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A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

JUDE 22, 23.

THESE verses present a well known problem in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament. Their difficulty, which is partly due to the extraordinary variety of readings in the four primary uncial witnesses, is enhanced by the lack of old Latin or old Syriac versions, and the absence of early patristic evidence. No single uncial is undoubtedly supported by any early version except the Bohairic, nor by any Church father before Clement of Alexandria; and, as we shall see, his evidence is not free from difficulties.

The first point to be determined is whether there are two or three clauses in these verses, a question on which modern editors are much divided. The evidence stands thus:—

(i.) For two clauses:

(a) καὶ οὖς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε διακρινομένους σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες οὖς δὲ ἐλεᾶτε ἐν φόβῳ, μισοῦντες κ.τ.λ., read by B and adopted by WH in their text with a comma after ἀρπάζοντες. It is also accepted by Weiss, who inserts a comma after the first ἐλεᾶτε as well. This too is the text which Weizsäcker follows in his free translation, "Und habet Mitleid hier mit denen, die in Zwiespalt sind, rettet, reisst sie aus dem Feuer heraus; habet Mitleid, dort mit Furcht, mit Abscheu auch vor dem Rock," etc.

(b) καὶ οὖς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε διακρινομένους, οὖς δὲ σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες ἐν φόβῳ: read by C^a, Syr. hl.

(c) καὶ οὖς μὲν ἐλεεῖτε διακρινομένοι, οὖς δὲ ἐν φόβῳ σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες: read by KLP, Thphyl. text, Oec. text, and so by TR.

(d) καὶ οὖς μὲν ἐλέγχετε διακρινομένους, οὖς δὲ σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες ἐν φόβῳ: read by C.

(ii.) For three clauses:

(a) καὶ οὖς μὲν ἐλέγχετε διακρινομένους, οὖς δὲ σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες, οὖς δὲ ἐλεᾶτε ἐν φόβῳ; read by A 5, 6,

13, 27, 29, 66** al^p lat. vg., boh., æth., arm. "Ephr." This, which is put by Weymouth in his resultant text, is the reading of Tregelles, Tischendorf, and Nestle. Zahn also accepts this as correct.

(b) καὶ οὓς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε διακρινομένους, οὓς δὲ σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες, οὓς δὲ ἐλεᾶτε ἐν φόβῳ; read by **N**, and followed in the text of our Revised Version.

This bewildering array of readings is best explained by some error that crept early into the text and cross-fertilized every family. Our task is to try to determine by external evidence and congruity with the context, first, whether the original contained a two- or a three-limbed sentence; and then, if the former is found to be probable, to decide which, if any, of our extant readings best satisfies the conditions.

Though most modern editors seem to incline to a triple-claused reading, the external evidence is the other way. The threefold division is attested almost entirely by Alexandrian witness, for the text of **N** is evidently conflate. A has as its chief supporter the oldest Egyptian version, the Bohairic, which is regarded by present critics as particularly free from so-called Western additions. Unfortunately in this passage we have no guidance from any great uncial, nor the old-Latin nor old-Syriac, as to how the "Western" reading would run. The Epistle of Jude, it would appear, was not present in any early Syriac version, and if Antioch was the home of the "Western" text, the deficiency in early "Western" testimony may be accounted for.

There is, on the other hand, strong support for two clauses, BC**a KLP syr. hl. syr. bodl. In addition we have the important testimony of Clement of Alexandria, our earliest patristic evidence, for nothing can be made of the supposed reference in the *Didaché* on this point. Clement's words, *Strom.* vi. 8, are, καὶ οὓς μὲν ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζετε, διακρινομένους δὲ ἐλεεῖτε, with the lat. Hier.

Ezech., 18: "et alios quidem de igne rapite, aliorum vero qui judicantur miseremini."

Turning to the internal evidence afforded by the passage, we judge it to be in favour of a reading with two clauses. As has been remarked, Jude evinces a fondness for triplets, and at first sight this would seem to support the Alexandrian text. But the progress of the thought of the passage really requires only two classes of persons in 22, 23, to complement the description of the proper attitude of believers in view of the intruding libertines (19-21). The whole work of these impious invaders is destructive and unspiritual. To repel and counteract their influence the readers are exhorted to the exercise of Christian duty, first, for their own benefit and protection (20, 21); secondly, towards brethren who are falling into danger; and finally, towards those whose condition has become almost desperate (22, 23). This exhortation finds its motive power in the great Christian verities summed up in the concluding doxology (24, 25).

Dr. Chase, like v. Soden, is not satisfied with the reading of either A or B; but if the former is accepted, he finds the three clauses rising to a climax, each with its characteristic idea—hopeful compassion, desperate effort, compassion paralysed by fear of contamination (*Hastings' D.B.*, art. "Jude"). Zahn supports a similar interpretation thus: "There are doubters who do not decidedly reject this spurious doctrine, but weigh the pros and cons. They must be convinced with reasons of the folly of their indecision, and of the untruth of teaching that is fraught with peril to them. There are also those who are already laid hold on by the fire of destruction, but who may still be snatched from it. Finally there are those who can now be only an object of compassion coupled with fear; their unclean vices must be hated and earnestly shunned, but they themselves are to be regarded with that unmerited

mercy that all hope to receive from Christ the Lord at the Day of Judgment" (*Einleitung*, ii. 79).

But it is impossible to draw a distinction between the second and third classes. The flames of destruction, which are already playing round members of the Church, find their lurid prototype in the fate that overtook the Cities of the Plain (cf. *v.* 22 with *v.* 7). Some of the Christians to whom Jude writes are in a measure tainted with the same vice as that of Sodom, and a punishment like that of Sodom awaits those guilty of similar sin, whether they be these filthy intruders, or believers who yield to their seductions and become their followers. There is no word of mercy for such. Eternal fire awaits them. The purpose of this letter is to warn the readers against associating with those whose conduct is sensual, not to bid them show mercy towards them, even if it be with fear. Mercy is to be exercised only towards those for whom there is still a vestige of hope. But there is no hope for those plunged into the fire (*v.* 7), though there may be some for those on whom the flames are beginning to play. Incipient sensuality, while fraught with direst peril, is not utterly desperate. But the next step of one on whom the flames are already leaping forth will bury him for ever in the sea of fire where the libertines and their followers are. Mercy is for the former; the latter are beyond its power. So the only three possible stages are, doubt, incipient sensuality—in both of which some of the Christians are involved—and complete ruin, to which the libertines and their disciples are given over. Thus the exhortation to sympathetic treatment contained in verses 22 and 23 is concerned with the first two classes, both of them still within the circle of Christian influence; and this, along with the entreaty to give heed to self-edification on the part of the steadfast portion of the Church, forms the threefold division in 20–23, which harmonizes well with the style of Jude.

If our interpretation of the evidence has been so far correct, a serious difficulty still confronts us when we attempt to decide how the two clauses are divided.

Weiss accepts the reading of B as satisfactory, partly by reason of the harsh asyndeton of the first clause. Weizsäcker, as may be seen in his version already quoted, escapes the difficulty by a free rendering with vivid finite verbs; while Köhl resorts to the extreme expedient of taking *ἐλεᾶν* in different senses in the two clauses—in the first of active helpful sympathy, in the latter of a pity nerveless through fear, a paralysed emotion. Hort says, “The reading of B involves the incongruity that the first *οὗς* must be taken as a relative, and the first *ἐλεᾶτε* as indicative.” Such a necessity justifies his opinion that a primitive error affects the passage. To remedy this state of matters he suggests that the first *ἐλεᾶτε* is intrusive, and was inserted mechanically from the second clause.

But though it is with the greatest hesitation that one ventures to question an opinion from such an authority, one cannot escape the impression that Dr. Hort’s suggestion is insufficient. It seems to have both internal and external evidence against it. When the two clauses are divided as in B with *οὗς δὲ ἐλεᾶτε* after *ἀρπάζοντες*, the passage presents the same difficulty that invalidates the tripartite reading of A; that is to say, mercy is required to be shown to a class hopeless because they are already in the midst of the fire. If we are shut up to a choice between A and B, the former is much preferable, for in its first two clauses it draws a distinction required by verses 5–7, between those in doubt and those in the flames of sensuality.

Turning again to external evidence, we observe that the reading *οὗς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε* is supported by NBC^a KLP (*ελεεῖτε*) Syr. hl., and that *οὗς μὲν ἐλέγχετε* occurs in AC* minuscules, vg., boh., arm., æth. Thus the balance of testimony

is strongly on the side of οὗς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε. This is also the harder reading, and less likely to have been substituted for the other. ἐλέγγχετε would indeed make admirable sense, but it is a word which might have been easily suggested by such passages as Matthew xviii. 15, Ephesians v. 11, 1 Timothy v. 20, Titus i. 9. So we may assume with a degree of confidence that οὗς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε is the true reading in the first clause.

Our next step is to determine where the second clause begins. οὗς δὲ is inserted after διακρινομένους by NAC^{*a} minuscules, vg., boh., arm., Syr. hl., æth., and with ἐν φόβῳ between οὗς δὲ and σώζετε by the Constantinopolitan text. In fact, B is the only great MS. that omits this οὗς δὲ. Thus if, as we have seen, both external and internal evidence lead us to a bipartite reading, we are almost constrained to hold that it would run as follows: καὶ οὗς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε διακρινομένους, οὗς δὲ σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζοντες ἐν φόβῳ, μισοῦντες κ.τ.λ.

This reading actually occurs in C^a, Syr. hl.; and the earliest corrections of C, which were inserted in the sixth century, are important. Further, Clement of Alexandria lends more support to this than to any other when he writes: καὶ οὗς μὲν ἐκ πυρὸς ἀρπάζετε, διακρινομένους δὲ ἐλεεῖτε. He seems to be quoting loosely, though the reading of the Bodleian Syriac, "et quosdam de illis quidem ex igne rapite; cum autem resipuerint miseremini super eis in timore," might lead to the conjecture that the inversion was even behind Clement. This would account for the early intrusion of οὗς δὲ ἐλεᾶτε before ἐν φόβῳ. But the fact of importance is that Clement and the Bodleian Syriac agree with C^a, Syr. hl. in the two classes referred to.

The internal evidence agrees remarkably well with this reading. In verses 5-7 Jude warns his readers by illustration against the fatal example of two types of characters—those who, having been guilty of apostasy, like the Israelites

in the desert, will perish; and others whose sensual conduct aggravates their revolt, as typified in the fallen angels and the inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain. Their punishment will also be the doom of those in the Christian Church who repeat their conduct, whether it be of the nature of unbelief or of vice. So in verses 20-23 we have the duties of the true believer set forth in contrast to the practices of the libertinists as outlined in verse 19. These intruders are separatists, introducers of caste. They claim to be spiritually-minded, pneumatic, superior to the average Christian, from whom they withdraw to form cliques of kindred spirits. In reality it is easily seen that they have nothing spiritual in them, but are dominated by the sensual. Evidently these people have been at work with some success, and this epistle is a warning against apostasy and vice. It is also a strong plea for unity.

The integrity of the apostolic faith must be preserved (v. 3). Pernicious example can be thwarted only by a true conception of life based on apostolic doctrine as the foundation of Christian character. A life of prayer in the Holy Spirit will bind the Church together in harmony. God's love, which streams forth upon the brethren, an earnest of the final revelation of mercy when the Lord Jesus shall appear to give them life eternal, will protect the Church and fortify her against error in life or doctrine (20, 21).

But though the bulk of the Church is true, there are some to whom the arguments and promises of the libertines have proved attractive. Catechumens perhaps, they are unstable (*διακρινομένους*) and have to be dealt with tenderly or they will be lost. As the Lord will on the last day show mercy to the faithful believer, so must the steadfast Christian exercise compassion towards the erring. Jude, familiar as he is with Pauline thought, gives advice, in accordance with the wise and generous precepts of

2 Thessalonians iii. 14, 15, to disapprove of unruly conduct, though instead of treating the offender as an enemy to admonish him as a brother. An even closer parallel is found in Galatians vi. 1: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted." So here the truly spiritual man is not the separatist, but he who shows mercy to the waverer.

Finally, there are some within the Church who are guilty of gross sensuality. They are not yet past hope, but afford opportunity for the discretion of the most spiritual among the brethren; for the peril both to the rescuer and to the perishing is awful. Hateful as it is and dangerous for the pure to approach the unclean, he is constrained to venture by the knowledge that a doom of eternal fire is reserved for those who apostatize into fleshly vice. Even the impure are not past hope. With the figure of Zechariah iii. 1-5 in his mind, Jude is persuaded that brands may be plucked from the burning, that filthy garments may be replaced with rich apparel; for Satan the Accuser is faced by the Servant, the Branch who will remove iniquity (cf. v. 9). God alone is the Saviour through Jesus Christ. He has all glory and majesty and might and power, and He can keep His Church inviolate. He can preserve the waverer from stumbling to a fall; He can remove the stains of sin, so that the sinner shall with exceeding joy stand in perfect purity, even in the presence of Him whose glory is untarnished.

Thus the doxology gives a well compacted and appropriate conclusion to a letter which begins with an eager exhortation to unity. In the Almighty God their Saviour His people have a magnificent ground for confidence against any inroad of vice.

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