A Patristic Commentary



The Book of Jude

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A COMMENTARY ON

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

By
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A WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY

Coming close to the book of Revelation, which proclaims the coming of the great day of the Lord, to partake of the divine glory of our Holy Christ, the epistle of Jude warns us against apostasy.

The devil knowing no com fort, uses all his effort to destroy the kingdom of God inside us. And the more the time of judgment draws nigh, the more he doubles his effort to provoke the spirit of apostasy. This epistle has come to show the ferocity of the enemy, together with the huge possibilities the believer has to fight this battle.

This epistle is a divine invitation to you, O beloved brother, to discover the way, to recognize the possibilities of salvation, and to beware of the tricks of the enemy, in order to be prepared for the coming of Your Savior to carry you up to His glories.

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AN INTRODUCTION

THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE:

In the Old Testament, three persons carried the name 'Jude': or 'Judas'.

1. 'Judas', the brother of James, one of the twelve apostles. Some believe that he is 'Lebbaeos', called 'Thedaeos'. Mentioned in (Matthew 10: 3; Luke 6: 16; John 14: 22; and Acts 1: 13).

2. 'Judas' or 'Jude', author of this epistle, brother of the Lord (cousin, son of His aunt) (Matthew 13: 55; Mark 6: 3); also brother of 'James', who had a prominent position in the early church of Jerusalem, who presided on the first council, mentioned in the book of Acts (Chapter 15).

3. 'Judas Iscariot' who betrayed the Lord (Matthew 10: 4).

WHEN, AND FOR WHOM IT WAS WRITTEN?

- ❖ It was written before the desolation of Jerusalem; Otherwise the author would have mentioned it together with the desolation of Sodom and Gomorrah, as an example of God's judgment on the ungodly.
- ❖ It was written to the believers, converted from the Jews or the Gentiles.
- ❖ Because of the strong resemblance between this epistle and the second epistle of Peter, both of them talking about the same false teachers, some scholars believe that it was written between the years 68 and 70 A.D.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EPISLE:

Despite its small size, yet it is both important and enjoyable for the following reasons:

1. It reveals the faith in the Holy Trinity.

The author talked about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, not in the language of theoretical philosophy, but in that of the practical life; as the believer experiences the work of the Holy Trinity, and perceives His possibilities in himself.

a. In God the Father we are called saints (sanctified) (1); for He is the Holy One who embraces His children to experience His holiness in them.

b. In Jesus Christ we become preserved (1); Although the war is extremely intense, yet we are not involved in it; for it is a war between our Christ and the devil. If we hide in Christ our Savior, we stay preserved.

c. Praying in the Holy Spirit (20); If we are even unable to pray, the fiery Holy Spirit kindles our hearts with love, and lifts them up to the throne of Grace, to stand before the Heavenly One, and talk to Him with no hindrance.

This is our faith in the Holy Trinity who edifies the soul "*Build yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit*" (20).

2. The author confirms the ecclesiastical life:

As the epistle presents a serious battle between God and the devil, the believer should perceive that he is a conqueror by God his Savior, preserved in Him (verse1), yet not in negativism, slothfulness, or negligence, but by building himself up on the most holy faith (20); working, not alone, but together with his brethren, being a living member in the (catholic) church.

The author confirms the ecclesiastical life as a strong support in our spiritual strife; saying:

"***I was diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation***" (3).

"***The faith which was once for all delivered to the saints***" (3).

In your repentance you support your brethren; and in the repentance of your brother he supports you. Any perversion in your life, will destroy the life of your brethren.

Our life with the Holy Trinity is a personal, inner, and a secret life; yet, at the same time, it is a mutual ecclesiastical life, and not an individual one, cut off from the other members of the one body.

3. The evangelical life: (according to the Holy Scripture)

In this single chapter, the author referred to the Old Testament; as our salvation is set upon evangelic thought, without separation between the Old and the New Testaments.

He referred to the following events in the Old Testament to instruct us:

a. The Lord rebukes Satan (**9**; Zechariah 3: 2)

b. The rejection and denial of faith by Israel (**5**; Numbers 14: 12-29; 26: 64, 65).

c. The desolation of Sodom and Gomorrah (**7**; Genesis 19: 24; Deuteronomy 29: 23)

d. Hiding the body of Moses (**9**; Deuteronomy 34: 5, 6).

e. The wickedness of Cain (**11**; Genesis 4: 5)

f. The error of Balaam for profit (**11**; Numbers 22: 7-21)

g. The rebellion of Korah against Moses and Aaron (**11**; Numbers 16: 1-3)

h. Enoch, the seventh from Adam (**14**; Genesis 5: 18).

4. The existence of the angels (6), the archangels **(9),** and also the demons **(6, 9).**

5. The ultimate judgment (6 – 7; 13 – 15, 24) is terrifying and dark for the wicked, but glorious and joyful for the children of God **(24).**

6. The ultimate coming of the Lord Christ with tens of thousands of His saints **(14)**

7. It is the only book that wrote **about the dispute between the archangel Michael and the devil, concerning the body of Moses (9); and that mentioned the prophecy of Enoch (verses 14, 15).**

8. He refers to three eternal issues: the eternal life verse **(21).** The everlasting chains (6), and the eternal fire **(7).**

EXAMPLES OF APOSTASIES:

If the Lord Christ has told us ahead about the apostasy, which will precede His ultimate coming, as the last attempt by the devil to deceive, if possible, even the elect (Matthew 24: 1-35; Mark 13: 1-31; Luke 21: 5-33). The apostasy is a continuous war which started before the creation of man, when angels rebelled against God. Then that movement got stronger and stronger along the eras, until it reaches its climax in the days of the antichrists.

Here, the book presents six movements of apostasy:

(1) By angels (5): through not keeping the grace – pride.

(2) By Israel (5): through lack of faith.

(3) By Sodom and Gomorrah(7): through abomination and corruption.

(4) By Cain (11): through rebellion (self-will).

(5) By Balaam (11): through love of profit

(6) By Korah (11): through love of authority and rebellion against priesthood.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE BELIEVERS AND THE APOSTATES:

The believers	The apostates
Experience the work of the Holy Trinity (1, 20 – 21)	Practically reject the Sun of Righteousness (13 – 14)
Experience the ecclesiastical life (3)	Disappear from the church (4); lost (13)
Anticipate the coming of Christ (14,15, 20)	Dreamers, fanciful (8)
Praying people (20)	Slanderers (10)
Compassionate (22)	Profit lovers (11)
Hope for the salvation of others (23)	Lack the water of grace and the fruit of the Spirit (12)
Pure (23)	Lustful (15, 19)
	Murmurers and complainers (16)

THE KEY WORD OF THE BOOK:

The key word of this book is the word **"preserved",** which came five times:

1-*"We are **preserved** in Jesus Christ"* (1)…. We are the members of His body.

2- Our responsibility is *"to **preserve** the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (3), to gain the common salvation.

3 - *"The angels who did not **preserve** their proper domain, but left their own habitation, He has* kept *in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day"* (6).

4. The apostates who do not **preserve** the practical living faith (verses 8, 19), are kept under darkness as stars lost to the Sun of Righteousness (verse12).

5. We **preserve** ourselves in the love of God, anticipating the coming of the Savior, to gain the eternal life through His mercy (20).

6. The Almighty God will **preserve** us against the offenses of the heretic apostates (24).

THE DIVINE WORK AND OUR POSITIVE ROLE:

St. Jude does not separate the holy faith from the spiritual strife; For it is God who sanctifies us (1), and preserves us ((1). As to our role, he says:

"Build yourselves" (20).

"praying in the Holy Spirit" (20).

"Keep yourselves in the love of God" (21)

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (21)

"Have compassion" (22).

Strive for the sake of the salvation of every soul (23).

"Hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" (23)

DIVISIONS OF THE EPISTLE:

1. An opening greeting (1, 2)

2. Exhortation to preserve the upright faith (3, 4)

3. Examples of the perversions:

a- The perversion of the Jewish people (5)
b- The fall down of some angels (6)
c- The desolation of Sodom and Gomorrah (7)
4. Features of the deceptive teachers (8 – 13)
5. Prophesies concerning the false teachers:
a- A prophecy by Enoch (14– 16)
b- Prophecies by the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ (17– 19)
6. The principles on which the spiritual life is set (20–23)
7. A conclusion (24–25)

1- AN OPENING GREETING

"***Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James***" (1)

Here, St. Jude boasts in being the servant of Jesus Christ, regardless of his relation to the Lord according to the flesh; For the sweetness of the worship to God provides us with joy; that He even calls us His beloved children, and His bride. As for us, we, in love, respond to Him, saying: [We are not worthy, O Lord, to be Your servants].

"***To those who are called sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ***" (1).

Here St. Jude addresses his epistle to the believers as a whole *"called";* namely, not for any favor they did, for it is God who first loved, and called us, and in His call He shows no partiality. Man either accepts or rejects the call; and if he accepts it, despite his strife and labor, he counts it a favor from God, and not his own.

"***who are called sanctified***". Accepting His call, believing in Him, and getting baptized, we are committed to deliver our life to the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us by God the Father, as His Children, to become like our Holy Father.

"***preserved in Jesus Christ***". Namely, preserved by the holy Spirit, and prepared as a bride fitting for her Groom the Lord Jesus Christ; and as a holy throne for the Holy God.

According to **St. Maccarius the Great**: [In our world, if a king plans to stay few days in a city; the house in which he is going to dwell, would be cleansed beforehand from every defilement, fumed by fragrant perfumes, furnished, and elaborately adorned. How much more would the house of the soul, namely, the heart, rather need to be prepared for the Lord, and the entire heavenly church, to come and dwell in it[1]?]. He also says: [Each of us should be faithfully diligent to believe, pursue, and seek virtue from the Lord, so that his inner man would be a partaker of glory in this present life, and his soul would have a fellowship in the holiness of the Spirit (1 John 1: 3); So that, if we are purified of the defilement of the sin, we, in the resurrection, would have what to cover the nakedness of our risen bodies, to cover our eyes, and to comfort us in the kingdom of heaven forever[2]].

"***Mercy, peace, and love, be multiplied to you***" (2).

It is the apostles' supplication for their people, seeking for them the limitless mercies of God, and His peace and love that surpass the mind. The church never ceases, at the beginning of every prayer, on the tongue of the priest, to seek for the sake of her children, saying: [Peace be with all], to which the congregation respond by saying: [And with your Spirit]. They do not say: [And with you], but {with your Spirit}, for we do not seek for the sake of an outer peace, but for the peace of the Spirit, set on(taking by force) God's mercy and grace, and her enjoyment of fellowship with Him, and the forgiveness of sin that may corrupt her being.

So we never cease to strive for the sake of this supplication for ourselves and our brethren; as according to **the scholar Origen**: [Let us (take by force) this blessing as much as we can, wishing to be fulfilled with the Lord our God, who says to us: "*Open up your mouth, and I shall fill it*".(psalm81: 10).

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[1] الحب الإلهي ص 1016.

[2] الحب الإلهي ص 1019.

As St. Jude filled his epistle with talk about the false and ungodly teachers, For fear that personal hate would enter into their heart against him, and not against vanity and evil, he seeks for them: "***Love be multiplied to you***" (2).

2- EXHORTATION TO PRESERVE THE UPRIGHT FAITH

*"**Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation…**"* (3)

The apostle was very diligent to write concerning the salvation, which no one can express; for talking about it, is a talk about the unutterable divine love; for it is our faith in God, delivered from the heart of one generation to another.

Christianity, truly, is not books written, or principles preserved, but is a life with our Lord, and a taste of the sweetness of an intimate relationship with Him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ raised His disciples on His own hands; He dwelt among them, and they with Him; and they walked along with Him wherever He went. Hence He commanded His Disciples: *"Go and make disciples of all nations"* (Matthew 28: 19); so that every generation would be raised on the hands of its fathers for our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the weakening of the spirit of discipleship in our generation, the spirituality has subsequently become lukewarm; and the worship transformed into mere sermons, writing books, mental culture, recitation of words, and much debate[1].

*"**to write to you concerning our common salvation**";* namely, of which all nations, tongues, and tribes partake; for God shows no partiality.

*"**I found it necessary to write to you, exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**"* (3).

The apostle wished to talk about the salvation, the cross, the love of God, and fellowship with Him; but having seen that the teachings of some false teachers are not according to what have been delivered to the church, he had to change his course, and sought from them to ***"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints".***

For wherever there are heresy and false teachings taught by strangers, who claim to be Christians, it would be befitting of the shepherd to wake his children up, and warn them against perversion from the upright faith.

The danger pertaining to those false teachers, is that they creep in unnoticed: *"**for certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation**"* (4); namely, they deceptively call the name of Christ, while attacking Him in His own church. They creep in unnoticed, namely, they are deceptive, show contrary to what they secretly hide; have the appearance of piety and zeal in ministry, while their true intention is to pervert the interpretation of the Holy Scripture.

They are ungodly, for two reasons:

a. *"**They turn the grace of our God to licentiousness**"* (4). They are 'ungodly', namely, they have no fear of God, abusing the grace of our God and His love, as a chance to realize their own desires; considering the blood of the Lord Christ, not as a chance for strife, and to adorn themselves with the virtues we acquire from His hands, but a chance for slothfulness and perversion to the currents of covetousness; falsely assuming that the mere faith without strife is enough for them.

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[1] راجع الحب الرعوي "الاعتراف تلمذة" ص 274 الخ.

b. "***They deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ***" (4). A denial that shows in one of two ways, or both: either a denial of the existence of God, or the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; or a denial of their works; through a rush into the current of sin, and not delivering, nor striving, according to the will of the Lord.

3- EXAMPLES OF GOD'S VENGEANCE AGAINST THE UNGODLY

A- PERDITION OF THE JEWS WHO DID NOT BELIEVE:

*"I **want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe**"* (5)

What the apostle mentions here is an example of what happened in the old covenant; and history repeats itself. For those saved by God from the land of Egypt, have apostatized from faith, and worshipped the golden calf in the wilderness, forsaking the worship of the true God. Having been saved once did not spare them from perdition. If that was what happened to them, How would it be for us if we do likewise?!; *"how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?!"* (Hebrew 3: 2).

B- PERDITION OF THE FALLEN ANGELS:

*"**And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness**"* (6)

According to St. Peter, *"God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment"* (2 Peter 2: 4) Before they fall, Satan and his hosts, were of the greatest heavenly ranks; Yet, as they did not keep their proper domain, they left their own habitation, heaven, which is inhabited only by the humble, and were reserved in everlasting chains under darkness; namely, they were eternally bound to darkness.

The way the Holy Spirit preserve the believers for Jesus Christ (1); the evil angels were preserved in darkness.

C- DESOLATION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH:

"**As *Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire***" (7).

Sodom and Gomorrah became an example before the evildoers to repent.

The Israeli people, collectively committing adultery, through their rejection of the way of the Lord, rebelling against Him, and worshipping another god; was considered by the Lord as spiritual adultery. The kingdom of Israel went after a groom, other than her true divine Groom.

Anything we put in our hearts – man, possessions, or lust – to replace the Lord on His throne, would become our Lord, and would be counted as adultery, and a betrayal against God.

According to **St. Augustine**: [By adultery would be understood all the carnal lusts. The Holy Book counts idol-worship as adultery; And as the apostle Paul counts greed as-idol worship, it would be counted, therefore, as adultery.

Every evil lust would be truly counted as adultery, for by it, the spirit becomes corrupted through forsaking the exalted law that controls it. And sells its honor for a lowly lust, which is not according to the exaltation of the spirit[1].

[1] أغسطينوس في شرح الموعظة على الجبل طبعة 68 ص 92.

4- FEATURES OF THE DECEPTIVE TEACHERS

*"**Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries**"* (8)

Having been called 'ungodly' by the apostle, on account of that they do not fear the Lord; We, therefore, can expect anything from them. For, having no fear or love of God, they would become tools for the devil; As:

a. They are dreamers: Namely, they live on dreams and fantasies, and not on the truth. Like drunkards, they deceive, are deceived, and walk according to their own desires, and not according to the steadfast will of God.

b. They defile the flesh: Rejecting the will of God, they despise their own bodies as members of Christ, and deliver them to lust of uncleanness (2 Peter 2: 10). Or in other words, by their pride, they would become cut-off defiled members, instead of living holy members, bound to the church, the holy body of Christ.

c. They despise the authority of the church. The word 'authority' in its Greek origin, is derived from the word 'author' or 'Lord'; namely, they reject the authority of God, which is the fruit of sin. Falling into lusts, man would tend to calm down his conscious by denying the existence of God, and despising the church. As according to **St. Augustine**: [Behind atheism, there is lust].

d. They speak evil of dignitaries: By dignitaries, he probably means "the authority of the church"; the way the Hebrews spoke evil of the prophet Moses. Or he may also mean the angels; for once man perverts, he speaks evil of everyone, even the angels; for his eyes cannot see anyone holy.

e. They are proud: They do not follow the lead of the archangel Michael, who, "***in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you'***" (9).

With the intention not to let his burial place be known, lest the people would worship him. the archangel hid it, And despite his complete knowledge of the truth, he humbly, yet courageously, executes every work hidden in the Lord.

f. But those dreamers, with arrogance, hide God, to appear themselves; And despite their ignorance and lack of knowledge, "***they speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt***" (10).

They, not only do not follow the lead of the archangel Michael in his humility, despite their lack of knowledge; but even in whatever they know by nature, namely, according to the natural law, they corrupt, something not done by the brute beasts, with their natural instinct..

g. They have no love: *"Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain"* (11), who had no love, but hate, and, with no fear of God, he killed his own brother, and insolently answered God (Genesis 4: 5-12). They lead many souls to perdition, through leading them astray from the source of their life; And, at the same time they, insolently and daringly, defend their evil deeds, as though they have done nothing wrong.

h. They loved profit: *"and have gone greedily in the error of Balaam for profit"* (11). Motivated by greed, they were poured like water toward vanity, like Balaam (Numbers 22: 70; Deuteronomy 23: 4), who acted with ignorance, while his donkey was wiser than he was.

According to **St. Augustine**: [We should not preach the Bible to earn our bread, but we eat to be strong enough to preach the Bible. Otherwise, if we preach the Bible to earn our bread, preaching the Bible would be, for us, of less importance than bread…. Preaching the Bible should be to get its own reward, the kingdom of God; and should be accordingly done, optional, and not compulsory[1]].

Profit does not only mean food or wages, but may take the form of seeking honor, or for the sake of a political motive, as was unfortunately done by certain foreign missionaries.

I They were rebellious: *"**They perished in the rebellion of Korah**"* (11; Deuteronomy 16: 1-30), who rebelled against Moses.; they rebel against the Lord and His bride (the church).

j. They had a deceptive outer appearance: their most evil feature; having the appearance of piety and zeal for ministry, while, internally, .they were full of evil; which the apostle demonstrated in the following analogies:

1. *"They are **"blemishes on your love feasts; while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves**"* (12). In the early church, by the spirit of love, several banquets of love (Agapi) were held, shared by both the rich and the poor. Those apostates followed suit, yet, not motivated by true love, but by the evil intention to separate the children of the church from the banquets of love, and to draw them to their heretic views they provoked.

How often have the foreign missionaries – under the pretence of love and mercy – attempted, and still do, to separate the Copts from their church, by offering them, directly or indirectly, financial and material aids – on one condition, which is to forsake their church. In that they are like hidden rocks under the sea, that bring the ships down.

2. "They *are **clouds without water**, **carried about by the winds**,* (12). Like deceptive clouds which give hope for rain, they, unfortunately carry no water of love.

3. They are *"**like autumn trees without fruit**, **twice dead, pulled up by the roots**"* (12). They are not only without fruit, but they are pulled out by the roots, on account of that they are hopelessly dead.

4. *"**Waging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame**"* (13). They collect the dirt cast into the sea; and never cease to slander the church publicly or secretly with their trash words.

5. *"**Wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever**"* (13). Namely, like stars, diverted from their natural course, they have to disintegrate and fall down, and cease to be draw nor to give light. For the star that wanders away from the sun, will certainly lose the reflection of sunlight on it, and cease to draw or to give light. So are the heretics, who, even though they may appear like prominent stars; Yet, having gone astray from the Spirit of the Lord Christ, the Sun of Righteousness; hence, losing the light of Christ, they come to be in darkness, and are reserved for the eternal darkness.

While claiming that they are members in the catholic church, they are actually apostates and lost.

[1] المرجع السابق ص 8 / 216.

5- PROPHESIES CONCERNING THE FALSE TEACHERS

a. A PROPHECY BY ENOCH:

*"**Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying: 'Behold, the Lord comes with tens of thousands of His saints**"* (14).

The apostle quoted this prophecy of Enoch That, while the Lord comes with tens of thousands of His saints; On the ungodly, He will execute judgment, and convict.

"***to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him***" (15).

The Lord will judge them on every word they have uttered, and on every deed they have committed, in which there is no fear of God…. They will be condemned by their own evil works.

Again, the apostle goes on describing them, saying that they are:

"***Murmurers".*** Namely, always complaining, denied of the life of peace and thanksgiving.

"Walking according to their own lusts". which make them lose peace. They disregard the will of God, and seek their own will, in the hope that they will get satisfied, but in vain.

"They mouth great swelling words". Namely, their mouths are filled with arrogance and ego.

"Flattering people to gain advantage". At the expense of the truth.

b. PROPHESIES BY THE APOSTLES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:

*"**But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ; how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts**"* (17, 18; 2 Timothy 3: 1-5; Hebrew 1: 2; Acts 20: 29; 1 Peter 1: 20; 1 John 2: 18).

As to saying: "*In the last time"*, Following the ascension of our Lord to heaven, the remaining time would be counted as "*the last hour"*, or "*the last time"*, during which, the believer anticipate the second coming of the Lord Jesus in His great day of judgment.

"***These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit***" (19).

According to the Arabic language version, it came as "These are **separatists**," So they were described by the apostle, on account of that they separate themselves from the church by rebelling against her.

***"Sensual* persons".** Namely, they walk, not according to the Spirit, in humility, but, being self-admirers, they only respect their own views and fantasies.

"Not having the Spirit". namely, they do not walk according to the Holy Spirit of God.

6- THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS SET

*"**But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit**"* (20)

After warning us against the false teachers, the apostle came back to draw our attention to our own inner life; lest, in the whirlpool of our strife for the sake of the upright faith, we would probably forget our inner spiritual building.

The apostle says: *"Build yourselves up on your most holy faith"*. That is the principle or the foundation of the spiritual life, to be set upon holy and upright faith, without perversion. Yet this faith should go hand-in-hand with works *""build"*. Here, shows the necessity of strife and work on our part, through the strength of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; Hence he goes on to say:

*"**praying in the Holy Spirit**"* (20).Any work or strife, not set upon prayers will be in vain. As according to father Isaac: [There is a kind of mutual, un-separated unity between the two: namely, the perpetual prayers and the virtues. The perfect prayer is the crown of the building of all virtues. If every virtue is not firmly united to prayer, being her crown, it will have no power nor steadfastness; The perpetuity of tranquility and steadfastness of prayer, would never be firm and perfect, unless supported by virtues; And it would not be possible to acquire the virtues completely, unless they are steadfast in prayers[1]].

*"**Keep yourselves in the love of God**"*. For the love of God is the shade under which we get a refuge and a cover during prayer in the Holy Spirit. That would require strife and persistence, "*Keep yourselves…"*

According **to father Pavnotius**: [It would be to our benefit, to be sure that, despite un-vainly striving in virtues, we cannot reach perfection through our own zeal and strife. Man's mere effort and strife are not enough to reach the rich gift of grace, unless his strife is supported by the guidance of God to the heart toward the truth[2]].

*"**looking for the mercy of our Lord Christ unto eternal life**'* (21). The goal of striving in prayers, and seeking the protection in God's love, should be our hope for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, proclaimed to us through His presentation of the eternal life. For what would be the benefit of our faith or our strife, without hope in eternity, or love to encounter the Groom forever?!

This hope, according to **father Sherimon**: [will take away from our minds, the love of temporal things, despising all the sensual pleasures, for the sake of what we anticipate of heavenly blessings[3]].

Binding it to love, **St. Augustine** says: [There is no love without hope, hope without love; or love or hope without faith[4]].

*"**And on some have compassion, making a distinction**"* (22).

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[1] مناظرات يوحنا كاسيانا ص 210.

[2] المرجع السابق ص 95.

[3] المرجع السابق ص 275 – 276.

[4] أغسطينوس: الإيمان والرجاء والمحبة (تحت الطبع).

Having hope in God's love, anticipating eternity, we are committed not to despair concerning the others, but to have compassion on them; Yet with distinction and wisdom; as some need leniency in dealing with them; while others need to be firmly chastised to have their course corrected.

According to **St. Augustine**: [Love should not be too soft; and firmness should not be too cruel. Both should be prudently practiced according to the circumstances without exaggeration[1]].

And according to **St. Ambrose**: [There should be reasonable measures for our words and teachings, so as not to have the appearance of exaggerated leniency, nor exaggerated roughness].

And according to **St. John El-Dargy**: [A shepherd of sheep should neither be a lion, nor a she-goat!].

"But others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" (23)

Strive to save those, with licentious souls; with firmness, and with fear, namely, through chastisements and warnings. Saying: "*Pulling them out of the fire"*, he proclaims the necessity to hasten in pulling these souls out of the fire, before it is too late. And saying: "*hating even the garment defiled by the flesh"*, he means that in our endeavor to save them, we should beware not to be perverted together with them, instead of saving them.

[1] الحب الرعوي ص 6، 7.

7- A CONCLUSION

"***Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and forever, Amen'*****(24- 25).**

So, with such words that fill the soul with hope, the apostle concludes his epistle; particularly that most of it, talk about the deceptive teachers who hide under the name of the Lord Christ.

Again, he talks to his listeners about the necessity of persistent strife to search for every soul; Yet cautiously, lest they would probably be perverted along with them.

- *"To Him who is able to keep you"*. encouraging us not to have fear in our ministry, for God is capable of keeping us from stumbling, and of granting us a holy life, blameless in gladness, namely, in the joyful day of judgment.
- Then he reminds us of the perpetual glory, and the gladness to come; something that exhorts the soul to carry the cross with joy.
- And he reminds us of the wise God, our Savior, who alone, with His wisdom, knows how to save, and to rescue.
- And finally, he reminds us of the song of praise sung by the children of God, who have tasted the sweetness of the intimate relationship with the Savior, and keep singing it forever with joy.

May the Lord grant us the everlasting portion, to be glorified with, and by Him, Amen.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

KEEP ME FOR YOU, O THE GROOM OF MY SOUL

- How amazing are You, O my God!
  You allowed the devil to enter into battle against
  He who apostatized from his angelic rank;
  And ended up lost, and to lead men astray.

- The enemy remained, and will remain in battle;
  Until he comes, with his whole energies as the antichrist.

- I have no fear of him, as long as You are with me;
  For in You, I hide, O the Groom of my soul.
  I am kept for You by Your Holy Spirit.

- Preserve Your church, O Savior of the world!
  Preserve her from those who crept in unnoticed;
  Who bear the spirit of vanity, not that of the truth;
  Who work to the account of the enemy, hiding under Your name;
  Preserve me for You, O the Groom of my soul!
  Preserve Your church!
  Preserve the entire humanity, holy for You,
  O Savior of the world.