceptable practices, the comparison of past crimes and present opposition, and the legal warrant for judgment to be taken are Jude's *probatio*. Finally comes the *peroratio*, or the conclusion of the presentation. For Jude (17-25) it comes in the form of a classic *indignatio*, where Jude writes of the opponents and their deserved ill will, and the *conquestio*, where Jude elicits sympathy for those who have fallen into an ungodly lifestyle.

³¹⁰ I summarize here what Watson has laid out in some detail. Duane F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 40-77.

There is also a poetic character to Jude that seems, at first glance, unlikely in such a strong polemic. From moving back and forth between the past prophecies to present illustrations and the rhythm of repeated triplets as mentioned above, Jude is stylish in the presentation of his case. It has been suggested that between the introduction and conclusion, the main body of the letter and attack on the opposition has a chiasmic style to it.³¹¹

A. Opponents foretold (Jude 4a)

B. Opponents labeled as godless (Jude 4b)

C. Those judged kept in darkness (Jude 6)

C. Those judged kept in darkness (Jude 13)

B. Opponents labeled as godless (Jude 15-16)

A. Opponents foretold (Jude 17)

Jude is both a complex and fascinating letter. As I have attempted to describe immediately above, structurally speaking, the epistle is more than a functional letter and the lack of attention it presently receives leaves that fact in obscurity. Jude is systematic and he includes a complete rhetorical-theological strategy. Jude's exclusive vocabulary, with its fourteen *hapex legomena* and additional twenty-two words that are only rarely found in the New Testament, is all the more amazing when considering Jude's economy of speech.³¹² "He utilizes word-play, repetition in varied forms, synonymous and antithetical parallelism, symmetry, contrast, alliteration and rhyme....His mode is apocalyptic, midrashic, liturgical,

³¹¹ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 24.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 27.

and rhetorical.”³¹³ The letter that Jude writes is always focused on the issue while drawing on the complete set of skills of the author.

Issues that dominate the study of Jude usually revolve around authorship and the identity of the opponents. But Jude is a unique letter that is hard to clearly classify. We have stated above that the letter of Jude is more apocalyptic than hierarchical. It is more polemical than instructional. As concerns audience, it is more general and less specific. Concerning authority, it is more interested in the choice of ancient texts and less concerned with referring to the apostles. But in all of these comparisons, Jude does not fit completely into the “more” designation nor is it wholly devoid of characteristics of the “less” category. Perhaps this observation lies at the foundation of the difficulty in categorically answering so many of the introductory issues of Jude.

³¹³ Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude*, 167.

CONCLUSION

JUDE: STANDING IN THE GAP

The purpose of this project was to demonstrate how the book of Jude illustrates Per Bilde's hypothesis that Gnosticism originated from Jewish Apocalypticism through the medium of early Christianity and in so doing uncover a truer picture of the historical situation of the Epistle of Jude. I sought first to illustrate the strong evidence that Jewish Apocalypticism is a foundational source of later Gnosticism. This cannot be easily dismissed. To what degree Jewish Apocalypticism laid the groundwork for Gnosticism is more debatable than the clear fact that it did. There is an undeniable resemblance of the two systems. With the clarity of that comparison comes a better understanding of Gnosticism, not just in its roots but in its main tenets. In this part of the pursuit I have also shown the role that early Christianity played in being a type of catalyst, supplying the missing pieces that helped propel Jewish Apocalyptic thinkers into the even more mystical world of Gnosticism. The rise of Christianity with its dualistic outlook on the present physical world and its rulers best explains the occasion for the development of Gnostic cosmic dualism and the creation of the demiurge. This Gnostic demiurge, or Yaldabaoth, such a foreign concept in monotheistic Judaism, would be considered the major deterrent from accepting the developmental connections between Judaism and Gnosticism. But we have seen that the surprising rise of Christianity affords a remarkable chronological and theological timetable that could explain such a contrary development. In addition, Christianity, its conflict with Judaism, and the anti-Jewish nature of its earliest literature also best explains the surprisingly harsh anti-Jewish character of Gnostic literature in a movement that rose out of Jewish Apocalypticism. Gnostic anti-Jewish rhetoric is much more intentional and certainly stronger than its older sibling's language. But

in the socio-religious context described in this scenario, that fact seems reasonable both because of the natural graduated steps of development expected in such an evolution as well as the recognition that Christianity originally sought to remain within the boundaries of Judaism while Gnosticism sought to distance itself from its Jewish heritage.

After this I laid out in some detail the background of the author of Jude as it relates to this theory. We have seen the unmistakably Jewish Apocalyptic background and present worldview of the author. Sources resourced, midrashic style of interpretation, self-identification, and a comfort level with both the Aramaic and Greek languages define our author as specifically Jewish. And we have established as specifically as possible, with much detail, that the opponents Jude describes in his letter are indeed early incipient Gnostics. There is simply no other identifiable group that would embrace the characteristics that Jude catalogs in his letter.

A historical analysis of these facets is revealing. As Jude writes his letter he is actually experiencing the continuum that Bilde describes in his proposal. In his letter, Jude has sought to break the chain. He believes in the apocalyptic mindset. He believes that the Christ has come and in that coming lies the culmination of the Jewish hope of the Messiah, final justice for the people of God, and ultimate justification of his worldview. As such he understands the apocalyptic outlook of the early Gnostic teachers. But Jude is convinced that it ends with Jesus, his “only Master and Lord.” With unusual discernment Jude perceives that his opponents are taking an additional step into something that lies beyond what Jude feels is God’s purpose and certainly beyond his view of orthodoxy. Jude is typical of early church leaders in singling out that a libertine lifestyle stands opposed to the design of God in both Judaism and Christianity. But Jude detects more in the intention of his opponents. For Jude

there is something sinister in the visions of these leaders that exhibit themselves in the recasting of the angelic world into an evil framework, a rejection of current authority, the superficial division of the church between those having a deeper understanding and those lacking that depth, and, most disconcerting of all, a reframing of the person of Jesus. Jude seeks to break what Bilde has termed as the logical conclusion of the Jewish Apocalyptic-Christian-Gnostic continuum. With this letter, Jude lays his claim of being the first to discern that third, final step as one that lies outside of the eschatological plan of God.

Finally, I brought these conclusions to focus on the description of background issues of the book of Jude. With the clarity of understanding the precise nature of Jude's opponents, the background of the author of this letter, and the historical context that Bilde explicates, the specific setting of Jude's epistle can be more easily understood. The author, date, origin, destination, occasion and character of the letter were all carefully crafted based on the findings explained in the previous sections of this dissertation.

I trust this work will be helpful in two areas. First, it provides a better understanding of the book of Jude. This book not only is one of the most neglected books of the New Testament in the realm of scholarship but also in the life of the Church. Jude has too often been ignored by those professing its canonicity. Taking only one page in the New Testament and tucked in between the positive letters of John and the spectacular revelation of Christ in the final book of the Bible, Jude, with its strong polemic, has left readers disinterested in pursuing its message. Rarely is it used in the church calendar, in liturgical readings, or as the main text of a message. A more solid grasp of the historical setting of the book can only aid in the understanding of the text, both for whom it was originally written and for what lessons it carries for the Christian world of today. The epistle of Jude has an enduring message for

the church. It is, after all, canonized and part of an inspired tradition. It should appear more often on the church calendar of liturgical readings and its deeper lessons can be taught on a more regular basis.

Second, the use of Jude in illustrating the connections between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism has never been attempted before this paper. It can only help in supporting that hypothesis in which I believe. At the very least the letter intimates the beginnings of a struggle between related but competing systems. Although Christianity developed into the role of the catalyst between Jewish Apocalypticism and Gnosticism, Jude is the earliest indication that the three worldviews would not all be reconciled under the broad definition of Christianity or, for that matter, under any one monolithic umbrella.³¹⁴ I trust that Jude's letter will be given a fresh look in the continuing study of Gnosticism. Surely, much more can be done with this letter by those more capable than I to help us all understand the mysterious Jewish/Christian/Gnostic world of the late first century. The book of Jude exudes the Jewish Apocalyptic background of the author. And as he clarifies the issues of early Gnostics in their relationship to the Christian faith, he tells us as much about the early precepts of the latter movement as he does the "heretical" nature of the former. As more is discovered concerning the early origins and development of Gnostic thought I hope that this letter will be a part of that expansion.

When I think of this remarkable author I am drawn back to the use of his first illustration in his polemic. In Jude 5 he raises the story of the Israelites brought by God out of

³¹⁴ See comments by Helmet Koester on Jude's role in the rejection of a peaceful coexistence of Christianity and Gnosticism in Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 247.

Egypt. God's purpose was not simply to remove them from Egypt but to take them to "the promised land." Yet on the way many, led by Korah, became sidetracked, eventually rebelling against the leaders of the plan and were destroyed as a result. In essence, according to this tradition, these slaves were transformed to "Jews" over time during their travels as their future culture was delivered to them at Mount Sinai on their way to Canaan. Some, however, chose the way of Korah and fell in the desert. Most others continued on.

This is the perfect illustration of Jude and his situation. Jude is on a journey. The journey he is experiencing is the one moving from Jewish Apocalypticism to early Christianity. Many are on this journey with him. On the way, he and his associates are being transformed to "Christians." Their culture is being redesigned by the injection of the person and the work of Jesus, a growing understanding of the life of faith, and a reinterpretation of accepted Jewish texts. The culmination of their hopes, their promised land, is near. But there is always the possibility of being sidetracked and some in Jude's world are being lulled away by those who would reject designated authority and dream of a further step to be taken, a step we now call Gnosticism. As Moses fought for the lives of the Israelites in the desert so Jude fights for the lives of these early Christians. The journey is in jeopardy. And if the journey is jeopardized, so is the promised land. It becomes critical for someone to stand in the gap. That man is Jude. Jude stands as a microcosm in the macrocosm of Bilde's timeline from Jewish Apocalypticism to Gnosticism through Christianity. Without the analysis of Bilde, Jude sees the progression. And for Jude it is serious. What for Bilde is a simple historical observation is for Jude a matter of life and death, of right and wrong. So he writes a letter. Originally intending to encourage the recipients this letter instead becomes the line-in-the-sand that Jude draws for the early church. It predates and prefigures a stronger apologetic that

the early church fathers will appropriate in their struggle with a more developed Gnosticism in the following centuries. And it is a letter that ultimately is accepted as inspired and canonized.

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