James and Jude

William F. Brosend II
The Louisville Institute

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Contents

I. Introduction

I intended to write that the present commentary was an attempt to address the status of the letters of James and Jude as "overlooked, ignored, and forgotten." As the Suggested Reading list shows, this is really no longer the case. And now, following the announcement in November 2002 that an Israeli antiquities dealer was in possession of an ossuary, or bone box, with an inscription reading "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus," James is enjoying unprecedented publicity.[1]

James then, and to a lesser extent Jude, may now be said to be well studied and fairly treated. To be sure, both letters still suffer from a traditional tendency to read them along with the wrong conversation partners – James and Paul, Jude and 2 Peter – as if the only questions of importance were the relationship of the apostles Paul and Peter and the letters James and Jude, respectively. But the work of Richard Bauckham, Luke T. Johnson, and Jerome Neyrey, among others, has done much to correct biases even as longstanding as these.

Why and for whom is this volume written? It is written for the Church by one who has spent most of the last quarter century as a parish pastor and as a seminary professor, not always balancing the two roles as well as might be wished but always trying to allow each role to inform, question, and shape the other. This reading of the letters of James and Jude is very much indebted to the readings, formal and informal, emerging from the Church in years past and is submitted not as a corrective but in the hope of furthering the conversation

[1] See Hershel Shanks and Ben Witherington III, *The Brother of Jesus: The Dramatic Story and Significance of the First Archaeological Link to Jesus and His Family* (New York: Harper SanFrancisco, 2003). Having viewed the ossuary myself I have no doubt about its antiquity but recognize there are disagreements over its authenticity and over the claims of some for its significance. A few years earlier a smaller splash was made by Robert Eisenman with the publication of *James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1997). Eisenman argued, to almost universal rejection and no small amount of ridicule, that James was the "teacher of righteousness" in the documents of Qumran.

and encouraging others to attend more seriously to what James and Jude say to us today. It is also an attempt to read the letters in light of the insights of sociorhetorical interpretation, particularly as found in the work of Vernon Robbins, a method that will be presented more fully at the end of the Introduction, following consideration of authorship, dating, occasion, and other customary issues. The commentary likewise brings to bear the significant insights of a generation of biblical criticism informed by the social sciences, particularly cultural anthropology, something that Neyrey has done for Jude but that has largely not been applied to James.

Bauckham notes, "Most introductory issues can really only be settled as a result of detailed exegesis."[2] One must start somewhere, however, and because my conclusions about the authorship of the letters of James and Jude both keep with the tradition and step outside of much current scholarship, it is a good place to begin. That said, conclusions about authorship, dates, and occasions of composition are interrelated, and the reader is invited to consider all three before making an evaluation of any one.

AUTHORS

Trends in scholarly opinion ebb and flow. As we will see in the section on reception and interpretation, Martin Luther was not the first to have questions about the letter of James, and the letter of Jude seems to have received a mixed reception almost from its composition. There were also early doubts about the identity of the letters' authors. Nevertheless, conventional opinion identified both letters with one or another of the New Testament (NT) personages bearing the name James (Gk. *Iakōbos*) or Jude (Gk. *Ioudas*), traditionally the two brothers of the Lord.

Fairly early in the history of modern, critical, biblical scholarship, and certainly by the time of F. C. Baur and the flourishing of the Tübingen School (mid-nineteenth century), conventional opinion changed, largely as a result of the late dating of both letters, the topic of the next section. The reasoning was, and remains, clear-cut: because the letters of James and Jude were understood to show evidence of concern for issues thought to be "early Catholic" (dulled eschatological expectations and organizational, *episcopal* concerns, etc.), they must be dated in the nineties CE or after, making it impossible for James, who was executed in 62, and unlikely for Jude to be the authors. Additionally, because James was generally read as if written in conversation and/or dispute with Paul, the letter has been held to be in response to Paul, and so again dated to a time after the death of James. And because Jude is read largely with regard to its

[2] Richard Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), p. 3.

relationship to 2 Peter, it is often dated alongside (or after, depending on the decision about priority of Jude/2 Peter) the usual late dating of that letter.

Questions of authorship seem often answered in tandem with questions of dating, and because there is generally held to be more "evidence" within the letters suggestive of date, authorship is circumscribed by date. But what happens if one separates the two? Moreover, what happens when one reads the letters of James and Jude on their own merits and not in light of any real or imagined relationship to the letters of Paul and Peter? Then the question changes, and the presumption returns to more traditional identifications. One is compelled to ask, what are the reasons to deny authorship to James and Jude, the brothers of the Lord?[3] First, one must identify the "James" and "Jude" in question.

Jude is the conventional rendering of Judas in the first verse of the epistle, but the Greek is *Ioudas*, so the task is to distinguish, or identify, the Judas of the letter from the other Judases in the NT, for the name occurs thirty-six times.

- twenty-two times the reference is to Judas ("Iscariot"), the betrayer.
- two times (Lk 6:16, Acts 1:13) the reference is to "Judas of James" (*Ioudas Iakōbou*) in Luke's list of the twelve.
- three times in Acts 15 the reference is to "Judas Barsabbas."
- Acts (9:11) mentions a Judas who hosts Saul before his sight is restored and a "Judas the Galilean" (5:37) whose revolt against the census in 6 CE is discussed by Josephus.
- Jn (14:22) includes a question from Judas identified in the Greek text as *ouch ho Iskariōtēs* ("not the Iscariot"), a phrase omitted in New Standard Revised Version (NRSV).
- Mt 13:55 and Mk 6:3 relate the Nazarean synagogue member's identification of Jesus as the "brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon."

While from time to time one or another writer has argued otherwise, the vast majority of scholars agree that the letter of Jude intends its author to be understood as one of the brothers of Jesus.

Is this identification authentic? I conclude that it is, insofar as one can identify any biblical author with a historical person. First, removing the late dating limits the reasons not to accept this identification to one or another version of the "early Catholic" canard and to the objection that a Galilean farmer or craftsman could

[3] While I understand the Marian issues that bear upon discussions of the fraternal relationship of Jesus, James, and Jude, there is not room to discuss them, nor does it impact the commentary to follow. The interested reader may turn to Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), pp. 19–32.

not write sophisticated Greek. As we will see in the commentary, there is nothing "early Catholic" about Jude.[4] The letter pulses throughout with anticipation of the Lord's return, cares nothing for office or position, and deals with a dispute easily understood as possible in earliest Jewish Christianity. As for writing Greek, Sevenster[5] and others have seriously called into question the depiction of the apostles as "illiterate Galilean fishermen," and if that does not convince, one always has recourse to the use of scribes, something we know happened in at least some NT writings (2 Th 3:17). In other words, there is no good reason *not* to accept the letter of Jude as coming from the brother of James. But did *this* brother write the letter attributed to him? And why did neither come right out and self-identify as a "brother of the Lord"?

"James" (*Iakōbos*) occurs forty-two times in the NT.

- twenty-one references are to the "son of Zebedee, brother of John," whose execution in 44 CE is recorded in Acts 12:2, the last mention of this member of the inner circle of the twelve.
- four references are to the "son of Alphaeus," one of the twelve.
- four references are to the "son of Mary" and "brother of Joses/Joseph" at the burial of Jesus.
- two references are to the father of Judas.
- two references are to the brother of Jesus by the Nazarean synagogue members.
- eight references are without designation.
- one reference, Gal 1:19, is to James, "the Lord's brother."

The last three sets are all accepted as one and the same person, for in early Christian history there is only one "James" who needed no further introduction: James, the brother of the Lord, who according to Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.200) was executed in 62 CE.

Did this James compose the letter of the same name? Certainly, as in the case of Jude, the letter was understood by its author to have been written by someone who needed no further introduction. On this everyone agrees. The letter of James purports to have been written by the brother of the Lord. But was it in fact? Here the burden, it seems to me, shifts to those who think that it was not, and they of course are many. But their reasons are few and generally cluster around a late dating, which will be discussed, a "tension" between the concerns of James found in the letter and the depiction of James's concerns in Acts and Galatians, and the sophisticated level of composition, which is denied, almost in

4 This is not to assume that the designation "early Catholic" is still useful. Recent research into the trajectories of early Christianity have largely put aside this nineteenth-century interpretation.

5 "Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?" *Novum Testamentum Supplement* 19 (1968).

the spirit of Nathaniel's "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46), to James. As seen with regard to Jude, the argument about composition is not telling. Nor, I think, is the very small glimpse of James found in Acts 15 and 21 and Gal 1–2 decisive. That Paul's rhetoric in Galatians and likely his attitude were tendentious, is indisputable. The danger of allowing Paul to have the deciding vote about the character and priorities of James is well evidenced by Luther. To say that the concerns evidenced in Acts do not match those of the letter is to forget that Paul is the center of the second half of Acts, so that James is likely to have been somewhat caricatured. There is also a tendency to overstate the significance of the two-part requirement of Acts 15:29 and 21:25 (abstain from certain meats and from fornication), and in turn to read the ethical concerns in the letter of James as if James had no interest in purity issues, thereby creating a tension between the depiction of "James" in Acts and the "James" apparent in the letter. That this tension is an artificial creation is evidenced, for example, by the very real purity concerns in James 3:17 and 4:8.

Among authors who have influenced this commentary, Martin Dibelius, Hubert Frankemölle, Sophie Laws, Pheme Perkins, and Bo Reicke deny authorship to James, and Ralph Martin and Robert Wall make recourse to later editing of Jacobean tradition, while James Adamson, Richard Bauckham, Patrick Hartin, Luke Johnson, and Douglas Moo affirm the traditional designation. Because I am unconvinced by arguments for a late dating and, as will be indicated in the commentary, hold that the work itself shows every evidence of being very early indeed, and because I am not persuaded that we know enough to deny authorship based on theories of what early Christians could or could not write, with or without use of a scribe, I accept the traditional designation as the basis for my reading. *James and Jude, the authors of the letters bearing their names, were the brothers of Jesus.* The really interesting question is what happens when one reads the letters based on this position.

DATES

Having claimed that our authors are "the brothers of the Lord" I have implicitly accepted a *terminus ad quem* of 62 CE for James and presumably not much later for Jude. I believe the internal evidence of both letters supports this conclusion. Johnson outlines six points in favor of an early date for James. The first four are most telling.

1. "James lacks any of the classic signs of late, pseudonymous authorship" (elaboration of author's identity, rationalization for delay of "parousia," tradition viewed as "deposit" rather than process, etc.).
2. "James reflects the social realities and outlooks appropriate to a sect in the early stages of life."

3. The shape of Jesus' sayings in James is similar to that of Q, so the arguments for placing Q within early Palestinian Christianity should also apply to James.
4. "The best way to account for the similarity and difference" between the language of James and Paul "is to view them both as first generation Jewish Christians deeply affected by Greco-Roman moral traditions yet fundamentally defined by an allegiance to the symbols and story of Torah."[6]

In the present commentary particular attention will be given to the sociocultural realities (2) and to the way James uses material we now identify as sayings of Jesus (3). The ecclesial and cultural realities seem best dated before the fall of Jerusalem and placed within Palestine, while the rather nonchalant handling of Jesus material is evidence of a time very early in the tradition. For these reasons I join with Adamson, Bauckham, Hartin, and Johnson in *dating the composition of the letter of James to the fifties* CE, *making it one of the earliest writings in the NT*.[7]

Jude is likely not dated quite so early and has one internal piece of evidence that must be explained.[8] Jude 17 says, "But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." The verse will be considered in detail in the commentary, but the idea that predictions said by apostles must be remembered suggests to many an *apostolic age* that is past, even long past, by the time the letter of Jude is written. Yet there is nothing in the construction itself that suggests a distant past, just a prior action, in this case action by apostles, perhaps but likely not including the author. Moreover, Paul calls to mind prior teachings (1 Th 4:1–2; Gal 1:9; 1 Cor 15:1) and refers to a central portion of his own teaching as "received from the Lord" (1 Cor 11:23); yet this is not thought to suggest a late date for his letters. When the objections to v. 17 are removed, and one appreciates that the words and actions of the opponents are hardly inconsistent with that of Paul's descriptions of the Corinthians, for example, what stands out is the sense of being in "the last times" (v. 18) when readers should "look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life" (v. 21) – in other words, an expectation usually identified with earliest Christianity. While it is not possible to offer a precise date, nor is there a *terminus* provided by the date of Jude's death, which is not mentioned in any source, *it seems best to interpret the letter as*

6 Luke T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, Anchor Bible 37A (New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 118–21.

7 John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 118–39, attempted to place James on "the frontier between Judaism and Christianity" and dated it to before the Jerusalem council, i.e., 47–8.

8 Scholarship's more sophisticated understanding of gnosticism has resulted in setting aside the idea that Jude's opponents were either gnostic or proto-gnostic. See R. Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter* (1983), pp. 11–13.

having been written prior to the fall of Jerusalem and thus sometime before 70 CE.[9]

OCCASIONS

Jude makes it easy. Whatever one concludes about who he was, when he wrote, and to whom he was writing, he tells us why he wrote. He even tells us why he was going to write a letter he apparently never got around to writing. "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" (v. 3). In form (sender, v. 1a; addressee, v. 1b; blessing, v. 2; thesis, vv. 3–4; body, vv. 5–23; doxology, vv. 24–5) Jude is clearly a letter, and by the letter's own admission it was written as warning, condemnation, and encouragement to a community confronted with suspect teachers and/or leaders.

The genre of the letter of Jude is clear, but what of its character? A fuller discussion must wait for the commentary. To anticipate the conclusions, Jude can be fairly characterized in rhetorical terms as exhibiting a mixed species of deliberative (giving advice and encouraging or discouraging a specific course of action) and epideictic (praise and blame, seeking assent to some value) rhetoric (Duane Watson). In sociocultural terms it may be characterized as a response, or riposte, to a challenge to the author's honor (Neyrey) and in ideological terms as an expression of early Christian apocalyptic, particularly as opposed to prior declarations that the letter's ideology was "early Catholic" (Bauckham).

While there are few if any clues as to provenance, recent interpreters have returned to Jerusalem as a likely location, given the identification of the family of Jesus with the Jerusalem church. As we will see in the commentary, however, little of this matters to the interpretation and appreciation of the letter.

The letter of James is another matter altogether. Although the most recent and best interpreters have begun to lay such questions to rest, it is still necessary to consider to whom (Jews, Christians, Jewish Christians?) and why (correction, reproof, encouragement?) James was writing, where author and audience were located, and whether the letter of James is even a letter.

Is the letter of James a letter, and if not, what is the genre of James?[10] The text itself purports to be a letter. In classic form it begins with the sender, then the addressee, followed by the traditional greeting, *chairein* (greetings). Is that enough to qualify James as a letter? Yes. First, despite the pervasive influence of Paul, there is not a single model in the NT of what a letter looks like. NT letters

9 J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (1976), pp. 169–99, dates Jude (and 2 Pet) to "61–2" (p. 198).

10 Throughout this commentary I use the designation "letter" to avoid any echo of the once popular debate distinguishing "letter" and "epistle" fostered by Gustav Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911).

vary in length, audience, outline, and topics, from the "letters" in Acts to the "letter to the Romans." To argue that James cannot be a letter because it lacks final greetings is like arguing that Mark is not a gospel because it originally had no resurrection appearance, nor John because it has no birth narrative.[11] Second, to disqualify James as a letter because the majority of its verses are devoted to *paranesis* (traditional moral instruction) and *diatribe* (moral exhortation) is to confuse form and content. By this standard one would also disqualify Romans. Johnson's solution is simple and persuasive, even if one may disagree with his final designation that James "can be appropriately considered protreptic discourse in the form of a letter."[12] More generally, and particularly in light of the discussion of homiletical texture in the final section of the Introduction, James may be thought of as a homiletical letter intended to be circulated and read aloud (as were all letters) by early Christian communities influenced by the Jerusalem church. Whether one thinks of it as a letter in the form of a sermon or as a sermon in the form of a letter, it was a vehicle for sharing the teaching of James with the extended early Jewish Christian community – the "twelve tribes of the Dispersion" (Gk *diaspora*).

This latter designation is explicitly metaphorical[13] and bridges a divide (Jew–Christian) experienced more in our day than in James's. Certainly it is a divide experienced more sharply. That James uses a traditional designation for the children of Israel, "the twelve tribes," and extends it to the early Christian community in a way that also speaks to the realities of the Jewish diaspora (a population that even in James's day far outnumbered that of Judah and Galilee) speaks to the absence of a boundary we have come to take for granted but cannot clearly place: the boundary between prerabbinic Judaism and earliest Christianity. Further evidence is found in debates over whether James is a "Christian" or "Jewish" writing, for Jesus is only mentioned by name at 1:1 and 2:1, and these verses have from time to time been held as insertions to an originally Jewish document. Such proof texting proves little, except the inadequacy of the categories to describe a newly emerging reality. What seems clear in the twenty-first century was hardly so in the middle of the first. Was James a Jew? Yes. Was James a Christian? Yes. Little wonder his letter reads as if written by a Jewish Christian. It was.

11 William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) follows Deissmann in denying that James and Jude are "real letters" (p. 68). That he devotes his longest chapter entirely to Paul and discusses James and Jude in less than a paragraph is comment enough. The much more thorough treatment by Stowers classifies James among "letters of exhortation and advice" (pp. 96–7) but does not treat Jude. Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986).

12 L. T. Johnson, *Letter of James* (1995), p. 24.

13 See Robert W. Wall, *Community of the Wise* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), pp. 11–18.

The geographical location of James and his audience is also hard to fix. To the extent that James intended his designation of addressee to mean at some level those outside Judah and Galilee, his own traditional location in Jerusalem is confirmed. But if "twelve tribes of the Dispersion" is wholly metaphorical, referring as Wall and others suggest to their social location and not to their geographical location within Jewish Christianity, no support for the traditional identification of Jerusalem as James's place of writing can be adduced. Discussion of the character of the letter of James is deferred to the section on literary relationships.

To summarize: Jude and James are both real letters written to real audiences with real issues in mind, another reason the designation "general" or "catholic" is not apt. Jude wrote to warn a beloved community to be careful of certain teachers/leaders and to hold firm to the teaching they had already received. James wrote to encourage a community or communities, reminding them of key features of his teaching, using the letter as a sermon in absentia.

There are two names notably missing from this brief discussion of the occasion for the writing of the letters of James and Jude: Paul and Peter. As we will see in the next section, I do not believe that James was written with Paul in mind, nor Jude with Peter, and I endeavor to read each letter accordingly.

LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

In discussion of intertexture in the last section of the Introduction and in our examination of intertexture in the Commentary, literary relationships are understood to run in two directions. The focus in this section is on the textual traditions that have impacted the works under consideration.

The most obvious influence is the Hebrew Bible, for James in translation (LXX [Septuagint]) and for Jude perhaps not.[14] Whether in Hebrew or Greek, in the text both authors are deeply indebted to the tradition. Jude's references are fewer in number and so are easier to identify. As with James, they are discussed in detail in the Commentary, with citations and references, and need only be listed here to give the reader some sense of just how thoroughly imbued both books are with OT (Old Testament) tradition. Jude's biblical references tend to come from the Torah, and James draws on Torah, prophets, and, to an even greater extent, the full range of the Wisdom tradition.

Citations and References in Jude	*Citations and References in James*
Gen 4:3–8; 19:4–25	Gen 1:26–7; 4:10; 22:9, 12
Ex 12:51; 34:8	Ex 20:5, 13, 14; 34:6
Num 14:29–30, 35; 22:7; 31:16	Lev 19:13–18
Isa 57:20	Deut 5:17–18; 11:14; 24:14–15

[14] See R. Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter* (1983), p. 7.

Eze 34:8	Josh 2:4, 15; 6:17
Amos 4:11	1 Kgs 17:1; 18:42–5
Zech 3:2; 14:5	Job 5:11; 34:19
	Psa 18:6; 21:9; 34:13; 39:1; 102:4, 11; 103:8; 111:4; 140:3; 141:3
	Prov 3:34; 10:12; 27:1
	Eccl 7:9
	Isa 5:9; 40:6–7
	Jer 5:24
	Dan 12:12
	Zech 1:3
	Mal 3:5, 7
	Sir 5:11; 15:11–13

Biblical citations hardly exhaust the literary relationships of Jude and James. Jude famously cites from two apocryphal, pseudepigraphical works – *1 Enoch* and *Testament of Moses* – along with an otherwise unrecorded saying of "the apostles." Johnson details a wealth of influences and possible parallels, if not precisely literary relationships, that form an important backdrop to James.[15] Two are key: the traditions of OT and Jewish Wisdom literature and the teachings/sayings of Jesus.

OT and Jewish Wisdom traditions are, of course, important to the entire NT but perhaps not to the extent of the letter of James. Bauckham has shown in *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* the full extent of this influence, for as is the case with all the influences on James it is not simply a matter of citation. James obviously felt it unnecessary to give chapter and verse. Nor is it limited to possible parallels, such as those included in the lists just provided. Instead it is the way in which the spirit of OT and Jewish Wisdom traditions imbue the entire letter, so that it would be fair to characterize the ideology of this homiletical letter as very much a part of the sapiential tradition, yet with strong "alternative wisdom" leanings.[16]

No doubt the most intriguing question in any discussion of the literary relationships of James is the relationship of James to the sayings of Jesus. The most thorough examination of Jesus' sayings in the letter of James is found in

15 L. T. Johnson, *Letter of James* (1995), pp. 26–46.

16 On OT and Jewish Wisdom, see the introductions by Anthony R. Ceresko, OSFS, *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom: A Spirituality for Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) and James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998). Crenshaw is the standard introduction, while Ceresko's approach emphasizes the ideological stream of wisdom that the letter of James itself reflects. On wisdom and James, see Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 236–47. In the Commentary I will argue against Witherington in finding that James's ideology more closely fits the model of alternative wisdom than is recognized in *Jesus the Sage*.

the 1989 Amsterdam dissertation of Dean B. Deppe.[17] Deppe concludes that scholars often overstate the number of allusions to Jesus material in the letter and attributes this to a lack of precision in determining what constitutes an allusion. His own standards are high, and by defining an allusion as the presence of "substantial verbal similarities as well as a common context and emphasis of content," he finds only eight allusions:

James 1:5 = Mt 7:7; Lk 11:9	ask and you will receive
James 4:2c–3 = Mt 7:7; Lk 11:9	ask and you will receive
James 2:5 = Lk 6:20b; Mt 5:3	kingdom belongs to poor
James 5:2–3a = Mt 6:19–20; Lk 12:33b	do not treasure up wealth
James 4:9 = Lk 6:21, 25b	those who laugh will mourn
James 5:1 = Lk 6:24	woe to the rich
James 5:12 = Mt 5:33–7	oaths
James 4:10 = Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14b	humble are exalted

That Deppe's standards may be too high is suggested to the student of the NT by the absence from this list of very familiar sayings; for example, about being doers of the word (James 1:22–5; 2:14-17 cf. Mt 7:24–7; Lk 6:46–9), against judging others (James 4:11–12 cf. Mt 7:1–2; Lk 6:37), against anger (James 1:19–20 cf. Mt 5:22), fruit from the tree (James 3:12 cf. Mt 7:16; Lk 6:44), blessing on those who endure (James 1:12; 5:10–11 cf. Mt 5:11–12; Lk 6:22–3), being peacemakers (James 3:18 cf. Mt 5:9), the results of mercy (James 2:13 cf. Mt 5:7), and more. Indeed, when one tallies not only allusions but parallels of content and/or terminology and common references, Deppe's list grows from eight to thirty-six, and this does not include nine themes common to the preaching of Jesus and the letter of James.[18]

What stands out most, however, is not the large number of allusions, references, and parallels, but the complete absence of citations. For all the common themes, sayings, and ideas, never once does James "quote" Jesus, which suggests not a lack of awareness or familiarity with Jesus traditions but a casual approach to those sayings. Far from being "gospel," at the time James was writing the sayings of Jesus were not yet fixed within the tradition. Instead they were part of a growing and gathering body of material, from which James freely and easily borrowed and to which his letter contributed.[19] This is, perhaps more than anything, the clearest evidence for an early dating of James.

17 Dean B. Deppe, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James* (Chelsea, MI: Bookcrafters, 1989).

18 Ibid., pp. 219ff.

19 I am not convinced, as is Patrick Hartin, *James and Q Sayings of Jesus* JSNT Supplement Series 47 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1991), that the letter of James knows the Jesus material via Q. Instead I think James and Q reflect a common, but unshared, early stage of development.

Jude, too, was in his own way fairly nonchalant in his use of traditional materials, quoting from and referring to the Hebrew Bible, the apocryphal work *1 Enoch*, the pseudepigraphic *Testament of Moses*, and an otherwise unknown saying of the apostles in more or less the same fashion, as if all were a piece. Also, it seems to be evidence for an early date.

Before turning briefly to the reception and history of interpretation of James and Jude, the relationship of Jude and 2 Peter, and of James and Paul, must be considered. The first is rather easy – and this may be the last time that anything can be said to be easy in our consideration of Jude. I will make every effort to read Jude without regard to 2 Peter, understanding, along with the majority of recent interpreters, that 2 Peter 2 is itself the first reading and appropriation of Jude.[20]

For the purpose of this commentary, the relationship of James and Paul, in its own way, is also simple. Along with Bauckham, Johnson, and many others, I am convinced that appreciation, interpretation, and appropriation of James has been consistently undermined by the long habit of reading James "in light of" (as the saying goes, but actually "in the shadow of") Paul. This commentary will, by way of corrective, endeavor to read the letter of James with as little reference to the letters of Paul as may be responsibly attempted. Convinced as I am that the differences between Paul and James have been consistently exaggerated and that the pivotal terms of law, faith, work, and righteousness mean slightly but significantly different things to each author, I want to explore what happens when we read James on his own terms and read James without reference to Paul as much as possible.

RECEPTION AND INTERPRETATION

That the letters of Jude and James have experienced a mixed reception in the Church, east and west, is both a commonplace and an understatement. In their own ways, each struggled to be received into the canon, and as late as Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (324–5 CE) both were listed as "disputed" writings (*antilegomenoi*; *HE* 3.25.3). Even after their inclusion in the list of twenty-seven writings found in Athanasius's "festal letter" (c. 367 CE), a point often used to demark the closing of the NT canon, James's and Jude's authenticity and canonicity continued to be questioned and perhaps more significantly, often ignored. The reasons were shared and unique.

[20] The work of Duane Watson is particularly important here. Recognizing the difficulty of using redactional criticism to establish the priority of Jude over 2 Peter, or vice versa, Watson carefully applied rhetorical criticism. He concluded, "Often the priority of neither can be asserted, the verbal correspondences being equally suited to the rhetoric of either work. Occasionally the priority of 2 Peter is indicated. However, by a considerable margin, *the priority of Jude is strongly affirmed*" (my emphasis). Duane Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), esp. pp. 163–88. Also, see R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus* (1990), pp. 134–77.

The most likely trajectory is as follows. Both letters were initially (c. 65–125 CE) well and widely received, a reflection of the recognition of the authors as "brothers of the Lord" and of the honored place of the Jerusalem church, with which they were closely identified. The ascendance of the legacies and reputation of Peter and Paul in the growing church and the geographical and theological shift away from Jerusalem as the center of emergent Christianity resulted in a decline in reputation for James and Jude. The spread of the canonical gospels, in which Jude and James play no real part, further eclipsed the letters bearing their names. By the third century, that James and Jude lacked clear apostolic credentials pushed the letters to the margins of the Church's favored reading. The tendency to read James with Paul and Jude with 2 Peter was almost their undoing. To the extent that James was understood to be challenging Paul, the letter was set aside as inferior. To the extent that Jude was read as an excerpt of 2 Peter, the letter was set aside as a pale imitation of the work of the rock upon which the Church was being built. More telling for Jude, as the biblical canon took on clearer shape, was that the letter cites *1 Enoch* and *Testament of Moses*. Would a work worthy of inclusion in the canon quote works that were not?

At one level, then, it is a wonder the letters of Jude and James survived at all. Certainly their earlier acceptance was crucial. At a practical level, this acceptance yielded sufficient copies to keep the letters available and read. Nor were the letters without champions. Foremost for Jude were Clement and Origen in Alexandria, but there was also Tertullian. The letter is included in the Muratorian Canon and finally, if grudgingly, accepted by Eusebius and Jerome. And assuming the order of composition most widely held today (see note 9), the strongest testament to the acceptance of Jude is 2 Peter. Given this history it is not surprising that other than the relationship to 2 Peter two issues have dominated the treatment of Jude in biblical scholarship: the identity of Jude's opponents and the sources of Jude's citations, questions that will be considered in the commentary on Jude.

The reception and interpretation of the letter of James has been, if possible, more troubled and controversial than that of Jude. Johnson devotes almost forty pages to this topic in his *Letter of James* (pp. 124–61), an excellent analysis to which the interested reader is encouraged to turn, for it cannot be duplicated in this commentary, where we must settle for a brief summary.

The opinion of Martin Luther (in)famously casts a shadow over any discussion of the reception of James, but Luther was hardly the first voice to raise questions about the letter of James and its place in the canon. While *1 Clement* (c. 95 CE) and *The Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 140 CE) seem to know the letter of James (especially the latter, which shares James's use of the unusual term *dipsuchos* [double-minded] and a number of important themes), if not borrow from it, James is not mentioned in the Muratorian fragment (c. 190 CE), although all three later documents are usually identified with Rome. This may well be evidence

of the declining reputation of the letter of James in the West after the middle of the second century. James fared better in Alexandria, where Clement and Origen cited James frequently (thirty-six times according to Johnson's count) and where Didymus the Blind (313–98 CE) wrote a commentary on James, and in the East generally, where Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, and others include James in their lists of accepted documents and cite the letter in their own writing.

Eusebius (c. 325 CE) wrote that to James "is attributed the first of the 'general' epistles. Admittedly its authenticity is doubted, since few early writers refer to it, any more than to 'Jude's', which is also one of the seven called general. But the fact remains that these two, like the others, have been regularly used in very many churches."[21] Later in the fourth century James found new champions in Jerome and Augustine, the latter writing a commentary on the letter. The letter is well attested in the fourth–sixth centuries and received a marvelous commentary from the Venerable Bede, still extant, in the late seventh century.

Prior to Luther, Erasmus and Cajetan both expressed doubts about the worthiness of the letter of James. The late Raymond Brown, SS, offered a succinct and unbiased summary of Luther's views in his *Introduction to the New Testament.*

> In the (September) 1522 edition of his translation into German, Luther attempted to put Jas with Heb, Jude, and Rev at the end of the NT as of lesser quality than "the true and certain, main books of the New Testament." Major factors in the Reformation opposition to Jas, besides disputes in antiquity, were the support it gave to extreme unction as a sacrament and its affirmation, "Faith apart from works is useless" (2:20), which conflicted with Luther's exaltation of faith. Even though Luther found many good sayings in it, Jas was a strawlike epistle when compared to the true gold of the gospel. As late as the 1540s in his "Table Talk" he was wishing that Jas be thrown out of discussion at the University of Wittenberg, for it did not amount to much.[22]

Brown goes on to note that Luther's attempt to rearrange the canon was later abandoned.

Since Luther the fate and fortune of James largely followed a path that would have been to the Reformer's liking. Consistently read alongside Paul, and found wanting, James the author began to disappear from the scene as nineteenth-century commentators, following the lead of F. H. Kern, began to read (or not read) the letter along the lines of larger currents and disputes in biblical

21 *The History of the Church, HE* 2.24, trans. G. A. Williamson (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1975) p. 103.

22 Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 744. Luther himself never retracted the opinion given in the 1522 "Preface to James": "I therefore refuse him a place among the writers of the true canon in my Bible; but I would not prevent anyone placing him or raising him where he likes, for the epistle contains many excellent passages." *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 36.

scholarship. Adolf Jülicher betrayed his Lutheran sensibilities when he wrote in his NT introduction (1894) that James was the "least Christian book" of the New Testament. It was not long after that L. Massibieau put forward the thesis that James was a Jewish composition to which 1:1 and 2:1 had been added, a position supported by the work of F. Spitta. The letter has been on the defensive ever since. As Johnson writes, "What the thesis of Massibieau and Spitta most vividly illustrates is the way in which the logic of the scholarly discussion in some circles had led to the removal of James from serious consideration as properly 'Christian' literature at all, whether early or late!"[23] Because the present commentary joins the discussion at about this juncture, I need only mention that twenty years or so after Spitta convinced many that the letter of James was not Christian, Dibelius argued that the letter was not really a letter! Fortunately, the fortunes of the letter of James, both in the level of attention paid to it and in the competency of the scholarship applied to it, would increase throughout the twentieth century, culminating in Johnson's marvelous Anchor Bible commentary, *Letter of James,* in 1995.

THE TEXTURE OF TEXTS

This commentary is an attempt to apply the methods of sociorhetorical criticism to the interpretation of the letters of James and Jude. "Socio-rhetorical criticism challenges interpreters to explore human reality and religious belief and practice through multiple approaches to written discourse in texts. As an interpretive program that moves toward a broad-based interpretive analytics, it invites investigations that enact integrated interdisciplinary analysis and interpretation."[24] As practiced by Robbins, his students, and colleagues, sociorhetorical criticism is not a new method, but a disciplined attempt to bring what is better seen as a *series* of methods to the reading of biblical texts. In his "guide to socio-rhetorical interpretation," *Exploring the Texture of Texts* (1996), and the companion study, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (1996), Robbins details the five textures found in any and every biblical text. Because the exegesis of the letters of James and Jude is informed and organized by these textures, plus a sixth that extends the method to include preaching, it is important to summarize them now.

Inner Texture

Robbins refers to inner texture as "getting inside a text." To study inner texture is to explore "features in the language of the text itself,"[25] that is, the rhetorical

23 L. T. Johnson, *Letter of James* (1995), p. 151.
24 Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 13.
25 Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) p. 7.