Introduction to Jude and 2 Peter

General Introduction

No longer can we maintain the oft-quoted declaration made about three decades ago, that the so-called Petrine epistles (and Jude) are the most neglected books in the New Testament.[1] True, the Gospels and the writings of Paul continue to dominate Biblical and Theological Studies, but the last fifteen to twenty years have seen a steady stream of publication of commentaries, journal articles, and conference papers that have increased the profile of General Epistle studies in the discipline. Such growth has even warranted the formation of a "James, Peter and Jude" section at the annual Society of Biblical Literature, which has brought a good discussion platform and engendered the publication of several significant studies including *Reading Jude with New Eyes*, *Reading 2 Peter with New Eyes*, and *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students*.[2] While the collective amount of publications in this area of the NT are only a fraction of volumes produced in the studies of Jesus and Paul, they nevertheless represent a positive trend.

My cursory count of stand-alone commentaries on 2 Peter and Jude (or James and Jude) has unearthed no less than twenty-five in the last twenty years, making an average of at least a commentary a year in the last quarter century alone.[3] That is not counting commentaries in single

1. Rowston 1975: 554–63; Cf. Elliott 1976: 243–54, in 1 Peter. Elliot's own commentary on 1 Peter (2000) with over seventy pages of bibliographic material is evidence of interest in the letter had sustained, perhaps instigated by his earlier comments about the neglect.

2. Davids and Webb 2008; Watson and Webb 2010; Mason and Martin 2014.

3. Recent influx of studies on 2 Peter and Jude as reflected in the number of commentaries that have been produced, has brought some long-needed focus on the letters but this does not preclude the fact that in comparison with studies on the Gospels and Pauline literature, the numbers on these letters pale. The list includes—Grundmann 1986; Paulsen 1992; Neyrey 1993; Chester and Martin 1994; Holmer 1994; Krimmer and Holland 1994; Vögtle 1994; Moo 1996; Horrell 1998; G. Bray 2000; Schelkle 2002; Kraftchick

volumes or stand-alone monographs, of specific aspects of the letters, or edited volumes. Needless to say then, the question of whether to write another commentary is indeed a genuine one, and one that I hope I can justify in this particular case. Even with this surge in publications, there have hardly been any works in the area that have sought to tap the methodological, theological, and cultural diversity that has been necessitated into the Biblical Studies discipline by postmodernism (Aichele 2012 is an exception). Hopefully, my maiden attempt in this commentary to integrate postcolonial readings will pave the way for more research that highlights the diversity of the discipline.

Commentaries in Biblical Studies, for the large part, have remained the domain of Euro-American white male commentators who over the years have directed their inquiries of the Bible to matters they deem relevant to the text. Unfortunately, these were driven *and* constrained by the particular concerns of these individuals' Euro-American worldviews, cultures, religious flavors, and positions of power, authority and privilege. Mostly, these *a priori* concerns were unacknowledged, and even when they were, these commentators assumed their views to be universal and representative of all of humanity. Since the western culture has been dominant in world affairs, and has cast its influence over many different parts of the globe through colonialism and other forms of foreign occupations, the western authors have tended to assume that they spoke for *all* peoples or that their interpretations captured all a text could say.

This rather myopic perspective on interpretation has meant that western scholars have controlled the discourse in Biblical Studies and have set the agendas and questions to be addressed, oblivious to the diversity and difference that readers from different cultures would bring to the interpretive process. The advent of postmodernism, has cast a long shadow on this form of thinking, making it plain that the role of the author/interpreter is never neutral, and that all knowledge is the product of the speaker's background, upbringing, culture, gender, wealth, language, privilege or lack thereof, power both political and social. Therefore, one cannot claim to speak for "all" people. This is also true of the writing of commentaries. They represent the writers' points of view, shaped and influenced by their background—cultural, historical, social, economic, educational, etc. One

2002; Schreiner 2003; Brosend II 2004; Skaggs 2004; Davids 2006; Reese 2007; Senior and Harrington 2008; Green 2008; Witherington III 2008; Powers 2010; Vinson 2010; Donelson 2010; Keating 2011; González 2011; Aichele 2012; Painter and deSilva 2012; Watson and Callan 2012.

who writes from a position of privilege, power, authority, and influence cannot claim to represent the views of the persons who, on the other side of the equation, are colonized, oppressed, enslaved, powerless, and otherwise subjugated. The respective points of view are colored by their respective social locations, political privilege (or lack thereof), and freedom (political, social, economic, etc.) that they have available.

This commentary series (NCCS), with its deliberate international, multicultural, multiracial representation of scholars has sought to correct that omission, albeit in its limited way. However small that gesture is, it is a significant recognition of the shifting composition of the community of biblical scholarship from the previous dominance of Euro-American white males, to one where there is an increasing significant presence of women, and of Latino/a, African-American, African, Asian, and Chinese biblical scholars. Each of these groups brings different questions to the text that previous commentaries, written largely by Euro-American white biblical scholars may have completely failed to address or may have done so from a biased (mostly privileged) position that did not cater to the needs of those in very different socio-cultural-politico-economic positions.

In a sense, one can speak of the Euro-America readings of the Bible as *top-down* readings (reading from positions of privilege, power, influence, etc.) versus the more recent crop of scholars from the Global South who represent a more *bottom-up* (reading from the position of the poor, colonized, enslaved, subjugated, etc.). Inevitably, the latter scholars also emanate from regions formally colonized or otherwise occupied, by western nations and are invariably shaped by that encounter. Much as the Enlightenment shaped the western civilization, colonialism and slavery shaped the lives of the communities over which these exercises of domination and subjugation were implemented. For this reason, the tendency to apply forms of reading that reflect a postcolonial vantage for the latter scholars seems inevitable for the non-western scholar.[4]

Another important factor is that there are constant advances in knowledge that may necessitate the revisiting of issues in the Bible thus justifying the need for new or updated commentaries. For example, the last ten years or so have seen the development of a robust discussion in historical studies about first century Greco-Roman associations (and small groups) within the Empire, which I have argued in this commentary can enhance our understanding of the communities of Jude and 2 Peter within

4. Dube et al. 2012: 1–28.

their first century setting, for they seem to fit quite well into the category of these associations. Comparisons of structure, language, and practices between associations and Jude and 2 Peter imply a world where borrowing was common and puts in new relief certain features of these New Testament writings.

That is why the editors of this New Covenant Commentary Series have sought to put together a commentary series that is as internationally representative as it is possible, in order to allow different voices, from different parts of the world to air their thought about how they read and understand the New Testament.

Communities Of Jude And 2 Peter As Greco-Roman Associations

Beyond family gatherings, associations were the most common unofficial community gatherings in antiquity.[5] They formed around common interests such as funeral guilds, labor groups, etc., and most involved regular informal gatherings that included meals, fraternizing and drinking. Philip Harland defines associations thus:

> In broad terms, associations, synagogues, and congregations were small, non-compulsory groups that could draw their membership from several possible social network connections within civic settings. All could be either relatively homogeneous or heterogeneous with regard to social and gender composition; all engaged in regular meetings that involved a variety of interconnected social, ritual, and other purposes, one group differing from the next in the specifics of activities; all depended in various ways upon commonly accepted social conventions such as benefaction for financial support (e.g., a meeting-place) and the development of leadership structures; and all could engage in at least some degree of external contacts, both positive and negative, with other individuals, benefactors, groups or institutions in the civic context.[6]

In a subsequent study, Harland points out that these gathering were as much about socializing as they were about honoring benefactors, both human and divine. As such, the modern distinction made between social and religious aspects of associations is patently mistaken, and that "all associations

5. Kobel 2011: 280.
6. Harland 2003: 211.

were in some sense religious. . ."[7] Reading the letters of Jude and 2 Peter as products of similar small groups will hopefully allow us to see them in a light that they have not quite been seen before. Since these letters reflect the writings of social groups that were part of the minority groups within the Greco-Roman empire, I have sought to read them in the context of Greco-Roman associations to highlight aspects they commonly share and how these in turn provide a window of understanding the rhetoric of these Christian letters.[8]

Both Jude and 2 Peter mention their communities' regular meal gatherings or "love feasts" as the prime target of the infiltrators to propagate their untoward teachings (Jude 12; 2 Peter 2:13). Meal gatherings were a shared commonality with other Greco-Roman small groups, and played a key role in the structuring of associations and so it mattered who controlled them.[9] These meal gatherings served as social institutions that functioned as both social and religious assemblies with the religious entwined with the communal, making the occasions without question both civic and religious.[10] It is in this context that one must read both Jude and 2 Peter allowing for the general analysis of Greco-Roman associations to inform our interpretive process of the letters.[11] Indeed, it is not a novel claim on my part since indications are that contemporaries viewed and understood early Christian gatherings in terms of associations, while some of the early Christians communities also viewed themselves in such terms.[12] We shall examine especially the tendency in associations to use stereotyping as a form of self defense against perceived enemies and also the importance for associations to maintain what was considered acceptable "banquet decorum."

7. Harland 2009: 26–27.

8. The term "voluntary associations" used by some scholars to distinguish between Greco-Roman associations whose membership was by means of birth or civic or religious responsibility, in contrast to the purely voluntary groups such as trade guilds. However, it is clear now that even such groups as the synagogues and some trade groups obligated membership, meaning the notion of "voluntary" could not be held too strictly.

9. Harland 2003: 2. "From a bird's-eye view of culture in the Roman Empire, Jewish Synagogues and Christian assemblies stand together as *minority cultural groups*, primarily due to their monotheism (and devotions to the same God) in a polytheistic culture" (emphasis original).

10. Smith 2003: 1–12.

11. Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996; Harland 2003; Harland 2009.

12. Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996; Harland 2003: 211.

Stereotyping in Associations, and in Jude and 2 Peter

According to Harland, language common to many of the Greco-Roman associations and groups typically stereotypes and vilifies perceived opponents as *sexual perverts*, *cannibals/barbaric*, and *murderers*, all with the aim of shoring up internal self definition and social identity at the expense of an opponent's.[13] These stereotypes therefore, had no intention of reflecting any actual historical practices.[14] In Jude and 2 Peter, the opponents are characterized using similar categories of sexual perversion (Jude 4, 18; 2 Pet 1:4, etc.), "wild brutes" (Jude 10, 19; 2 Pet 1:9; 2:10, etc.), and "blasphemy/ungodly" (Jude 8–10; 2 Pet 3–4) resulting in death (2 Pet 1:10, 2:2, 10, etc.). Also, the focus on value in 2 Peter retains parallels with the purity focus of the Greco-Roman stereotype.[15] Drawing from Harland's conclusion about certain characteristics of the stereotyping language evident in the Greco-Roman group dynamics, "novels, histories and ancient ethnographic material," the characterization of the opponents in Jude and 2 Peter therefore closely parallels that which is found in the Greco-Roman discourses on identity formation and boundary structuring.[16]

Placed in the wider Greco-Roman association context, an analysis of the group dynamics in Jude and 2 Peter would hopefully put in new light, and further clarify, the harsh tone that the letters reflect, and which remains a disquieting aspect of the letters for most readers. Following Duane F. Watson, the authors of Jude and 2 Peter were using ancient rhetoric, that involved "artificial proof" (*entechnoi*), in which case, "the rhetor seeks to show his own and his client's ethos in the best light and his opponent's in the worst."[17] This parallel with association language however, does not preclude Jude's and 2 Peter's clear agenda of iterating their conviction about the centrality of the communities' faith in God through Jesus. In fact, it is in this regard that we will be able to witness their rhetorical inventiveness.

13. Ibid., 59. Cf. also Smith and Taussig 2013: 73–86.

14. Harland 2009: 174. "These . . . arise from a common stockpile of stereotypes of the threatening other, and there is no need to look for any basis in the reality of actual practices."

15. Jude, however, may have maintained the caricature of the infiltrators as "murderers" and proponents of violence directly by associating them with the likes of Cain, Balaam and Korah (v. 11).

16. Ibid., 161.

17. Watson 1988: 15.

Such rhetoric not only seeks to paint the perceived enemy in as much a negative light as possible, it does not necessarily claim to be historically accurate in its portrayal of the perceived enemy. If the situation is one where rival groups are competing to persuade the same population about who is right, then the more the rhetoric escalates, increasingly becoming *less* realistic, and more stereotypical, in how each group portrays the other. It is less likely then to find in such rhetoric accurate representation of the opponents' views. Instead, one is likely to find language that is characteristic of stereotyping of the Other, by portraying them as less desirable, dependable, lovable, acceptable, and even, less than human. This is probably even more so if the competing groups share a lot in common, meaning they have to find whatever they think is distinct about themselves and contrast it, as starkly as possible, with the competing group.

Greco-Roman associations, which included officially recognized groups, guilds, and gatherings of people who shared common trades such as funeral support groups in Roman Empire, provide us with a glimpse of how conflict and competing identities frequently turned to stereotyping as means to fend off any competing claims to the group's distinct identity, membership or boundary. As Harland explains,

> Although rules may often be drawn up to deal with problems that were actually encountered, the regulations suggest that "good order"—as defined by such groups—remained a prevalent value in many banqueting settings. So *we should not imagine that stories of wild transgression are descriptive of real activities* in immigrant or cultural minority groups, or in other associations.[18]

And as C. McGarty, V. Y. Yzerbyt, R. Spears, elaborate, "These beliefs [stereotypes] represent a necessary precondition for collective action such as protest as well as for regulation and law enforcement. Their argument is that stereotypes form to enable action. They are *political weapons* that are used in the attempt to achieve and resist social change."[19] All these elements are present in the way, for example, 2 Peter portrays the false-teachers and Jude caricatures the infiltrators.

There is no doubt that in both Jude and 2 Peter we are dealing with the three issues that Harland points out concerning minority groups' interactions—rivalry between author and infiltrators/"false-teachers," identity construction (who is the true representation of the teachings of Jesus?), and

18. Harland 2009: 172 (emphasis added).

19. McGarty et al. 2002: 15 (emphasis added).

group-boundaries (who rightfully belongs to the Jesus community?). These are the issues at the heart of the construction of the virtues in 2 Peter 1:5–7, and in the characterization of vices of the "false-teachers" and infiltrators in Jude. If the virtues represent the "good order," for example, the list of vices in 2 Peter 2, represent the dangerous inversions of this order.[20]

When dealing with their opponents, both Jude and 2 Peter are therefore steeped in Greco-Roman rhetorical banter that regularly employed the use of stock stereotyping when verbally jousting with known opponents. Even the primary characterization of the opponents by 2 Peter as false-teachers (*pseudodidaskaloi*), for example, must be tempered by the realization that this is still part of the negative caricature of opponents that says little, if anything, about whether they are actual teachers, and what they actually teach, or even how they in fact behaved.[21] It is largely an effort to discredit the opponents and not necessarily intended to be an accurate description of their teachings or behavior.[22]

Banqueting Protocols in Associations and in Jude and 2 Peter

A second concern in association life was the place of decorum without which the gathering would easily devolve into chaos, a not-so-unusual result for many associations. Therefore, regulations were frequently put in place to guide behavior in the gatherings and heavy penalties meted against any that would exhibit anti-decorum behavior, including excommunication from the group. As Harland explains:

> Evidently, banqueting practices played an important role in discourses of identity, in which certain authors, representative in some ways of their cultural group, engaged in the process of

20. Harland in Smith and Taussig 2012: 73–86.

21. In contrast, for example, Bauckham's (1983) discussion of the opponents in Jude/2 Peter seems to take for granted the stereotypes as actual characterization of opponents' behavior upon which he then builds a portrait of them as itinerant teachers/preachers (11–13).

22. Wisdom and Philo also use similar language to caricature non-Jews (Harland 2009: 177): ". . . we are witnessing the expression of Judean or Christian identities in relation to the associations in a way that illustrates the internalization of external categorizations…" The Psalms in the Hebrew Bible reflect the tendency to use such rhetoric to discredit opponents, and calls for their divine destruction (e.g., Ps 3:7; 22:16, 20; 44:15; 69:21–28; 143:12).

> defining his or her own group as civilized by alienating another as barbarous.[23]

At stake in Jude's and 2 Peter's accusations are also issues of decorum and order, rituals and banquets.[24] The behavior displayed by the opponents in both letters flies in the face of the established social practices that govern all Greco-Roman banquets and social gatherings. Both epistles make reference to "love feasts" (2 Peter 2:13—*syneuōzocheomai*: Jude 12—*agapais*, *syneuchomai*) for the communities into which the false-teachers and infiltrators, respectively, had introduced their untoward and scandalous behaviors and teachings. Both authors find fault with their opponents, alleging that their out of control shenanigans represent that which is "anti-banquet" behavior which reflects the image, to any outsider, of deplorable and out-of-control gatherings that are not fit to be classified within the category of civil organizations.

Similar concerns are also highlighted in contemporary Jewish writings on gatherings, giving us a glimpse of how such concerns were addressed, providing a larger context for Jude and 2 Peter. Josephus *Ant*. 14:214–16 (c. 93 CE), for example, reports that Julius Caesar, in a letter to magistrates, allowed the Jews in Rome "to collect money for common meals (*sundeipna*) and sacred rites," even though it does not mention the regularity of such gatherings. Detailed meal gatherings and their decorum are outlined in the Dead Sea Scrolls writings (1QS 6.2–13 and 1QSa 2.17–21), while Philo compares what he considers the superior and civil Jewish therapeutae gatherings with those of Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, which he portrays as tending to be filled with out of control drinking, violence, and recklessness that leads to "frenzy and madness" (*Vit. Cont*. 40–41; *Flacc*. 4: 136–37). Tacitus, *Hist*. 5.5.2 (c. 115 CE), on the other hand, accuses the Jews of supposed lurid and unlawful sexual practices in their gatherings.[25]

Similarly, the authors of Jude and 2 Peter are determined to expose the barbaric image of the anti-banquet attributed to their opponents, and which they fear may expose the entire group to accusations of barbarism and ritual uncleanness that reflect lack of order and piety.[26] In contrast, they strive to define their own communities in association terms that align them with the respectable and recognized Greco-Roman associations. This

23. Crook and Harland 2007: 74.
24. Harland 2009: 171.
25. Alikin 2010: 28.
26. Harland 2013: 74–75.

seems to be the role played by the list of virtues laid out in 2 Peter (1:5–7), and exhortations for proper conduct in Jude (3, 20–24) which provide the foundation for the social structure of their communities. Granted, however, that the communities of Jude and 2 Peter do remain distinct in some ways from their Greco-Roman counterparts, they still mirror them in their striving to fit neatly in the larger society's expectations and concerns about religious group structures and behavioral patterns.[27] By indicting the opponents as anti-banqueters and anti-moralists, Jude and 2 Peter seek to conversely portray their own communities as models of association life within the Roman Empire, even as they seek to distinguish them as structured around the Lordship of Jesus Christ and not Caesar.[28]

So, while locating Jude and 2 Peter in their first-century setting, I do also hope that in my analysis of these two small but important New Testament writings, my own readings tempered by my sensitivities to matters hermeneutical, postcolonial, liberationist, and African will further contribute to the conversation on how best to interpret these writings in our day and age, while paying close attention to the first century Greco-Roman context of their origin.

Jude

Authorship

Today there are essentially two primary positions on the question of Jude's authorship: advocates for an early authorship usually arguing for Jude the brother of Jesus ("a servant of Jesus and the brother of James"),[29] and in contrast, advocates for a pseudepigraphical authorship (later author writing in the name of Jude).[30] The latter position rejects the authenticity of the letter's own claim in Jude 1. These two positions are equally balanced and both have committed defenders within the guild. Arguments made by Bauckham over twenty years ago, remain at the heart of the defense for the authenticity position.[31]

27. Alikin 2010: 34n73; Charles 1998: 55–73.

28. Beard et al. 1998: 337.

29. Bauckham 1983: 14–16; Green 1987: 179–82; Davids 2006: 9–28, while leaning towards Jude is non-committal: Green 2008: 46.

30. Reicke 1964: 190; Kelly 1969: 233–34; Neyrey 1993: 29–31; Ehrman 2011: 189.

31. Bauckham 1983: 14–16; idem 1990: 177–81.

For these defenders of authenticity, the process of elimination is used in order to arrive at one of at least eight people named Jude (Judah, Judas) in the NT as the author. The name Jude was fairly common given its origin with one of the patriarchs of Israel, "Judah," and is one of the most common names in the NT, besides the reference to "Judas Iscariot."[32] The early church seemed to assume that the Jude in the epistle, who identifies himself as the brother of James, is one of the disciples ("Jude son of James" listed in Luke 6:15; John 14:22; Acts 1:13) or a brother of Jesus listed in the Gospels with other Jesus' siblings (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). A third identification was with the apostle Thaddeus (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18), while a fourth identified Jude with disciple Thomas (whose name means twin) who some of the Syrian church traditions identified as a "twin" of Jesus (*Acts of Thomas* 11; 31; 39; Book of Thomas 138. 4, 7, 19).

While there are others called Jude in the NT (Judah father of Simeon Luke 3:30; Judas the Galilean Acts 5:37; Judas of Damascus in Acts 9:11; Judas Barsabbas Acts 15:22–32) none of them is identified as having a brother called James. As for the disciple in Luke 6:15, he is called a "son of James" and not brother, making him and others mentioned above as unlikely candidates of identification with the letter's author. The only person in the Gospels who has a sibling called James is Jude the brother of Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). The James mentioned here can also be identified with the one mentioned in Acts (12:17; 15:13) who is also called "the brother of the Lord" in Galatians (2:9-12). Mention by Paul (1 Cor 9:5) of "the Lord's brothers" as traveling missionaries strengthens the idea that the Lord's brothers (James and Jude) were well known in the early Church.[33]

Early acceptance of the letter by the Church was followed by challenges, primarily for its use of *1 Enoch* and other biblical writings.[34] The Western church accepted it early, but the Syrian church hesitated (e.g., exclusion in the fourth Syrian *Peshitta* manuscript together with 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Revelation) for a while to include it in its canon. But it is probably Jude's reference to the non-canonical writing of *1 Enoch* in Jude 14–15, that made it suspect in the early period, rather than questions of the author's authenticity.[35] While accepting Jude as authentic, Origen (second

32. Green 2008: 1. At least forty-five of the mentions are in reference to Judah the patriarch (Matt 1:2–3; 2:6; Luke 3:33–34; Heb 7:14; 8:8; Rev 5:5; 7:5) or the land of Judah (Luke 1:39).

33. Bauckham 1990: 57–60. E.g., *Gos. Thom.* 12.

34. Mason and Martin 2014: 10.

35. Green 2008: 5.

century), Tertullian (second century), Jerome (fourth century), Dydimus of Alexandria (fourth century) all point out to the questioning raised about its use of *1 Enoch*, but nevertheless defend this use even to the point of arguing for recognition of 1 Enoch as Scripture. Against this argument, Augustine (fourth century), while accepting Jude as authentic, argued against *1 Enoch*'s acceptance as he recognized it to be pseudepigraphical.[36]

Arguments for pseudepigraphical authorship of Jude only gained prominence largely following the rise of the German biblical interpretation in the mid-nineteenth century, especially following the work of F. C. Baur and the Tübingen school who argued for a late date of the book's authorship than had traditionally been assumed. The basis of this argument was primarily an assumption that the letter of Jude (and 2 Peter) evidenced "early Catholic" teachings that focused less on eschatological expectations and more on establishing long term Christian communities. While grouping writings together under a common theme, such as early Catholic, may be useful in highlighting similarities in such works, it unfortunately also has the tendency to obscure and eradicate the individual characteristics of each writing in the group. Combined with this was the perception that Jude's opponents exemplified Gnostic tendencies in beliefs; available evidence, however, suggests that Gnosticism as a theological teaching did not exist until the second century CE.

Bauckham made it clear that the "early Catholic" classification was inconsistent with the letter's internal evidence including a strong eschatological nature (14–15), his classification of the letter as what he calls "a Jewish *midrash*" (which reflects a Jewish Palestinian provenance for the letter), and the lack of a record of Church offices such as elders, deacons or bishops.[37] These factors, among others, convinced Bauckham that the benefit of the doubt lies with those who maintain the authenticity of Jude while the burden of proof is with those who think otherwise. Davids concurs, and after a lengthy analysis of the evidence finds that ". . . none of the explanations why someone would use Jude as a pseudonym is convincing."[38] It therefore makes more sense to maintain the authenticity of the Jude in this regard.

36. Ibid.
37. Bauckham 1983: 14–16.
38. Davids 2006: 28.

Date

The same split that we see in the arguments about authorship happens with regard to the dating of the letter. Scholars who maintain the authenticity arguments date the letter fairly early, either as early as the 50s/60s or 80s CE, while those who think it is pseudepigraphical date it as late as the 90s CE. The guideline dates that serve as points of reference are the well established date of the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, and the traditional dating of the death of Jude's brother James as 62 CE. And since we have no record of Jude's death, these serve as the plausible references to the period within which the letter was constructed. Jude's reference to himself as "the brother of James" (Jude 1) would assume he was still alive and influential in the early Christian community (even though the reference does not require that James be alive) and would make most sense if that is the authority with which he seeks to align himself in getting his letter accorded the respect he desires. If that is the case then, one would assume that the letter would have been written before 62 CE.

Relationship to 2 Peter also assists in trying to situate the letter, depending on when one dates 2 Peter. Since 2 Peter utilizes and replicates a substantial amount of the material in Jude, one must assume that there was enough time for the letter of Jude to circulate among the churches and be familiar to the author of 2 Peter but, at the same time, not be well known by his audience who presumably did not know about Jude. That would be the reason that the author of 2 Peter would have included such a fair amount of the letter of Jude in his own letter while also performing some significant editorial work on it.

Eschatology

The issue of eschatology is important in both letters, but more pronounced in 2 Peter where the scoffers questioned what they perceived to be a delayed return of Jesus (*Parousia*) in 2 Pet 3:8–10. Whether they had misunderstood the timeline as presented earlier by some Pauline letters or they had simply misunderstood the anticipation of the earlier apostles, these scoffers referred to this perceived delay to argue that the message they had received about the Gospel could not be sustained since none of the expected or predicted events had taken place. Second Peter then turned to Psalm 90 to unearth a philosophical response to this accusation: "To the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years, like a day."

Opponents

Over the years, the opponents in Jude have been conflated with the *pseudo-didaskaloi* (false-teachers) in 2 Peter, even though nowhere in Jude are they referred to as false-teachers.[39] However, a close analysis of the two letters reveals significant differences between the opponents in Jude and the false-teachers in Jude. In Jude, the opponents seem to have emanated from the community and there still seems to be hope for them to be saved, while in 2 Peter the false teachers seem to have crossed the red line and are beyond redemption.[40] While in Jude the opponents are already in the community, 2 Peter is ambiguous in reference to the presence of false-teachers as he speaks of their arrival in the future tense (2:1).

Identity of Jude's opponents has ranged from "Gnoctics"[41] to "antinomian/ libertines,"[42] besides the letter's own reference to them as "intruders"/"infiltrators," and "scoffers." The abundance of stereotyping language in Jude's rhetoric—vilifying the opponents—makes it virtually impossible to make any identification based on the described characterization possible.[43] Recent arguments have sought to connect the opponents with Jewish libertines, perhaps those reflected in Acts 15 and in Paul's letter to the Galatians, who seem to have misunderstood Paul's teaching on freedom.[44] The judiciousness of Thomas Schreiner to avoid any attempts at identifying the opponents with any labels is a more commendable perspective.[45] Overall, Gene Green is probably most accurate when he states that the identity of the opponents "cannot be fixed with any precision" and there

39. Kelly 1969: 231; Green 1987: 51. E.g., Bauckham (1983) constantly refers to them as false-teachers.

40. Mason and Martin 2014: 10.

41. Sidebottom 1967: 75; Kelly 1969: 231, calls it "incipient Gnosticism"; See Green (2008: 23–25) for arguments against Gnostic identification.

42. Rowston 1971: 31. Bauckham 1983: 41; Idem 1990: 166–68.

43. Thúren 1997: 451–67.

44. Painter 2013: 5. "Who are the opponents? I propose that the opponents are Jewish and particularly affiliated with Jewish leaders in Palestine, probably Jerusalem. His characterization of the perpetrators comes based on their actions, which I will focus on in a moment. Why Jewish leaders? I would first reiterate that the letter is thoroughly Jewish in its focus and uses not only the Hebrew Scriptures but at least two other Jewish writings of the period, *1 Enoch* and Assumption of Moses."

45. Schreiner 2003: 411–16.

is no sufficient data to positively identify them with any known specific philosophical groups from antiquity.[46]

2 Peter

Date and Authorship

The author in this letter introduces himself as "Peter, slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James," and goes on to present elements in his writing that would portray a person intimately familiar with the life of Peter the apostle (talks of impending death [1:14] prophesied by the Lord), awareness of an earlier letter he wrote (3:1), familiar with the Gospels (reference to Jesus' Transfiguration—1:17–18, described in Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2–7; Luke 9:28–35) and also familiar with the writings of Paul (3:15). All these personal anecdotes would usually provide sufficient grounds on which to attribute the letter to the self-identified author. However, in the case of 2 Peter, it has not proved to be conclusive and, in fact, has become the premise of counter-arguments against a Petrine authorship.[47]

Arguments about dating are closely related to those on authorship. Basically, the positions seem to fall into two categories; of Petrine authorship (including use of *amanuensis*), which would give it an early pre-70 CE dating, versus pseudepigraphic writing which puts it between 70 CE and 125 CE. But if it was written before Peter's death then it has to be dated before 64 CE. This letter is perhaps the one NT writing to which most modern scholars overwhelmingly assign pseudepigraphic authorship. From very early on in the life of the church, the authenticity of this book has been questioned, albeit for differing reasons. While the letter very clearly states its author as "Simeon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), it does not seem to have a clear historical trail among the canonical writings for the first two centuries of the Church. The first time the letter is clearly mentioned by name is by Origen at the beginning of the third century, who though clearly citing it as Scripture, explained that it was still a disputed writing within the Christian circles.[48]

46. Green 2008: 26.
47. Ibid., 150.
48. Green 1987: 20.

Nonetheless, studies have shown that there may be plausible references of 2 Peter in earlier writings such as *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. 70–150),[49] 1 *Clement* (ca. 95 CE), 2 *Clement* (ca. 135 CE) and *Shepherd of Hermas* (ca. 120 CE).[50] Third century Church historian Eusebius (ca. 260–340 CE) says that it was by then accepted as Scripture even though he himself raises concerns about its authenticity.[51] Jerome (*Epist*. 12.11) was the first to offer the possibility that 2 Peter was written by a secretary (*amanuensis*) giving its distinct style. Their initial rejection (or lack of mention) in the Syrian Church of 2 Peter (and Jude) may have been more to do with their references to angels, a subject the Syrian Church may have been eager to quell since it had dominated Jewish angelology in the region.[52]

In the Reformation period (sixteenth century) there were also misgivings about the letter; Luther is said to have included it, among other NT writings whose authenticity he is famously known to have questioned (*antilegomena*), Calvin cautiously accepted it stating, "If it be received as canonical, then we must allow Peter to be its author . . .", while Erasmus rejected it as a forgery.[53] However, while doubts had been raised about its provenance, it was not until a German scholar named Grotius in the seventeenth century dated the book to the period of the Roman Emperor Trajan (98–117 CE), and altogether eliminated the possibility of it having been written by Simeon Peter (the apostle who died under Nero in 64 CE, as it claims in its salutation).[54]

Over time, primary concerns raised about (and responses to) authenticity issues in 2 Peter have included the following:

1. *Stylistic and theological differences with 1 Peter* (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*. 3. 3. 1, 4; 3.25.3, 4)—At least from the time of Jerome (ca. 345–420), it has been adduced that 1 Peter's Greek is excellent and dignified while that of 2 Peter is flamboyant and cumbersome. Yet Peter in the Gospels and Acts is presented as uneducated lowly fisherman (Matt 4:18–19; Acts 4:13). A common response given is that each letter could have

49. Picirelli 1988: 65–74.

50. Green 1987: 20. Bauckham 1983: 162: "There is better evidence than is sometimes admitted for the fact that 2 Peter existed in the second century."

51. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*.: 3.3.1–4; 25.3; 6. 25 .11: "Peter has left behind one acknowledged epistle, and perhaps a second; for it is questioned."

52. Green 1987: 21.

53. Calvin 1885: 363.

54. McNamara 1960: 13.

been written by a different secretary giving the distinctive styles.[55] While a linguistic analysis shows that 2 Peter follows an "Asiatic style of writing" with an Aramaic thought background,[56] it is generally agreed that the sizes of both letters are not large enough to warrant sufficient proof of difference.[57] These make reasonable explanation to the differences between the letters.

2. *Dependence on Jude whose earliest plausible date is 60–70 CE*. The earliest the letter of Jude would have been completed is between 60 CE and 70 CE. Thus, 2 Peter must be later since it contains a majority of Jude. And if Jude's provenance is Palestine and 2 Peter's is Rome, we must allow for a period of time for Jude to get to Rome for the author of 2 Peter to be familiar with it. A plausible response here is that 2 Peter was written not too long after Jude's letter which 2 Peter's audience were not familiar with. So the author of 2 Peter would have a copy of the letter, but his audience would not know that it exists and that is why he finds no problem both quoting it extensively and also altering its content for his audience. However, a further objection would be, if this is Peter's letter why does he find the need to copy Jude's letter so extensively? If as many scholars are now convinced, Jude's letter is authentic from Jesus' brother, then it would explain why Peter would consider it significant enough to replicate in his own letter.[58] And as has been shown, 2 Peter does not simply copy Jude, but has consciously utilized Jude and integrated Jude into his own arguments.[59]
3. *Reference to the first Christian generation as "fathers" falling asleep* (3:4), probably indicating they had already died by the time of its writing, and thus unlikely to have been written by Peter. The term "fathers," however, was more commonly used in reference to biblical ancestors rather than apostles (Heb 1:1; Rom 9:5).[60] Support of this understanding also comes from the author's response by referring to

55. Jerome *Ep. Heb.* 120.11. Rejection of this reasoning states that if the secretaries had such freedom to construct the letters, then the letters cannot be rightfully called Peter's. However, this objection is driven by our modern understanding of authorship.

56. Green 1987: 23–26. This apparent use of Attic Greek style may also lend support to a late dating of the letter.

57. Green 2008: 145.

58. Ibid., 144.

59. Davids 2006: 145.

60. Green 2008: 147.

the flood as an example of God's intervention in history—it would not make sense if the history envisioned here is that of the Church.[61] The term, therefore, can easily have referred to the OT prophets who had prophesied the initial *parousia* of Jesus.

4. *Reference to a delayed "parousia* (revelation) of the Lord" referring to the second coming of Jesus (Matt 24:3; 1 Thess 2:19; 4:15), indicating that some long time had passed since the time of the apostle initial ministry to the audience. In response, Webb has argued, it is not simply the denial of the second coming that the opponents represent in their questioning but the concept of *parousia* at any period in time.[62] M. Green also points out that the greatest disappointment of the delayed *parousia* would have been reflected more prominently in mid first century than in the second century where the effects of the shock had waned.[63]

5. *Reference to Paul's letters as a "collection*" and to the author's equating them to other "scripture" (3:15–16).[64] The tradition or copying and sharing of Paul's letters in the early Church may have been encouraged by Paul himself (Col 4:16) and so should not be a surprise if the author of 2 Peter is familiar with Paul's writings. But nothing in the passage here assumes a "Collection" of corpus, as proponents of this argument assume.[65] Furthermore, in the Council of Jerusalem, Peter and Paul are united against the instigators (Acts 15:7–11).

6. *Reading 2 Peter (and Jude) as if it is responding to the second-century threat of Gnosticism*. While 2 Peter does favor the term "knowledge" (*gnosis*) from which we get the term Gnosticism (a form of early philosophy that emphasized "special *secret* knowledge" as the means to salvation), 2 Peter's use of the term does not fully conform to Gnostic thinking. Recent rhetorical studies of the letter however have shown that, rather than focusing on fending off Gnosticism, 2 Peter's primary concern is with *ethics* as reflected in the list of virtues (1:5–7), and the

61. Green 1987: 34–35.

62. Webb 2012: 476. ". . . the issue at hand is *not* a questioning of the *parousia* in the future because of its delay, but rather a rejection of the truth of the *parousia* itself because there is no evidence of divine intervention and judgment in the past" (emphasis original).

63. Green 1987: 35–36.

64. McNamara 1960: 13–14.

65. Green 1987: 38.

pointed inquiry in 3:11 ("Given that all things will dissolved, *what kind of lives ought you to live*?"), driven by eschatological concerns.[66]

7. *Identifying 2 Peter as a "Testament" genre*, has been used as grounds on which to argue that it is pseudepigraphical just like other Testamentary writings.[67] While this argument has been well developed by Bauckham and is widely accepted by scholars, it has significant weaknesses. In fact, as I will argue below in the commentary, you can have testamentary material in a piece of writing, without converting the entire document into a "Testament."[68] Also, 2 Peter does not follow all the conventions of a Testamentary writing.[69] A strong argument against pseudeipgraphical authorship is the early church's vigilant censorship of the canonical writings as they determined what to include in the Bible. Writings deemed to be inauthentic were eliminated from contention, irrespective of their teachings. We know for example other writings written in the name of Peter, such as *Gospel of Peter*, were rejected as pseudepigraphical.[70] For example, the authorship of the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (ca. 160) was questioned and eventually its author, a presbyter in the Church, admitted writing it not in an attempt to mislead, but in admiration of the apostle Paul. But this was not sufficient argument to the Church leaders who proceeded to condemn and defrock him for writing in the name of the apostle. Given that this issue of morality seems to have loomed large when dealing with apostolic writings, it makes it rather challenging for one to concede Bauckham's otherwise well crafted argument that the authorship of this letter would have come from the hand of a Petrine sympathizer.[71]

66. Charles 2006: 357–412.

67. Kümmel 1975: 433; Bauckham 1983: 159–62.

68. Charles 1997: 45–75.

69. Green 2008: 149.

70. Serapion (ca. 180) is quoted by Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist*. 6.12.2) declaring about the *Gospel of Peter*," "For our part, brothers, we revere both Peter and other apostles as [we revere] Christ, but the *writings which falsely bear their name we reject*" (emphasis added).

71. Bauckham (1983: 162) is aware of these arguments and does not think they disqualify the pseudepigraphy argument. Instead, he thinks that a more apt comparison of acceptance of 2 Peter as Petrine would be with Origen's acceptance of Hebrews as written by Paul because it contains the apostles' thoughts.

Arguments against Petrine authorship have continued to persist, but comprehensive (if not fully convincing) answers to each objection have been provided. The alternative theory of pseudepigraphy also has its own gaping holes making each side's position, on the one hand plausible and, on the other, still inconclusive. Of all the concerns for the pseudepigraphy arguments, I still believe the moral issue is probably the most challenging to account for. Nonetheless, as Witherington III points out, our modern notion of authorship may be too narrow to accommodate the plausible fact found in his own proposal of 2 Peter as a form of "sapiental literature" where scribal editing of writings was done communally allowing for a composite writing to be crafted by scribes, from original kernels and other sources.[72] This would allow for aspects of the letter to have originated with the Peter but with subsequent accretions over time, much in the same way that 2 Peter itself has incorporated the letter of Jude.

While advancing the concept of authorship, Witherington III's argument does not preclude a difficulty of the time-frame of a purported writer's death *vis-a-vis* his/her own writing. For instance, most pseudepigraphon were documents penned hundreds of years after the deaths of those to whom those documents were attributed (i.e., *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Assumption of Moses*). And the audience would have been aware of that fact, versus the so-called NT pseudepigrapha which would be penned several years after the purported author's death inevitably raising suspicion of authorship. Of course, this would be resolved if we accepted Bauckham's testamentary genre which, however, as we have noted and will elaborate further below and in the commentary, has its own shortcomings. Also, it is one thing if such a writing appeared soon after the writer's death versus, say, twenty or thirty years later, the time-frame suggested by Bauckham's dating of the letter (80–90 CE) from the death of Peter.[73]

So where are we left after all this? I am still not convinced by the pseudepigraphical arguments for authorship, as it seems to me that there are significant unanswered concerns over it.[74] At the very least, even the primary accusation that 2 Peter itself levies against its opponents—what

72. Witherington III 2007: 269–70.

73. Bauckham 1983: 158.

74. See Green (1987: 40–48) for a detailed presentation of the concerns with pseudepigraphy in 2 Peter. Peter H. Davids (2006: 149) seems to come to an impasse, concluding that there is no way of proving "*from historical investigation*" whether the Simeon Peter in the salutations is the disciple or a pseudepigrapher.

it considers false teaching posing as the truth—would seem to undermine any claim of it being pseudepigraphy in the first place. On the other hand, the history of the reception of the document in the early Church does give one pause. That notwithstanding, 2 Peter was eventually accepted into the canon even as its authenticity concerns lingered. At this point then, Jerome's amanuensis explanation would seem to sufficiently address many of the concerns 2 Peter raises about authorship, and remains as equally plausible to any of the other possibilities adduced.

Opponents

The opponents in 2 Peter are identified as false-teachers (*pseudodidaskaloi* —2:1) meaning they may have enjoyed a certain authority in the community as teachers. While the term is occasionally mistakenly applied to the opponents in Jude, this term does not appear in the letter of Jude in reference to the opponents in that letter. In spite of Michael Green's insistence that the opponents in the two letters share significant similarities as to warrant a conflation, there is need to recognize that even the distinctive use of the terminology in 2 Peter, that is missing in Jude, gives a specific nuance to the characterization of the opponents in the letter as opposed to those in Jude.[75] The false-teachers basically seem to have cast doubt on the apostolic teaching about the return of Jesus as a judge of creation dubbing it a myth (1:16–17). Accordingly, there would be no return; there was no need to have moral codes or virtues (2:19), given that it was not in the nature of God to interfere in human affairs (3:5–7), since all evidence points to a never changing universe (3:8–10). These positions are reconstructed from what 2 Peter refutes regarding the false-teacher's perceived teachings, but are not comprehensive enough to identify them with any specific first-century religious or philosophical group.

Genre

A key element of Bauckham's psuedepigraphical authorship argument for 2 Peter rests on identification of the writing as a farewell *testament* (the last words or wishes of a dying person of significance, e.g., a patriarch).[76] For

75. Green 1987: 51.

76. Bauckham 1983: 130–33.

Bauckham, the nature of testaments is that they are *all* inherently, always fictional, a claim questioned by other scholars.[77] The elements that account for identification of 2 Peter with this genre include: i) its reference to the author's impending death (1:12–14), ii) emphasis on moral exhortation (virtues) which parallels other Testaments (1:5–7), iii) recounting (reminiscing?) of the arrival of the gospel message to the community (1:16–19), and iv) warnings of impending dangers that must be resisted and fought (2:1–3; 3:1–7).

Challenges to Bauckham have pointed out that a document can have testamentary material without the whole writing being a Testament (e.g., John 21, 1 Macc. 2), that there is no clear premise to presume that all testamentary writings are pseudepigraphical, missing significant testamentary material in 2 Peter (e.g., a death scene), and rather than predicting arrival of opponents they seem to already have arrived.[78] Also, while today we may understand documents such as the testamentary writings to have been written in the name of worthies who had died ages before; it is not clear at all whether first or second century readers would have understood 2 Peter that way.[79] So while the testamentary elements are truly present, they are not sufficient to make the document a testament, and so the nature of the documents remains one of an epistle—a *farewell letter*, to be exact.

Eschatology

There is an image of changing attitudes and concerns about God's ultimate judgment of creation and the desire for assurance that promises made earlier about the *parousia* of Jesus were still part of the present reality of the readers. The agitation is being driven the teachings of the false-teachers who have questioned the reliability of the message the community had received from those who brought the gospel to them. Second Peter's sentiments about the *parousia* are similar to those in Paul's letters (1 Thess 5:2) and Revelation (3:5; 16:15). Therefore, the day of the Lord is expected to make a sudden appearance (2 Pet 3:10, 11) and calls for the readers to be watchful (2 Pet 3:12). However 2 Peter does add an aspect to the *parousia* in that it can be directly influenced by the believers' ethical response, hastening its appearance by moral conduct (2 Pet 3:12–14). Similarities can

77. Davids 2006: 148–49.
78. Kraftchick 2002: 74–75: Davids 2006: 145–49.
79. Davids 2006: 146.

be drawn to Acts 3:19–21. These eschatological perspectives set 2 Peter firmly in the early Church's understanding of an expected return of the Lord within their own lifetime.