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978-0-521-35659-6 - The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude

Andrew Chester and Ralph P. Martin

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The letters of James, Peter, and Jude number among the most neglected parts of the New Testament. The authors of this study argue that the letters in question are more theologically significant than is often considered the case, and have a distinctive role to play in contemporary discussion of Christian faith. Andrew Chester sets James in context and discusses its main themes: eschatology, faith and works, ethical and social teaching; and (to a lesser extent), law, wisdom, human nature, ministry, God, and Christ. He addresses the problems that James has been seen to pose, in relation to Paul, for the canon and coherence of the New Testament, and points to the significance of James for the present day, especially in its attack on the rich and powerful and its demands for faith to be lived out in everyday life. Ralph P. Martin in turn shows how Jude and 1 and 2 Peter give insight into Jewish Christianity in its earliest development; how the Christian movement was understood in an outlying region of the empire; and how the post-apostolic church utilized the memory of Peter for its practical needs. The resulting picture constitutes an expert and long-overdue treatment of these letters as valuable theological documents in their own right.

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NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

**General Editor: James D. G. Dunn,
Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, University of Durham**

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This series provides a programmatic survey of the individual writings of the New Testament. It aims to remedy the deficiency of available published material, which has tended to concentrate on historical, textual, grammatical, and literary issues at the expense of the theology, or to lose distinctive emphases of individual writings in systematised studies of 'The Theology of Paul' and the like. New Testament specialists here write at greater length than is usually possible in the introductions to commentaries or as part of other New Testament theologies, and explore the theological themes and issues of their chosen books without being tied to a commentary format, or to a thematic structure drawn from elsewhere. When complete, the series will cover all the New Testament writings, and will thus provide an attractive, and timely, range of texts around which courses can be developed.

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Editor's preface

Although the New Testament is usually taught within Departments or Schools or Faculties of Theology/Divinity/Religion, theological study of the individual New Testament writings is often minimal or at best patchy. The reasons for this are not hard to discern.

For one thing, the traditional style of studying a New Testament document is by means of straight exegesis, often verse by verse. Theological concerns jostle with interesting historical, textual, grammatical and literary issues, often at the cost of the theological. Such exegesis is usually very time-consuming, so that only one or two key writings can be treated in any depth within a crowded three-year syllabus.

For another, there is a marked lack of suitable textbooks round which courses could be developed. Commentaries are likely to lose theological comment within a mass of other detail in the same way as exegetical lectures. The section on the theology of a document in the Introduction to a commentary is often very brief and may do little more than pick out elements within the writing under a sequence of headings drawn from systematic theology. Excursuses usually deal with only one or two selected topics. Likewise larger works on New Testament Theology usually treat Paul's letters as a whole and, having devoted the great bulk of their space to Jesus, Paul, and John, can spare only a few pages for others.

In consequence, there is little incentive on the part of teacher or student to engage with a particular New Testament document, and students have to be content with a general overview, at best complemented by in-depth study of (parts of)

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two or three New Testament writings. A serious corollary to this is the degree to which students are thereby incapacitated in the task of integrating their New Testament study with the rest of their Theology or Religion courses, since often they are capable only of drawing on the general overview or on a sequence of particular verses treated atomistically. The growing importance of a literary-critical approach to individual documents simply highlights the present deficiencies even more. Having been given little experience in handling individual New Testament writings as such at a theological level, most students are very ill-prepared to develop a properly integrated literary and theological response to particular texts. Ordinands too need more help than they currently receive from textbooks, so that their preaching from particular passages may be better informed theologically.

There is need therefore for a series to bridge the gap between too brief an introduction and too full a commentary where theological discussion is lost among too many other concerns. It is our aim to provide such a series. That is, a series where New Testament specialists are able to write at a greater length on the theology of individual writings than is usually possible in the introductions to commentaries or as part of New Testament Theologies, and to explore the theological themes and issues of these writings without being tied to a commentary format or to a thematic structure provided from elsewhere. The volumes seek both to describe each document's theology, and to engage theologically with it, noting also its canonical context and any specific influence it may have had on the history of Christian faith and life. They are directed at those who already have one or two years of full-time New Testament and theological study behind them.

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JAMES D. G. DUNN

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<i>ANRW</i>	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
b.	Babylonian Talmud
BAGD	Bauer, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> , ed. W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CD	The Damascus Document (From the Cairo Genizah)
<i>Cath</i>	<i>Catholica</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ET	English translation
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Interp</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series

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<i>KD</i>	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
<i>LingBibl</i>	<i>Linguistica Biblica</i>
MeyerK	Meyer, <i>Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSuppl	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
IQS	The Community Rule (from Cave 1 at Qumran)
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>
SB	Sources bibliques
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
<i>ThR</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>ThV</i>	<i>Theologische Versuche</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>