

VILIFICATION IN 2 PETER 2: A COMPARISON WITH THE LETTER OF JUDE

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Abstract

The relationship between the content of 2 Peter 2 and the Letter of Jude is widely discussed among scholars, although a particular dependency has not been proven conclusively. In a recent article it was demonstrated that Jude used female sexual depravity as vilification to effeminate his opponents in order to maintain authority over the Christians in his community. The aim of this article is to compare the depiction of the opponents in 2 Peter 2 with the vilification technique used by Jude to ridicule his opponents, thus influencing the author's audience to dissociate themselves from these adversaries. The question is whether the writer of 2 Peter 2 maintained the same austerity towards his opponents as Jude did. Moreover, this article seeks to address the question of whether the vilification technique applied in 2 Peter 2 could be an indication of the way the author and his community viewed women and, by extension, their sexuality. A logical outcome of the article is to provide commentary on the relatedness between 2 Peter 2 and the Letter of Jude, as well as discussing the moral traditions underlying 2 Peter 2.

Key Words: Vilification; 2 Peter 2; Letter of Jude; Female Depravity; Sexuality

Introduction

The question can be asked: “Why are we still engaging in gender-critical readings of biblical texts?” The answer and purpose of this research is to alert the Christian community to destructive ideologies hidden in authoritative biblical discourse, and to provide gender and other related values applicable to contemporary society. This article aims to compare the vilification of opponents in 2 Peter 2 with the defamation of those in the Letter of Jude, and so to address the relationship between these two documents.

2 Peter was known among early Christians, and read, but not widely used. This Letter is, however, still important for historical and theological reasons, because it reflects the way in which early Christians applied their apostolic heritage to new situations, which were, in turn, employed to confront Christian communities. The two main problems with which Christians were confronted were the delay of the *Parousia* and the issue of future judgment (Skaggs 2004:82). The author responded to these concerns with a strong appeal to apostolic claims, the inspiration of Scripture and the authority of God's Word itself.¹

The close relationship between 2 Peter 2 and Jude has already been confirmed by scholars, but they differ concerning the nature of the relationship. Was the author of 2 Peter

¹ This article will not engage in the discussion concerning the Petrine school or authorship. See Bauckham (1988:469-494) for a discussion on the topics.

2 dependent on the Letter of Jude or vice versa? Or did both writers use a common source? Another theory holds that one person was responsible for both letters (cf. Robinson 1976:192-195; Gundrie 1970:919-927). The last assertion is deemed indefensible because the differences in style of the two letters make it impossible to conclude that they were written by the same author, and will therefore not be considered as an option (cf. Kraftchick 2002:79). A guideline for a possible conclusion on the issue is the fact that although the two books share many words and make use of the same phrases and even imagery, no complete sentence is quoted directly from the other.

Most scholars accept the dependency of 2 Peter 2 on Jude, but differ in terms of the level of dependency. Some overstate the dependency by saying that, “2 Peter has simply incorporated Jude”² (Callan 2004:42), while others are of the opinion that 2 Peter 2 adapted, modified and improved the content of Jude by using “ingenious literary devices” (Bauckham 1983: 260).

Callan’s conclusion is that 2 Peter 2 is a paraphrased version of Jude, indicating that the author of 2 Peter 2 worked from the written text of Jude and basically re-wrote the Letter of Jude by using most of Jude’s language and syntactical structures (cf. Callan 2004:43). Callan concludes that the ‘modifications’ of Jude made by 2 Peter 2 indicate that Jude was, in fact, the source (Kraftchick 2002:80). Green is of the opinion that 2 Peter “employs a literary strategy called *imitatio*, a way of citing a work, in this case Jude, but transforming it to one’s own purposes” (2008:162).

Bauckham, who also supports the dependency of 2 Peter 2 on Jude, says that, “the author takes what he wants from Jude, whether ideas or words, and uses it in a composition that is very much his own” (Bauckham 1983:236).

Chatelion-Counet (2006:407) confirms the striking similarities emphasised by Callan and Bauckham, but questions the adequate explanation of the differences between Jude and 2 Peter 2. He is of the opinion that both Letters used an Aramaic or Hebrew (oral or written) *Vorlage*³ or *florilegia*.⁴ Snyder (1986:22) also suggests the existence of a common source for both Letters, designed to meet the needs of their communities facing various types of heresies and false teachings. This theory suggests that the authors of Jude and 2 Peter translated and edited this ‘source’, during which both occasionally lapsed into Semiticisms. Chatelion-Counet (2006:408) comments, “Those who assign Jude as priority will have to explain why 2 Peter 2:12 distorts the pure Greek in Jude 10, ἐν τούτοις φθείρονται⁵ into a Semiticism, ἐν τῆι φθορᾷ αὐτῶν καὶ φθαρήσονται.”⁶ Callan (2004:55), disregards the Semiticisms, and calls it examples of ‘paronomasia’.

Chatelion-Counet is further of the opinion that a *Vorlage* in the form of a *florilegium* would explain the thematic similarities, as well as the differences, in vocabulary and terminology, such as the Semiticisms. Writers and members of the same community could have used the same sources differently. These similarities demonstrate patterns of the same religious conviction, but the differences show that the authors, while using the same sources, were not copying each other directly (Chatelion-Counet 2006:407-8).

² Cf. Jude 4-18 in 2 Peter 2:1-3:3.

³ This refers to a text used by the author/translator/copyist as the original text (cf. Deist 1984:184).

⁴ This is a collection of writings/sayings/quotations compiled for a particular purpose (cf. Deist 1984:63).

⁵ This is translated as “they are destroyed”.

⁶ This is translated, “but when they are destroyed, they themselves will also perish in the same destruction”. A similar phrase in the LXX reads, “In their own destruction they shall be destroyed”. Examples of this are found in Ex 18:18, Isa 24:3 and Mic 2:10 (cf Bauckham 1983:236).

Commentators who reject a common source, like Gilmour (2002:90), say that the dependency of both texts on a common early Christian oral source is theoretically possible but unlikely, given the overlap in vocabulary. Kraftchick (2002:77) goes a step further, saying that, “no common source has been discovered, and there is no ancient evidence for this existence.” This argument can also be applied to the Sayings Gospel Q, although scholars use this as a standard theory to explain the similarities and differences between the Synoptic Gospels. Therefore, none of the given arguments concerning the dependency of 2 Peter 2 on Jude or vice versa is convincing or conclusive.

Background to the Polemic

Neyrey’s (1980:407-431) explanation of the background to the polemic described in 2 Peter, supports Chatelion-Counet’s view that both authors used the same sources in different ways. It is not the aim of this article to identify 2 Peter’s opponents as Epicureans or Sadducees even if these analogies prove convincing. Since Neyrey has identified the Epicurean polemic as background to 2 Peter’s Letter, other authors, such as Kraftchick (2002:78), have also supported the theory. It should also be noted that the opponents are only cited twice in the Letter (3:3-4:9) and the rest of the polemic must be understood from the author’s reaction in the argument outlined (Neyrey 1980:414; cf. also Neyrey 1993).

Neyrey uses examples of Graeco-Roman polemics against providence⁷ as a basis for reassessing 2 Peter’s argument. As early as Grotius and Wettstein, attention was drawn to certain parallels between 2 Peter and Plutarch’s *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*. Studies of the formal argument of *De Sera* have rarely been undertaken, and seldom has it been viewed in comparison to the argument in 2 Peter 2. *De Sera*’s fictive case is an Epicurean polemic against Divine providence. The precise target of the Epicurean argument is a rejection of providence, understood as theodicy, advocating instead that God does not judge, reward or punish. The objective of the Epicurus’ system was ‘pleasure’, more accurately described as ‘absence of trouble’ (*ἀταραξία*) and was equally applicable to God and humans. If God is to be free from trouble, He cannot be provident, for this would continually embroil him in endless concerns.

A brief outline of the Epicurean arguments against providence will serve as background to the argumentation in 2 Peter. The school of thought consists of four basic arguments: *Cosmology, freedom, unfulfilled prophecy and injustice*. *Cosmology* advocates that the world came into being through the chance occurrence of passing atoms and not by a rational or divine power. Epicurus’ own work suggests a multiplicity of causes accounting for the cosmos and these exclude a provident God. With respect to the notion of *freedom*, the allegation is that providence destroys freedom and moral self-determination. Thirdly, *unfulfilled prophecy* negates the theory of providence, and as the cosmos came about by chance, there could be no divination or foretelling. Epicureans argued, from the perspective of unfulfilled prophecy, against foreknowledge (providence) of the affairs of the world. The existence of *injustice* was the final argument used by the Epicureans to deny providence. It was observed that justice is delayed, and that the good did not prosper while the wicked did not receive their just desserts. God, therefore, does not reward nor punish (cf. Neyrey 1980:409).

⁷ These polemics are linked to the diverse reactions by contrasting groups of noted theologians, Epicureans and Stoics to the issues of theodicy, divine providence and so forth.

Hence, to be totally free from trouble, humans should reject theodicy and providence as well as the belief in an afterlife and post-mortem retribution. These are the central controversial points of the argument in *De Sera* (cf. Neyrey 1980:410).

Neyrey also finds in comparable Jewish polemics against Theodicy⁸ a possible background for the polemic. The clearest example comes from a midrashic expansion in the Palestinian Targums of Genesis 4:8. Before slaying his brother, Cain held a formal debate with Abel in which he rejected the idea of divine judgment because of the existence of injustice in the world. Then Cain expanded his defence to reject not only divine judgment, but also the notions of an afterlife and post-mortem retribution. The lack of justice in this world suggests that justice will also be lacking in the next world, that is, if there is indeed another world.

A second example from Jewish thought, which was also considered, is that of Josephus whose presentation of the Sadducees' views provides another formal polemic against providence and theodicy. Josephus attributes the following positions to the Sadducees: They do away with Fate altogether; they remove God not only from the commission but even from the sight of evil; they maintain radical free-will (self-determination); they deny the persistence of the soul after death; and they reject penalties and rewards in the underworld. The Sadducees are credited with the same polemical triad found in *De Sera* and the Targums of Genesis 4:8 (cf. Neyrey 1980:413-414).

Through these arguments, Neyrey finds a suitable background for the author of 2 Peter's polemic against the opponents. He applies these arguments to 2 Peter in the following ways:

- Firstly, there are numerous statements in 2 Peter 2, made both by the opponents themselves and by the author about them, which indicated that they denied divine judgment, afterlife, and post-mortem retribution. Examples of these are evident in 2 Peter 3:9, 2 Peter 2:1,3b and 2 Peter 2:4-9. Although these three issues are not stated explicitly as being the opponents' teachings in 2 Peter 2, they are defended in the author's apologetic responses to the opponents, therefore representing his reflection and view of their claims.
- Secondly, in form and function, the language or slur in 2 Peter 3:9 reflects Epicurean arguments against providence (cf. also 2 Peter 2:4-9).
- Thirdly, in Greek (for example, the Epicureans) and Jewish (for example, the Sadducees) heterodox traditions, such a triad was formally linked to the anti-providence argument of delayed judgment and injustice, thus constituting a context for understanding the implications of the polemic about delayed judgment (Neyrey 1980:422). This seemed to be the case with 2 Peter's opponents. These adversaries considered the future return of Christ as cosmic judge, a fabricated myth (1:16-21), and it was therefore impossible to perpetuate this belief since the promises on which it was based had not been fulfilled (3:8-10).
- Fourthly, there is the issue of self-determination that advocates that because God does not intervene in the course of human affairs, there will also be no future judgment of humans for their conduct. Therefore, people should determine their own moral codes and conduct (2:19). Such action is contrary to the belief in divine will and intent (2 Peter 3:5-7) (Kraftchick 2002:77-78).

⁸ These Jewish polemics are linked to contrasting reactions by Pharisees and Sadducees to the issues of theodicy and also to the resurrection as debated in Acts 23:6-10 for example.

Taking this into consideration, scholars have convincingly argued in favour of Greek and Jewish heterodox traditions, or a combination of both, as possible background to the diatribe presented in 2 Peter. In conclusion, it seems that the author of 2 Peter warns his readers against the opposition's teachings and the immoral behaviour accompanying these philosophies.

Vilification of Opponents in 2 Peter 2

Vilifying opponents and praising followers, or a combination of the two, is a very old rhetorical technique used by ancient and contemporary authors and speakers as a useful persuasive tool to influence their audiences and increase honour and elude shame. During Hellenistic times, it was commonly used throughout the Mediterranean world by philosophers, public speakers, politicians as well as Jewish and Christian authors, to ridicule their opponents and influence their audience to dissociate themselves from the opponent's view, espousing the author's viewpoint instead (cf. Du Toit 1994:404; Forbes 1986:3-15). In Matthew 23, there is a good example of a speaker, in this case Jesus, who vilifies his opponents (the scribes and Pharisees) in order to get the support of the crowd and his disciples. Paul and other New Testament writers were also skilled in this technique (cf. Gal 1-2; 2 Cor 10-11; 2 Tim 2-3; 2 Pet 2; cf. Boonzaaier 2003:1280; Van der Watt & Kok 2008a:1798).

The concept and execution of vilification covers a broad field and encompasses many different facets. However, this article, explores vilification as the specific use of negating the moral integrity of opponents, in the Letter of 2 Peter,⁹

A recent article discussed the Letter of Jude as mainly a critique of the immoral behaviour of his opponents.¹⁰ The writer uses Old Testament traditions and Jewish traditional material¹¹ to support his argumentation against these adversaries and to engage in an extensive critique of their immorality. In Jude, where the immoral character of the adversaries is emphasised, descriptions are dominated by strong subjectivity, that is, the perceptions of the author and his personal interpretation of their actions within the framework of his conflict with them (cf. Du Toit 1994:411).

However, the vilification of opponents in 2 Peter 2 seems different. The opponents are referred to as 'false teachers' (2:1), 'teachers' (2:3), 'ungodly men' (2:9, 3:7), 'these men' (2:10, 12, 17), 'scoffers' (3:4) and 'lawless men' (3:17). The writer never refers to them as 'prophets' or even 'false prophets' such as the false prophets from the Old Testament (2:1). Not even the 'foolish' Balaam is called a prophet (2:16). This suggests that the author does not want to give them the status of a prophet, even if a false prophet. Bauckham is of the opinion this is because these characters did not claim prophetic inspiration, unlike the opponents in Jude (cf. Bauckham 1983:236) who made these claims. These 'false teachers' accused the apostles of grounding their message of the *Parousia* on human inventions, referring to the words of false prophets. The author emphasises, however, that it is not the apostles but the false teachers who are standing in the line of succession of the false prophets of Israel by teaching false messages of human invention (Bauckham 1983:238, 239). As in Jude, these men have infiltrated the community and the author warns the

⁹ Cf. Du Toit's discussion of "Vilification in the Early Epistolography" (*Biblica* 75(1) 1994 pp. 403-412).

¹⁰ Author, 2013. Effeminacy as Vilification in the Letter of Jude: Female Sexuality and the Constitution of Hierarchy and Authority. Forthcoming.

¹¹ Jude refers to the Book of Enoch, an extra-biblical source, but 2 Peter does not refer to this source.

community about their activities in order to influence them to dissociate themselves from the opponents' teachings and activities, reminding them to hold firm to Christian foundational beliefs. It seems that the opposition in 2 Peter does not challenge the authority of the author, as in Jude, but the denial of the apostles' prophecies or messages is suggestive of this undermining of authority.

The vilification of opponents is concentrated in 2 Peter 2, and exhibits most similarities between 2 Peter and Jude. The vilification should be seen against the background of 2 Peter 3:3-4 and the more specific rhetoric of 2 Peter 2:1-9, namely that there were believers who were influenced by certain philosophies (probably with roots in popularised Hellenistic and Jewish¹² heterodox traditions). These schools of thought claimed that there would be no divine judgment and therefore encouraged a self-determined life based on the belief in the delay of the return of Christ for judgment, and the accompanying enjoyment of life resulting, in turn, in immoral behaviour.

The author vilifies different aspects of the opponents' behaviour to give an impression of their complete apostasy and depravity.

1. It seems that the criticism in 2 Peter 2 is directed more against these teachings rather than their deeds, as the author refers to their 'speech acts' as the instigation of immorality. This is probably to demonstrate how harmful, destructive and persuasive these false teachings were. For example, their destructive heresies (2:1) are indicated no fewer than four times in their 'blaspheming' the truth (2:2), 'blaspheming' heavenly beings (2:10), 'blaspheming' things they do not understand (2:11), and in so doing exceeding the action of the angels in the presence of the Lord (2:12). In chapter 2:18, their empty, boastful words are linked directly to the "lustful desires of sinful human nature", and the promises of freedom they make are proof of their depravity. In contrast, there is a very brief and vague reference in Jude 3-4 to the teachings of the opponents, but their immoral behaviour is referred to in much more detail and more directly.
2. The references to Old Testament and Jewish traditions are also placed in different contexts in 2 Peter 2 and Jude. In 2 Peter, these form part of the apology or defence of divine judgment(s) with examples provided from the Old Testament traditions that judgment has been fulfilled on several occasions (2:4-10a refers to judgments made on the angels who sinned¹³, sinners from the time of Noah, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and lawless men from the time of Lot), proving their certain and future condemnation. In Jude, the behaviour of the opponents is compared directly to the immoral deeds of the people referred to in these traditions.

Although the oppositions' behaviour in 2 Peter 2 is not compared directly to the deeds of the people condemned in the Old Testament examples, the deeds for which they were punished were not dissimilar from the deeds committed by the opponents. Bauckham says, "Instead of specifying the sins of each of the three Old Testament examples of sinners in turn, the author has chosen to sum up the sins of all three in the words of 10a, which in fact has a strong emphasis to sexual indulgence" (1983:249). These sins are referred to as corrupt or lustful desires of the sinful nature (2:10,18). Reese (2007:151) points out that these Old Testament examples involve both condemnation and rescue. Although Noah and Lot are not portrayed in the Old

¹² Epicureans/Sadducees as discussed by Chatelion-Counet 2006; cf. also Kraftchick 2002:78.

¹³ Davids does not link the sin of the angels to the days of Noah, but he draws a parallel between their sin and the sexual immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 6-7). Davids concludes that the comparison with the fallen angels has to do with crossing a 'species boundary' (cf. 2006:53; Reese 2000:28-29).

Testament as heralds of righteousness, their life and faithfulness to God was a testimony to the righteous judgment God brought upon the ungodly. These two cases display the intensity of the divine judgement, namely by water (as demonstrated by the Flood) and by fire (as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah), but God has still delivered Noah and Lot because of their faithfulness (cf. Hillyer 1992:190)

3. In a unique way, the author of 2 Peter 2 compares the behaviour of the opponents negatively to different characteristics in the behaviour of animals. Also, Balaam's donkey's act (2:16) is compared to a 'preacher of righteousness' (cf. 2:5,7 Noah and Lot), rebuking, 'with a human voice', the human for his wrongdoing. This indicated to the opponents that unlike them, even an animal like a donkey knows the reality of God's judgment (Reese 2007:157). The author ends this section of accusations by indicating that the behaviour of his opponents has become even lower than that of an animal. He emphasises this by comparing them to animals at the lowest level of the animal hierarchy, namely a dog and a sow (2:22).¹⁴ Like wild animals the opponents will be caught and destroyed (Reese 2007:155).

Both sayings referring to animals illustrate the apostasy of false teachers. The author sees his opposition as unclean animals, dogs and pigs, which, in the Jewish mind, symbolised the immorality of Gentile life (cf. Rev 22:15; Bauckham 1983:280). After having been cleansed from their sins, they turned to the immorality of their pagan past. Davids (2006:252) writes that, "having once turned to Christ and been freed from their past, they, like unclean and despised animals, have turned back to and embraced their former uncleanness". Therefore, their change was only an outer action and their inner nature did not change (Hillyer 1992:206).

The author concludes the comparison of false teachers to 'creatures of instinct' (1:12) with the references to animal behaviour. Kraftchick says that, "the use of two aphorisms about 'unclean animals' is a fitting way to end a polemic that began with a charge that these (false teachers) are like irrational animals" (2002:146).

4. The author of 2 Peter also attacks the opponents' greed in terms of monetary gain by highlighting their exploitation of the congregation, probably by sharing and participating in the welfares and benefits of the community. Their actions are compared to the way of Balaam 'who loved the wages of wickedness' based on his counselling of Balak to entice the Israelites to practice lewdness (v.15). 'Balaam's way' is to leave the righteous way of the Lord and follow greed. In the Hellenistic world, greed is considered as driving out virtues such as compassion and kindness and is associated with important causes of evil in the world, such as ambition and vanity (Reese 2007:147). In group oriented societies, where the group relies on its members for support and loyalty, greed has as its very aim to harm the society in favour of the individual.

The reference to Balaam, as the son of Bosor, is unknown, but "the form probably reflects a Jewish tradition of play on the name and the word 'flesh'. Balaam's immoral character would be indicated by calling him 'son of flesh'" (Bauckham 1983:267-8). In this context, such an explanation is quite possible.¹⁵

¹⁴ In Proverbs 26:11, it is said that, "a dog returns to it vomit", and a known Hellenistic saying states, "a pig likes to return to the mud". See also the reference to dogs and pigs in Matthew 7:6.

¹⁵ The Targum of Numbers 22:30 accounts for the 'madness' of Balaam, because the donkey rebukes him for his foolishness. Balak also called him 'mad' and 'foolish' because he failed to curse the Israelites. It seems that

5. Moral depravity was strongly associated with female sexuality and behaviour and with the female body. Accusations of immorality, such as sexual depravity and adultery, were clichés used for members of the Church who disrupted the peace, like syncretists and apostates (cf. Rosenblatt 1994:396). This rhetorical technique is used prolifically in Old Testament prophetic literature, for example Jeremiah 3:1-10 and Ezekiel 16.

Although much more limited than Jude, the sexual vilification of the opponents in 2 Peter is no less vehement. Their behaviour is referred to in terms of sexual depravity and grouped together in 2 Peter chapter 2, verses 13-14 and 18-19:

- They are arrogant enough to feast blatantly in ‘broad daylight’ (v.13). This ‘feasting’ is associated with drunkenness and other forms of sensuality. Because of the strong sexual indications, Kraftchick (2002:139) thinks that they had turned the Christian feasts into orgiastic feasts.
- They are described as being ‘spots and blemishes’ (v.13). This refers to the Old Testament animals not fit for sacrifice or a male not fit for priestly service (cf. Lev 21:21), but is also an analogy used in the Old Testament and New Testament as a sexual image. In the New Testament, ‘to be without blemish’ refers to the image of an unblemished bride or woman, a metaphor used to indicate the unblemished morality of the Christian community (cf. Eph 5:27; Rev 21:2; cf. Nortjé-Meyer 2003:139) and their faithfulness to Christ. In the Old Testament, Israel is portrayed as a virgin in Jeremiah 18:13; 31:4, 21 and the virgin daughter of Zion in Isaiah 37:22.

According to Jude, the loyal members of the community were like ‘unblemished brides’ (Jude 24), representing the ascetic ideal, while the behaviour of the opponents was that of immoral women. In 2 Peter 2, the image has been turned around and the opponents are like ‘spots and blemishes’. In 2 Peter 2:13, this immorality associated with sexual depravity made the Church unfit to be presented as a sacrifice to God (Bauckham 1983:266). This gives the contemporary reader an idea of the ideology of female sexuality.

- The opponents are portrayed as exhibiting a complete lack of self-control. Their eyes were always looking for an opportunity to commit adultery (v. 14). Therefore, they preyed on unstable people (probably new converts who had recently broken away from their pagan life) and seduced them with their lifestyle. This is a typical antiquated image attributed to women: They are unreliable, not trustworthy and can easily be seduced!
- On two separate occasions, the author refers to his opponents’ corrupt or lustful desires of a ‘sinful nature’ (2:10a, 18). Firstly, he sums up the sins of the people from the Old Testament who had been condemned (2:10a), and secondly, refers to his opponents’ ability to tempt the new converts in the Christian community with promises of freedom, advocating moral self-determination, as the references to their feast in ‘broad daylight’ (v. 13) and their ‘eyes full of adultery’ (v. 14) indicate.
- 2 Peter 2:17 uses the same imagery – but not the same language – as Jude to indicate the complete uselessness of his opponents: He leaves out the imagery of the fruit trees and shortens the imagery of the clouds (Jude 12-13), and refers to these men as “springs without water” and “mists driven by a storm”. These metaphors indicate the

his father’s name was ‘Beor’ and he was ‘insane’. Philo explained the name ‘Balaam’ as meaning ‘foolish people’ (Bauckham 1983:268-9).

‘barrenness’ of the springs that once held the promises of sources of life-given water, but were now empty; and the complete ‘uselessness’ of the mists, because the possibility of even moisture had been removed by the storms, which had blown away the mists. In ancient society, a barren woman was regarded as a useless woman. By extension, a wife who could not bear a son to her husband, was considered useless and could be rejected or even divorced (cf. Malina 2001:47).¹⁶

Conclusion

The opponents of 2 Peter 2 are portrayed as being slaves to corruption, more specifically, moral corruption, in terms of their monetary greed and sexual immorality. These two characteristics of the opponents are linked and are an indication of their self-indulgence. The use of female sexual depravity to humiliate opponents is limited in 2 Peter 2 compared to Jude, as the author’s vilification of his adversaries is not predominantly to effeminate his opponents as it is in Jude. Jude is rather primitive, the writer being more personal and direct in his accusations. The author of 2 Peter aims to portray his opposition as morally corrupt, but uses also other comparisons to demonstrate their corruptness, namely with regard to monetary greed, comparing their behaviour to unreasonable animals who react only on instinct.

Taking 2 Peter 2’s vilification technique into consideration, it is hard to argue for Jude being the source. It points instead to a common source used independently and modified for specific audiences and contexts.

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¹⁶ Cf. Ps 127:3-4, states that, “sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one’s youth.” NRSV.

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