

THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

Course Description

This course examines in brief, only four of the seven Scriptural Letters known as the Catholic Epistles. There will be an overview of these Epistles in general. Then the course will explore in a concise manner the dating, authorship, style and theology of the Epistles of James, Jude and Peter. There will be some exegetical reflections on selected passages from the identified Epistles.

Objectives

The student will gain a general understanding of the background to the Catholic Epistles. They will become conversant with the questions posed to our chosen Epistles and appreciate the theological issues addressed by each of them, both individually and a group. The student shall comprehend the interconnections among the Catholic Epistles. They will also appreciate, in general, the arduous journey of the majority of these Epistles into the canon of the New Testament, as probably the reason why some of them seem to have been neglected. But above all, the student will recognize their value within the context of the canonicity of the Scriptures and relevance in our contemporary time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997), pp. 703-771

*Robert W. Wall, "A Unifying Theology of the Catholic Epistles, A Canonical Approach," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, edited by J. Schlosser, (Leuven University Press, 2004), pp. 43-71.

Daniel Keating, *First and Second Peter, Jude* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture), (Baker Academic, 2011).

*Bo Reicke (trans.), *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), pp xv-xxxviii, 3-10, pp. 69-75, pp.143-149, pp.189-193.

Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction: Hebrews to Revelation* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1962).

A Word for Reflection:

“The truth, then, insofar as it can be found – the solution to the problem, insofar as that is available to us – consists rather in the *ordered discussion itself* than in any set of propositions or assertions about it. Thus, in order to present this truth to our minds – and to the minds of others – we have to do more than merely ask and answer the questions. We have to ask them in a certain order, and be able to defend that order; we must show how the questions are answered differently and to say why; and we must be able to point to the texts in the books examined that support our classification of answers.”

Taken from Mortimer J. Adler & Charles Van Doren, *How to read a book* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1972), pp. 322-323.

Exam

Since this is a short 11-hour course, perhaps it is best that the final mark be based on solely an examination. However, we need to decide the form of the examination: oral or written! As it evidently clear to us, this is our first encounter. We are yet to know one another better. Therefore, I would like to feel your pulse before I would decide on the nature of the exam. So, by December 3rd, I will communicate to you my decision on the form of the examination.

0. INTRODUCTION

What are the Catholic Epistles? When are they composed? Why are they written? What are they saying and how about their message?

The Catholic Epistles are a body of Christian composition, document, literature or writing. They are a group united by history, religious climate/context, literary form (genre), content and message. Their major focus centers much more on the life of the Christian faithful, especially at a historical epoch that is characterized by political turmoil, pernicious persecution and personal/communal doubt occasioned by a sense of “delayed eschatology.”

Thus, in this course, we shall explore, as succinct as possible, the historical context, religious climate, literary form (genre), content and theological message of the so-called Catholic Epistles (from now on - CE). We shall also examine their contemporary relevance. The foundation of this course is the vision of the CE as canonical texts. Despite their rough ride to canonicity, the CE enjoy occupy their space as part of Sacred Scriptures.

0.1 Canonicity of the EC (from Fr. Justin Schembri, OP)

Before we discuss each of these letters individually, it seems opportune to study a general conception of this group of letters. A first question concerns the placement of this corpus within the Catholic Canon. **The word canon denotes not only a regulatory role but also the rule of faith.** As a term, it begins to appear to be popular in the 4th century based on a tradition that goes back to at least Irenaeus and his defense of the four-Gospel complex (180 AD): Eusebius (in Hist. eccl. 6.25.3; around 320 AD) refers to Origen (ca. 185-251 AD) in his commentaries defending the canon of the church which is based on Irenaeus; of course the canon did not appear to be fixed until the 4th century. One must note that not all letters in the corpus is accepted by all churches in Christianity; this is especially true of James. Indeed, many assume (wrongly) that James is against Paul and, while Paul is fundamental for Christianity, James is not. For Catholics, what does this placement in the Canon tell us? It tells us that they are non-Pauline letters that can and should be grouped together. It tells us that, by being grouped together, they can be studied together and the Canon invites us to do so.

More specifically, these letters are known collectively as the Catholic or General Epistles on the grounds that they were originally **addressed to early Christians in general**; this is different from Paul's letters (e.g. *to the Romans*) as they are usually addressed to specific churches. This term (Catholic, general) was already applied to 1 Jn and 1 Pt by Origen in the first half of the 3rd century. Indeed, in around the 4th or 5th century AD this collection of seven letters can be said to be fixed. **This early use of the term probably arose from the theological use of the term *Catholic* to designate the universal church in contrast to a local congregation.** Eusebius (died in 340 AD) and Athanasius (died in 373 AD) used the term CE to designate these 7 NT texts as a collection. Around 396 AD, Jerome informs us that while these seven letters are brief, they are difficult and rich in themes and in content. Augustine (in 396-397 AD), in his *De doctrina christiana* (II.8.13), also mentions these seven letters as a corpus of CE (with the only difference is the order: “the two

letters of Peter, three of John, one of Jude and one of James”). Thus, it can be understood that by the year 400 AD this corpus was fixed in number and books.

0.2 HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

Concerning the brief history of the CE, we shall consider when these epistles are composed and why they are written.

Apart from the Old Testament, we are concerned here with the period from 66-96. The foundation is approximately AD 30-65. The most important political figures in this historical epoch are Nero (AD 54-68) and Domitian (AD 81-96). The point here is the Christian faith between Judaism and the Roman empire. As it were, Christianity is caught in between these two persecuting forces. These are principally and practically destructive, but the Christian faith (Christianity) survives. This is the historical context in which the CE are composed.

The question is whether the apostles, who are the most hit by the persecution or their followers after them compose the CE? This forms the crux of the debate about authorship and date of their composition. Is it possible that the apostles who are practically gasping for the oxygen of survival could have had the courage and time to compose these epistles. Or do their followers document what they must have heard, digested and even embellished or conjectured to have been the mind of their spiritual fathers!

In summary then, the historical context of the composition of the CE includes the following:

- The political situation that centers around two major figures: Nero and Domitian.
- The religious climate occasioned by Judaism.
- The philosophical and cultural Greek influence.
- And so, how do Christians live, defend and die for their faith, with some surviving and composing the epistles as we have them today?

0.3 The End of the Apostolic Age.

Towards the end of the apostolic age, there is a heightened tension in the society. There is Nero, the imperial cult, Greek art and culture (literature), tension between Greek and Jewish interests – the struggle for survival and for supremacy between these two cultures. And Rome is holding the ace. It is in this context that Christianity is to advance the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is the challenge of Jewish zealotism and Greek philosophical wisdom and literary art. So, with the Roman political influence, Judaism and Greek culture, where does Christianity belong and how does it survive? And so, it could be said that the CE are composed to advance and defend the Christian Truth of the Gospel in the midst of turmoil: political, ideological, cultural, philosophical, individual and other human existential interests. Thus, the CE are produced within the context of tensions in the society.

The relationship between Christianity and Judaism is not so cordial. The Christian consciousness is that she is the new and true Israel. In this way, she hopes and desires to convert Judaism to Christianity (cf. Acts 1-4).

There is the challenge of Hellenism: how could Christianity maintain its identity within the context of the cultural blocks of Greece and Jerusalem? For example, Peter is caught in the web of the difficulty (Gal 2:11-14, 2:1-10). There is an effort to make compromises, which Paul condemns. James appears to be at the forefront of the compromise with Judaism, having taken over the leadership of the Jerusalem Church from Peter. Paul tries to mediate and the consequence is not so easy (Acts 21:20-30). There is the suggestion that James could have tried to pacify the Jews in one way or the other as a way of stopping the persecution of Christians. But still, he too is martyred. St. Paul is always ready and defends the sanctity of the Christian Truth against the law. Perhaps he succeeds because he is in the gentile world. But for those in Jerusalem (Peter and James), the story is different. James is credited with a relatively Judaizing attitude, according to history. But that does not save him from martyrdom. He is killed around AD 62.

Thus, when James is martyred, there is migration of the Christians from Palestine in order to escape disorder and terror caused by the Jewish zealotism. It is this zealotism of the Jews that causes the Jewish Roman war. The end result is then the eventual separation of Palestinian Judaism and Christianity. The epistle of James shows a pronounced anti-zealotic tone. This could be as a result of the persecution of Christians, which is occasioned by the Jewish zealotism!

Zealotism is a movement, which Paul, Peter and James condemn and urge Christians to avoid. Instead of zealotism, which is akin to self-help, martyrdom should be accepted in the spirit of Jesus Christ. This will ensure "the success of the gospel and salvation of humankind." Christianity is encouraged to shun Jewish attitudes in the early Church. Christians should give up one-sided Jewish-traditions, like zeal for Jerusalem and external observances of the Law. This could be seen from the dispositions of Peter, Paul, Stephen and others, who foster the conversion of the Greco-Roman world.

The implication of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul is that no amount of compromise with the political and ideological forces of the time could save Christianity from persecution. Such a compromise could not wipe away the perception of Christianity as sectarian. Therefore, it is seen as dangerous and any attempt by its adherents to demonstrate otherwise could have been considered to be pretentious. The sectarian identification of Christianity speaks louder than its expressions of good will and desire for peace. In sum, Christianity is perceived to be a subversive sect, which is dangerous as well as pernicious. Christianity is viewed as representing "a dangerous superstition, hated mankind and were pernicious criminals."

However, Christianity might have also not totally been the innocent and harmless religious expression at the time in question. Some zealous faithful might have also preached against Rome (cf. Rom 12:18-13;14; 16:17-20). And so, there could have been some form of Christian zealotism, which could have prompted Nero's persecution.

*Are Peter and Paul victims of social aggressiveness, which they condemn, or are they truly subversive in their preaching and dealing? Could the Christian message, which the Christians proclaim, be rid of subversive elements? Could anyone who preaches Christ be careful enough not to offend the powers that be: be they political, ideological, cultural and even religious? To what extent could it be said that the authors of the CE are mild in preaching the Gospel, in order for them to ward off persecution?

In conclusion, it could be said that the inevitability of martyrdom, persecution and rejection of various kinds characterize the Christian attitude and fate. The Christian, like Christ, should be ready for martyrdom if they must proclaim the truth of the Gospel. But they should shun the rebellion and the violence of the zealots.

0.4 The Post-Apostolic Age

This is also a very important historical background to the composition, content and tone of the CE. This period is marked by:

- Death of the leading apostles – James, Peter and Paul.
- Troubles of the Jewish-Roman war
- Destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70
- Imperial successions – Vespasian (AD 69-79), Titus (79-81), Domitian (81-96)
- James, Second Peter and Jude seem to reflect the situation under Domitian, with remarkably positive attitude to state and society, and condemnation of revolutionary tendencies and social hostility.

Domitian and his persecution of Christians shape the post-apostolic period. There was evidence of the Christian authors who are anxious to preserve that loyal attitude to the heathen society, which could be inferred from Jesus (the discourse on the tribute to Caesar).

** What motivated the Christians during the post-apostolic period: love of the truth of the Gospel, fear of persecution, desire for social cohesion or caution against zealotism? Do doubts and disappointment set in because the consummation (end of the age) does not come? Who do the poor see as the evil – the state, the Church or society?*

- There is also the Jewish influence, which is more or less against Christianity. Rome continues to recognize Judaism as state religion. Christianity is still viewed as a sect. There is still an underground Jewish revolt against Rome. So, which way for the Christians – to Judaism, allegiance to Roman paganism or to remain firmly rooted in the Gospel Truth?
- The influence of philosophical thoughts and convictions: stoicism and cynicism: Freedom against society. There is also the influence of gnosticism. The Domitian solution is persecution. All these religious, philosophical and zealotistic manifestations are seen as revolt against the imperial cult. The complexity of society and human problems provide a breeding ground for various suggestions/actions in terms of seeking solutions. Whatever be the case, here is the underlying principle for the CE: "But in so far as philosophical rationalism led to intellectual

presumption, and social radicalism implied envy, animosity, and belligerence, it was the duty of leading Christian personalities, such as the authors of the epistles dealt with in this study, to remind their readers of the fact that genuine wisdom is not impatient, but humble (p. xxvi).” We can conclude thus: “The attitude toward state and society of the epistles here treated is optimistic and positive in spite of the tendencies we have just discussed. This is not because of any political conservatism, respect for the mighty, or desire to avoid trouble, but rather a simple conviction that social obedience and patience are necessary for a Christian and valuable for the success of the gospel, and that God himself will judge iniquities (p. xxviii).”

- The three factors of: social animosity, Jewish influence, and contemporary philosophies are also operative among the Roman aristocrats, who represent the senatorial party. This has also developed a strong opposition to Domitian. The suspicion or even conviction is that “there was a real possibility of Christian involvement in the political intrigues of the Flavian period. For instance, Domitian is murdered by Domitilla’s steward who was a Christian, and committed the deed in collaboration with some chamberlains after negotiations with Nerva, the leader of the senatorial party.” And so, “the New Testament authors we are discussing had good grounds for their warnings (p. xxviii).” The point is that the Christian Church gains converts from among the various social classes of the time, including from among those in the imperial cult. Or at least some members of the imperial cult feel for the Christians and are against the persecution of Domitian.
- CE and the book of Revelation: “The contrast between the General epistles and Revelation is very instructive. According to the former, Christians should respect state and society in the midst of all iniquity. This still appeared to be possible when the General epistles were composed. John, on the other hand, saw that Rome had gone too far in requiring absolute subservience. But the Revelationist by no means recommended political intrigues and social aggression; he shared the early Christian conviction affirmed by the General epistles that patient suffering is necessary for the disciples of Jesus and that the iniquities of this world are to be rectified by God and his Messiah, not by human violence (p. xxix).”
- Lesson from this historical survey: There is the natural human tendency to resist what is perceived as evil. There could have been some level of immaturity with regards to the faith in Jesus. The authors of the CE appear to have seen through the social, political, religious and philosophical avalanches of the time and they write to encourage, to warn, and to instruct the Christian believers. In as much as there might be difficulties in interpreting Jesus’ teachings, the truth of his Gospel remains the final authority. It is indispensable to the goal of life, politics and religion. Christians should not fall prey to careerism, harmful ideologies, proud and deceptive philosophies/philosophers, selfish politicians and misguided social enthusiasts. The true Christian must be vigilant and focus on Christ! This should save them from going against the commandments such as: you should not commit murder, do not take revenge, etc.

0.5 Form and Content of the Catholic Epistles

What kind of literature is the CE? How are they distinct from other books of the Bible? The first part of the discussion here involves the genre and structure of the CE.

The Christian writing that we are studying here is called epistles. The term “epistle” as a designation of the literary works in question denotes the general character of the documents, which distinguishes them from private communication. This genre, together with the Pauline letters, which make them 21 in all, constitute the most numerous category in the New Testament. They have precedents in the Jewish and Greek communication practices. Letters are employed both for private and public communications (e.g., Ezra 7:12 = Rom 1:1,7a, etc. 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1).

How are the epistles related to the Old Testament? The opening formulas or the epistles find resemblances in the OT, though with certain variations: 1 Pet 1:2b, 2 Pet 1:2 and Jude 2. It can be seen that the opening and closing formulas are generally stereotypical. There is only one prophetic or single apocalyptic book in the New Testament – the book of Revelation. In comparison with the Old Testament documents called the “Writings”, the epistles represent a homogenous literary category, which if we disregard oral tradition, is the oldest and most important within the early Church. They are a very useful means of disseminating the Christian message. They are actually methods and instruments of (communicating) preaching the Gospel truth! The heart or the main body of the epistles is generally a doctrinal section followed by a series of admonitions. New Testament epistles can be seen as a new creation, i.e., a form of Christian preaching. They are ways of speaking publicly to a Christian community.

The epistles have precedents in Jewish and Greek literary communication practices: “Jewish congregations were accustomed to correspond with each other, with political authorities, and with other religious leaders in Jerusalem... Thus the Jewish initial address “X to Y” (e.g., Ezra vii 12)... After this address, Oriental and Jewish letter writers inserted a wish of “peace” (e.g., Ezra iv 17).” From the epistles, we could observe this custom. The epistles pair “grace” with “peace” – “grace and peace (I Thess i 1). St. Paul adds his own peculiar nuance of “from God the Father”, a sort of fortification of the religious sense (Rom i 7b, etc. see p. xxx). Peter and James invent their own peculiarity: “grace be with you and may peace abound (I Pet i 2b; II Pet i 2, and Jude 2, with slight changes. It could also be observed that the intent and motivation for this wish of peace could have been deeper than just a greeting. It might have been a cautionary measure, urging the addressees to avoid political quarrels. There could be no better period to wish people peace than in the time of turmoil and tension! In fact 1 Pet 5:14, the last verse of the Peter’s epistle, is another wish of peace.

In the Jewish and Greek epistolary structure, the letter requests that greetings be extended to chosen individuals. This custom reflects in the New Testament epistles – Rom 16:21-23 and 1 Pet 5:12-14.

However, the central parts of the New Testament epistles do not reflect the influence of Jewish and Greek epistolary traditions in the manner that greeting and conclusion express them. The main body of the NT epistles tends to present doctrinal teachings and admonitions. This could be interpreted to correspond to the “forms of Jewish, Greek and Christian preaching (see p. xxxi).” In sum: “Christian preaching made the main parts of the New Testament epistles an essentially new creation, developed to its highest point by Paul (see p. xxxvi).” And so, the content of the epistles are mainly various forms preaching include the following genres: Baptismal catechesis, testaments, catechetical instructions and exhortations: In James and Jude we have hortatory preaching in general, in 1st Pet and 1st John, there are reflections of baptismal sermons and in 2nd Pet the pattern is majorly testament.

We should also reflect on the rhetorical constitution of the epistles. It is probably the predominant way of composition then. It could also be the common methodology, given Greek influence on the composers of the epistles. Am thinking that if we should consider the rhetorical composition of the texts (epistles), the authorship would certainly go beyond the apostolic age or even the immediate post-apostolic age. The reason is that the apostles or those immediately following them could not have had the leisure to care for rhetorical finesse in an urgent moment when the desire could just have been to encourage people who are being persecuted! This observation can be justified by the subsequent reflection on the religious environment of our epistles.

0.6 Religious Environment.

The CE are canonical texts. It was during the 4th century that all the epistles are canonized. They show remarkable differences to the Pauline epistles. They are also closer to Hebrews, 1st John and First Clemet. They manifest a framework of the biblical tradition.

The authors are aware that they are writing within the context of the biblical tradition. Thus, they make reference to what God and Christ have done (sacred history or history of salvation) and to what the prophets and the apostles have said (the apostolic tradition). For instance, James 1:18; 5:10; 1 Pet 1:10-12, 2:21-25, 3:18-22; 2 Pet 1:16-18, 3:2; Jude 5,14,17.

The biblical tradition, which the epistles recognize include the authority and normative value of the OT as a permanent source of inspiration for Jesus and his disciples and is purpose as having been written directly for the edification of the church. The OT is foundational to the biblical tradition. The four epistles show the general dependence on the OT.

It can be said that the biblical tradition, as represented by and in the epistles does not seem to hinge on the temple cult, but rather on the apocalyptic-pietistic movement, which found expression in the book of Daniel and other apocalyptic work in the second pre-Christian century. Certain fervently messianic congregations, including the penitential movement of John the Baptist, also represent this movement in Jesus' time. Thus, the CE are not pro-temple, but they are rooted in messianic, apocalyptic, penitential and pietistic religious

movements. Now, a pro-temple cult biblical tradition would not have been practical to the compositors of the CE. The reasons can be expressed thus:

- a. the expulsion of the Christians from the temple
- b. eventual destruction of the temple
- c. the major focus on Jesus and
- d. Pauline challenge with regards to the Law and the temple.

We can observe that there is a paradigm shift to the messianic, apocalyptic, pietistic and penitential-ascetic movement, which focuses on and anticipate the imminent rapturous ascent into God's eternal kingdom. There is a shift from the focus on the earthly Jerusalem and a geographical Zion. The focus is heaven, i.e., the after life! There is no doubt that the Christianity, which the epistles project appears sectarian. It is like the Qumran community, the Baptist movement and even Jesus and his disciples. Jesus constantly talks about his Kingdom not being of this world.

However, albeit identifiable resemblances with Qumran, CE has its essential background within the NT tradition. Jesus, his preaching and activity, is in the center. CE is based on the preaching and work of Jesus, though they scarcely provide contributions to his biography. Thus, CE takes Jesus and his work of salvation as undisputed factor. In fact the goal of CE appears to be the encouragement of the faithful not to deviate from the path of Jesus and his teachings.

The CE asserts itself in such a way that it is admitted into the apostolic tradition of Scriptures. It expressly lays a claim to this tradition (see pp. xxxii-xxxvi).

0.7 The Christian Message of the Catholic Epistles

What is the message of CE for Christian believers? And how is this message transmitted?

The Christian message of CE manifests itself through:

- theological interconnections among the four epistles
- their possible dependence on the same source for their compositions
- non-homogeneity of the epistles like the Pauline letters
- no direct concern with Jesus' passion as is the case with Paul
- except 1 Peter, their subject matter is more the Christian congregation; its present and future problems.
- certainly, there is reference to God's work and that of Jesus in the past. But the emphasis goes to the Christians, their immediate Christian life and future consummation. The reason for this disposition is the acute social problems and political pressures at the time. Golgotha (Jerusalem – resurrection) is still the basis of Christian life, but the actual starting point of the epistolary exposition is rather the believers' conversion and baptism.
- the believers already know Christology through preaching and catechism. Thus the focus is on how to navigate through the social and political turmoil of the time in order to successfully attain the desired consummation in Jesus Christ whose glorious return is fervently expected.
- the aim is to inculcate the right attitude in Christians toward their worldly environment.

- there is the challenge of the delayed eschatology (parousia): thus there are exhortations to faithfulness, to patience and long-suffering: then the future consummation is sure to come.

0.8 Theology of the Catholic Epistles

What is the theology of the Catholic Epistles? How do we describe it? Can we talk about a unifying theology of the CE or is it a case of each to its particular theological expression?

We shall explore the thesis of Robert W. Wall, that there is actually a unifying theology of the Catholic Epistles. According to him, this is rooted in the canonicity of the Catholic Epistles. Here is the structure of Wall's theological observations about the CE:

- a). an introduction, which expresses a systematic theological foundation for the CE, which is hinged on "canonical role (see p. 43)."
- b). an explanation of "a canonical approach to the CE as a collection." Under this subdivision, our author enumerates a seven-point observation about the canonicity of the CE.
- c). a consideration of "the role of Acts in the final redaction of the CE collection (see pp. 55-59)." The point here is that Acts provides a literary background, missionary environment and characters that feature prominently in the CE. Thus, the theological gains and challenges, which are dramatically exposed in the Acts, continue to receive even a much more practical attention in the CE given the social, political, religious and evangelical interests and intrigues of the time.
- d). Finally, Wall proposes "a grammar for a unifying theology of the CE collection" under five major points (see pp. 60-71). In this final section, our author highlights the rhetorical role of the epistle of James in the entire CE collection. He sees James' "principal rhetorical role" as providing the grammar for a unifying theology of the CE (see p. 60). In conclusion, he proposes that "Jude supplies an apt *peroration* of the entire CE collection, concluding by iterating its central subject matter a final time in eschatological garb: the future prospect of a believer's eternal life with God is motivated by the implicit demand to live presently "without (moral) blemish" and preserved "from falling (into sin and death)" not only by building yourselves up in your most holy faith ... (and) keeping yourselves in the love of God" (vv. 20-21) but also by the actions of a congregation whose vocation it is to save those immature believers "by snatching them out of the fire" (vv.22-23), (see p. 71).

Thus, one can talk about a theological thread running through the CE collection! This view points to a shift from an exegesis that tends to highlight particular and respective theological dispositions of each of the epistles in question. Such a unifying theology can be possible because of the role of the canonicity of the Scriptures.

Now, let us sketch the network of the "grammar for a unifying theology of the CE collection:

James is the first among the group of CE collection. This is by no means fortuitous! There is a canonical purpose for it, which can be said to be the fact that James brings "balance to a *Tendenz* towards religious syncretism by which the pressures of the surrounding pagan culture may distort if not then subvert the church's substantially Jewish theological and cultural legacy (see p. 59)."

Thus, the balancing contribution of James is therefore to ensure that “the full experience of God’s righteousness is by performance of works pleasing to God and neighbor, and not merely by *sola fide* – no matter how orthodox or sincerely confessed (see p. 59).

R.W. Wall gives a pride of place to what he refers to as “the surprising priority of Jas... (p. 60).” The reason is that considering the CE in terms of their rhetorical unity, James introduces and supplies the grammar for the theology of the epistles.

Wall argues that James proposes a pattern that is non-Pauline, but which is also not “anti-Pauline.” He puts it this way: “... pattern of salvation that centers a congregation of believers (rather than a “world of sinners) upon the performance of those “works” consistent with God’s law (1,22-27; 4,4-17)[see p. 60].” Therefore, the complementarity of Paul and James, according to Wall, “aims at a more robust expression of God’s gospel that lies at the heart of the canonical process (p. 61).”

In conclusion, Wall underscores the value of James, as providing a foundation for “a unifying theology of the CE collection (p.61).” He proposes the following “framework for a distinctive articulation of the Christian faith (p. 61)”:

1. Human suffering tests the community’s love for God.
2. In response to the suffering of God’s people, God discloses a “word of truth” to define the way of salvation.
3. In obedience to this word, the community must practice “pure and undefiled” behavior as the public mark of friendship with God.
4. Theological orthodoxy by itself is inconclusive of friendship with God and is made effective only when embodied in loving works.
5. Finally, the reward of steadfast obedience to God’s word is eternal life with God.

This “framework” acts as a sketch of the elements that constitute the “grammar for a unifying theology of the CE collection.” A reflection on each of these elements in each of the CE would expose how these epistles draw from the single source of the living stream of the Church’s canonical vision of the Catholic Epistles in particular and the Scriptures in general.

We propose this “framework” as a working structure for our theological reflection on each of the CE.

0.9 The relationship between eschatology and ethics (Fr. Justin Schembri)

A particularly strong area of study of the CE is the relationship between eschatology and ethics. Living an ethical life, for the Christian, only *really* makes sense because we have become one with Christ in a death *like his* (The Greek term: *baptizo*) and looking towards the consummation of the kingdom in the future. As Ladd had rightly illustrated, the Kingdom of God is never something that can be to some extent separated from God; rather it is a more pregnant expression for God himself: “in Jesus, God has become present among men and he is active in their salvation. In its dynamic meaning the Kingdom of God is God himself, not merely ruling in the universe but actively establishing his

rule among men.”¹ In Luke 11,14-36, for instance, Jesus shows us, by his deeds, that he has come to repel the rule of Satan and to actively establish his rule – and this demonstrates that the Kingdom of God is already, in part, present. And yet, as Jesus’ rule is not complete – as there is still a part of the cosmos, which rebels – it still has to be consummated.² We know that the problem of eschatology is great; most – if not all – scholars fit somewhere along a tripartite spectrum: realized (Jesus will not come again; history is over and the distinction between saved and damned is complete), future (only the second coming counts), inaugural (already-not yet). The problem here in the letters, as it is today, is mainly with realized eschatology: many people thought, and now think, that Christ already did everything; those who are saved are saved and those who are not cannot do anything. This made/make ethics nonsensical and created a sense of superiority and arrogance among the ‘saved’ which lead/leads to sexual laxity, a divided community, and a general lack of leadership. **These letters are a testament to the fact that the only eschatological framework that makes sense in the entire biblical corpus is already-not yet: we have been justified in the past, live out today a lifestyle indicative of this internal justification in the hope/certainty that God will vindicate and save us in the future – but only if we live out a life of simplicity and perfection. There is no room for compromise. While we are all sinners, we must strive towards perfection. This, all the more today, must be on our lips. There is no space for sexual laxity, for covering up our moral lapses, for arrogance, for thinking that we are immune to sin and judgment. We will be judged and hell is a clear and present danger. While we will suffer for our convictions, the crown of life will be ours if we holdfast to Jesus. Holdfast, therefore, and experience the wonders of Jesus Christ. This is the rallying call of these letters.**

1. A STUDY OF EACH OF CATHOLIC EPISTLES

1.0 Introduction

The structure of our studies on each of the Catholic Epistles will be according to the following pattern:

- a. a reflection on the introductory questions centering around “authorship”
- b. an examination of the general structure of the epistle
- c. the theological meaning of the epistle
- d. contemporary application/relevance

1.1 THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

1.0 Introduction:

¹ G. E. LADD, *The Presence of the Future*. The eschatology of biblical realism. Revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI 1974) 145.

² See J. SCHEMBRI, *When Your Eye is ἀπλοῦς*. The Christological Implications of Discipleship in Lk 11,33-36 [published doctoral dissertation] (Rome 2018) 139-149.

In studying the epistle of James, we shall be concerned with three major issues. The first will be authorship or the so-called introductory questions like: Who is James, the presumed author of the epistle? To whom is his epistle addressed? Where is it composed and who is the audience that this epistle addresses? When is the epistle composed?

The second issue is about the structure of the epistle of James: Is there a meaningful and recognizable structure of the epistle? Does it portray a considerable methodology in the presentation of its contents?

And the third matter relates to message and theology: What is this epistle all about? And finally, a related question will be: why is the epistle written? This will lead us to consider what could be the contemporary application/relevance of our epistle of James.

1.2 Authorship: (Donald Guthrie, *NT Introduction*, 1962, pp. 60-94, William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, editors, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, (The Anchor Bible) trans. by BO Reicke, P. 3-10, Raymond Brown, *Introduction to the NT*,).

From the epistle of James itself, the only information we have about the author is found in 1:1a: **James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,**

From the lively discussions on the authorship of the epistle of James, we can appreciate the difficulty in positing categorically who composed this letter. Thus, is it James the just, or the brother, or the son, or someone else, that wrote the epistle of James?

Guthrie gives elaborate information concerning the “authorship” of James (see pp. 60-91).

On the question about who wrote the Epistle of James, Guthrie concludes that the “traditional view” of the author as the Lord’s brother should be upheld. And here is what the traditional view concerning the author of James looks like (see Rogers Jr and Rogers III, *LEGNT*, P. 552, for a summary):

Ἰάκωβος – James = “This James was the half-brother of Jesus (s. Mark 6:3-5). He grew up in a poor family w. at least 7 children, but before the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, he was not a believer (John 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7). He was evidently small in stature (Mark 15:40) and led a very austere life (Eusebius, *Church History*, 2:23). After his conversion he became a leader in the church of Jerusalem (Gal 2:9; Acts 15). He was called “the righteous (just) one” and it was said of him that “his knees grew hard like a camel’s because of his constant worship of God, kneeling and asking forgiveness for his people” (Eusebius, *Church History*, 2:23). While Ananus (Annas) was the high priest, just after the death of Porcius Festus, James was killed for his faith by being thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, then stoned and hit in the head with a club. As he was being stoned, he cried out, “I beseech thee, O Lord, God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” One of the priests called out, “Stop! What are you doing? The Just (ὁ δίκαιος) is praying for you” (Eusebius, *Church History*, 2:23, Jos., *Ant.*, 20:197-207). He was a man of righteousness, faith, patience, obedience, and prayer, as reflected in his life and letter.”

Bo Reicke proposes a latter author other than the James known as the just, or the brother of the Lord, the son of Zebedee (Matt 4:21).

Authorship of James: Raymond Brown

- Several men identified with the name “James”. It is taken from the Greek *Jakobos*, which comes from the Hebrew, *Jacob*, the patriarch of the twelve tribes of Israel. Was this James the brother of John and the son of Zebedee? There was James (the Great) who died in the early 40s. There was another James, the (son?) of Alphaeus, of whom we know practically nothing. Brown reveals that it is a mistake to identify the James who wrote the Epistle of James with James the brother of James. Although this claim has been repeated in Hagiography, Brown cites Acts 1:13-14, where there is a lucid distinction between the Twelve and the brothers of the Lord; also I Cor 15:5,7. There is also the suggestion of a James that is totally unknown in the NT as the author. The justification for this unknown James is to account for the reason why the work did not enjoy wide acceptance. A later tradition thought that he would have been confused with James the brother of the Lord.
- Brown suggests a plausible author to be *James listed first among the “brothers” of Jesus* in Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55, not a member of the Twelve but an apostle in a broader sense of the term (I Cor 15:7; Gal 1:9).³
- Brown identifies “the imagery of James as a conservative Jewish Christian very loyal to observing the Law” to be an important element to the background of James’ authorship. He was not seen as an extremist, given the fact that Acts 15 and Gal 2 are united in the view that he was on the side of Paul in defending the gentiles against the exigencies of circumcision as a precondition for admittance in the community of the faithful in Jesus. Let us glean further information about James, according to Brown:
- Speech on his lips (Acts 15:13-21). Gentiles are to be accepted into the community by applying to them elements of Lev 17-18. These are applicable to strangers living in Israel.
- According to latter traditions (the *Pseudo-Clementine writings*), “James was looked on as the bishop of bishops by Jewish Christians who despised Paul. He was given the sobriquet “the Just,” which Eusebius

³ Raymond Brown, p. 725, makes an observation that is good for our consideration as Catholics and those who accept the tradition of Mary’s virginity before and after the conception and birth of Jesus. Considering the NT alone, it seems to be the case that the “brothers of Jesus” would be Mary and Joseph’s children, who were born after Jesus (Mark 3:31-32; John 2:12). Tertullian held this view in antiquity; most of the Protestants believe it today, coupled with Pentecostals. But as early as the 2nd century, these “brothers” were identified as Joseph’s children by a previous marriage (*Protoevangelium of James* 9:2). Brown says: “This interpretation is maintained in much of Eastern Christianity, and Baukham (*Jude Relatives* 31) says that it “has a better claim to serious consideration than is often nowadays allowed.” The claim that he (James the author of the Epistle of James) was a cousin of Jesus was introduced in the 4th century by Jerome and became common in the Western church. Brown recommends the article of J.P. Meier in CBQ 54, (1992), p. 1-28.

(EH 2.23.4-7) explained in terms of his having lived as a Nazirite (an ascetic especially dedicated to God) and his praying so often in the Temple that his knees became as calloused as those of a camel. It is not surprising then that, whether or not written by James, the NT letter that bears his name echoes in many ways traditional Jewish belief and piety.”⁴

Audience of the epistle of James:

- The readers: **the twelve tribes in the dispersion**, is the Christian Church in general. The expression is a sort of generic identification, as the heir of Jacob and his twelve sons.

The time of composition is placed around 90 AD.

The purpose is to admonish – call for patience and practical living out the faith.

The form or genre is sermon.

Structure and Content of the epistle of James:

- “Structure” as a cautious terminology to describe the content of the letter of James. This enumeration is taken from Raymond Brown⁵:
- Topics:
- 1:1: Greetings (opening formula)
- 1:2-18: The role of trials and temptations
- 1:19-27: Words and Deeds
- 2:1-9 Partiality toward the rich
- 2:10-13 Keeping the whole law
- 2:14-26 Faith and works
- 3:1-12 Power of the tongue
- 3:13-18: Wisdom from above
- 4:1-10: Desires as the cause of division
- 4:11-12: Judging one another as judging the Law
- 4:13-17: Further arrogant behavior
- 5:1-6: Warning to the rich
- 5:7-11: Patience till the coming of the Lord
- 5:12-20: Admonitions on behavior within the community

There is this other structure in the article from the *Anchor Bible*. This is arranged in parts, according to the chapters of the epistle of James. It can be summarized this way:

Greeting, 1:1

Part one, chapter one

Part two, chapter two

Part three, chapter three

Part four, chapter four

⁴ Brown, p. 727.

⁵ Raymond Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Auckland: Doubleday), 1997, p. 726.

Part five, chapter five

The author then creates subdivisions from these parts/chapters.

The above-proposed structures of the epistle of James lack introduction and conclusion. That seems to lend credence to the view that the epistle of James lacks meaningfully recognizable structure or methodology (see Guthrie, p. 91). However, this view flows from the bias disposition of Luther to the epistle of James. Martin Dibelius also advances this vision of the epistle of James. But there is better news! The newest view concerning James is positive. The epistle is perceived to be structurally, literally and theologically valuable and meaningful. It has a remarkable, observable and meaningful simple structure. This is derived from the rhetorical reading of the letter of James. Thus there is a three-part structure:

Prologue	1:1-12
Main body of the epistle	1:13-5:6
Epilogue	5:7-20

The prologue, James 1:1-12, enumerates the themes that are then handled accordingly in the main body of the epistle. This passage can be viewed as a form of summary of the letter's content. Actually, vv. 2-4 defines the program for the epistle, i.e., it presents the fundamental intention of the letter: Perfection is the ideal of the Christian life's transformation. In these three verses, James reveals what Christians need to avoid and what they need to.

1.3 II.B.3: EXEGESIS (JAS 2,14-26)

Τί τὸ ὄφελος,
ἀδελφοί μου,
ἐὰν πίστιν λέγῃ τις ἔχειν
ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη;
μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις
σῶσαι αὐτόν;

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says that he has faith but no works? Does that faith have the power to save him?

¹⁵ ἔὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς	If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,
¹⁶ εἴπῃ δὲ τις αὐτοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν· ὑπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε, μὴ δῶτε δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος, τί τὸ ὄφελος;	If one from you says to them: 'go in peace, be warmed and be filled' but do not give them what is necessary for the body what use is that?
¹⁷ οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστίν καθ' ἑαυτήν.	Thusly also is faith: if it has no works, it is dead, being alone.
¹⁸ Ἄλλ' ἐρεῖ τις· σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, κἀγὼ ἔργα ἔχω· δείξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, κἀγὼ σοὶ δείξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν.	But someone may say: 'you have faith, but I have works.' Show me your faith without works, and I will show you, by my works, faith.
¹⁹ σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, καλῶς ποιεῖς· καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσουν.	You believe that God is one – you do well. But also, demons believe and tremble.
²⁰ Θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι, ὥ ἄνθρωπε κενέ, ὅτι ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργὴ ἐστίν;	Do you want convincing, O inane man, that faith without works is useless?
²¹ Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ἀνενέγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον;	Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?
²² βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη,	You see: faith was working with his works and, through his works, faith was perfected.
²³ καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἣ λέγουσα· ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη.	And scripture was fulfilled which says: 'and Abraham had faith in God and it was reckoned to him as justification' and he was called 'friend of God'.
²⁴ ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.	You see that, by works, a man is justified and not by faith alone.
²⁵ ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἐτέρᾳ ὁδῷ ἐκβαλοῦσα;	So also, Rahab the harlot: was not she justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another path?
²⁶ ὥσπερ γὰρ	For just as the body without the spirit is dead,

τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρόν
ἐστίν,
οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων
νεκρά ἐστίν.

so too is faith dead without works.

SOME GRAMMATICAL POINTS

v. 14: μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν: the negative particle μὴ expects a 'no' answer.

v. 17: ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστίν: This is a conditional clause. The protasis is: ἐὰν + present subjunctive (ἔχῃ) while the apodosis is ἐστίν (present indicative). This means that we have a third-class conditional clause considered as a present general. This, therefore, means that if the condition (no works) is met, then – as a general rule – faith is dead. However, the third-class conditional clause makes clear that everything depends on whether the condition – do we have works – is true or not. The important element here is to not assume that his audience are those with dead faith. The third-class conditional clause is asking and answering a hypothetical situation that need not reflect reality. This is done to exhort rather than reprimand as everything depends on whether or not the condition – the lack of works of charity – turns out to be true. In the light of the letter as a whole, the perfect man (the true believer) would not fit in this category while the disputer would.

v. 18: ἐκ + genitive: this is a prepositional phrase. Usually the preposition ἐκ + the genitive has a spacial meaning (to move out of something) or can refer to a genitive of origin. In this case, it is instrumental, or *of means* (by, by which). ***Thus, works act as an instrument, a means, and not an end. They are a means by which faith can be demonstrated. If faith can be conceived as an abstract reality, then works are there to concretize their existence.***

v. 19: εἷς ἐστίν ὁ θεός. This is a tripartite nominal clause of identification. The subject is ὁ θεός; the predicate is εἷς. The verb (ἐστίν) is the copula. We can use Wallace's second and third rules to justify our stand: ὁ θεός is articular while εἷς is not; also ὁ θεός acts as a proper name.⁶

v. 23: ἡ λέγουσα. The article here is in the attributive position and is therefore attached to the preceding noun (ἡ γραφή); it acts as a relative pronoun.

COMMENTARY

1. Summary of pericope

The *genre* of this pericope is best understood as a *diatribe* (a moral exhortation often in the format of a dialogue with a fictitious interlocutor introduced with a rhetorical question. The aim is to persuade the audience by means of different

⁶ See D. B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. An exegetical syntax of the New Testament with scripture, subject, and Greek word indexes (Grand Rapids, MI 1996) 42-46.

techniques, such as irony, questioning the other's position, the giving of examples, which helps strengthen the author's position and weakens the opponent's position). This diatribe consists of three sub-sections: 1. Inactive faith is useless and dead (2,14-17); 2. Two types of false faith: that which separates faith and works and that which confuses faith with intellectual assent to a creed (2,18-19); 3. Two examples of genuine faith: Abraham and Rahab, concluding with a reiteration of the principle that inactive faith is dead (2,20-26).

2. Immediate context

Jas 2,14-26 is found within a larger passage (Jas 2,1-26). This passage concerns the relationship between genuine faith and ethical behaviour. The major genre of this passage is the diatribe.

Just before this passage, in Jas 1,19-27, we find that the perfect man is the *doer of the word and not just the hearer*. This sets the stage for what follows; we cannot just listen and believe in a list of creeds but rather we must do what the creed sets out for us.

Firstly, in Jas 2,1-7, we find a discourse concerning **faith and favouritism**: in fact, in Jas 2,1, we find the exhortation to not to show favouritism in faith. Jas 2,2-4 expresses direct examples of this favouritism (we favour the rich over the poor) which, in vv. 5-7, is shown to be foolish and against the Gospel (v. 5: God has chosen the poor; v. 6-7: the rich, not the poor, are oppressing Christians).

In Jas 2,8-13: we find an advancement of the diatribe, but this time the content concerns the distinction between **faith and law**. **The folly of favouring the rich against the poor goes against the golden rule: love of God, love of neighbour – all neighbours (vv. 8-9)**. Therefore, if you show favouritism, then you are breaking the law and live the life of an evil doer [you are not the perfect man but rather like the double-souled man] (vv. 10-11). The pericope concludes in vv. 12-13 by stating that mercy is for the merciful, echoing the sermon on the mount/plain and transiting to the next pericope concerning faith and works (of charity).

In this way, the passage is quite clear: faith (internal) and works (external) are two-sides of the same coin. God has chosen the poor so therefore one cannot favour the rich; if one favours the rich, then one does not obey the law. If one does not obey the law, then their faith is dead.

We know that Jas 3,1 begins a new section in the letter because the author returns to a concern voiced in 1,19 and 1,26: the unbridled tongue. In fact, 3,1 specifically discusses teachers and gives a general warning: if a teacher stumbles in matters of speech, he will receive a more severe judgment (Jas 3,1-2). Due to a change in topic, therefore, we can safely admit that we are in front of a new part in the letter.

3. Theology

We know well the theological framework of this section. The only remark that remains to be said concerns the examples of Abraham (and Isaac) and Rahab

(Jas 2,21-26). We ought to remember that James' main point concerns the fact that faith, without works, is ineffective (Jas 2,14.17.20.26). Paul's concern is elsewhere: the justification process (the law cannot justify as only Christ can justify). James is interested in the *post-justification* state of the believer: for the justification to remain in effect, one must live an ethical life. While ethics is subordinate to justification, it is an external sign to a justification internally received. Hence, James' use of Abraham and Rahab would differ from Paul's use of Abraham. For Paul, Abraham was justified not by any works (i.e. circumcision) but due to his fidelity to the promise – even in the face of his old and semi-dead body. This fidelity was reckoned to him as justification [this promise was given before justification and his fidelity to it is what rendered him as justified: Gen 15 comes before Gen 17]. For the Christian, it is Christ's fidelity to the pact on the cross, which renders him/her as justified. For James, Abraham (already in a state of justification) and Rahab are examples of the fact that faith cannot be divorced from works. Abraham's sacrificing (binding) of Isaac, however, is a strange example of works (of charity). How does this work express an external sign of an internal justification already received? **The binding of Isaac was the greatest test that Abraham faced and it is understood to be the clearest case of fidelity to the pact: of his being the perfect man with a total commitment towards God. For James, therefore, this willing offering of Isaac proves his perfection and simplicity towards God while already in the state of justification [for Paul, Abraham's fidelity to the promise would vindicate him as it is reckoned to him as justification and does not show/prove anything – the proof would come in Gen 17]. Here Abraham is not just a hearer but also a doer of the word.**

The case of Rahab, therefore, must also *prove* her perfection towards God: she is the perfect one whose simplicity before God is witnessed in her deeds; her sheltering of the spies was clear evidence of her belief that God would conquer the city.

The two examples, therefore, shows that faith and works go hand-in-hand and is witnessed in the perfect one whose simplicity shines forth – as they participate in the light of the father of lights (Jas 1,17). For those who only have dead faith, all they have is darkness and side with the disputer who puts into question God's entire project and is like a wave tossed about by the wind.

2 The letter of Jude

2.0 Introduction

The question about the authenticity of the epistle of Jude appears to be recurrent. The major critic flows from Jude's application of apocryphal materials. However, it has been shown that the letter has been in use even in the early period of the Church (see Guthrie, pp. 226-227). Now, actually, there should be no doubt about the pride of place, which has been and should continue to be accorded to Jude, at least for the reason of having made its way into the Scripture canon. Thus, we wish to study this "little letter" within its context as part of the canonical Scripture.

For the purpose of the authenticity of Jude, we should pay attention to certain external evidences:

- There are traces in the letter of Clement of Rome, "the shepherd of Hermes."
- Polycarp, Barnabas and perhaps the Didache make reference to the epistle of Jude. Polycarp's allusion is said to be the most certain.
- Athenagoras definitely knew the Epistle of Jude.
- The Muratorian Canon mentions the Epistle of Jude together with the Johannine Epistle
- Tertullian knew Jude and mentions that it uses Enoch
- Clement of Alexandria commented upon it in his Hypotyposes.
- Origin did not appear to question the authenticity of Jude himself, but he mentioned the doubts of others
- Later Didymus of Alexandria defended Jude against its disputants. He does this on the ground that Jude cites apocryphal books
- Eusebius classed Jude among the disputed books.
- Jude was not received into the Syriac Canon until a late date. The reason for this is the extreme caution of the Eastern Church.
- In sum, therefore, it can be observed that much has been said to demonstrate the considerable use of Jude at the early period of the Church. The doubts that were later expressed appear to be as a result of the use of the apocryphal books by Jude.

2.1 Authorship (This lecture notes are prepared by Fr. Justin Schembri, OP):

The author, Jude, presents himself as "Jude, the brother of James: (v. 1). Only the half-brother of Jesus seems to fit this description (Mt 13.55; Mk 6,3). It was not customary to identify oneself by one's brother, unless he was a person of great prominence. James, the half-brother of Jesus rose to such prominence within the early church, becoming the leader of the church in Jerusalem after Peter's departure (Acts 15,21). Leadership in the Jewish Christian churches remains largely in the family throughout the first century for at the end of that century we find Jesus' grandnephews, the grandsons of Jude, as leaders among the churches therein.

As with James, the problem arises if this Jude actually wrote this letter (the traditional view) or whether it is simply a pseudonym. The debate centers around the following questions:

- 1. Does this letter show signs typical of postapostolic period, which often includes a fading expectation of Jesus' imminent return, an increased body of doctrine which is more precise than "faith", an increased interest in the church offices and hierarchy?**
- 2. Could the historical Jude write this well in Greek?**
- 3. In vv. 17-18 (But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; for they said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts."), is Jude looking back to the deaths of the apostles?**

1. **Jude does not fit the characteristics of postapostolic writings.** He has a great belief in the return of the Lord and the judgment of God typical of the day of the Lord (OT) on which he hangs the rhetorical force of his argument (vv. 14-15: *It was also about these that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "See, the Lord is coming with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict everyone of all the deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*).
2. **The appeal to Enoch rather to church authorities to correct false teachers gives no evidence of a developed church.** Rather, the appeal to Enoch is typical of Second Temple Judaism and so this can be seen to be written by one who is entrenched in that tradition. In v. 3 (*Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*), the use of faith describes a pattern of belief and a way of life (all that constitutes being a Christian). This, of course, is somewhat different than Paul who uses faith in a more dynamic (two-fold) way of relationship between Jesus and the disciple. But Jude's use of the word is also typical of the early church and is of a Semitic quality; even for Paul, as for the Gospels and Acts, faith is a style of life that must be lived by the disciple.
3. The knowledge of Greek. This question was also tackled in James. **The difficulty stems from a position that puts Judaism and Hellenism at odds with one another;** in reality, Palestine was Hellenized for a while before the Christ event. Besides, Jude, when transferred to Jerusalem would certainly had access to education. As with James, there is no reason to doubt that Church leaders, who certainly would have had aid from scribes, did not study Greek, the lingua franca of the time.
 - a. In opposing biblical thought to Greek, one mistakenly thinks that the Jew and the Greek do not embody the same world; this is simply not the case – especially when the NT was being written. Notwithstanding these remarks, a certain level of trepidation can be found in the mind of the present lecturer since, rather than dealing with texts originating from the heart of Athens, the texts in question – biblical in nature – arose from a seemingly very different place and had a very different scope in mind. Indeed, for those who assume the complete differentiation, in terms of tradition, between *Judaism* and *Hellenism*, between *Palestinian* and *Hellenistic*, this line of inquiry will seem definitely erroneous and out of place. However so, Hengel rightly makes a case that New Testament scholars, who only understand the New Testament, cannot at all understand *these things*. One of *these things* that cannot be understood is precisely the importance of Hellenistic language and philosophy within the framework of the Early Church and the Hellenistic-Roman period.⁷ Now, no one can deny that the process was complex and one can certainly

⁷ See M. HENGEL, "Aufgaben der Neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft", *NTS* 40 (1994) 321, 355.

discuss when the process of Hellenization had begun but it is hardly possible to deny that – at least to a certain degree – it did take place. For sure, in reducing Hellenization to “syncretism with Greek religion and culture”⁸, Feldman weakens the complexity of the situation “which cannot be limited to purely political, socio-economic, cultural or religious aspects, but embraces them all.”⁹ This does not mean that the relationship between Israel and Hellenistic culture was not a strained and complex one – far from it. Yet, as Garrison notes, this peculiar situation was not limited to first century Israel as “the church today battles with the corrosive acids of contemporary culture; yet the language and images of the day (or the hour) are often employed by the church in order to make the gospel message more ‘understandable’ to the members of that same contemporary culture.”¹⁰ Therefore, does it not make sense that the authors of the New Testament, writing in Greek and, at least in part, for a Greek audience, would have made use of the language, images, and thoughts of their own contemporary culture to make their message more accessible to their audience?

4. Verses 17-18 do not recall a previous generation (this is forced onto the text by those who want to force a late date on the text) but rather recall words uttered sometime in the past. After all, do we not do the same?

In reality, the fact that this letter is rooted in Jewish traditions adds weight to the view that it is an authentic document. Interestingly, the Hebrew Bible is used more than the LXX (in v. 12, he cites the Hebrew text of Prov 25,14 rather than the LXX). Again his use of 1 Enoch, a text which was very authoritative among the Jews and even among the Qumran community, is also indicative. The apocalyptic (the imminent coming of God and the consummation of the Kingdom of God) worldview likewise is indicative. **THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE THAT JUDE, THE BROTHER OF JAMES, IS THE REAL AUTHOR OF THE LETTER.**

Date of composition: Again, it is difficult to discern the letter’s date. The author’s silence about the death of James and the destruction of the Temple is probably not a reliable indicator of date in so short a document. Due to the result of the study of authorship, the dating of the letter is anywhere between 50/60 AD to 80/85 AD (the latest date that Jude could have been writing).

Place of writing: Fitting right in our theory, the place of writing seems to be Jerusalem.

Setting, Purpose and Addressees: It seems likely that the intended audience of the letter (with the familiarity with Jewish OTP traditions like Cain, the fallen angels, and Moses, 1 Enoch) is Jewish Christians in Palestine. **The occasion (setting) of the letter seems clear enough: the presence of false teachers.**

⁸ L. H. FELDMAN, “How much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?”, *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (L. H. FELDMAN) (JSJS 107; Leiden 2006) 99.

⁹ M. HENGEL, *Judaism and Hellenism*. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period (London 1974) I, 3.

¹⁰ R. GARRISON, *The Graeco-Roman Context of Early Christian Literature* (JSNTS 137; Sheffield 1997) 9.

Several clues suggest that those whom Jude opposes come from outside the community and are acting as teachers or authority figures:

- Jude charges these false teachers with shepherding (ποιμαίνοντες; v. 12) or feeding only themselves employs the popular image of leadership and traditional critique.
- In v. 8, Jude calls them dreamers (ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι), which probably refers to their claim of authority based on visionary or ecstatic experiences. The presence of traveling visionaries was typical of the time
- In v. 4, Jude mentions that they have infiltrated the community probably meaning that they come from the outside.

Little can be said about the contents of what these false teachers were teaching. Jude accuses them of posing as Christian teachers for the sake of indulging their own greed and lust, claiming to be Spirit-led visionaries, when in fact they rebel against God's moral authority. They are no better than other self-serving egoists who peddle their wares and philosophies (like the Sophists) in the marketplace, using flattery to gain their ends (v. 16: *These are grumblers and malcontents; they indulge their own lusts; they are bombastic in speech, flattering people to their own advantage*), and eager to make a profit from religion (v. 11-12a: *Woe to them! For they go the way of Cain, and abandon themselves to Balaam's error for the sake of gain, and perish in Korah's rebellion. These are blemishes on your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, feeding themselves*), indulging the belly and the loins (vv. 4.12.16.18). These intruders may well have claimed prophetic authority on the basis of visions and revelations received in a state of religious ecstasy (dreaming; v. 8), encouraging their fellow Christians to cast off moral restrictions that apply to ordinary people but not the "spiritual" person.

There was a similar situation that developed in Paul's letters: with Paul's emphasis on grace, many believed that they could remain in sin and could indulge in sexual indiscretions and indifference to participating in idolatry to some degree (1 Cor 5-6; 8). Paul, therefore, was himself accused of turning God's grace into an excuse to sin but he defended himself by stating that when the Christian is dead to sin and lives for God, s/he cannot remain attached to it: **God's gift of the Spirit empowers a self-controlled, moral life that remained aligned with the ethical standards of God's law. Mercy, in other words, exists only with conversion from sin and one's casting off of its power! But should this surprise us, we who are found in the time of already-not yet?**

By mentioning Cain and Balaam, Jude states that moral laxity was part of their message not merely their practice. In the fight between the authority of Jude to that of these intruders, Jude strikes the first blow with his demolition of the intruders' credibility in vv. 5-19. This false message of moral laxity would find no home in the rural areas but would find welcome with the Greeks and other non-Jews; Jews and Jewish Christians in the urban areas of Palestine, educated in the Greek ways, would also become exposed to it. This is why it was written originally in Greek.

Genre, Style, Purpose, Structure

Genre and Style: Unlike James, this short letter keeps the genre of the letter as its primary genre. And yet, this letter has a theological value to it; whilst it is a true letter, the contents of this letter are theological. A letter typically opened by naming the sender and the recipients, followed by a word of greeting and a wish on behalf of the recipient. Jude 1-2 follows that pattern. In vv. 3-4, Jude names the reason that elicits this letter which is also typical of occasional letters and transitions to the letter body using a usual formula of desiring to make something known or remind the recipient of something (v. 5).

Jude combines two types of letters: the **advisory** (exhortation to hold or stop some sort of action) with the **vituperative** (to lay bare the malice of someone's character or the offensiveness of his/her action).

Jude, typical of the Christian Epistle, ends with a doxology, which is particularly appropriate if Jude envisioned his letter being read aloud when the congregation assembled.

Purpose: Jude's immediate goal (as advisory) would be to persuade the congregation not to be influenced by the intruders' practice and teaching. He urges them instead to engage in practices that will continue to nurture the whole community in alignment with the apostles' teaching and vision for discipleship with the result that they will stand before God blameless (v. 24). **To support this goal, Jude engages in extensive vituperation of the intruders by naming practices that are out of alignment with the vision for God's people communicated in the sacred tradition and the apostolic preaching, and demonstrating what the outcome of the intruders' way of life will be from historical examples of God's judgment in the sacred tradition.** As they are condemned, being associated to them will prove detrimental to the congregation since their influence will lead others into condemnation as well.

Structure

Opening and Statement of the problem (1-4)	Letter opening (1-4) Opening greeting (1-2) Occasion for writing (3-4)
Letter body (5-23)	Intruders' behaviour illumined from history (5-10) Three historical examples and their relevance: Ex 32; the fall of the angels (1 Enoch and Gen 6,1-2); Sodom and Gomorrah and T12P (5-8) A fourth example and its relevance: the corpse of Moses (The Assumption of Moses) (9-10) Intruders' behaviour illumined from history, nature, and prophecy (11-15) Three brief historical examples: Cain, Balaam, Korah (11) Amplification of the Intruders' malice (12-13) Indictment from 1 Enoch (14-15) Exhortation and conclusion (16-25) First contrast and exhortation: they are mischief makers but they follow nothing (16-18) Second contrast and exhortation: they cause division but you must keep yourselves within the love of God (19-23)
Liturgical closing (24-25)	Doxology (24-25)

2.2 THE THEOLOGY OF THE LETTER OF JUDE

The Theology of the Letter of Jude revolves around his answer to false teachers.

It is to be remembered that the claims that the false teachers were making posed a danger to Jude. As it is clear that what he writes is in reaction to the threat he perceived and this false teaching acts as a foil to set forth his own contributions towards doctrinal and pastoral theology. These false teachers taught:

1. Human beings were like angels (the angelic and human worlds were not separated) and this mixing of worlds is a justification of their advocating immoral ways. **As with 1 Cor, when people think they have already become like angels they also believe that they are free from all earthly constraints following their baptismal resurrection including pride and sexual/bodily indulgence (1 Cor 6,12-20).** Paul issued a warning that there is still a not-yet tension between justification already secured in Christ and its future perfection (salvation) at the Parousia of Christ (1 Cor 15,20-28). In 1 Enoch, after the fall of the angels, it was another sin to mate with mankind;
2. These false teachers gained access to the agape meals and corrupted them from within (v. 12);
3. These false teachers taught pride and ungodly ways;
4. **These false teachers denied the second coming of Christ and the apocalyptic elements in Christianity, making salvation only in the here and now;**
5. **In v. 19, Jude summarizes: these men are those who cause divisions, they are worldly minded, and do not have the Spirit;**
6. The doctrinal problem was that they believed that salvation was in the here and now which does not respect the already-not yet complex. **This realized eschatology was matched with a mystical approach to God in terms of ecstasy and spiritual awareness that, in its immediacy, poured scorn on the angels, evidently regarded in Jude's church as mediators.** The false teachers' take on the spiritualizing of religion was thought to be the counterpart of God's pure grace **that replaced any moral requirements for staying in salvation, a notion akin to that expressed in Rom 3,8; 6,1-14 as well as the parallel section in 2 Pt 2,19 with its promise of unrestricted freedom.** This, according to Jude, is an attack on divine authority as centered in the apostolic tradition and the deposit of the faith and a denial of the moral issues that God's judgment on sinners illustrates (vv. 5-7). **Yet the main critique Jude makes of the teachers is that they denied the only Master and Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4) and showed an attitude of rebellious unbelief (v. 5).**
7. The practical implications of the foreign teaching are also clear: **the cavalier attitude to morality on the grounds that being spiritual (v. 19) was a passport to ethical indifference led to Jude's severe warning.** God's grace may be perverted into license and the teachers evidently **confused freedom from sin with freedom to sin** a false step indicated in 2 Peter 2,19. The teachers' ways are

condemned as godless (2 Peter 4,14-16) and ripe for future judgment (2 Peter 4,7.13), which has already begun. Nor can Jude refrain from bringing standard accusations against them for their self-willed notions, their avarice and deceit and their pride.

Jude's responses to these false teachers are directed to the congregation as a pastoral and persuasive call to stand firm in the apostolic faith (v. 3) to take steps to ensure their continuance in the faith (vv. 20-21), and to be concerned about their fellow-believers who have been seduced (vv. 22-23). Jude's pastoral theology is shaped by three things:

1. He underscores the need to maintain adherence to the teaching already given by, and derived from, the apostles themselves (vv. 3.17.20). **The faith once delivered to the saints is a strong assertion of faith seen as a body of belief that enshrined the tenets of Christian salvation and that must be defended and not surrendered especially when other teachings are being canvassed.** In Jude, therefore, faith is a development from earlier texts since, while faith still denotes an all-encompassing lifestyle, it also begins to refer to a crystallized form of a body of doctrine and practice.
2. The role of Jesus as judge underlines the two emphases Jude strove to make clear: **God acts through Jesus and God's character includes that of judgment. The test-case comes in v. 5 with its reminder of how the Lord saved a people from the land of Egypt and afterwards destroyed those who disbelieved. The agency of Jesus as judge is tempered by his quality of mercy which is the ground of confidence of Jude's friends (v. 21) and equally the source of optimism for them to display as they reach out to rescue the wanderers (v. 23) even if the wayward can only be left to God's mercy.**
3. The nature of Christian living as described in vv. 20-21 is a bulwark against deviation and falling away. **The heart of Jude's encouragement and admonition lies in the call: keep yourselves in the love of God. This is a practical summons for the readers to attend to, matching the assurance given in v. 1 that they are kept safe for Jesus Christ.** Thusly, God is in charge of his people's destiny in all ages and has a final purpose in view which is to keep them from stumbling and to make them stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing. Yet those same people are not to be negligent and wayward like unbelieving Israel or the unstable and gullible adherents (vv. 22-23). The danger that threatens in the false teaching should awaken them to their peril and alert them to their responsibility, which is to stay within the orbit of divine life and not stray into ruin.
4. The practical means of their remaining safe are then spelled out by three link-verses: **building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, leading to eternal live (v. 21)**
 - a. The most holy faith looks back to the military call of vv. 3-4 (to fight for the faith of apostolic **integrity [read perfection and simplicity: the Hebraic term 'tam']** and not to be seduced into **compromise** especially one that would lead to a moral disaster).

- b. The call to prayer echoes Paul's writing on the role of the Spirit as one who authenticates and informs Christian praying and places prayer under the charismatic banner.
 - c. The verb **expecting** orients faith to the future and reminds the reader of the not-yet dimension of their common salvation which only of the Parousia of Jesus will bring to fulfilment in eternal life
- 5. The doxology (vv. 24-25) that closes the letter makes a double statement. It is a recognition of God's action on behalf of believers (v. 24) and it lifts up certain qualities of divine attributes (v. 25)
- 6. The issues posed in this letter are still with us today. The competing claims of those who look for validation of their religious experience no farther than in their inner illumination and certain will be in tension with those of other Christians who find strength in institutional forms and structures: the creeds, the historic church and its accredited leaders, traditions, and continuity with the past – these are their grounds of confidence. But perhaps both are complementary.
 - a. **Christianity is always an affair of the heart** evoking our love for God and neighbour as God has loved us and the focus of our responding love. To that extent then definition of Christianity as the life of God in the souls of men and women is sound. **Yet it is a definition crying out for expression in tangible and measurable forms in the realities of social life and communal existence.** That is why the church, with its scriptures, its faith and its appeal to the past, is part of our own heritage as it was of Jude's message in his day.
 - b. Morality is a strenuous and serious business. **It still today remains the case that grace can be perverted and the road to cheap and easy salvation with no moral claims laid upon us is an ever-present false trail in all generations.** The seductions of those who offer a quick fix salvation are met by the stringent ethic reflected in this letter with its reminder **that the moral undergirding of the religious life can never be relaxed.** Keeping these things in mind is the beauty of this letter.

2.3 EXEGESIS (JUDE 3-7.20-21)

Ἀγαπητοί, πᾶσαν σπουδὴν ποιούμενος γράφειν ὑμῖν περὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας ἀνάγκην ἔσχον γράψαι ὑμῖν παρακαλῶν ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι τῇ ᾧπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει.	Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you beseeching that you contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.
⁴ παρεισέδυσαν γάρ τινες ἄνθρωποι, οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα, ἀσεβεῖς, τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν χάριτα μετατιθέντες εἰς ἀσέλγειαν καὶ ἀρνούμενοι τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.	For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this judgement, ungodly people, who turn the grace of our God into perversion and deny the only master and our Lord Jesus Christ.
⁵ Ὑπομνησαι δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, εἰδὼτας ὑμᾶς πάντα ᾧπαξ, ὅτι ὁ κύριος λαὸν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου σώσας τὸ δεύτερον τοὺς μὴ πιστεύσαντας ἀπώλεσεν,	Now, I desire to remind you, though you know all things once and for all, that the Lord, after saving the people from the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed the unfaithful ones
⁶ ἀγγέλους τε τοὺς μὴ τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν ἀλλὰ ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις ὑπὸ ζόφον τετήρηκεν,	and angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper abode, for judgement of the great day, he has kept in eternal bonds under darkness
⁷ ὥς Σόδομα καὶ Γόμορρα καὶ αἱ περὶ αὐτάς πόλεις τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον τούτοις ἐκπορνεύσασαι καὶ ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἐτέρας, πρόκεινται δεῖγμα πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην ὑπέχουσαι.	Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them: since they, in the same way as these, indulged in gross immorality and went after another flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire
²⁰ ὑμεῖς δέ,	But you,

ἀγαπητοί, ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς τῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ ὑμῶν πίστει, ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ προσευχόμενοι,	beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit,
²¹ ἑαυτοὺς ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ τηρήσατε προσδεχόμενοι τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.	(and) keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to eternal life.

SOME GRAMMATICAL POINTS

v. 3: ποιοῦμενος. This participle is used modally – in a temporal fashion. The present middle participle expresses relative time in relation to the main verb (ἔσχον). In this case, the participle expresses concomitant action (occurring as a punctual action in the past as highlighted by the aorist stem of the main verb) which introduces a subordinate clause. The ‘while making’ occurs at the same time as ‘held’ or, in this case, felt).

v. 3: παρακαλῶν ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι. The participle (παρακαλῶν), present active participle, is in relative time to the preceding main verb (ἔσχον). The *beseeking* explains the content of the necessity of the writing. Attached to the participle is ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι which, being an infinitive, is a-temporal: the beseeching is done so *that* they will fight/contend for the faith. Thusly, the infinitive takes on the role of a purpose clause.

v. 5: σώσας ... ἀπώλεσεν. The first verb (σώσας), being an aorist active participle, expresses relative time in relation to the main verb (ἀπώλεσεν) – aorist active indicative. The relative time of the aorist stem indicates an action happening before the main verb: the saving from Egypt (Ex 1,8–15,21) occurs before the destroying (Ex 33,33-35; Num 21,4-9).

v. 20: δέ. This particle is often left untranslated. However, here, it marks a sharp contrast with what the author was saying up until now; it marks the beginning of the other side of the coin.

v. 20: ἐποικοδομοῦντες ... προσευχόμενοι. Both verbs are in the present participle mood. These participles can be interpreted modally and therefore in different ways. As we have often mentioned, participles are to be seen in relation to a finite verb. There seems to be no finite verb other than the imperative (τηρήσατε) in the following verse. We can translate these participles in two ways. Firstly, we either translate them as an expression of state: the beloved who are building themselves up and who are praying. But this does not fit the train of thought of the letter which wants to exhort the faithful ones: they are to remember (vv. 5.17-19) that the false teachers will be punished and therefore they ought to build themselves up (unity vs. division: v. 18) and pray (to the Holy Spirit to be different from those who are devoid of the Spirit: v. 19). Therefore, it is best to translate them as imperatives treating them as exhortations.

In relation to the main verb (the imperative τηρήσατε in the following verse), we run into issues. The aorist stem is a strange choice; we learnt that the aorist usually takes over a punctual act; it is the present imperative, which usually

concerns a general rule. In this case, we need to interpret the aorist. This aorist could be understood as *an effective aorist*: it indicates an action directed to some end. The action to *keep themselves in the love of God* is directed to the end that is so desired: eternal life. It could be also understood as a *global aorist*: the action expressed by the aorist reminds us that we are in the realm of a categorical imperative – there is no room for discussion for, if you want to receive eternal life, you *must* keep yourself in the love of God.

COMMENTARY

1. Summary of the letter

The examination of the text of the epistle of Jude is different from the examination of the other letters; this is due to the shortness of the letter itself. Jude can be divided into three parts – as per the structure above: 1. The greeting formula and reason for writing (vv. 1-4); 2. body (vv. 5-23) and 3. final doxology (vv. 24-25). The text under examination is partly from the first part (vv. 3-4) and partly from the beginning and end of the body (vv. 5-7.20-21); these verses were chosen so that the student may appreciate the letter as a whole.

In vv. 3-4, **Jude discloses his purpose for writing**: that the audience of the letter should contend for the faith handed down to them against certain false teachers who have infiltrated the church and brought teachings that lead to immorality.

In vv. 5-7, **Jude specifies that these false teachers will suffer judgment** like those evildoers in the past: the rebellious Jews at the Exodus, the rebellious angels who fell, and like Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 5a (I desire that you remember) indicates that Jude does not want to simply denounce but also to exhort; if the people remember what has happened in the past, then we can do things differently today. This shows that Jude's real concern is not simply to **vituperate** the false teachers but also to **exhort** the people. In this way, the letter itself concerns *moral instruction and exhortation* and the author wants to remind the people of lessons already learnt. Indeed, Jude assumes that his audience knows well the history of God's past judgements and is desirous that they apply the lessons learned to present situations.

The rebellious Jews: we see examples of when Jews rebel against God many times during the Exodus (from the book of Exodus until the end of Deuteronomy); a good summary phrase of this rebellion is seen in Num 14,11-12 (*And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."*)

The angels: The apostasy of the angels is not found in canonical scriptures; rather, it is somewhat based on a Jewish interpretation of Gen 6,1-4 that was often understood to refer to angelic sin: *When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh;*

their days shall be one hundred twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days-- and also afterward-- when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown. In reality, Jude is probably reading an OTP re-reading of this text – like Jubilees 5,1-2 since in Jub 5,1 we read ‘angels of God’ rather than ‘sons of God’ or 2 Bar 56.10-16. But, most likely, Jude is utilizing 1 Enoch (especially cc. 6–12) which Jude cites in vv. 14-15.¹¹ The point of the recounting of the fall of the angels is to emphasize that no one – not even those of a privileged position – can escape divine judgement if they embrace sin; therefore, the fall and punishment of the angels becomes **paradigmatic** for the present time: as the angels beforehand, so too the false teachers

Sodom and Gomorrah: Little needs to be said here; not even Jude goes into detail (see Gen 19,1-5: angels come and spend the night at Lot’s house, but the people of the city wanted to rape the angels – hence the word *Sodomy* for homosexual relationships.) Both cities were evil and they began to be emblematic cases of judgement – not only due to sexual sins but also due to arrogance and wickedness (Sir 16,8-10; T. Naph 4,1) and neglect of wisdom (Wis 10,6-10) and of hospitality (Wis 19,4). These cities failed to walk in the path of the Lord, destroyed the natural order of things, and was generally unfaithful to the pact.

In vv. 20-21, we turn to the other side of the coin: those who are – or are trying to be – faithful to the pact and walk in the way of the Lord. Verse 20 begins with an emphatic ‘but you’ which places the believers in sharp contrast with the false teachers; whereas the false teachers are devoid of the Spirit and are trying to cause division (v. 19), the beloved need to build themselves up on the foundation of the faith (v. 20a) and pray in the Spirit (v. 20b), and are to keep themselves in the love of God (v. 21) so that they are not swayed.

3. The First Letter of Peter

¹¹ 1 En 6–12 recounts the ‘fall of the watchers’, i.e. the story of the angels who came to earth, took human wives, and gave birth to evil children who were the giants. The flood was the judgment that came on the world for this heinous sin [**this is something that will appear again in full force in 2 Peter 2,4-10 [see Jude 6] where the author again mentions the sin of the angels leads to the flood and the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah**]. While 1 Peter 3,18-22 also discusses the fall of the watchers, the flood is not punishment but rather a symbol of purification and baptism: 1 Peter focuses, not on the false teachers who are warned that they will suffer a similar fate of the angels and humanity in the flood, but rather those *who have already passed through* the waters of Christian baptism which saves them by means of the vindicating resurrection of Christ. In other words, like the very water that threatened to kill Noah was at the same time the means of his salvation, so too the saving waters of baptism – a baptism which acts as a pledge to live in relationship with God, which would result a lifestyle of perfection (like Noah beforehand). For those interested on a new take on the phrase ‘sons of God’ in Gen 6,1-4, see J. GROSSMAN, “Who are the sons of God? – A new suggestion”, *Bib* 99 (2018) 1-18.

3.0 Introduction

“Our conclusion must be that this Epistle not only exerted a wide influence on early Christian writings, but that it also possessed for them apostolic authority. This makes clear that the primitive Church, as far back as any evidence exists, regarded it as a genuine Epistle of Peter, and thus any discussion of objections to Petrine authorship must sufficiently take account of this fact (Guthrie, *NT Introduction*, p. 97).”

3.1 Authorship, date of composition, place of writing, genre, purpose, setting and addressees

Authorship, date and place: as usual, authorship of this letter is still up for discussion. There are three basic positions: 1. Direct authorship by the apostle Peter; 2. Indirect Petrine authorship through the scribe Silvanus who worked with creative freedom; 3. Pseudonymous authorship by someone of the Petrine circle, who used the master's name to perpetuate his memory and teaching.

1. The traditional view of authorship is that the apostle Peter (1,1) with the help from Silvanus (5,12) wrote the letter in Rome sometime between the martyrdom of Paul (62 AD) and the outbreak of the persecution under Nero in 64 AD.
2. The main arguments against this, first brought up by the Tübingen school, who ascribe to the third position are:
 - a. The level of Greek would be too developed for Peter to have written this letter;
 - b. It is indebted to Paul's theology;
 - c. It does not bear the marks of one who knew Jesus and heard his teachings;
 - d. It implies a time when the mere profession of Christianity was a crime (and hence the first decade of the second century).
3. But, in favour of the first position (the traditional view) and against this position, one can reply by saying that:
 - a. **While Peter may have had limited knowledge, Silvanus' knowledge of Greek was highly advanced and one who does not agree with the traditional view would have to account for the strange implication that whoever wrote the text employed the help of another;** this confirms the help that Peter would have needed to write in Greek but why would a later author employ such tactics? Silvanus is seen as the joint author of 1 and 2 Thessalonians with Paul and Timothy and also known as Silas in Acts.
 - b. **The Paulinism of 1 Peter is not Paulinism at all but rather a common, apostolic Christianity held by all.** The apparent Paulinism was a necessary position of the Tübingen school because, otherwise, there would be no conflict between Peter and Paul which is synthesized by the author of Acts (who, according to them, is not Luke).
 - c. **It is not true that 1 Peter does not contain many references to the life and teachings of Jesus; it is simply not that all direct.** But, then again, are not allusions to it enough? After all, it

is not necessary that the author has to prove his knowledge to us by making direct reference to this knowledge.

- d. **The reference to suffering is quite general and need not reflect a more systematic abuse.** In this way, the onus of proving otherwise is on those who reject the traditional position.
4. Another school of thought ascribes to the intermediary position that there is indirect Petrine authorship. This school of thought holds that 1 Peter may be the final product of a group associated with Peter (Silvanus for instance) in his lifetime and intent on publishing his teaching after his demise. This proposal also explains the relationship between 1 and 2 Peter and Jude as this communal authorship would be responsible for all three letters. This includes the similarities in content, liturgical elements, and the unique use of OT and OTP.

We hold that either the traditional view or indirect Petrine authorship as both viable.

Dating: If the traditional authorship is accepted then a dating of 60s AD is probable, during Nero's emperorship. If 1 Peter is deemed as indirect Petrine authorship (school) then 75-85 AD is probable. If 1 Peter is pseudonymous then a late dating is required (90-111/112 AD). **Holding to our position, a dating of either the 60s or 75-85 AD are both possible.**

Place of writing: The place of writing is usually dependent on how do we interpret the term Babylon (1 Pt 5,13). Usually this term is taken to be a code term from Rome [in keeping to a dating between 60-85 AD, it was possible that the designation could have been used of Rome in the 60s after Nero's persecution and it became a popular term for Rome after 70 AD]. In any case, in keeping with our conclusion with authorship, **Rome seems the more likely place of writing.**

Setting, Purpose, and addressees: The intended audience is given at the beginning of the letter: a somewhat-defined group of Christian congregations scattered throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, in particular those living in the north-east section of Asia (modern Turkey), distributed in provinces (from Pontus to Bithynia). **The occasion/setting for the letter was due to sufferings, trials, and persecution. Indeed, they were undergoing trials (1,6) and testing (4,12). The chief reason behind the letter to directly related to this situation of dire straits: to encourage the harassed believers to stand firm in God's grace (5,12). The letter is essentially one of encouragement in the dual sense of calling on those in the face of their preset troubles both to bear up under trial and to cheer up when their spirits are down. The notes of sympathy and a close bond between author and reader are sounded repeatedly. The basis for said exhortation is hope, based itself on the resurrection.**

Indeed, by a common participation in the messianic blessing realized in Christ and the new age and through a shared study of ancient scriptures, both first generation Christians and any subsequent generation of believers stand together as on the same ground. Perhaps this conviction is what gives the letter

its timeless appeal and Christian character as a witness-bearing document. It invites us to look at it as binding together Christians in varying circumstances, different cultures, and diverse backgrounds as those who, with access to Christ mediated through the scriptures, discover his contemporary presence, and find in him God's strength to help in time of social adjustment, painful acculturation and religious change. As for the readers, they were at odds with society around them and feeling the sharp pricks of 'persecution' from local officials and community pressures (1,6; 3,13-14; 4,4.12-16; 5,9-10). Because of this, their social status was thrown into question by their acceptance of a new religion and at least some of the letter reflects the felt need of an alienated social group whose underpinnings have been swept away as a direct consequence of their conversion to Christianity (2,10; 4,4). On a theological level, this community of believers was wrestling with some age-old questions: why do good people suffer? Why does God allow trials to happen? Where, in fact, is God in all the uncertainties and contrarities of life when opposition breaks upon believers for no reason? See 1,6; 2,19; 4,12.

The response of 1 Peter is the following:

1. **The reader's good conduct is the best answer** to hostile neighbors and the authorities (2,12.16-17; 3,16; 4,12-16).
2. **The social identity they are afraid to be lost is replaced by a new sense of belonging to the people of God**, stretching back to Abraham and Sarah (3,5-6) and onward to the complete household of faith that shall be realized (2,4-10; 4,17-19).
3. As we will see, **1 Pt's main contribution to the theology of suffering is its recourse to theodicy, which is an attempt to explain how God's plan is at work in and through human pain, misery and affliction** [in a modern take on this same problem one could discuss Gollum in LOTR]. At the end of history this plan will be fully known (1,5-9; 4,7; 5,10).
4. These three characteristics are still valid today, even in the West: **the Christian Gospel is a provocation to resistance and to nonconformity with society, it is a disturbance within the social order, and a discussion which leads to a heightening of tension about the divine character**. Truly, 1 Peter has far-reaching appeal and universal meaning. Truly, it is a Catholic letter.

Genre: The usual problem with these letters is whether or not the genre is that of the letter or is it something else dressed up like a letter? Definitely, it has the letter form as there is a sender (author), addressees and initial and closing greetings. But can we see something more to it? Three possibilities have been proposed and are deserving of closer attention:

1. **As a baptismal address:** this was proposed by Form critics who identified a number of Christological hymns in a baptismal setting. One main piece of evidence they claim is the so-called break in the text consisting of a doxology in 4,11 (Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen). This break caused these same form-critics to assume to 2 documents now stitched together where the original core was 1,1-4,11 followed by a secondary

addition of 4,12-5,11 which confronts a more ominous situation in which trials are present and more threatening. The original core would be, then, this baptismal homily. This being said, recent investigation has shown that this theory has many problems – first and foremost due to the fact that the word *baptism* only occurs once in the entire letter (3,21). Also doxologies do not necessarily come at the end of the letter but rather, as in Romans 8,31-38, it can also close a section of the same letter.

2. **The word group which does place an important role is suffer/suffering (11x as a verb and 4x as a noun). Thusly, it has been proposed that 1 Peter is an apologetic tract offered to explain the readers' trials and so to hearten them.** This is certainly important, but some tend to be too specific with the kind of suffering: there was a target audience of a persecuted church and social displacement. Certainly this is tackled but the suffering is much wider than that [for instance suffering caused by simple nonconformity], and Peter's attention is directed to the entire Christian community in Roman Asia and beyond.
3. Others see the letter as a stich work of homiletic midrash (midrash is a Jewish interpretative framework involving explanations of texts and questions of a theological and philosophical nature) to enforce the chief point that 1 Peter is all about the church as the temple community.

What are we to say? **The traditional view that this document is a genuine hortatory epistle has withstood any and all attacks and has absorbed the finding of form, source, and redaction criticism. There is a growing consensus that supports the claim that 1 Peter is a real letter and this consensus also affirms the literary coherence of the letter. The differences in style are not due to difference documents but rather to difference sources employed (liturgical for instance) and redacted and shaped into one whole. The acceptance into the canon most likely sees this letter as a sort of encyclical letter sent out to an identifiable group in the name of a well-known leader in early Christianity. But above all 1 Peter is a theological-ecclesiological document bent on demonstrating to a disenfranchised and alienated people that their real roots are in the people of God and their heritage of faith and hope is the religious antidote to the prevailing loss of identity. In sum, 1 Peter is a real letter, which incorporates different forms (hymnic, liturgical, homiletical) in order to encourage the people of God to stand firm in suffering of all kinds as it an integral part of our Christian obedience in a hostile world. Like the suffering servant of Isaiah, the new people of God are called to maintain the truth in conflict and pain. But God's presence is there, within the shadows, and the new Israel is to discover its role as the one people of God.**

Structure of the letter

Address and greeting (1,1-2)

Christian existence (1,3-2,10)

The believers' new existence is grounded in Christ's resurrection (as a praise-formula) (1,3-12)

One is required to live in the light of God's redeeming purpose (1,13-2,10) in three dimensions:

In regard to the world, Christian behaviour is controlled by nonconformity and holiness (1,13-21)
In respect of community life within the church, the call is to familial love and maturity (1,22-2,3)
In response to God's call, the church is to be a worshipping body reflecting the destiny of Christ (2,4-10)

Christian living in society (2,11-4,11).

General exhortation to always live honorably (2,11-17). This is followed by different household codes through which one should act with honour.

God's people are called to live in a situation of conflict and suffering; this is particularly true of the slave who was vulnerable to abuse by harsh masters: Christ is model. (2,18-25)

Special attention is given to domestic harmony between husband and wife (3,1-7) and to other members of the community (3,8-12) as a witness to the world.

In front of persecution, have no fear (3,13-17). The reality of an evil society is the foundation of disharmony and in submitting to Christ, who suffered, the believer can be victorious with Christ (3,18-22).

The pattern of suffering leading to glory begins with Christ, so it is made relevant to suffering Christians as they are called to the same vocation and to bear witness to the eschatological victory of Christ. In the interim, the life of the community is marked by prayer, practice love and selfless service (4,1-11)

Christian hope for the future (4,12-5,11)

To aid the Church in the midst of suffering, the author turns to some pastoral devices (4,12-19)

Specific theodicy (4,12-16)

Reminder of the fate of the oppressors (4,17-18)

Another exhortation to live the good life (4,19)

Leadership is an important role: on the example of the Good Shepherd (5,1-4)

Humility and submission to leaders is exhorted (5,5-7)

A call to vigilance, strong faith, and hope in God's final vindication (5,8-11)

Epistolary close (5,12-14)

3.2 THE THEOLOGY OF THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

It is to be reminded that, at the heart of the message of this letter, we find the call to a more Christian existence which, essentially, concerns the right living in the light of God's redeeming purpose. Practically, this means that we are called to live in a situation of suffering but to always do good as this leads to glory. **This present life is a life geared in hope towards the future.** With this in mind, we can isolate the following theological themes within:

1. God: parent and creator

This epistle is **theocentric** through and through and its author has a robust faith in God, which he seeks to impart to the reader. The author's mind is filled with the centrality of the divine plan and purpose in both human and cosmic affairs. Indeed, this letter constantly underlies the idea that God is Creator, Father, and Judge, and as the one whose will determine all that comes to pass, who shapes the destiny and determines the actions of those whom he has chosen for his own. **God sustains them in times of trial and it is God who will vindicate them.** This also is indicative of a serious problem at the time of writing that the community was indeed suffering; this required a letter to explain why God permitted the trials to come and what good may be expected to flow out of them. For this end, this letter offers the following points:

- a. **God as sovereign in human affairs.** The basic reality to which Peter points to is the Christ event and his resurrection and enthroning (1,3; 3,21-22), crowned with glory (1,21) in anticipation of his final vindication (1,7.13; 5,1). Thusly, these trials are not outside of the divine will (trials of necessity; 1,6) since it is through trials that faith is refined (1,7) and the outcome may be ensured at the final day (1,9). Hence, suffering should be embraced as part of God's providence (3,17; 4,16). Of course, this suffering is not the individual angst that we understand today - this is before Descartes and Freud; this suffering is due to one's faith.
- b. **Christ the model believer in God:** Peter uses the sufferings of Christ as a point of entry into his reassurance that God is above all. The passion text of Isaiah 53 is used to portray the providential and the exemplary nature of what happened to Jesus in his early career and how he reacted to insults and injuries (2,21-25): v. 21 states: *to this vocation of suffering you have been called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.* This following in the footsteps of the Lord is not to devalue the atoning worth of the cross but rather to point to the spirit in which such sufferings were borne, and calls on his readers to accept their vocation before God as Jesus did. This calling to live as servants of God and to have reverence towards God in the whole of one's life is the key to Christian living. It is through Christ that men and women come to believe in God and true worship and right living (righteousness) is only possible when the disciple is *in Christ*. But this privilege of being joined to Christ entails the risk of suffering before the ultimate reward is gained.
- c. **The holy character of God:** God's holiness is the basis for trust through Christ (3,15) and a pattern for Christian living (1,14-21). The OT text '*you shall be holy for I am holy*' (Lev 11,44; 19,2; 20,7.26) is cited as the foundation of this trait and is the link between God's holiness and the people's. **This has ethical repercussions: the Christian does well and avoid evil because that is what is required of holiness.**

- d. **God as Protector:** since God is parent to believers, he may be trusted to watch over his own (2,25) as a shepherd cares for sheep and a parent responsible for his child (1,22-25): cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares for you (5,7). **But faith is no soft pillow that exempts believers from trials and confidence in God's overarching purpose does not preclude a time of future judgment when Christians will be assessed on the basis of their true humility (5,5-6) and obedience.**

2. Christ: person and achievement

- a. 1 Peter is rich in its Christological details. The name of Christ occurs 22x. The chief emphasis is made in relation to his death and resurrection which are two events tied together (1,11; 3,18) to form a unity. The main passages, which elaborate this connection, are 1,3-7.18-21; 2,4-8.21-25; 3,18-22. All these sections are lyrical in style and form and have been classified as containing fragments of early Christian creeds or hymns.
- b. 1 Peter 1,3-7: the focal point herein is praise to the act of God in raising Jesus Christ from death to new life whose quality spills over into the hope which his resurrection promises. This hope is secure in spite of sufferings that are the present lot of believers and will come to fruition at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1,7) namely his glorious appearing at the last time. Resurrection and final coming are thus linked as providing the solid basis for what the author regards as a firm hope and secure inheritance. The joy he inculcates is based on what he knows of Christ's presence in the present experience of believers
- c. 1 Peter 1,18-21: this Christ-hymn uses traditional material in a new way. The way Christ's relationship to God is pictured (v. 20) mirrors what the author believes is true of his readers (1,2). Both they and Jesus were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the Christological allusion is reinforced in 2,6, the stone laid in Zion is chosen and precious to God just as he has become precious to those who are his people (2,7). Given all we learn of the readers' sense of being disadvantaged in society and living at odds with their pagan neighbors (2,11-12; 4,3-6), Peter's intention here is to assure the followers of Christ that both their salvation and their status are secure since they are not at the mercy of feckless chance or historical accidents (a point explicitly made in 1,4). Thusly, just as Christ's saving plan is anchored into God's eternal purpose, both Christ and the one who follows him are elected. This foreknowledge is at the same time eternal and historical (already now and not yet) and serves to show both the importance of the cross of Christ and the moral life of the follower of Jesus.
- d. 1 Peter 2,4-8: As Jesus Christ is the chosen stone, chosen from the bowels of eternity, Christ takes on a decisive role in salvation-history. Attitudes to him, of acceptance or rejection, determine human destiny. Just as Christ suffered and was vindicated, so too is the follower of Jesus; also is the fate of the faithless and the persecutors laid out (4,17-18; 5,5-6).
- e. 2 Peter 2,21-25: this letter places social teaching side-by-side Christology. Jesus is the model of all other servants of God (based on

Isaiah 53). Both ethical call and soteriological teaching are part of the Christian identity. This is based on Jesus who bore our sins (v. 24) and who was our example (v. 21) and is now risen Shepherd (v. 25). The readers, like slaves, who see in Jesus a mirror-image of their own lives and would take heart from both the human experience of Jesus Christ and God's control of events in the long run.

- f. 1 Peter 3,18-22: these verses describe Jesus' twofold existence of Jesus as incarnate-redeemer and risen-victorious. Herein the essential point is that he is conqueror of all cosmic spirit-powers. It would bring assurance to the readers, when harassed and fearful, that Jesus, now exalted, is Lord of all - both human (those also in Sheol waiting for the redemption of Israel) and demonic.
- g. The distinctive elements in 1 Peter's picture of Christ are summed up in the title Lord (3,15). His phases of existence cover the range of (a) his life in God before his coming to earth where the spirit of Christ was active in the OT prophets; (b) his incarnate and human life marked by suffering and death, and resurrection which vindicated his obedience; (c) his final glory of the Son to the Father. Christ's present status is one of glory and exaltation but this does not rob him of an intimacy with his followers who find their life in Christ = in union with him as their deepest friend and love, and protector.

3. The Holy Spirit

While the role of the Holy Spirit is only briefly touched upon in this letter, most of the main elements of the work of the Spirit are still present herein. The Spirit's task of making the chosen people a choice people by promoting holy living (1,2), a function that led Peter to include an extended treatment of holiness (1,14-22; 3,15) which, in typical Pauline fashion, carries the twofold side of separation from moral evil and devotion to good (3,13).

4. The problems and responses of the Christian community

The suffering suffered by these Christian communities certainly stands at the forefront of the problems that they had. While not necessarily a suffering caused by official state policy, the hostility felt and experienced is felt in every line of the letter; they form a background for Peter's letter of encouragement and hope and allows him to give a strong eschatological perspective to this suffering. There is also another cause of suffering which was the cultural setting in which they found themselves in which was not always aligned with the Gospel - this caused social marginalization of Christians. For 1 Peter the responses are:

1. **Christian life is centered on hope** (1,3; 1,21; 3,5.15) **and sustained by a faith in God whose purposes are known in Christ** (1,21; 4,11). God is acknowledged in the opening prayer of thanksgiving (1,3) as the one who raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to the heights of honour (1,21; 3,21-22). This is Peter's starting-point and the guiding principle of his theology.
2. **Obedience to the call of the Good News, voiced by preachers who came to the Asian provinces was the response the readers have made.** The readers, thusly, became children of obedience.

Witness to the world marks out the Christian's call to obedience, whether to God or to those structures of society which are not against the Gospel. **This is founded on Christ's obedience to the cross.** As a witness to Christ in society, the Christian is called to holiness and is to present a life of attractive living (1,16-18) and to reflect the character of God in their life. In very down-to-earth terms, Christians are to be courteous and kind (3,8) within their fellowship and outside in the world (3,15); they are to practice good behaviour (3,16); ethical values are to be internalized by the cultivating of a gentle and tranquil spirit (3,4).

3. The Household codes show respect for authority but also that authority must follow the principles set in the paragraph above.
4. This is especially so for leaders in Christian communities (5,1-5). The elders are those whom are charged with guiding and protecting the Church wherein the divine shepherd is the ultimate authority (5,4). The younger ones, a junior branch of ecclesiastical oversight are to be submissive to the elders implying that they were not being so

The call to remain steadfast and firm in the face of life's problems and the oppositions' hostility sounds in various ways throughout this letter (1,3.21; 4,19; 5,9-11). This also has a present reality and an eschatological tone to it; presently we are to remain steadfast and cling to the Lord who justifies because he remained steadfast on the cross and his vindication and glorification is the foundation of our future glory and vindication in heaven: we must *endure* until the end to arrive at that glory.

3.3 EXEGESIS (1 PT 4,12-19)

Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ ξενίζεσθε τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν γινομένη ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος,	Beloved, do not be surprised about the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing as though some strange thing were happening to you.
¹³ ἀλλὰ καθὼς κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν χαίρετε, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι.	But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, rejoice so that you also at the unveiling of his glory you may rejoice and be overjoyed.
¹⁴ εἰ ὀνειδίζεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται.	If you are reviled in the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the spirit of glory and the spirit of God rests on you.
¹⁵ μὴ γάρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος·	By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a busybody.
¹⁶ εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ.	But, if as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed; rather, in this name, let him glorify God.
¹⁷ ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ' ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ;	For it is time for judgment to begin with the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will become of those who do not obey the Gospel of God?
¹⁸ καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβὴς καὶ ἁμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται;	And, if it is with difficulty that righteous is saved, how will the godless one and the sinner shine?
¹⁹ ὥστε καὶ οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῶ κτίστη παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ.	Therefore, let those who suffer, according to the will of God, entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

SOME GRAMMATICAL POINTS

v. 12: μὴ ξενίζεσθε. The presence of the negative particle μὴ is due to the following verb in the imperative mood.

v. 13: χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι. The present participle (ἀγαλλιώμενοι) is to be interpreted modally. I have interpreted the participle as concomitant action (the rejoicing and being overjoyed are two actions that happen at the same time). The KJV interprets it as ‘rejoicing with exceeding joy’ – this is also possible. A third option is to see this as a Semitism – a hendiadys – which is when two nouns are interpreted as one action.

v. 14: εἰ ὀνειδίζεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ μακάριοι. This is a conditional clause. The markers are εἰ + ὀνειδίζεσθε (present passive indicative) in the protasis, an understood ἔστε (present indicative) in the apodosis. This makes it a *first-class conditional clause*. This type of conditional clause is defined as “The Condition of Logical Connection.”¹² This means that *being blessed* is not something that is necessarily true; it is true *if and only if* the person is persecuted due to that person’s faith.

v. 14: ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα. The neuter nominative πνεῦμα is clumsily found at the end of the phrase; this is especially seen in the placement of two articles right after each other: τὸ τῆς and τὸ τοῦ. Both τῆς and τοῦ are genitives while both τὸ and τὸ are neuter nominatives. The easiest explanation is that the noun πνεῦμα governs both neuter nominative articles and this was done in order that the noun πνεῦμα was not repeated. However, in translation, it ought to be translated twice for clarity.

v. 17: εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ. In this clause, there are no *real* verbal forms. The articular participle (τῶν ἀπειθούντων) is to be interpreted as a substantive. The verb ‘to be’ is to be understood in both parts of the clause. In this case, the markers would be: εἰ + ἔστιν (present indicative) in the first part and ἔσται (future indicative) in the second part. The ἔσται in the second part is best understood logically rather than a real future. These two questions are asking a logical rhetorical question: if judgement starts with us, then what will happen to them? This is made clearer in the rhetorical questions of the next verse.

v. 18: σῶζεται ... φανεῖται. It may seem that these two verbs, to save and to shine, have nothing to do with each other. In fact, the NRSV does not translate φανεῖται as ‘will shine’ but rather as ‘what will become’. But *shining and light* are terms deeply connected with the paradigm of divine glory and therefore it is typical of the larger language of salvation and justification. Therefore, the term φανεῖται should be translated accordingly.¹³

v. 19: ὥστε καὶ. These two words are to be interpreted together: therefore.

v. 19: οἱ πάσχοντες. The article + participle structure = substantive.

v. 19: κατὰ τὸ θέλημα. Prepositional phrase. κατὰ + accusative case = according to.

v. 19: πιστῷ κτίστη παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν. The compound verb (παρατίθημι; πάρα + τίθημι) has two different meanings. In the active/passive voice, it means exactly what the compound implies: to place (τίθημι) beside

¹² J. L. BOYER, “First Class Conditions. What do they mean?”, *GTJ* 2 (1981) 82. See also SCHEMBRI, *When Your Eye is ἀπλοῦς*, 164-166.

¹³ For more, see SCHEMBRI, *When Your Eye is ἀπλοῦς*, 177-182.

(πάρα). But in the middle voice, there is another nuance: to entrust [literally: to place someone/something in the care of something/someone else; the middle voice indicates a reciprocal relationship between entrusted and trustee]. Only the context can help us decide if it is a middle or a passive. It makes much more sense to see this verb as a real middle. In the case, as with other verbs of trusting and belief, you entrust something/someone (in the accusative) to something/someone (in the dative). What is being entrusted? The souls (τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν; note the accusative case (τὰς ψυχὰς); αὐτῶν is a genitive possessive indicating οἱ πάσχοντες – it refers back to those who suffer) of those who suffer due to being Christians. How to interpret the phrase πιστῷ κτίστῃ? πιστῷ can be parsed as a masculine dative singular adjective from πιστός, -ή, -όν. For its part, κτίστῃ can be parsed as a masculine dative singular noun from κτίστης. Hence, the adjective modifies the noun; the question being asked is what kind of creator? A faithful one.

v. 19: ἐν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ. This is a prepositional phrase: ἐν + dative (feminine dative singular noun from ἀγαθοποιία). The preposition has the meaning 'in' but has an instrumental value. Therefore, those who suffer entrust their souls to the faithful creator *by doing what is right*.

COMMENTARY

1. Summary of Pericope

While we do not wish to suffer, Peter rightly makes the claim that suffering should not come as a surprise for the Christian. When suffering comes, it can actually be an opportunity for joy and blessing. Peter explains that to suffer for being a Christian – in as much as s/he is a Christian and not because of other things – is to suffer according to the will of God. This indicates that the one who chooses fidelity to the pact even in the midst of suffering for being a Christian over abandonment is already undergoing eschatological judgement that will separate God's people from those who reject him.

2. Immediate Context

This pericope is the beginning pericope of a larger, final, passage (4,12–5,11), which concerns the consolation for the suffering people of God. Just before we find 1 Peter 4,7-11 which highlights the fact that we, as believers, must live out a lifestyle indicative of Christ's victory: being self-controlled and clear-minded for prayers, love one another for love covers sins, be hospitable, speak well, serve from the heart. The author of 1 Peter is no ignorant fool; he knows all too well that this type of behaviour will make one suffer. This is then taken up in 4,12-19. In 1 Peter 5,1-11, we find, first, the final exhortation to two parts of the community: the elders and the younger ones (5,1-5) and, secondly, an exhortation to the life of perfection: be humble so as to accept suffering, stand fast against the devil, trust in God to put things right (5,6-11). As for 1 Peter 4,12-19, we find three parts: 1. The blessing of suffering (vv. 12-16), suffering now as eschatological judgment (vv. 17-19), and 3. Trusting God even while suffering (v. 19).

3. Theology and comment

Suffering is to be avoided and if we suffer we are to do whatever is necessary to remove the cause so that we can return to a normal life. However, in the

ancient world, misfortunes like sickness or death or even injustices caused by evil doers was thought to be expected – it was a part of normal life and a part of the normal workings of the universe. This being said, even for the ancient world, the suffering that we are in front of is not normal especially when viewed from God's intention in creation and his plan in redemption. **Evil and sin have set their sights on the perfect one, Jesus Christ, and those disciples who are called to live the life of perfection as their master did. Therefore, those who follow the way are not to be surprised: they suffer just as Christ suffered and for the same reason: because evil and sin have set their sights on them. In the catastrophic world of God, then, suffering is a blessing because it marks one as belonging to God's obedient followers, upon whom his Spirit rests.**

Like in the times of the NT, we Christians find ourselves at odds with the socio-political values of the societies that we live in now; once again it is hard to remain an uncompromising Christian in a hostile world. If suffering for Christ should be the believer's experience, Peter re-frames it not as a reason of bitterness but that of joy; this is not about suffering in as much as suffering but rather suffering *because of being a Christian*.

The Christian who stands fast – who remains perfect and simple – will stand fast in an eschatological reality, which will outlast death and history itself. Of course, it is not a passing daydream: Peter rightly states that it is better to remain steadfast and suffer for Christ now – a time which passes – than to deny Christ, fall away, and suffer in the time when the kingdom is consummated. This is all more the more poignant coming from Peter, a man who denied Jesus three times.

Remaining steadfast is not a human endeavour; it only comes from simplicity and perfection in God – the perfect one trusts in God even in suffering. The faithful creator is the one who has the authority and power to judge all humanity justly. This trust is seen (as in 4,7-11) in doing good even when we are suffering.

4. THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO 2 PETER

This letter presents itself as an apostolic letter, a literary genre known to its author since it refers to “all the letters of Paul (3,15-16).” Its purpose is to settle matters of doctrinal controversy by the authority of the apostle Peter and thus admonish Christians against both false teachers and teachings.

A note on authorship. *We must be wary to apply modern notions of authorship onto ancient texts. The common misconception in modern times is that pseudepigraphy is equivalent to deception and is to be avoided. Also problematic is the tendency in modern times to return to the ipsissima vox Iesu – or, in this case, of Peter – thinking that if it does not then it is not authentic. Authorship in antiquity was communal; it was perfectly acceptable and even encouraged that later disciples take up the name of their master and write as if it was the master himself. Also, even if pseudepigraphy, it is still canonical and written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit [and this is what is essential in any canonical text]. Moreover, if pseudepigraphic, then it is the result of an effort to create a literary monument to important elements of authentic apostolic tradition: not only early Christian eschatology but also the important truth that, when rightly interpreted, the apostles Peter and Paul have delivered identical teachings. In fact, many details of the letter – such as the portrayal of Peter as a privileged eyewitness of the Transfiguration, as a recipient of revelation about his imminent death and as a brother of the apostle Paul, all of whose letters he knows and can interpret correctly, including the difficult passages – manifest the author’s intention not only to establish parity between Peter (witness to Jesus’ glory at the transfiguration, martyrdom, letters) and Paul (witness to Jesus’ glory on the road to Damascus, martyrdom, letters) but also to point out a significance in Peter’s mission not possessed by that of Paul (Peter as eyewitness from the beginning; the capacity for Peter to interpret the more difficult passages in Paul implies the claim that he possessed a more intimate knowledge of Paul’s mind than those who quote him to deride the Church’s ongoing eschatological expectation). Thusly, the apostle Peter, as presented by the letter, uses his privileged association with Christ and his claim to superior knowledge to interpret Paul’s letters.*

4.1 Authorship, date of composition, place of writing, genre, purpose, setting and addressees

Authorship, genre, dating, and purpose: The second epistle of Peter claims to be the work of the apostle under his Semitic name of Symeon (Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ; 1,1). The author claims that he was an eyewitness of the Transfiguration (1,16-18) and attests to have a relationship with Paul, his beloved brother (3,15). Due to these remarks, the traditional view is that this letter is the work of the apostle Peter. But the issue is not so easily resolved as there is counterbalancing evidence to point in other directions: (i) 2 Peter is of a later period than Peter’s own lifetime (after 65 AD) or (ii) it is the product of a group that reversed his memory and used his name as authority to publish a tract that has a situation in view much later than the 60s.

Indeed, this letter presents the strongest case of pseudepigraphy in the NT and the main reasons that exclude Peter's personal authorship have been well known since the nineteenth century.

The following is given as evidence:

1. The reference to some at least initial collection of Pauline letters in 3,15, raised to the level of scripture in 3,16
2. The extensive use made of the letter of Jude. There is a strong verbal link between the two books and there is a level of indebtedness to Jude. For instance at Jude 12b-13 // 2 Peter 2,17, the wandering stars are consigned to the gloom of darkness. This mixed metaphor in Jude is cleared up in 2 Peter by likening the false teachers to clouds and mists destined to disappear in the darkness.
3. The literary dependence of 2 Peter 1,16-18 on the Greek text of Mathew 17,4-5
4. Language of 2 Peter points to a late date
5. While 1 and 2 Peter have 153 words in common, there are differences: 1 Peter prefers 'apocalypse' to explain the glorious return of the Lord, 2 Peter uses Parousia. The flood in the time of Noah is a type of baptism in 1 Peter (3,20-21) but cosmic destruction in 2 Peter 2,5; 3,5-7. This paradox of common language but dissimilarities in style brings up the following conclusion:
 - a. The author of 2 Peter would then be considered as a devoted member of the Petrine school. He knew traditions about the early Palestinian church and its connection with the Holy Family (hence with Jude). And he was intent on assembling and publishing a testament to his teacher and his influence to meet a pressing need in his own day, now removed from the times of the apostles (since the fathers fell asleep: 3,4).
6. The testamentary character and **genre** of 2 Peter (1,13-15) is one of the clearest signs that it is post-Petrine. In form it is like T12P as a farewell speech based on Jewish and Christian models.
7. The false teachers appear to have been successful more so than in the earlier situation of Jude's writings. The readers are in danger of falling away (1,10), being exploited (2,3) and enticed (2,14) into an apostasy (3,17). For these reasons, 2 Peter gives stringent warnings. The opponents' appeal was evidently reinforced by the several-pronged accusation brought against the church leaders (explained better in structure). But generally speaking, they denied the reality of judgment and preferred an idiosyncratic interpretation of OT prophecy, pointing to the passing of the apostolic generation as proof that "prophecy does not work" in its predictive role (especially about the Parousia - they claim that it is a lie). 2 Peter offers the fullest rationale for the delay of the Parousia (2 Peter 3,3-9): **delay does not imply denial since ideas of time are not the same with God as with mortals, and in the waiting period God is gracious to allow space for repentance.** Yet this would not have appeased the opponents since there seem to have stressed the reality of salvation here and now, which basically denied any claim of a moral life since there was no prospect of judgment and accountability for deeds done in this life.

8. In this it fits the *Sitz im Leben* of works like 1 Clement (96 AD) and the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians.
9. The author of 2 Peter makes the claim of orthodoxy on the basis of Peter the apostle whose role was that of the guardian of the faith. Peter himself had successfully overcome rivals in his lifetime (Acts 8,9-25; Simon the magus, the archetype of false teaching)
10. The linkage of both Peter and Paul harks to a time when Paul's letters are already assembled (in all his letters; 3,16), are the object of study and are accorded a status and authority. This was only possible sometime after Paul's death.

For all these reasons, it seems best to assume to be composed by members of the school of Peter at a time when Peter's memory was cherished and his aegis claimed for teaching required to repeal rival teachers. As a pseudonym, it uses the name and authority of the chief apostle to convey teaching that his followers believed was in keeping with his abiding influence and continuing spirit in the Church. This is similar to how the Hebrew prophets lived on in the writings of their disciples or the teachings of Socrates and Plato were imitated in the later philosophical schools. This also means that the authors believed that the apostle's name could legitimately be used because he was believed to be living in heaven and speaking to the contemporary situation through his devoted friends and followers. **Dating is late, close to the end of 100 AD (the limit of revealed texts).**

Addressees and place of writing: The work is written to a group of Christian believers of unknown origin (1,1) but in which churches there were the presence of false teachers. The school of Peter functioned in Rome, which is the place of composition.

Structure of the letter

Letter opening (1,1-2)

Exordium (1,3-15)

Homiletic (1,3-11)

Autobiographical (1,12-15)

Probatio (1,16-3,13) which consists of a series of accusations against the false teachers and their claims refuted

First indictment (the hope of the Parousia is a myth) is refuted with a double appeal to eyewitness testament at the Transfiguration and to the evidence of the OT (1,16-19)

Second indictment (the appeal to OT prophecy is in vain) is refuted by the double assertion that prophetic interpretation rests on the *consensus fidelium* not on one's private whim and that OT prophets were spirit-inspired witnesses to the Parousia (1,20-21)

Third indictment (the heretical and immoral nature of the false teachers: they are doomed to ruin but do not recognize this fate) is refuted by the long appeal to history which shows how the wicked are punished and the righteous vindicated – the future Parousia with bring judgment and reward (2,1-10)

A digression which denunciations or the moral practice of the sectarians (2,10-22)

Fourth indictment and its refutation about the lie of the Parousia (3,1-13)

There are many proofs: the flood happened to validate God's words (3,5-6); the fire will burn up the old creation at the Parousia (3,7); delay is relative to the position of *ex parte hominis* and not *ex parte Dei* (3,8); the delay is a gracious sign of divine forbearance (3,9); the apostles taught that the Parousia will come (3,10)

Transition to moral application which calls for patience and holy living (3,11-13)

Peroratio (3,14-18): Closing

4.3 THE THEOLOGY OF THE LETTER OF 2 PETER

1. Setting

It ought to be remembered that this letter shares more in common with Jude than to 1 Peter. This letter presents itself as expressing a number of distinctive theological features. It shares much of the apocalyptic world-view belonging to Jude, though its opponents are not quite the same. In Jude, the false teachers were itinerant prophetic types who infiltrated the congregation from the outside with a rival message of salvation. Their ground of authority was evidently a charismatic awareness that overrode the apostolic traditions and faith. Jude denied this claim by branding it as not of the spirit. **In 2 Peter, the opponents are less well defined. They share much of the same condemnation for their immoral ways and influence (2 Peter 2,1-3. 10-22) and their catchwords (2,19) were “freedom” and “no fear of future judgment”. They**

showed no respect for angels (2,10) and they openly paraded their supposed immunity for moral evil (2,10.13-14). Like Jude, the root problem arose from a false conception of Christian salvation in which future hope was eliminated in a concentration on present experience which accounts for the impunity with which the opponents defy moral claims and assert that the world goes on its way with no prospect of a day of accountability. In 2 Peter, this seems to be the background of their rationale in 3,3-13 as 2 Peter seeks to refute it by appealing to the orthodox Christian eschatology of both a final wind-up to history and a reminder of judgement to come.

2. Themes

God

- a. **God as creator:** as in the OT, 2 Peter proclaims that the universe came into existence by divine fiat (3,5). Particularly important for 2 Peter is the distinction of earth and water as it allows him to expose the flood in the time of Noah as divine judgment; the flood was not a natural occurrence but rather a divine act (2,5) wrought by the same powerful word that brought creation into being. From this position, he goes on to establish that the present world order (3,7) is destined for God's judgement with adverse results for the godless but also the promise of a new creation drawn from Isaiah 65,17; 66,22 as a reassurance to his readers. Indeed, if the opponents are willfully ignorant of past history (3,5), the audience of 2 Peter is not (3,8-10). The so-called delay of judgement is not a weakness of God; rather he holds back the Day of Judgment as a sign of his patience and his love. Yet when the dreaded day finally arrives, it will come as a thief in the night (for evil doers) and will herald the birth of a new cosmic order by dissolving the existing order with a roar (3,10). The ultimate goal of such a Day is optimistic as it is God's purpose to restore create to its pristine beauty and harmony.
- b. **God as judge:** this is based on the scoffers' excuse that the coming of the Lord is delayed (3,3) and the course of history flows without interruption or break (3,4). Some Christians come and gone and yet the Parousia was nowhere in sight. For 2 Peter, this skepticism is not the outcome of neutral observation but rather of an ungodly disposition that turns way from the apostolic teaching which derives from the Lord's own commandment (2,21; 3,3). These false teachers are no better than the false prophets of the OT (2,1):
 - a. The introduce false teaching (2,1) which denies the Lord who saves his people either by renouncing him or by their attitude to him and his Parousia
 - b. The attract to themselves a considerable following (2,2) from the among the faithful and encourage them to take immorality and sexual laxity (2,7.18; see also Jude 4)
 - c. They are governed by love of money (2,3) with their greed for gain and an exploitation of the congregation.

- d. All the above are ripe for judgement. This is introduced in 2,3-4 as judgment is inevitable. The author uses past history to show that this is so (2,4-6). The antithesis is then seen in 5,7-8 as past examples of deliverance (Noah, Lot) act as a foil to the dark side of judgment which falls on:
 - i. Angels who sinned vs Angels who remained faithful
 - ii. The world of the flood vs Noah
 - iii. Sodom and Gomorrah vs Lot

Christ, Lord and Saviour

The Christology of 2 Peter lies somewhat in the shadow of the characteristics of God as creator and judge. Yet there are some notable features:

- a. High honours are ascribed to Jesus Christ (1,1) who is described to be both God and saviour
- b. Jesus is also Lord and Saviour (1,11; 3,18). Lord indicates Jesus' glorified state and the right to rule both humanity and the cosmos.
- c. The testimony of the Transfiguration (1,16-18) which is introduced here so as to refute dependence on myths by appealing to eyewitness accounts and to collocate power and Parousia so as to refute the false teachers' claim that the Parousia is a myth (3,1-4.12). Power and Parousia put together is in reference to the already (1,11) and not yet nature (3,12) of God's kingdom.

Authority and Christian Living

2 Peter builds its case on the authority emanating from the Lord (1,17) and transmitted to the church in the medium of prophetic scriptures (1,19-21; 3,2.15-17). These verses contain some of the clearest illustrations of how a community like the leaders behind 2 Peter met and responded to the threat of deviance and what they considered error (2,15-16). Also in 1,3-11, the ethical qualities that out the true people of God is discussed: **Christian life is a response to strenuous and stringent demands but is enabled for divine empowerment. It is God's intent that when Christians take seriously their calling and election, they will be fortified by his grace and brought to eternal felicity in Christ's ultimate kingdom, which is their possession. In that state, they are both warned not to desert (that is: to persevere and endure in their simplicity) and encouraged to mature (3,17-18) towards perfection.**

4.4 EXEGESIS (2 PT 1,5-11)

Καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δὲ σπουδῇ πᾶσαν παρεισενέγκαντες ἐπιχορηγήσατε ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ τὴν γνῶσιν,	Now, for this very reason, applying all eagerness, supply, in your faith, moral excellence; and, in your moral excellence, knowledge;
⁶ ἐν δὲ τῇ γνώσει τὴν ἐγκράτειαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐγκρατεῖα τὴν ὑπομονήν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ὑπομονῇ τὴν εὐσέβειαν,	and, in knowledge, self-control; and, in self-control, perseverance; and, in perseverance, godliness;
⁷ ἐν δὲ τῇ εὐσεβείᾳ τὴν φιλαδελφίαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ τὴν ἀγάπην.	and, in godliness, brotherly kindness; and, in brotherly kindness, love.
⁸ ταῦτα γὰρ ὑμῖν ὑπάρχοντα καὶ πλεονάζοντα οὐκ ἀργοὺς οὐδὲ ἀκάρπους καθίστησιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπίγνωσιν·	For, if these things be in you, and abound, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
⁹ ὥ γὰρ μὴ πάρεστιν ταῦτα, τυφλὸς ἐστὶν μυωπάζων, λήθην λαβὼν τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν.	For, he who lacks these things, is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten that he received purification from his former sins.
¹⁰ διὸ μᾶλλον, ἀδελφοί, σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλῆσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι· ταῦτα γὰρ ποιοῦντες οὐ μὴ πταίσητέ ποτε.	Instead of this, brothers, be all the more eager to make certain your calling and election: for, as long as you do these things, you will never stumble.
¹¹ οὕτως γὰρ ὑμῖν ἡ εἵσοδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πλουσίως ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται.	For, in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Grammatical point

v. 9: λήθην λαβὼν τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν. The phrase λήθην λαμβάνω τινός [note the genitive] is idiomatic and means to be oblivious of something.

Commentary

These verses (2 Peter 1,5-11) are found within a larger pericope (2 Peter 1,3-11) but, as the main clause starts in verse 5, it was deemed that we start here [vv. 3-4 state: *His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature.*]. Indeed, whereas vv. 3-4 consists in a preamble that highlights the importance of divine power and the promise for life and the duty that comes with this promise, vv. 5-11 is an urgent appeal to ascend in virtue. This second part of the pericope show how the recipients of God's blessing become participants in the divine nature and thus themselves become benefactors.

In 2 Peter 1,1-2, we find the greeting of the letter so typical of the genre. After, in 2 Peter 1,12-2,22, we find the contrast between apostolic teaching and the false teachers.

In vv. 5-7, we find a list of virtues, which is typical of the lists found elsewhere (for instance Gal 5,22-26). This form of ethical instruction was a well-recognized mode of moral teaching in the ancient world. This moral instruction is presented by using the literary device known as the *climax* or ladder: it is a set of statements which proceed, step by step, to a climactic conclusion where each statement picks up a key last word of the preceding one. As with Paul in 1 Cor 13, the climax of ethical behavior is love. The outcome of knowing God and becoming partakers of the divine character (2 Peter 1,4) is progress in moral character. Peter places the virtue list over against the immorality of the false teacher (2 Peter 2,18) who have committed apostasy (1,9) and seek to carry others away in their error (3,17). Diligence in moral ascendancy is the antidote for the moral decline addressed in this correspondence.

In vv. 8-9, Peter contrasts the condition of those who demonstrate and progress in virtue with those who do not display them. Those who do not display them are blind. The blindness that Peter is discussing is spiritual blindness. We know that there is a great link between the eye and the heart and they are tethered together. If we do not live the lifestyle indicative of perfection and simplicity therefore we will not receive light, typical of the language of blessing, and therefore we will be blind (darkened). The one who does these virtues will have an illuminated heart-eye and therefore will not stumble (vv. 10-11).¹⁴

¹⁴ For more on the matter, see SCHEMBRI, *When Your Eye is ἀπλοῦς*, 53-58, 169-173, 201-218.

5. CONCLUSION: THE IMPORTANCE OF CATHOLIC EPISTLES IN RELATION TO THE BIBLICAL CORPUS

Throughout this course, we have made many remarks concerning the fact that the Catholic Epistles are not extra-biblical nor are they only to be seen as secondary to other biblical texts. **They are an actualization of Gospel truth in the life of the believer; the truths discovered in these letters are timeless truths and go to the heart of the Christian endeavor, which is a cleaving on to Christ.**

Yet, this also means that the CE are rooted in a tradition that is definitely scriptural and there many echoes that we can find in the OT and NT.

For instance, many scholars notice that James reflects an inherently Jewish character – particularly towards the Psalms and Wisdom tradition as well as with the Torah, such as texts as the love commandment of Lev 19,10-18 (in this way even the love commandment of Lev 19,10-18 is entrenched in wisdom tradition).¹⁵ For instance:

Lev 19,10: show concern for the poor and the sojourner (Jam 2,1-6.15-16.25)

Lev 19,12: do not swear falsely (Jam 5,12)

Lev 19,13: do not oppress one's neighbour (Jam 5.1-6)

Lev 19,15: do not show partiality (Jam 2,1-11)

Lev 19,16: do not slander or falsely accuse (Jam 4,11)

Lev 19,17-18: do not hate brother in heart but love neighbour as self (Jam 2,8; 4,1)

This shows that James made a sustained use of material originating from Lev 19. Yet, it is also most likely that this use is taken from the NT's use of Lev 19 rather from Lev 19 itself: especially as seen in Matthew 5–7; Luke 6 (the sermon on the mount/plain).

Proverbs also seem to be at the background of James; this is no surprise due to Proverbs being entrenched in Wisdom Literature as it sees the source of true wisdom as God and in its characteristically Wisdom ethics (lifestyle). For instance:

James 4,6 (see also Directly citing Proverbs 3,34
5,20)

James 1,5 + Prov Getting wisdom from God
2,3-6

¹⁵ Akiyama interprets the love command (specifically Lev 19,17-18) as wisdom wherein "the love command has a fundamentally admonitory tenor and concerns both external and internal aspects [...Thusly,] ethical commands in the Pentateuchal law are less regulative and more exhortative, designed to instil ethical insights rather than dictate behavioural norms or even adjudicate disputes." See K. AKIYANA, "How can Love be Commanded? On not reading Lev 19,17-18 as Law", *Bib* 98 (2017) 8.

James 1,3 + Prov Testing
27,21
James 2,6 + Prov Concern for poor
14,21
James 3,6 + Prov Tongue
16,27

Due to the fact that Ben Sirach reflects much of the Proverbs, it is little wonder that James is said to have 32 points of contact with this book. For instance, the warning in Jam 3 about the dangers on the tongue is seen in Sir 19,6-12.16; 20,5-7.18-19; 28,13-26.

James (Jam 5,1-6) also echoes the prophets such as Amos 6 in the scathing remarks on landowners.

But most of all there is a great link between James and the Wisdom of Jesus. Jesus, as a teacher of Wisdom was entrenched in this same tradition by exhorting all would be followers to take up a certain style of life. This is particularly seen in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain. Indeed, we can witness the following links:

James		Matthew 5–7 (and Luke)
1,2	Joy in suffering	5,11-12 (Lk 6,22)
1,4	Be perfect	5,48 (Lk 6,36)
1,5-6	Ask in faith	7,7 (Lk 11,9)
1,10	Riches are like grass	6,30 (Lk 12,28)
1,17	The Father gives good things	7,11 (Lk 11,13)
1,19-20	Do not be angry	5,22
1,22-23	Hearing and doing	7,24-26 (Lk 6,47-49)
2,5	God chooses the poor	5,3-5 (Lk 6,20)
2,10	Doing the whole law	5,18-19
2,11	Murder and adultery	5,21-30
2,13	Mercy triumphs	5,7 (Lk 6,36)
3,12	Fruit indicates the tree	7,16-18 (Lk 6,43-44)
3,18	Peacemakers	5,9
4,4	Serving two lords	6,24 (Lk 6,33)
4,8	Pure in heart	5,8
4,10	God exalts the humble	5,5
4,11	Do not judge	7,1-2
4,13-15	Do not worry about tomorrow	6,34
5,2-3	Moth-eaten treasures	6,19-21
5,10	Prophets as examples	5,11-12
5,12	Do not swear	5,32-34

In the other CE, the links are much more vague, but there are still echoes therein. In 1 Peter for instance, it is not true that there are no echoes to the eyewitness of Jesus: for instance, in 1 Pt 1,3-9, Peter implies that, while the readers did not see Jesus (v. 6), he had (v. 3). Again, the reference to witness in 5,1 is taken to mean that Peter is calling himself an eyewitness to the person of Jesus, a witness also reflected in 2,22-25. Other echoes of the sayings of Jesus are found in 1 Pt 3,14; 4,14 (with Mt 5,10), concerning the blessedness of the righteous who suffers. Also 1 Pt 2,12b + Mt 5,11-12 both discuss good works being glory to God. He also cites Lev 19,2 (1 Peter 1,16) and echoes Isa 40,6-8 at 1 Pt 1,24-25. In 1 Pt 2,3, he alludes to Ps 34,8 (taste the Lord). In 1 Pt 3,10-12, he cites Ps 34,12-16 LXX + 1 Pt 3,14 cites Isa 8,12-14 concerning the believers need to follow Christ's example. Significantly, Peter cites second Isaiah and the suffering servant poems:

1 Pt 2,22 + Isa 53,9: the servant committed no sin, no deceit was found in his mouth

1 Pt 2,23 + Isa 53,7: the Servant did not despise in return

1 Pt 2,24 + Isa 53,4-5: the Servant bore our sins; by his wounds we are healed

1 Pt 2,25 + Isa 53,6: we all like sheep went astray

Peter concludes the letter with two citations from the book of Proverbs: in 1 Pt 4,18 = Prov 11,31 LXX and in 1 Pt 5,5 = Prov 3,34 LXX (also cited in James 4,6).

We had also alluded to the links that there are between 2 Peter and Jude:

2 Peter	Jude	As we have said, one can easily notice that a good portion of Jude is also found in 2 Peter. This requires either: (a) Jude draws on Peter; (b) 2 Peter draws on Jude; (c) a common source. While (c) is helpful because it would account for the similarities and differences, these same similarities and differences can be also accounted for by means of (b) 2 Peter drawing on Jude as 2 Peter could of adapted Jude to his own end. Also the similarity in order favours literary dependency. To date, answer (b) fits the data best. Jude, it is to be recalled, is also aware of 1 Enoch and other OTP and draws on the OT. Also Jude's midrashic method shows an affinity with exegesis practiced at Qumran. 2 Peter 2,22 cites Prov 26,11
2,1	4	
2,2	4	
2,3	4	
2,4	6	
2,6	7	
2,9	6	
2,10	7b-8	
2,11	9	
2,12	10	
2,15	11	
2,13	12a	
2,17	12b-13	
2,18	16	
3,1-2	17	
3,3	18	
3,24	24	
3,18	25	

The above survey of the ways in which the CE made use of scriptural tradition is hardly exhaustive. Yet, it demonstrates the remarkable ways in which the NT writers used both Israel's scriptures as well as earlier NT texts. It demonstrates that any author who believes that these NT texts are bereft of theology or that they are alien to the rest of the NT ought to be deemed as suspect. They indeed reflect the variety of scriptural uses in the larger Judeo-Christian world of the first century AD. What is more is that, while there are many factors, such as the reason for writing, the author's own command of scriptures, the scriptural knowledge of those addressed, the genre of writing, etc. which accounts for *how* CE make use of scriptures, there is no denying that they are steeped in the traditions that are found throughout the bible. Also, the theological applications of these same letters have a considerable scope: Christology and Ecclesiology are on the forefront of all letters discussed. Ultimately, these writers, by their varied use of the OT and NT, bear witness to the unity between the history of Israel, the coming of Christ, and the history of the early Church. This consciousness of the salvation-historical connectedness of God's people of all times provided a common, fertile ground for the argumentation of different writers of the CE. Scriptures (OT/NT) provided the quarry from which the raw materials could be taken and re-interpreted according to the needs of the day. It is inappropriate to require these writers to have a slavish adherence to the OT and NT texts as the way of citing and recalling events was not only different in the ancient world but also unnecessary for those who knew scriptures by heart. Like a potter works with his clay, shaping and reshaping it to mold it into the form he desires, these authors were allowed to shape and mold their sources as they saw fit (redaction criticism); this is in perfect harmony with the inspired quality of these texts as the primary author is the Holy Spirit. After all, as Paul states in 2 Cor 3,16-18: "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory,

are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

In conclusion, the CE corpus is not simply that part of the NT which is studied for completion sake; rather, this corpus not only gives us a picture of the early Church and the difficulties it had to overcome but also, and more importantly, timeless and perennial answers to those questions which go to the heart of the Christian story: The Christian must cleave to Christ, the Lord and Savior, in order to gain access to the inner desire of the heart: salvation; at the same time, the one who cleaves to the Lord must live a certain style of life (perfection, simplicity, love of God and neighbor) not because it is good to do good and avoid evil but because the status as child of light, clinging to God, demands that we act in a certain way. Also, the Christian endeavor is no soft pillow and in no way escapist (opium); by no means will we not suffer in this world due to our faith (Christ suffered before us) but God has shown us the way and, through divine pedagogy, God now uses suffering to temper our faith as fire tempers steel. Lastly, the present blessings of the Christian pale in comparison to the real blessing and the crown of life that we shall have when the Kingdom of God comes to its final consummation when the only light needed will be the glorious, saving light of the Lord.