

Dedicated
to
Our Lord Jesus Christ
The Savior of Sinners
and
Sustainer of Saints

An
Introductory and Explanatory
Survey of the English Bible V

New Testament Volume III
The General Epistles and Revelation

W. R. Downing

Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
Psalm 119:105



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An Introductory and Explanatory Survey of the English Bible. Volume II, The General Epistles and Revelation.

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Preface

This is the fifth and final volume of *An Introductory and Explanatory Survey of the English Bible*, a project of ten years' research, writing, studying and teaching.

This Survey of the English Bible has been intended as a basic help to our church members, to beginning students of our English Bible, and as a resource for pastors. These volumes have been used as textbooks in our seminary and in Bible classes and conferences. These volumes and other works have been distributed in prisons for inmates in several states, and in other countries for the use of pastors and students in religious schools through FirstLove Ministries.

A survey of the Bible is not an extended commentary, but an introductory work meant to accompany the Bible. Such a work is but the first step in the study of the Scriptures, providing essential background information and giving an analysis of each book.

A study of the Bible should be progressive, i.e., we need more than a mere repetitious reading the Scriptures. We should memorize strategic passages. As the godly man in Psalm 1:2, we need to “mutter” or meditate on and both memorize and feed upon the Scriptures daily.

Further, we should seek to educate ourselves in each book of the Bible as a whole, and this can be accomplished by a suitable Survey of the Bible. Such a work goes beyond the use of a Study Bible, which is usually much more limited in scope. The survey gives basic information concerning the given author, the historical circumstances under which each book was written, major interpretive and essential issues, any decisive questions which might arise, and gives an outline or analysis of each book so that one may gain a grasp of each book and its teaching.

The author has been graciously helped by those who have proof-read the manuscripts, given much good advice and been resourceful in various ways. Over the years, the following have been of great help, encouragement and kind in their advice and proof-reading: Brothers James Billings, Mark Bailon, Don Pitts and Sister Sarah Hart. Also worthy of mention are Pastor Joseph Jacowitz, head of FirstLove Ministries, Pastor Tom Lyon of University Place, Washington, and Brother Paul Little of Sacramento, California, for their encouragement and the use of their libraries. My Associate Pastor, Dr. Paul Nelson, has supported this project with his interest, encouragement, and help with technical issues in designing the covers for these volumes. Finally, thanks to our congregation at Sovereign Grace Baptist Church for their prayers, patience and understanding through these past years. We trust that this material has been of help and proven useful for their own Bible studies.

May this final volume and all the volumes together continue to be useful and beneficial for our people and for Bible students and pastors around the world. This is our great desire and prayer.

— W. R. Downing

Table of Contents

New Testament Linguistic Abbreviations.....	20
An Introduction to The General Epistles and Revelation	27
Chronology: 30–397 AD	27
The Apostolic Era (c. 30–100).....	28
The Epistle of James (c. 44–46).....	28
The First Missionary Journey of Paul: to Cyprus, Pamphylia, Phrygia, Lycaonia [Southern Galatia] (c. 48–49)	28
The Era of Transition (100–300)	33
The Imperial Era (300–476).....	38
Introduction	41
Troublesome Times.....	41
The General Epistles and Revelation: Designations	42
Canonical and Non–Canonical Books	42
History of the New Testament Canon	43
The Process of Canonization	45
The Chronological and Canonical Order of the General Epistles and Revelation	46
The Chronological Order of the General Epistles and Revelation.....	46
The Canonical Order and Theme of the General Epistles and Revelation	47
The Importance and Significance of these General Epistles....	48
Distinctions and Peculiarities among the General Epistles....	49
Jewish–Christian Elements	49
Doctrinal Emphases	50
Individual Characteristics	50
A Concluding Note on Romans and Hebrews	51
Excursus: A Necessary Comment on Radical Biblical Criticism.....	52
The Epistle to the Hebrews.....	55
Introduction: Questions.....	55
Introduction: Summary	55
The Title of Hebrews	55
The Authorship of Hebrews	56
Possible Authors	56
Salient Issues	57
Conclusion	58
The Canonicity of Hebrews	58

The Recipients, Destination and Purpose of Hebrews.....	59
The Recipients and Destination.....	59
The Purpose.....	59
Conclusion.....	60
The Five Stringent Warnings.....	61
Five Great Encouragements.....	62
The Date of Hebrews.....	62
The Theme of Hebrews.....	63
Leviticus and Hebrews.....	63
Contrasts and Comparisons.....	64
The Names and Titles of our Lord.....	65
Key–Words and Phrases.....	66
Chapter 11.....	69
The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews.....	70
The Theology of Hebrews.....	72
Bibliology.....	73
Theology Proper.....	73
Christology.....	74
Angelolgy.....	75
Hamartiology.....	76
Soteriology.....	76
Ecclesiology.....	77
Eschatology.....	77
Outline of Hebrews.....	77
Notes and Observations.....	81
The Epistle of James.....	95
Introduction.....	95
Authorship.....	96
Which “James”?.....	96
Three Theories.....	96
James and Jude.....	98
The Recipients.....	99
Provenance and Date.....	99
Canonicity.....	100
Occasion and Purpose.....	100
Themes.....	102
The Christian Ethic.....	102
The Tests of Faith.....	103
Excursus: The “Problem of Evil”.....	103
Style and Characteristics.....	106
James.....	110

Matthew	110
Theology	111
Bibliology	111
Theology Proper	111
Christology	111
Pneumatology	112
Satanology	112
Deontology	112
Ecclesiology	112
Anthropology	113
Soteriology	113
Eschatology	113
Practical Theology	113
Excursus: James and Paul on Justification and Works	113
Excursus: Prayer and Anointing with Oil	116
Two Texts	116
Basic Issues	117
Anointing with Oil not Limited to the Apostolic Era	117
The Sick Person is to Summon the Elders	118
This Anointing not Medicinal	119
This Anointing not Sacramental	120
This Anointing is Symbolic	120
The Prayer of Faith: Presuppositions	120
Historical Observations	121
Outline of James	121
Notes & Observations	124
The Epistle of 1 Peter	131
Introduction	131
Authorship	132
Biographical	132
Authenticity	133
Questions and Objections	134
Peter and Paul	135
Provenance	136
Recipients and Date	137
Purposes	137
Theme: Suffering	138
Faith, Hope and Love	139
1 Peter and other Biblical Writings	140
Two Difficult Passages	141
Theology	142

Theology Proper	143
Christology	143
Pneumatology	144
Angelology	144
Hamartiology	144
Soteriology	144
Ecclesiology	145
Eschatology	145
Christian Experience	145
The Imperatives	145
Husbands and Wives	146
Outline of 1 Peter	148
Analysis	148
Notes and Observations	150
The Epistle of 2 Peter	155
Introduction	155
Authorship of 2 Peter	156
The Provenance, Recipients and Date	157
The Occasion and Purpose	157
Who were these False Teachers?	158
The Key-Word: Knowledge	158
The False Teachers: Gnostics	158
The Two Petrine Epistles	160
Fallen Angels in prison	161
The protection of Noah and his family through the Flood	161
Riotous living, immorality and Divine judgment	161
Exhortations to Christian living	162
A Doxology in the context of practical Christianity	162
2 Peter and Jude	162
Theology	164
Bibliology	164
Theology Proper	164
Christology	164
Pneumatology	165
Soteriology	165
The First Cults	165
Eschatology	166
Four Excurses	166
Divine Inspiration	166
The Three Worlds	167
Remember!	168

The Vital Importance of 2 Peter	169
Outline of 2 Peter	169
Notes & Observations	171
The Epistle of 1 John	177
Introduction	177
Authorship	177
Biographical	177
External Evidence	179
Internal Evidence	179
Provenance and Date	182
The Recipients	182
Occasion and Purpose	182
The Heretics	183
Key Terms	184
Theology	186
Bibliology	186
Theology Proper	186
Christology	186
Pneumatology	187
Hamartiology	187
Soteriology	189
Eschatology	189
Troublesome Passages	189
Committing Sin	189
Sin and Lawlessness	190
The Johannine Comma	190
Style and Structure	191
Style	191
Structure	191
Outline of 1 John	194
Notes & Observations	195
The Epistle of 2 John	203
Introduction	203
Background	203
Authorship	206
The Recipients of 2 John	207
Provenance and Date	208
Purposes	208
Contribution to the Canon	209
Key–Words	209

Genre and Style	211
Theology	211
Theology Proper and Christology	212
Practical Theology.....	212
Eschatology	212
Structure and Outline.....	212
Outline of 2 John	213
Notes & Observations.....	214
 The Epistle of 3 John	 217
Introduction	217
Excursus: The Rise of Ecclesiasticism	218
Authorship	219
The Recipient and the Circumstances.....	220
The Purpose and Occasion.....	222
The Necessity and Nature of Christian Hospitality	223
Excursus: Danger and the <i>Didache</i>	224
Provenance and Date	226
Theology	227
Structure and Outline.....	227
Outline of 3 John	228
Notes & Observations.....	228
The Epistle of Jude	233
Introduction	233
Authorship	233
Canonicity.....	235
Occasion and Purpose.....	235
Provenance, Date and Recipients	236
Provenance	236
Date	237
Recipients.....	237
The Apostates	237
Descriptions from History	238
Descriptions from Nature.....	239
Their Destruction Prophesied.....	239
An Apostolic Warning	240
Style.....	240
Excursus: The Apostates and Modern Christianity	241
Theology.....	242
Bibliology: Jude & 2 Peter	242
Polemics.....	245
Bibliology: Apocryphal Literature	245

Theology Proper	247
Christology	247
Pneumatology	248
Angelology	249
Soteriology.....	249
Evangelism	249
Excursus: Faith–Objective and Subjective	249
Ecclesiology.....	252
Eschatology.....	252
Doxology	252
Structure and Outline	252
Outline of Jude	253
Notes & Observations	255
 The Book of Revelation.....	 261
Introduction	261
Authorship.....	262
Authenticity.....	263
Provenance and Date.....	264
Recipients.....	265
Genre and Style.....	267
Genre.....	267
Uninspired Jewish Apocalyptic Literature	267
Inspired Biblical Apocalyptic Literature	267
Style	268
Revelation: Old and New Testament Sources.....	269
Occasion and Purpose	269
Theology	270
Bibliology	270
Theology Proper	270
Christology	271
Pneumatology	271
Soteriology.....	271
Ecclesiology.....	271
Eschatology.....	271
Five Hermeneutical Approaches.....	271
The Preterist Approach	273
The Historicist Approach.....	273
The Futurist Approach.....	274
The Idealist Approach.....	274
The Eclectic Approach	275
Conclusion	275

Three Views of the Millennium.....	275
Premillennialism.....	275
Postmillennialism.....	277
Amillennialism.....	278
The Structure of Revelation.....	279
Outline of Revelation.....	281
Notes & Observations.....	285
A General Bibliography.....	295
Grammatical and Lexical Works.....	295
Latin.....	295
Hebrew.....	295
Septuagint.....	296
Greek.....	296
New Testament Introductions and Surveys.....	298
General Works.....	299
Apologetics.....	300
Bible Atlases.....	301
Bible Archeology.....	301
General Biblical Introduction.....	301
New Testament Biblical Criticism.....	302
Biblical Interpretation.....	303
General Hermeneutics.....	303
The History of Interpretation.....	304
New Testament Biblical Theology.....	304
Bible Customs.....	305
Apostolic Church History.....	305
Dictionaries of Church History.....	307
Commentaries on the Entire Bible.....	308
Commentaries on the New Testament.....	310
Commentaries on the General Epistles.....	312
Hebrews.....	312
James.....	314
1 Peter.....	314
2 Peter.....	315
The Johannine Epistles.....	316
Jude.....	317
Revelation.....	318

New Testament Linguistic Abbreviations

The following abbreviations and explanations are used in the exegetical notes and footnotes pertaining to the Old Testament Hebrew [MT], the Septuagint [LXX] and the Greek New Testament, various reference works and biblical commentaries. These are included for this Survey and also for reference to other works.

ἀ	Aquila. A revision of the LXX.
abl.	Ablative case. The case of separation.
absol.	Absolute. Used for the Gk. Gen. or Acc. Absolute.
acc.	Accusative case. The case which relates to the direction, extent or end of action.
act.	Active voice.
anarth.	Anarthrous. Without the definite article. Stresses character or quality. See “Arthrous,” “def. art.”
aor.	Aorist tense. A punctiliar action or event. Viewing an action as a whole rather than a process.
aor. imp.	Aorist imperative. A command or entreaty to commence an action at once with a sense of urgency and determination. See “pres. imp.”
aor. subj.	Aorist subjunctive.
aor. subj. prohib.	Aorist subjunctive of prohibition. A command or entreaty to not even begin a given [anticipated] action. See “pres. imp. of prohib.”
Arab.	Arabic.
Aram.	Aramaic.
art.	Article. Definite article. Stresses identity. See “def. art.”
arth.	Arthrous. Articular, having the definite article. Stresses identity. See “Anarthrous,” and “def. art.”
cl.	Clause, or Class of conditional sentence.
cod.	Codex, codices. A codex is a ms. with pages sewn together in a book form, replacing the earlier scroll form.
cond.	Conditional, conditional sentence.
conj.	Conjunction.
const.	Construction, with reference to various linguistic arrangements.

Const. St.	Used for Heb. words in “Construct State,” or dependent and often joined to another by <i>maqquph</i> (ֿ). See “Absol. State.”
Crit.	Critical. The Critical Text, the latest Greek eclectic text.
D	Latin Vulgate. C. 406 AD.
D	“Deuteronomic.” See JEDP.
dat.	Dative case. The case of personal concern.
def. art.	Definite article. See “Arthrous,” “Articular.”
def. dir. obj.	Definite Direct Object.
demon.	Demonstrative.
dir. obj.	Direct Object.
dual.	Dual number. Heb. thought of some things as naturally existing in pairs.
E	“Elohistic.” See JEDP.
E.g.	<i>Exempli gratia</i> , “for the sake of example.”
emph.	Emphatic, emphasize.
emph. imp.	Emphatic Imperative. In Heb., the addition of the suffix ׀ to the imp. vb. for greater emph.
emph. pos.	Emphatic position. Inflected languages often reserve word-order for emphasis, usually placing the emphatic words or phrases toward the first of the given statement. At times the emphatic words are placed last for a culminative emphasis.
Eng.	English.
Eth.	Ethiopic Version.
fem.	Feminine gender.
fig.	Figure, figurative.
fut.	Future tense.
gen.	Genitive case. The case of source or possession.
Ger.	German.
Gk.	Greek.
Heb.	Hebrew.
i.e.,	<i>id est</i> , “that is.”
imp.	Imperative mood. The mood of command or entreaty. See “pres. imp.” and “aor. imp.” See also “ind.,” “subj. ” and “opt.”
imperf.	Imperfect tense. The Gk. imperfect denotes continuous [linear] or repetitive action in time past. The Heb. imperfect denotes an incomplete action. See “perf.”

ind.	Indicative mood. Statement of fact or [presumed] reality. See “subj.,” “opt.” and “imp.”
indef.	Indefinite.
ind. obj.	Indirect object.
inf.	Infinitive.
inst.	Instrumental case. The case of means.
intens.	Intensive. Various constructions may be used to produce an intensive expression.
interj.	Interjection.
interrog.	Interrogative.
K, cop ^{sa}	Coptic Sahidic Version.
K, cop ^{bo}	Coptic Bohairic Version.
κ τ λ	An abbreviation for καὶ τὸν λοιπὸν, lit: “and the rest or remaining.” Roughly the equivalent of “etc.”
KJV, AV	King James Version or Authorized Version of the English Bible (1611).
LLat.	Late Latin.
Lat.	Latin.
Lex.	Lexicon.
loc.	Locative case. The case of location.
LXX	Septuagint. The Greek Version of the Old Testament, c. 246 BC, which is designated by the Roman Numerals for “Seventy.”
masc.	Masculine gender.
ME.	Middle English.
MFr.	Middle French.
mid.	Middle voice. The middle voice in Greek is reserved for either a reflexive or intensive expression.
MLat.	Middle Latin.
ms.	Manuscript. A hand-written document. Pl., “mss.”
n.	Noun.
neg.	Negative.
neut.	Neuter gender.
OE	Old English.
OFr.	Old French.
OLat.	Old Latin. Third century. Before the Lat. Vulg. of Jerome (406 AD).

opt.	Optative mood. The mood of possibility, further removed from reality than the subj. See “subj.,” “opt.” and “imp.”
Orig.	<i>Hexapla</i> of Origen, Polyglot, c. 230 AD.
part.	Particle.
pass.	Passive voice.
per.	Person.
perf.	Perfect tense. The Gk. perfect tense views an action as past and the results existing into the present. The Heb. perfect denotes a completed action. See “imperf.”
periph.	Periphrastic. An equitive verb construed with a participle used to emphasize a given action or state.
pl.	Plural number.
pluperf.	Pluperfect tense. An action considered as extending from one time to another in the past.
pos.	Position. Refers to word-order in either Gk. or Heb. sentence. See “emph. pos.”
poss.	Possessive.
prep.	Preposition. These may be used either separately or intensively [the “perfective” use] in a compound word.
pres.	Present tense. An [linear] action considered as in progress from the present view of the speaker or writer.
pres. imp.	Present imperative. A command to keep on doing a certain action.
pres. imp. of prohib.	Present imperative of prohibition. A command to stop something already in progress.
pron.	Pronoun.
ptc.	Participle. A verbal adjective. The pres. ptc. can be used with a def. art. (rel. ptc.) to emphasize an outstanding characteristic. The ptc. may be used temporally with an equitive verb to emphasize a given action or state.
Q	Qumran Texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls [DSS].
qual.	Qualitative. Combined with the rel. pron., used to demonstrate a kind of person or thing.
rel.	Relative. The rel. or arthrous ptc. is used to stress a given characteristic.

rt:	Root word, the basic form.
rest. att.	Restrictive attributive. The repetition of the def. art. with the adj., both in the same case and gender as the preceding noun, for emphasis.
RV, ASV	Revised Version or American Standard Version of the English Bible (1901).
G, LXX	Septuagint.
σ,	Symmachus, a later literary version of LXX [c. 170].
sing.	Singular number.
stat. vb.	Stative verb. A vb. that describes a state of being, condition or quality. An intransitive vb.
subj.	Subjunctive mood. The mood of contingency or probability, closest to reality. See “ind.,” “opt.,” and “imp.”
Syr.	<i>Old Syriac</i> . The language of ancient Syria, an Aramaic language [Aramaean] very closely related to the Chaldee. Syriac versions are significant in the textual criticism of the Hebrew OT.
S, syr ^p	<i>Peshitta</i> or <i>Peshito</i> (“Simple”). A standardized Syrian text that dates from the early fifth century, based on earlier texts (c. 120). See “Old Syriac.”
Talm.	<i>Talmud</i> . The written body of Jewish tradition and commentaries, comprised of the Mishna and Gemara.
θ	Theodotian, a 200 AD version of LXX.
TR	<i>Textus Receptus</i> . 1633 revision of the 1550 <i>Stephanus Text</i> with emendations from Beza’s final editions (1588–89, 1599).
transl.	Translated.
vb.	Verb.
Ver.	Version.
v.l.	<i>Varia Lectio</i> . A variant reading in the text.
voc.	Vocative. The case of direct address.

Key to Written Works Cited

ACNT	American Commentary of the New Testament
BHC	Interpretation of the English Bible, B. H. Carroll
CC	Calvin’s Commentaries
BHGNT	Baylor’s Handbook to the Greek New Testament
EB	Expositor’s Bible

EC	Ellicott's Commentary
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
EGT	Expositor's Greek Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
JFB	Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary
TDNT	Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the NT
Lange	Lange's Commentary on Bible
Matt H	Mathew Henry's Commentary
M&S	McClintock & Strong Biblical Encyclopedia
Meyer	Meyer's Greek Commentary on the NT
NAC	New American Commentary
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary of NT
NIDNTTE	New International Dictionary of NT Theology & Exegesis
NTC	New Testament Commentary
PC	Pulpit Commentary
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
RCHL	Lenski's Interpretation of the NT
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

An Introduction to The General Epistles and Revelation

This study and survey include the biblical books from Hebrews to Revelation. The Epistle to the Hebrews is usually omitted from the General Epistles and Revelation, the one prophetic book of the New Testament, is also omitted. For sake of convenience and a general grouping, we will include Hebrews in the General Epistles, although it was probably written for a certain congregation.

Some preliminary studies should precede such a study, including some chronological surveys of this era, enabling the reader to fix general dates and historical incidents in his mind. The following will survey the beginning of what some call “The Christian Era” from the death and resurrection and ascension of our Lord and the Apostolic Era beginning with Pentecost to the turbulent first three centuries and on to the third Council of Carthage (397) and the complete and final canonization of Scripture. Such a survey will also join the issues of the first century from Paul’s ministry to those of Peter and John, James and Jude.

Chronology: 30–397 AD

This chronology extends from the Apostolic Era through the reign of the Emperor Constantine, who made the “Christianity” of his day the state religion through the Edict of Milan (313), on to the Council of Carthage (397) when the canon of Scripture was fully accepted. This chronology includes Roman Emperors and significant Christian writers and personalities, and some historically important incidents. This may act as a reference for the early Church Fathers and others who commented on Scripture.

The Apostolic Era (c. 30–100)

This era witnessed the spread of Christianity through the inspired
Apostles and the writings of the New Testament
Canon of Scripture¹

Crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord and His ascension into
heaven (c. 30)

The Feast of Pentecost and outpouring of the Spirit upon the
Jerusalem Church (c. 30)

Clement of Rome (Apostolic Father) (c. 30–100)²

The Epistle of James (c. 44–46)

Plutarch, Greek historian (47–120)

The First Missionary Journey of Paul: to Cyprus, Pamphylia,
Phrygia, Lycaonia [Southern Galatia] (c. 48–49)

Martyrdom of James (c. 48)

Ventidius Cumanus, Roman Procurator of Judea (48–53)

Herod Agrippa II made King of Chalcis (48)

Emperor Claudius commands all Jews to leave Rome (c. 49)

Paul writes the Epistle to the Galatians. Written to the churches
of Southern Galatia (c. 49–50)³

Paul is forced to publically rebuke the Apostle Peter for his
compromise which made an unnecessary distinction between
Jewish and Gentile believers (c. 50)⁴

The Gospel of Mark (50–55)

¹ From the final decades of the first century to the following two centuries, the dates are often conjectural through tradition.

² The Apostolic Fathers were an early group of Christian writers believed to have had direct contact with the Apostles themselves. This groups includes: Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Barnabas of Alexandria, Papias and Polycarp.

³ This chronology is according to the more recent scholarship [the “Southern Galatian theory”]; older scholarship [the “Northern Galatian theory”] held that Galatians was written just prior to Romans (c. 57).

⁴ This public confrontation and rebuke had to occur before the Jerusalem conference. Paul would have referred to the conference as a primary argument (Acts 15).

The Jerusalem Conference: Paul's third trip to Jerusalem (c. 50–51)

Paul and Barnabas split over John Mark. Paul and Silas depart with the blessings of the Antioch church

The Second Missionary Journey of Paul: to Cilicia,⁵ Galatia, Mysia, Macedonia, Greece and Ephesus (c. 51–53)

Paul stoned and left for dead at Lystra (c. 51)

Troas: the gospel enters Europe at Philippi (c. 51)⁶

Paul and Silas beaten by Roman lictors at Philippi (c. 51)⁷
 Marcus Antonius Felix, Roman Procurator of Palestine
 (52–60)

Paul addresses the philosophical Council at Athens (c. 52)

Paul's eighteen months' ministry at Corinth. Paul receives an encouraging vision

Epistles of 1 & 2 Thessalonians written from Corinth (c. 52–53)

Paul makes a short stay in Ephesus, leaves Aquilla and Priscilla there, then travels to Jerusalem

Martyrdom of Philip the Apostle (53)⁸

The Third Missionary Journey of Paul: Cilicia, Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece (c. 53–57)

Three years' ministry at Ephesus. The incident with Apollos. Unusual miracles performed. Uproar and city-wide riot instigated by Demetrius

Tacitus (Roman historian), (c. 55—117)

⁵ There is no biblical record of the establishment of the Cilician churches. These could have been planted by Paul during his "silent years" (Acts 9:28–30; 15:41).

⁶ This short trip was the most significant in Paul's ministry, for it changed the direction of Christianity and the history of Western Civilization.

⁷ The beating at Philippi is the only one mentioned. There were others, probably early in Paul's ministry (2 Cor. 11:24–25).

⁸ Although we have the biblical record of the martyrdom of James the brother of John in 44 AD (Acts 12:1–2), the deaths of the others, who all died in the first Neronian Persecution, except John, are known only through early church tradition. Such martyrdoms included most of Paul's associates and helpers.

Paul writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (c. 56)

Paul writes 2 Corinthians from Philippi (c. 57)

Paul writes Romans from Corinth (c. 57)

Jewish plot to murder Paul; a circuitous route to Troas and back to Jerusalem. Eutychus raised from the dead at Troas

Jonathan, Jewish High Priest (58)

Paul reports to the Jerusalem Church and brings the offering from the Gentile churches

Paul makes his great address and gives his testimony to the huge multitude at the Temple. Nearly beaten to death at the Jerusalem Temple; rescued by the Roman garrison

A further plot to murder Paul foiled. Paul sent under guard to Caesarea

The First Imprisonment of Paul (c. 58–63)

Two Years at Caesarea (c. 58–61) Paul stands before the Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus and Agrippa II; appeals to Caesar

The Gospel of Luke (58–61)

Ishmael ben Fabus, Jewish High Priest (restored?) (58–62)

Martyrdom of James the Just (61)

Joseph Cabi ben Simon, Jewish High Priest (62–63)

Porcius Festus, Roman Procurator of Palestine (c. 60–62)

The Gospel of Matthew (60–66)

Papias (Apostolic Father) (c.60—130)

Paul's sailing trip to Rome. The great storm and shipwreck at Melita (c. 61)

Gnosticism (a syncretic mixture of Judaism, Christianity, Eastern mysticism & Greek philosophy): The internal threat to Christianity from within for first 3 centuries.⁹

Paul's two years at Rome under house arrest (c. 61–63)

The "Prison Epistles" written from Rome (c. 62–63)

"Prison Epistles." Colossians (c. 62)

⁹ Gnosticism was a major threat to Christianity during the first three centuries. It was a mixture of Platonic philosophy, Oriental mysticism and apostate Judaism. Gnosticism manifest itself in a variety of forms, eg., Cerinthianism, Doceticism, Marcionism, etc.

“Prison Epistles:” Ephesians (c. 62)

“Prison Epistles:” Philemon (c. 63)

The Book of Acts written by Luke (c. 63)

“Prison Epistles:” Philippians (c. 63)

Paul stands before Caesar and the Praetorian Court, acquitted¹⁰

The Second Interlude between Roman Imprisonments: Paul travels to all his previous mission fields and also to Illyricum, Dalmatia, the Lycus Valley,¹¹ Crete¹² and Spain (c. 63–c. 67)¹³

Albinus, Roman Procurator of Judea (62–65)

Death of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman Statesman, Stoic Philosopher (5 BC–65 AD)

Ananus ben Ananus, Jewish High Priest (63)

Joshua ben Damneus, Jewish High Priest (63)

Joshua ben Gamia, Jewish High Priest (63–64)

Nero sets the city of Rome on fire and blames this incendiary act on the Christians.¹⁴ The first Roman persecution of Christians (64–68)

Paul writes his “Pastoral Epistles” during his final journeys (c. 63–66), arrested, and returns to prison in Rome

“Pastoral Epistles:” 1 Timothy (c. 64)

“Pastoral Epistles:” Titus (c. 63–64)

Martyrdom of Barnabas (64)

The Epistles of 1 & 2 Peter (64–68)

¹⁰ Phil. 1:13, “the palace” is τῷ πραιτωρίῳ, referring to the Imperial Praetorium or Court, comprised of Caesar, the heads of the Praetorian Guard and twenty-two Roman Senators.

¹¹ Philemon was a resident of Colossae, and Paul intended to visit this area for the first time once he was released from his first Roman imprisonment (Col. 2:1).

¹² Paul’s trip to Crete and the establishment of the Cretian churches there had to occur between his Roman imprisonments (Titus 1:4–5).

¹³ The trip into Spain had been anticipated, even before his first imprisonment (Rom. 15:24, 28).

¹⁴ 5 of the 7 districts of the city were burned to ashes. Nero, in his insanity, intended to rebuild Rome on a greater scale and rename it “Neropolis,” i.e., “The City of Nero,” after himself.

Mattathias ben Theophilus, Jewish High Priest (65–66)

Phannias ben Samuel, Jewish High Priest (67–70)

General Epistle: Hebrews (c. 64–66)¹⁵

The Epistle of Jude (67–68)

The Jewish War and destruction of the Temple (66–70)¹⁶

The Final Imprisonment and Martyrdom of Paul (c. 67–68)

“Pastoral Epistles:” 2 Timothy (c. 67–68)

Peter martyred at Rome (c. 66–68)

Paul martyred at Rome in early 68 toward the end of the Neronian Persecution

During the Neronian persecution, early tradition states that the following were martyred: The remaining Apostles, John Mark, Aristarchus, Aquilla and Priscilla, Epaphras, Andronicus, Junia, Silas, Onesiphorus, Matthias; Prochorus, Parmenas and Nicanor [three of the first deacons of the Jerusalem Church], Trophimus, Onesimus, etc.

Nero, insane and hunted as a criminal of the state, dies in an assisted suicide (June 9, 68)

Galba, Roman Emperor (68–69)

Otho and Vitellius, Roman Emperors (68–69)

Vespasian, Roman Emperor (69–79)

Eruption of Mt. Vesuvius buries the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum (79)

Titus brings 60,000 Jewish prisoners of war as slaves to Rome to build the Colosseum [*Amphitheatrum Flavium*] (70–82)

The Jewish final stand of the *sicarii* and mass suicide at Masada (c. 74)

Titus, Roman Emperor (79–81)

¹⁵ Hebrews is usually placed among the General Epistles, denying the traditional Pauline authorship. This work holds Paul to be the author, perhaps through the amanuensis of Luke.

¹⁶ Paul probably heard of the Jewish War during his last travels and imprisonment. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would end Jewish Christian narrowness and prejudice. The Judaizers, according to some historians, would later identify with Jewish sects, e.g., Ebionites, Nazarenes and Elkasites.

Domitian, Roman Emperor (81–96)

The general persecution of Christians began during the reign of Domitian and continued spasmodically through the reigns of the Roman Emperors until the reign of Constantine (c. 330) in the Western Empire and to c. 323 in the Eastern Empire

The Gospel according to John (c. 90–95)

The Book of Revelation (c. 98)

The Apostle John exiled on the Isle of Patmos (c. 90–95)

Hermas (Apostolic Father) (c. 90—140)

Nerva, Roman Emperor (96–98)

The Johannine Epistles (c. 95–98)

Trajan, Roman Emperor (98–117)

The Era of Transition (100–300)

This era witnessed the departures from New Testament

Christianity and the rise of Ecclesiasticism

Barnabas of Alexandria (Apostolic Father) (c.100)

Justin Martyr (Apologist) martyred (beaten & beheaded)
(c. 100—165)

Ptolemy (Egyptian astronomer and geographer (c.100—
178)

Dacian Wars (101—106)

Ethiopian eunuch martyred at Ceylon (110)

Tatian (Apologist) (110—172)

Onesimus martyred (stoned) at Ephesus (111)

Pliny persecutes Christians in Bithynia (112)

Rise of Ebionism (A Jewish cult formed by a merger of a
Qumran remnant with Jewish Christianity (1st—2nd cent)

Hadrian, Roman Emperor (117–138)

Basilides of Alexandria, Gnostic teacher (c. 117–138)

Ignatius of Antioch (d. 108/140?)

Quadratus (Apologist) (c.117—138)¹⁷

Hegesippus (Apologist) (c.117—189)

Rise of Ecclesiasticism: Elders and Monarchical Bishops differentiated (c. 120)¹⁸

Basilides (c. 120—140)

A time of severe persecution of Christians at this time under
Hadrian: multitudes slain (c. 130)

Epistle of Barnabas (c. 132)

Galen (Greek physician, c. 130—200)

The final Jewish *Bar Kochbah* rebellion and end of Jewish national life (c. 132—135)¹⁹

The rise of Montanism (c. 135—230)²⁰

¹⁷ The Apologists were a group of early Christian writers who defended Christianity against the ever-increasing opposition of pagan philosophy, politics and religion. This group includes: Quadratus, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagorus, Theophilus, Minucius Felix, Melito, Hegesippus and Tertullian.

¹⁸ The rise of ecclesiasticism. The era from 100—313 AD was one of transition from NT simplicity to the Romish hierarchy and Papal system. The first step was a distinction made between bishops and elders, then parochial bishops, then diocesan or monarchical bishops, then the Metropolitan bishops by the early fourth century. The transition was also from the NT simplicity of Gospel preaching and ordinances to sacerdotalism and an ecclesiastical priesthood.

¹⁹ The only one successful revolt in gaining religious freedom was the Maccabean revolt. The final *Bar-Kochba* ["Son of the Star," Numb. 24:17—19] revolt ended with the destruction of Jewish national life.

²⁰ The beginnings of the various groups eventually designated generically as "Anabaptists." As the more liberal churches took back into fellowship members who had apostatized under threat of persecution and death, conservative churches opposed such action and separated themselves. The rise of ecclesiasticism took place among the same liberal churches.

During the era of transition (100—313 AD) these influences resulted in several schisms, eg., Montanism, Novatianism, Donatism, etc. The movements were essentially the same, but were named after their prominent leaders. After the State—Church system in 313 A.D., these groups continued under various names until the time of the Protestant Reformation. Some were heretical in areas; others were more orthodox in doctrine and biblical in principle; and some were very orthodox and

Aristides (Apologist) (c.138—161)

Emperor Antoninus Pius (138—161)

Marcionism (a heretical Gnostic system) (c. 140)

Beginning of doctrine of and controversy over baptismal regeneration (c. 150)²¹

Polycarp (Apostolic Father & pastor at Smyrna) martyred (burned & thrust through with a sword) with 12 others (c. 69—160)

Clement of Alexandria, early Church Father (c. 150—215)

Great Plague in Roman Empire (160—180)

The Muratorian Canon which listed and commented upon some New Testament writings (c. 170)

Irenaeus (Ante—Nicene Father) bishop of church at Lyons (c. 175—195)

Tertullian (Apologist) (c. 160—215)

Athenagorus (Apologist) (c. 161—180)

Emperor Marcus Aurelius: A great era of persecution for Christians. 19,000 martyred at Lyons (161—180)

Roman Defeat in Scotland (180)

Rise of Ecclesiasticism: Diocesan or monarchical Bishops and Apostolic succession (c. 180)

Emperor Commodus (180—192)

Theophilus (Apologist) (d. 181)

Melito (Apologist) (d. 190)

Emperor Septimius Severus (193—211)

evangelical. Note the chronology of the Middle Ages for a listing of these groups.

²¹ Patristic developments concerning baptism. By the mid—second century, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration was being debated. Until the sixth century, however, believer's baptism (i.e., faith and instruction or catechizing were necessary prerequisites for baptism) was the general practice (which would preclude infant baptism), until changed by Imperial decree. Immersion was the usual mode (and continued to be, even in the Romish Church until the 12th century), but effusion was considered valid in cases of sickness or extreme circumstances. Infant baptism logically followed.

The Thebaic (c. 200) and Memphitic (early 3rd century)
Egyptian Versions

Carthage again becomes a world metropolis (c. 200)

Period of the Neo-Platonic philosophers (c. 200—)

Rise of Ecclesiasticism: the Bishop of Rome begins to gain
predominant position as pope²²

Afghanistan invaded by the Huns (c. 200—540)

Cyprian of Carthage (Ante-Nicene Father) (c. 200—258)

Tertullian writes opposing the baptism of young children as they
had not been instructed sufficiently as disciples (first possible
mention of infant baptism) (204)

Emperor Caracalla (211—217)

Clement of Alexandria, Church Father (c.150—215)

Minucius Felix (Apologist) (c.180—220?)

Emperor Heliogabalus (218—222)

Goths invade Asia Minor and Balkan peninsula (220)

Emperor Severus Alexander: Resumes the persecution of
Christians which had ceased from 213 to 223. (222—
235)

Hyppolytus (Ante—Nicene Father) (c. 170—236)

Emperor Maximin (235—238)

Emperors Gordian I, Gordian II, Balbinus, Pupienus and
Gordian III (238—244)

²² The rise of Ecclesiasticism and the rise of the Papal system: From the earliest times, the Bishop of Rome became central. This prominence derived from: the supposed principle of Apostolic succession from Peter, the Imperial capital being located at Rome, the Latin-speaking western part of the Empire holding preeminence over the Greek-speaking eastern part, the removal of the Roman capital to Constantinople under Constantine in 331 A.D., and the final division of the Empire into East and West in 395 A.D.

This left the Pope in virtual control of the Western Empire as the prominent person. The first Pope with ecclesiastical, political and military power was Gregory the Great (590—604) who may be properly called the first pope. The Papal system reached its zenith with Gregory VI (Hildebrand) (1073).

Julius Africanus (Ante–Nicene Father) (c. 160—240)²³

Emperor Philip the Arabian (244—249)

Alexander of Jerusalem (bishop of church at Jerusalem & martyr)
(d. 247)

The 1000th anniversary of Rome (248)

Emperor Decius (249—251)

Synod of Carthage: Romish decision against the Novatians
(251)²⁴

Manichaeism (c. 250—)

Rise of Ecclesiasticism: a change begins toward sacerdotalism
(c.250)

Rise of Novatianism: Partly a reaction against the developing
ecclesiasticism & laxness in discipline (c. 250—)

First general and most pervasive persecution of Christians
(248—251)²⁵

Emperor Gallus (251—253)

Emperor Vallerian (253—260)

Origen (Ante–Nicene Father) (c. 185—254)

Synod of Carthage: Romish opposition to “heretical” baptism
(256)²⁶

Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 200–265)

Baptismal controversy re baptism performed by “heretics”
(c. 255)

Emperor Gallienus (260—268)

²³ The Church Fathers are classified according to their historical relation to the Council of Nicaea (325): Ante–Nicene Fathers—those who wrote before 325; Nicene Fathers—those who lived and wrote in the immediate context of 325; and Post–Nicene Fathers—those who lived and wrote after 325. The Apostolic Fathers and Apologists are classified with the Ante–Nicene Fathers.

²⁴ The Novatians opposed Romanism and sought to practice NT Christianity.

²⁵ A record of the Christian martyrs and their sufferings down to the 16th century can be read in Theileman J. Van Braught, *Martyrs' Mirror* and John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

²⁶ Groups such as the Montanists, Novatians and Donatists held to believer's baptism by immersion after the NT pattern.

- The Marcomanni invade Black Sea region (257)²⁷
- First Edict of Toleration for Christians (260)
- Dionysius (bishop of church at Alexandria), Gaius & Peter exiled (260)
- Sabellian Controversy (Trinitarian) (c. 262)
 - Goths plunder Athens, Sparta and Corinth (268)
 - Emperor Claudius (268—270)
- Monarchian controversy (Trinitarian) (c. 269)
 - Emperor Aurelian (270—275)
- Gregory Thaumaturgos (Ante-Nicene Father) (c. 213—270)
 - Plotinus (Neo-Platonic philosopher, 204—270)
 - First form of compass used in China (271)
 - Emperor Marcus Aurelius Probus (276—282)
 - Emperor Marcus Aurelius Carus (282—283)
 - Emperor Diocletian (284—305)
 - First partition of Roman Empire into East and West (285)
- Period of relative peace for Christians (260—303). During this time the first church buildings were erected²⁸
 - Porphyry (Neo-Platonic philosopher) (233—303)
- Arnobius in his writings cites the almost universal practice of faith & instruction before baptism (300)

The Imperial Era (300—476)

- The Imperial Era traces the Roman Empire from its greatness to the beginning of its decline. Our concern is only to the time of the third Council of Carthage (397)
- Second great general persecution of Christianity (c. 302—310)
 - Emperor Constantius Chlorus assumes reign over eastern and western divisions of the Empire (306)

²⁷ Macromanni, an early tribe of Germanic people.

²⁸ The church was originally the ἐκκλησία, or assembly, congregation of the Lord's people—the “gathered church.” The first church buildings were designated as κύριακου or κυρίανκον, that which belongs to the Lord (Κύριος). This eventually became the word “Church.” This is seen in the Scottish *kirk* and German *Kirche*.

Ephrem Syrus [Ephrem the Syrian] (c. 306–373)

Donatist schism in North Africa (312)

Constantine defeats Maxentius and with Licinius jointly issues two edicts of toleration for Christians, the Edicts of Rome (312) and Milan (313)²⁹

Council of Arles, Constantine presides as a “Christian Emperor” (314)³⁰

Arian Controversy (Christological) (314–)

Lactantius (Nicene Father) (c. 240–320)

Pope Sylvester I (314–336)

Donatus (a bishop at Carthage) rejects all infant baptism, the authority of the pope & stresses liberty of conscience (317)

Council of Nicaea: Arianism condemned, formulation of Nicæan Creed (325)³¹

Capital of Roman Empire moved to Constantinople (331)

Pope Mark (336)

Arius: denied the absolute Deity & eternal Sonship of Christ (256–336)

Emperor Constantine II (337–340)

Eusebius of Caesarea (Nicene Father, “Father of Church History”) (c. 265–339)

²⁹ The Edict of Toleration issued by Constantine in 313 stopped the persecution of Christians in the western portion of the Empire, but Licinius in the eastern portion still persecuted Christians from 319–323. He may have thought they supported Constantine and therefore were disloyal.

³⁰ Constantine as the first “Christian Emperor” introduced the “Constantinian Change” to the “Church.” This was the concept of a State Church in which every New Testament and Gospel principle would be modified to suit a monolithic system and the “Church” would receive the protection and power of the State. This State Church system existed until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century when it was rivaled by the “Neo-Constantinian” system of the Reformers and their State Churches.

³¹ The Council of Nicaea was the first of the four great General or Ecumenical Councils of the Imperial age: Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). The Church Fathers or Christian writers of the first five centuries are categorized according to their historical position to this first Ecumenical Council.

- Pope Julius I (337–352)
- Council at Antioch (341)
- Synod of Carthage: Opposition to the Donatist schism (345)
- Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 349)
 - Empire divides into East (Emperor Constantius II, 337–361) and West (Emperor Constans, 337–350)
- Pope Liberius (352–366)
- Antony (first hermit, ascetic, c. 251–356)
- Macedonianism (Pneumatomachism) (Trinitarian controversy concerning the Deity of Holy Spirit) (c. 360)
 - Persecution of Christians in Persia under Shapur II (343–378)
 - Huns invade Europe (360)
 - Books begin to replace scrolls (c. 360)
 - Emperor Julian the Apostate attempts to revive paganism in Roman Empire: Revives persecution of Christians (360–363)
 - Emperor Jovian (363–364)
- Hilary (Nicene Father) (c. 291–371)
- Council of Laodicea (363)
 - Pope Damascus I (366–384)
 - Emperor Valentinian I (Valens): Christians martyred during this time as pacifists (364–375, West)
- Athanasius (Nicene Father and Deacon): greatest opponent of Arianism (c. 296–373)
 - Huns invade Russia (376)
 - Emperor Gratian (375–383, West)
- Basil the Great (Post–Nicene Father): Taught believer's baptism (c. 329–379)
 - Pope Siricius (384–399). Enjoined chastity on priests.
- Council of Constantinople. The Apollinarian Controversy (Christological) (381)
- Gregory of Nazianzus (Post–Nicene Father) (c. 330–389)
 - Emperor Valentinian II (375–392, West)
- Council of Hippo: Final canonization of Scriptures (381)
 - Emperor Theodosius the Great (378–395, East) (392–395, West)
- Gregory of Nyssa (Post–Nicene Father) (c. 330–395)

Ambrose of Milan (Post–Nicene Father) (c. 339–397)

Visigoths invade Greece and Balkan Peninsula (398)

Emperor Arcadius (395–408, East)

Emperor Honorius (395–423, West)

The Third Council [Synod] of Carthage issues the finalized canon of Scripture (397)

Introduction

Troublesome Times

The final decades of the first century and of Apostolic Christianity were characterized by both external and internal troubles. During this time most of the original Disciples and multitudes of believers were martyred. Externally, from c. 64 onward a series of periodic Roman State persecutions began, which would not finally end until the early fourth century when the Emperor Constantine made the “Christianity” of that day the official state religion in the West (c. 313).

Internally, the churches were tested by heresies and schisms which had been foretold by the Apostle Paul, including: a denial of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12) and the rise of false teachers and apostates (Acts 20:29–31; 1 Tim. 4:1ff; 2 Tim. 4:3–4). The Epistles of 2 Peter, Jude and 1, 2, and 3 John were written to warn of and counter these errors and heresies.

Various forms of Gnosticism arose, which would become the major internal threat to Christianity for the first three centuries.³² The Apostle Peter and Jude wrote against early Gnosticism with its heresies and immorality (2 Pet. 2:2–22. Jude parallels Peter). The Apostle John wrote against Cerinthian Gnosticism, which denied the deity of our Lord (Jn. 1:1–18) and Docetic Gnosticism, which denied our Lord’s true humanity (1 Jn. 1:1–3; 4:2–3; 2 Jn. 7).

³² For a thorough discussion of Gnosticism, see this *Survey of the Bible*, III, pp. 118–125.

The General Epistles and Revelation: Designations

Traditionally, the final books of the New Testament canon—Hebrews through Jude—apart from the Revelation of John—have variously been termed the “General,” “Catholic,” “Non–Pauline,” “Jewish Christian” or “Encyclical” Epistles.

Note: the terms “catholic” [ἐπιστολαί καθολικαί, “universal”] and “encyclical” [ἐνκλύκλιος, fr. “circle”] derive from the Gk. The first connotes being general; the second, being circular. These epistles were written to a wide range of readers and not to a specific individual or church as in the case of the accepted Pauline Epistles and Hebrews. The designation of being “non–Pauline” separates these from the Pauline corpus. Several of these were written to Jewish Christians, thus this designation “Jewish Christian Epistles” was inclusive of the General Epistles. Some would exclude Hebrews from the General Epistles, holding it in a class by itself.

It may be quickly noted that any suggested designation remains somewhat inconsistent, as it describes most, but not all of these books. This work uses the term “General Epistles” for the canonical books from Hebrews through Jude for convenience.

Canonical and Non–Canonical Books

The complete scriptural canon is comprised of sixty–six books, thirty–nine in the Old Testament canon and twenty–seven in the New—those writings which are self–attesting and universally accepted as sacred writings in the Hebrew canon [Old Testament] and the Apostolic writings³³ of the New Testament, all of which occur in our English Bibles.

Note: “Canon,” orig. from the Heb. קִנֵּה [kaneh], a reed used as a measuring rod. By the time of Athanasius (c. 350), the term “canon” was applied to the Bible, both as the rule of faith and practice, and as the body of inspired and authoritative truth.

Note: The LXX [Septuagint] contains the Old Testament Apocrypha, but these were never accepted into the Hebrew

³³ Luke, a Greek but not an Apostle, wrote the Gospel which bears his name and also the Book of Acts. Some believe that he also either wrote or was Paul’s amanuensis for the Epistle to the Hebrews.

canon. The *Latin Vulgate* included the Apocrypha as these books formed the basis for some Romish doctrines.

The New Testament canon of twenty-seven books is generally divided into three sections: Historical [the Gospels and Acts], Doctrinal [the Pauline and General Epistles] and Prophetical [Revelation]. These and no others are considered canonical, i.e., as inspired, self-authenticating and authoritative Scripture.

History of the New Testament Canon

A large body of Christian and pseudo-Christian literature existed in the first two centuries in addition to those considered canonical. A collection of writings called the “Apostolic Fathers”³⁴ include: the Epistles of Clement of Rome (c. 95, 140), the Letters of Ignatius to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrneans (c. 115), the Letters of Polycarp (c. 115, 160), The Didaché (c. 90?), the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 130), the Shepherd of Hermas (c. 150), the writings of Papias from Hierapolis (c. 125), Sixtus of Rome (c. 119–128) and the Epistle to Diognetus, an important anonymous work of the mid-second century.³⁵

There also existed, in the first two centuries of Christianity, many other allegedly “Christian” and Gnostic writings, including: the various Gnostic “gospels,” which numbered at least fifty-two; the abbreviated and edited New Testament “canon” of Marcion (c. 140–160),³⁶ and a large body of Apocryphal and Pseudopigraphical works, which numbered at least ninety-four.

Note: Gnosticism was the greatest internal threat to Christianity during the first three centuries.³⁷ John's Gospel was written in

³⁴ These writings were authored by those with some relation to the original Apostle themselves.

³⁵ See W. R. Downing, *Historiography and Early Church History to 325 AD*, pp. 228–232.

³⁶ Marcion the Gnostic was the first “Higher Critic” and radical redactor of Scripture. He edited and revised the New Testament canon. His edited “canon” contained eleven books.

³⁷ For a full discussion of Gnosticism, see Vol. II, pp. 434–436 and Vol. III, pp. 118–125 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

part against Cerinthian Gnosticism [e.g., Jn. 1:1–18] and his first two Epistles against Docetic Gnosticism [e.g., 1 Jn. 4:2–3; 2 Jn.

1:7].³⁸ Paul's Epistle to the Colossians was probably written against an early form of Gnostic heresy.³⁹

Note: *Pseudopigraphica* [ψευδοπίγραφα] denotes "false writings," i.e., those books never considered canonical by the early churches.

Although the writings of the New Testament were written in the first century AD, the early churches did not settle the issues of canonicity until the late fourth century. This was due to the existence and relatively rarity of only handwritten copies, continued Roman state persecution and book burning of Christian literature, the scattered nature of Christian assemblies throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, and the existence of various other "Christian–Gnostic" writings. The issues of canonicity were finally settled by the Romish State Church at the Synod of Hippo (393) and the Councils of Carthage (397, 419), which reaffirmed the canon as given by the Council of Laodicea (363).

It must be noted, however, that the present New Testament canon was largely settled among the churches by the middle of the second century.⁴⁰ The *Homologoumena* [ὁμολεγοῦμενα, "saying the same thing," or accepted writings] consisted of twenty books. The *Antilegomena* [ἀντιλεγόμενα, "spoken against," or disputed] consisted of seven books: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation.

³⁸ Cerinthian Gnosticism denied the true Deity of Christ by holding that the "Christ element" came upon him at his baptism and left him in the garden agony before his crucifixion. Thus, he died as a mere man (Jn. 1:14, 18). Docetic Gnosticism holding that all matter was inherently evil, denied the true humanity of Christ, holding him to be a phantom being (1 Jn. 1:1; 4:2–3).

³⁹ See Vol. IV, pp. 330–331 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

⁴⁰ David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, maintains that by the middle of the second century a complete New Testament canon existed in a single codex form.

The seven disputed books were generally accepted before the middle of the second century. The length of time does not reflect negatively on the early churches, as though they were indecisive, but positively, as it reveals the care taken to doctrinally and practically recognize the sacred writings and no others.⁴¹

The Process of Canonization

Early Christianity did not canonize the Scriptures by its own [the church's] authority, i.e., select which writings were to be included or excluded, but rather recognized those writings that were and are canonical. The differences between the canonical and non-canonical writings were and are immediately discernable.

How did the early Christians recognize certain books as Scripture and reject others? The answer lies in the application of various principles gathered from early Christian writings which detail the process used by the early Christians and churches before the rise of the *Katholikos* [Catholic] party and later Romish Church.

- Is the book authoritative? Does it possess Divine authority? The scriptural books were distinct from other literature as self-authenticating or self-attesting.
- Is the book authentic, i.e., was it written by one of the Apostles or the stated author?
- Does it agree with the rest of Divine revelation and with the rule or “analogy of faith?” [This refers to the inclusive, non-contradictory or coherent nature of Scripture as the very Word of God inscripturated. This also refers to the self-consistent teaching of Scripture as it touches on any one given point].
- Is the book dynamic, i.e., does it possess the power of God to evangelize and edify? This refers to the witness of the Spirit in the power of His Word.
- Is the book recognized by the early Church Fathers?
- Is the book received by the people of God? A spiritual instinct draws one toward scriptural truth.

⁴¹ See H. S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, pp. 96–149 for a full and concise discussion of the canon and canonization of Scripture.

Thus, the Scriptures formed the churches, and not the reverse. Scripture stands upon Divine authority, not upon any ecclesiastical authority. The Scriptures, then, are self–attesting or self–authenticating. The Holy Spirit witnesses to the veracity of Scripture to the believer.

The Chronological and Canonical Order
of the General Epistles and Revelation

The chronological order and the canonical order differ greatly. The arrangement of the New Testament canon is logical and categorical, not chronological. This work considers the various books in their canonical order. However, the chronological order is a necessary consideration for Biblical Theology and the progress of doctrine.

The Chronological Order
of the General Epistles and Revelation

This chart shows both the chronological order of the General Epistles and also their relation to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Book	Author	Date	Place	Recipients
James	James	44–46	Jerusalem	Jewish Christians of the Diaspora
1 Peter	Peter	64–65	Rome?	Jewish Christians in Asia Minor
2 Peter	Peter	65–67	Rome or Babylon	Jewish Christians in Asia Minor
Hebrews	?	64–68?	Unknown	Jewish Christians
Jude	Jude	68	Unknown	Christians in general
The Destruction of Jerusalem 70 AD				
John	John	98	Ephesus	Christians in the region around Ephesus

1 John	John	95–96	Ephesus	Christians in the region around Ephesus
Revelation	John	96? ⁴²	Isle of Patmos Asia Minor	Seven churches in western Asia Minor
2 John	John	97–98	Ephesus	A Church near Ephesus
3 John	John	97–98	Ephesus	Gaius, a Christian in the region of Ephesus

Note: The dates of the various books are approximate.

Note: The traditional dating for the Johannine writings is the mid to late nineties of the first century.

Note: Some recent scholars would place all the New Testament writings before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The Canonical Order and Theme of the General Epistles and Revelation

Book	Theme
Hebrews	The Superiority of Christ
James	The Need for Good Works as the Evidence of Genuine Faith
1 Peter	The Conduct and Joy of Christian Suffering
2 Peter	The Certainty of the Gospel and the Day of the Lord
1, 2, 3 John	The Way of Fellowship and Genuine Faith

⁴² Although the Book of Revelation logically closes the NT Canon, there is reason to believe that 2 and 3 John were written later.

Jude	Warning concerning False Teachers
Revelation	The Divine Redemptive Program

Note: The General Epistles, with the exception of Hebrews, are designated by the names of their authors, not by their recipients and destinations, as with the Pauline Epistles.

Note: This chart shows the modern Canonical order. In the oldest extant mss. the canonical order differed. The General Epistles were usually placed after the Book of Acts and before the Pauline Epistles. Revelation always occupied the final place.

Note: In the *Vaticanus* ms. (fourth century) and the *Alexandrinus* ms. (fifth century) the General Epistles occur after Acts and before the Pauline Epistles. In the *Sinaiticus* ms. (fourth century) the Pauline Epistles stand between John and Acts. The Epistle to the Hebrews occurs before 1 Timothy within the Pauline corpus in all three mss. The *Latin Vulgate* (fifth century) has the modern canonical order.

Note: Hebrews, because of presumed Pauline authorship, yet addressed to an unknown church, was finally assigned a position between the Pauline and General Epistles in the present canon.

Note: As Luther had some doctrinal objections to both Hebrews and James, he put them last in his German translation, between the Epistles of John and Jude.

The Importance and Significance
of these General Epistles

Hiebert’s statement, echoed by many, is worthy of consideration:

The non–Pauline Epistles, written...by five different men, are invaluable in the contribution which they make toward the fullness of the New Testament revelation. Without them the New Testament would have been incomplete. From the Acts and the Epistles of Paul we would have learned that there were other presentations of Christianity than the Pauline, grounded indeed in the same essential truths which Paul proclaimed, yet placing

these truths in a different perspective and regarding them from another point of view.

The inclusion of these non–Pauline Epistles in the canon completes the picture....As the four Gospels complement each other, so these epistles offer a highly instructive complement to the Pauline Epistles. Christianity is so manifold that it required the contribution of each of these writers to set forth its full import....

While each of the New Testament writers gives us his own distinctive emphasis and apprehension of the Gospel message, there is yet perfect harmony between them.⁴³

Thus, with the inclusion of the General Epistles, the New Testament canon is complete in every respect. Throughout the Holy Spirit witnesses to the self–authenticating nature of Scripture as Divinely–inspired and coherent [without any contradiction] (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21).

Distinctions and Peculiarities among the General Epistles

Jewish–Christian Elements

Nine of the Pauline Epistles [Romans through 2 Thessalonians] were addressed to churches. The remaining [1 Timothy through Philemon] were addressed to individuals. By contrast, most of the General Epistles were addressed to Jewish Christians: Hebrews was clearly written for this group (1:1ff. Each section presupposes Jewish–Christian readers). James was written for “the twelve tribes scattered abroad” (1:1; 2:2). 1 Peter was sent “to the strangers of the Diaspora” (1:1; 2:12; 4:3). 2 Peter was written to the same people (3:1). It may be inferred that

⁴³ D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the non–Pauline Epistles*, pp. 20–21.

at least 3 John was written for Jewish–Christian readers (v. 7).⁴⁴ The Jewish background of Jude and Revelation are clear.⁴⁵

Doctrinal Emphases

The doctrinal emphases of the General Epistles differ from those of Paul. Most of his Epistles may be said to be ecclesiocentric [church–centered] and contain many references to the mystery of the church, the believer’s union with Christ, the body of Christ and the practicalities of church life, etc. The General Epistles seem to emphasize more of Christian experience, responsibility, trials and faithfulness.

Individual Characteristics

Although these General Epistles share certain features, they also manifest marked differences. Hebrews is in the form of a sermon, without a formal salutation. It details the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ over the Old Testament personalities and institutions.

James has the general form and content of a Greek diatribe,⁴⁶ taking issue at places with various classes of readers. His epistle is essentially concerned with practical Christianity.

First Peter is formally addressed to a certain geographical provincial area (1 Pet. 1:1ff). His concern is with Christian patience under trial. Second Peter follows to the same people and area with a warning against false prophets [Gnostics] in chapter two.

First John is a homily, without an opening address or closing salutation. Second John is evidently addressed a given church and Third John to an individual. John deals throughout on Christian

⁴⁴1 and 2 John and their continual reference to God’s “commandments” may reveal a Jewish background. Further, John wrote from Ephesus to those in this area, where a large Jewish–Christian community was formed just before the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁴⁵ The abundance of Old Testament references and the reference to the Book of Enoch by Jude reveal a Jewish background. Revelation also contains Jewish–Christian references (e.g., 5:5; 7:4–8; 21:12).

⁴⁶ A Diatribe [Gk. διατριβή, a wearing away] is a lengthy discourse which deals with criticism and accusation.

love. Jude parallels 2 Peter chapter two and is a series of warnings against intruding Gnostic teachers.⁴⁷

Scroggie suggests that:

...comparing the Catholic Epistles it may be said that James is ethical, Peter is experimental, Jude is exhortatory and John is expository. The subjects of the first are prayer and practice; of the second, hope and knowledge; of the third, faith and conflict; and of the fourth, love and truth.

The terms Pauline, Jacobean, Petrine and Johannine have a significance beyond mere authorship: they stand for apprehensions and aspects of Christianity, aspects which do not contradict, but supplement one another.⁴⁸

St. Paul dwells, not of course exclusively, but predominantly, on Christian doctrine, St. James on Christian practice, St. Peter on Christian trials and St. John on Christian experience.⁴⁹

A Concluding Note on Romans and Hebrews

Romans stands at the head of the Pauline Epistles. Hebrews stands at the head of the General Epistles. Romans and Hebrews are the two greatest doctrinal treatises of the New Testament canon. The former is very systematic and comprehensive; the latter begins as a sermon and ends as an epistle. They tower above all the other books in their subject-matter and approach.

Romans, though anticipating Jewish objections, is the grand Epistle geared to Gentile believers. Hebrews, though to Jewish-Christians, gives to Gentile believers a glorious Christology steeped in the fulfillment of Old Testament types and prophecies. Romans is a Systematic Theology, logically developed in its soteriology, historical grasp and practical application. Hebrews reveals the superiority of our Lord Jesus Christ over the Old Testament personages and institutions. Both conclude with a Practical Theology which derives from the biblical gospel—Soteriologically in Romans and Christologically in Hebrews.

⁴⁷ See Donald Guthrie, "Catholic Epistles," *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. A-C, p. 763.

⁴⁸ W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, pp. 286-287.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, quoting Dean Stanley and Dean Farrar.

Excursus: A Necessary Comment on Radical Biblical Criticism

Sadly, it is necessary to deal with such, as this *Survey of the Bible* has been intended to provide both educational and practical help for pastors and Bible students. This writer has had to sift through countless volumes over the years. He has constantly had to read through hundreds of pages of allegedly scholarly material and found nothing which might prove helpful for the pastor in his studies or the Bible student who seeks to learn and become proficient in the Scriptures—and found much to be either avoided or discounted altogether.

Books should be chosen with care and one must become familiar with the names of both sound and unsound authors, theologians and scholars—and seek to avoid and investing in allegedly scholarly works which undermine the faith and leave nothing of practical value. The following note lists the major radical critics among New Testament scholars and commentators:

Note: The major New Testament rationalistic critics, liberals or “historicists” (rationalists who limited Scripture to a mere history of religion): have included John Philip Gabler, Lorenz Bauer (1796), Julius Welhausen, F. C. Baur and the “Tübingen School” of radical New Testament criticism (1845–), H. J. Holtzmann (1863–), Heinrich Ewald (1888), Archibald Duff (1891), W. H. Bennett (1896), C. F. Burney (1904), C. A. Briggs (1906), Adolf Harnack (1907–), David F. Strauss (1835), Johann Weiss (1912), H. Wheeler Robinson (1913), S. R. Driver (1913), Martin Dibleius (1919–), Hermann Gunkel (1895–), K. L. Schmidt (1919), James Moffat (1913–), Karl Barth (1910–1931), Rudolf Bultmann (1921), A. B. Davidson (1925, whose work does not show his later rationalistic convictions), W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson (1937), Harry Emerson Fosdick (1938), Theophile J. Meek (1950). Among the Neo-Orthodox: G. Ernest Wright (1944), Millar Burrows (1946), Otto Baab (1949), H. H. Rowley (1956), Ludwig Köhler (1957), Edmond Jacob (1958), T. Z. Vriezen (1958), George A. F. Knight (1959), Yehezkel Kaufmann (1960) and Walther Eichrodt (1961).

Many contemporary scholars have been influenced by these older men, and some more modern commentaries have been tainted or compromised with their views.

Mark the following words of C. H. Spurgeon, who well knew the value of good books:

Even an apostle must read....Paul is inspired, and yet he wants *books*! He has been preaching for at least thirty years, and yet he wants *books*! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants *books*! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants *books*! He had been caught up into the third heaven, and had heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter. Yet he wants *books*! He had written the major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants *books*! The apostle says to Timothy and so he says to every preacher, "Give thyself unto reading".

The man who never reads will never be read; he who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains, proves that he has no brains of his own. Brethren, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. You need to read. Renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible sound theological works, especially the Puritanic writers, and expositions of the Bible. We are quite persuaded that the best way for you to be spending your leisure, is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master's service. Paul cries. "Bring the Books"—join in the cry.

Paul herein is a picture of industry. He is in prison; he cannot preach: What will he do? As he cannot preach, he will read. So it was with the fishermen of old and their boats: the fishermen were gone out of them. What were they doing? Mending their nets. So if providence has laid you upon a sick bed, and you cannot teach your class—if you cannot be working for God in public, mend your nets by reading. If one occupation is taken from you, take another, and let the books of the apostle read you a lesson of industry.

He says, "especially the parchments." I think the books were Latin and Greek works, but that the parchments were Oriental; and possibly they were the parchments of Holy Scripture; or as likely, they were his own parchments, on which were written the originals of his letters which stand in our Bible...Now, it must be "especially the parchments" with all our reading; let it be especially the Bible....Read the books, by all manner of means, but especially the parchments. Search human literature, if you

will, but especially stand fast by that Book which is infallible, the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.⁵⁰

A good library should be looked upon as an indispensable part of church furniture....If a man can purchase but very few books, my first advice to him would be, let him purchase the very best. If he cannot spend much, let him spend well....Don't buy thin soup; purchase the essence of meat....You require accurate, condensed, reliable standard books, and should make sure that you get them....The next rule I shall lay down is, master those books that you have. Read them thoroughly....A student will find that his mental constitution is more affected by one book thoroughly mastered than by twenty books which he merely skimmed....In reading, let your motto be, 'Much, but not many.'⁵¹

This writer has dealt with radical biblical criticism in volumes one and three of this *Survey of the Bible*, making necessary distinctions between legitimate biblical criticism and radical biblical scholarship, and giving a list of some of the well-known radical critics. Save both your money and your time.⁵²

⁵⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 9, pp. 668–669.

⁵¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, pp. 175–178.

⁵² See I, pp. 35, 63–75; III, pp. 28–34 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Introduction: Questions

Although the Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the most significant writings of the New Testament, it presents many questions: the author, though known to his readers, remains anonymous (10:32–34; 13:18–19, 22–23). The provenance or place of writing is unclear. Suggestions have spanned the Roman Empire. The readers themselves and destination, though evidently a local congregation, are not known with certainty. They of [ἀπὸ, from?] Italy salute you” may be somewhat ambiguous (13:24). The date has been questioned. The letter itself, though a glorious treatise on the superiority of our Lord over all the institutions and personages of the Old Testament, is essentially a sermon, a “word of exhortation” (13:22). “This writing begins like a treatise, proceeds like a sermon, and concludes like a letter.”⁵³

Introduction: Summary

Countless hundreds of pages have been written on these subjects and issues, often with little agreement. Much of the grammatical, historical, traditional, ecclesiastical and theological approaches and discussions are beyond the scope of this Bible Survey. The following is an attempt to summarize the issues and questions, give answers where these are possible or probable, and give the major views when the questions remain, if necessary.

The Title of Hebrews

Most of the earliest Greek mss. [ⲐAB, fourth and fifth centuries]⁵⁴ have the simple title: “To the Hebrews” [Πρὸς

⁵³ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, V, p. 328.

⁵⁴ Ⲑ designates the *Siniaticus* ms, fourth century. A designates the *Alexandrinus* ms, fifth century. B designates the *Vaticanus* ms, fourth century.

Ἑβραίου].⁵⁵ This was the consensus of the second and third centuries. The title, “The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews” dates from the fourth or fifth century, and was the result of the consensus of much later scholarship after acceptance by both the Eastern [Greek] and Western [Latin] Churches. This title was continued in the KJV (1611), despite disagreement since the Reformation. The Reformers denied the Pauline authorship. The canonicity of Hebrews largely depended on Pauline authorship by the fourth century AD and the acceptance of the Western Church through the influence of Jerome (347–420) and Augustine (354–430).

The Authorship of Hebrews

Possible Authors

Endless controversies surround the authorship of this Epistle. A list of possible authors who have been suggested and argued for include: Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Titus, Mark, Silas, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila and even Mary, the mother of our Lord!⁵⁶ The Apostle Paul has strong modern defenders.⁵⁷ Tertullian (c. 155–220) argued that Barnabas wrote Hebrews. Pantaenus (c. 180) and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) held to Pauline authorship with Luke translating a previous work by the Apostle Paul. Origen (c. 184–c. 253) in his writings, attributed Hebrews to Paul in various comments, but stated, “but who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows.” This has been somewhat misrepresented and probably referred to Paul’s amanuensis, not his authorship.

⁵⁵ Or *PROC EBRAIOYC*. By the fourth century, and due to the influence of the Latin, the Gk. Kappa [κ] was change to C. The mss. were still uncials. The minuscule mss. date from about the sixth century onward.

⁵⁶ The masc. sing. ptc. διηγούμενον [“to tell of”] of self-reference would negate feminine authorship.

⁵⁷ E.g., David Alan Black, *The Authorship of Hebrews: The Case for Paul*, 28 pp. Robert Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, pp. 273–279. Both works are well-argued and seek to answer all relevant questions.

Luther suggested Apollos due to his being “mighty in the Scriptures” and possessing great oratorical and presumably literary ability (Acts 18:24). Barnabas has been put forth because he was a fervent Jewish Christian and well-qualified as “the son of consolation or exhortation”⁵⁸ and a Levite (Acts 4:36; Heb. 13:22). Most scholars think that whoever the author may have been, he was a close associate of Paul.

Salient Issues

The internal and external evidence for Pauline authorship: Paul was most eminently suited for this work, as he was a converted rabbi, thoroughly instructed in the affairs of Judaism, especially the Aaronic sacrificial system. Internally, vocabulary, certain grammatical constructions and phrases parallel those of the Apostle. The author was further a close companion of Timothy and was also imprisoned (10:34; 13:23). External evidence in the Eastern Church begins in the second century, with almost universal acceptance of Pauline authorship.

The major objections to Pauline authorship include: the author identifies himself as a second-generation believer (2:3), whereas Paul was careful to trace his apostolic authority in the salutation of almost all of his epistles (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1). The author does not identify himself, but Paul did, a trademark of the Apostle in every epistle. The literary style and argumentation is allegedly non-Pauline, but betrays another hand. The author uses the Septuagint [LXX] exclusively, even when it differs from the Hebrew; Paul often quoted from or alluded to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Note: At certain places, Paul changes the wording of the text, from both the MT and the LXX. E.g., Rom. 11:26, referring to Psalms 14:7 and 53:6. Paul's changes and applications are inspired. The Apostle Peter acknowledges this (2 Pet. 3:15–16).

Paul's focus was usually upon the believer's union with Christ individually and upon the church corporately, but he never

⁵⁸ Cf. Acts 4:36 and Heb. 13:22. Both use the term *παράκλησις*.

developed the high priestly ministry of our Lord, unless Hebrews is the one exception.

Conclusion

While the question of immediate or amanuensis authorship may not be answered with complete certainty, the evident Divine inspiration and loftiness of this great epistle is unquestioned. Linguistically, it is the most eloquent work in the New Testament canon. Doctrinally, it reveals the superiority of our Lord over the prophets (1:1–3), angels (1:4–2:18), Moses (3:1–4:4), Joshua (4:5–13) and the Aaronic priesthood (4:14–10:18) in the clearest and most glorious light. Christologically, it explores the finality of our Lord's high priestly ministry—a subject broached by no other work. Practically, its exhortations are systematically interwoven throughout the epistle with strong language and consummate skill. Thus, although the authorship has been questioned, the Divine inspiration has not.

The Canonicity of Hebrews

Although not technically one of the General Epistles, as it was addressed to a certain locality and assembly, we place it with the General Epistles because of convenience and tradition.⁵⁹

Clement of Rome quoted from Hebrews in his own writings (c. 95). This epistle was accepted by the Eastern [Greek] Church by the early second century. It was refused by the Western [Latin] Church until the late Fourth Century due to certain alleged influences. As previously stated, the Latin Church finally accepted Hebrews into its canon based upon its alleged Pauline authorship.

In the earliest extant Greek ms. [P⁴⁶], dating from the early third century, Hebrews was placed in the Pauline corpus after Romans. Hebrews occurs before 1 Timothy within the Pauline corpus in all three of the early, most significant mss.: *Vaticanus* (fourth century), *Sinaiticus* ms. (fourth century), *Alexandrinus*

⁵⁹ See p. 31 of this volume, under "The General Epistles and Revelation: Designations."

(fifth century). The *Latin Vulgate* (fifth century) has the modern canonical order.

Because of presumed Pauline authorship, yet addressed to an unknown church, Hebrews was finally assigned a position between the Pauline and General Epistles in the present canon.⁶⁰

The Recipients, Destination and Purpose of Hebrews

The Recipients and Destination

Again, although most agree that the letter is addressed to Jewish Christians—though some argue for Gentile believers, a mixed congregation, or even some former Jewish priests who had fled to the Qumran communities in southern Judah—there is little agreement over the provenance or place of writing and the destination. The most evident conclusion is that this epistle was written to Jewish Christians who were tempted to retreat back into Judaism to avoid persecution during the Neronian era (c. 63–68).

The alleged destination has varied from Spain in the west to Galatia in the East to Egypt in the south. The words, “they of Italy salute you” (13:24) could mean those who lived in Italy and probably Rome, or those from Italy, possibly in Palestine or even Alexandria.

Note: Some hold that these Jewish Christians, after suffering such opposition and persecution, and wanting to return to Judaism to escape more persecution were “backslidden Christians.” The subject of “backsliding” is discussed in this *Survey of the Bible* in the study of the Book of Jeremiah.⁶¹ The issue in Hebrews is the possibility of apostasy from one’s profession of faith by returning to Judaism. Cf. 3:12 [ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι] in the context of 3:6–4:11.

The Purpose

The purpose, as revealed in the contents of this epistle, is four-fold: first, to warn against apostasy and set the matter of

⁶⁰ For the order of canonization, see p. 36 in this volume.

⁶¹ See *Survey of the Bible: The Old Testament* Vol. II, pp. 109–111.

reverting back into Judaism in the most stringent terms as a real possibility. See the “Five Stringent Warnings” below.

Second, to emphasize the typical and transitory nature of the Aaronic priesthood, the Levitical institution and sacrificial system, which all passed away in the progressive revelation of God through the person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, to demonstrate and emphasize the fullness and finality of the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and the glory of his everlasting High Priestly ministry. This all reveals the temporary nature of Judaism and the finality of New Testament Christianity.

Finally, to exhort and encourage these Jewish believers to persevere in the faith and rest in the finality of Christianity and not give up or lose hope.

Conclusion

There is a general consensus that Hebrews was written to a congregation of Jewish Christians in the area of Rome who had and were undergoing persecution and had evidently become greatly discouraged and worn down (6:9–11, 18–20). Christianity had become a *religio illicita*, and these readers had become wearied and were tempted to return to Judaism, a *religio licita*, to avoid persecution. The writer informs them that to do so would be to turn away from Christ and apostatize (3:12).⁶² The various warnings in this epistle enforce the danger and awful consequences.

Note: The converts of early Christianity were mainly of three classes: converted Jews, converted Jewish proselytes and Gentiles. There were two types of proselytes: Proselytes of Righteousness, who submitted to circumcision and became Jews in every respect, and Proselytes of the Gate, who became “God-fearers” and monotheists. This latter group was allowed to attend synagogue services. It was evidently from these God-fearers that Paul gained most of his synagogue converts.

⁶² Heb. 3:12, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing [ἀποστῆναι], i.e., *apostatizing* from the living God.”

Note: While some may denigrate the readers for being tempted to return to Judaism, if these were in the area of Rome, their knowing and perhaps witnessing the rigorous and horrible Neronian persecution would be understandable. For a description of this time of terror, see Vol. IV, p. 209 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

The Five Stringent Warnings

The writer warns the readers five times in the most stringent terms what reverting back to Judaism would mean—apostasy from Christ! Whether hypothetical or not, the writer assumes the possibility and its awful consequences.

A Warning against Drifting	(2:1–4)
A Warning against Disbelieving	(3:7–4:13)
A Warning against Degenerating	(5:11–6:20)
A Warning against Despising	(10:26–31)
A Warning against Defiling	(12:12–29)

Notes: In the first warning (2:1), the words “...lest we let them slip” [μήποτε παραρυῶμεν] is lit: “drift away.” The term “apostasy” is used in the Gk. in 3:12, “departing” [ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι]. The warning against spiritual degeneration in 5:11ff is stronger in the Gk: “having become...having become...” [...γεγόνατε... γεγόνατε...perf.]

The warning in 6:6, “If they shall fall away” [καὶ παραπεσόντας, aor. ptc.] is lit: “having fallen away.” In 10: 25ff, the existence of a local church context is implied. In v. 26, the Gk. const. describes, not a mere willful sin, but going back to a life of willful sinning [Ἐκουσίως γὰρ ἀμαρτανόντων, pres. ptc.].

In 12:16–17, the idea is not that a person might seek to repent and not be able within himself to do so, though he seeks repentance with tears. Esau sought to change his father Isaac’s mind with crying and tears (Gen. 27:34–38). The issue is, that once the step back has been taken, it is irreparable. These could not revert back into Judaism, then later return to Christianity. The author assumes the reality of apostasy from their profession, which might be true of some who were mere professing believers.

These warnings and their given emphases may be outlined as follows:

- A) Experimental: Indifference in the life (2:1ff)
- B) Intellectual: Unbelief demonstrated in Rebellion (3:7ff)
- C) Psychological: Repentance & Renewal Impossible. (5:11ff)
- B) Soteriological: Unbelief demonstrated in Renunciation. (10:26ff)
- A) Experimental: Indifference in the Life (12:12ff)

Five Great Encouragements

Interspersed with the warnings are also five encouragements for these Jewish believers. The first three (4:14–16; 6:9–20; 10:19–25) are closely associated with the confidence, assurance and boldness believers are to have in the ever-present High Priestly ministry of our Lord. This is the strength and blessing of a living faith.

The fourth is a call to remember their past trials and past testimony. God sustained them then (10:32–39). As with the Psalmist, who often recounted his past experiences and Divine provision or deliverance, our past experiences should strengthen our confidence in God's providential protection and provision. The final encouragement is an exhortation to persevere in light of the ultimate future. Present trials cannot last (12:12–14, 22–24). Future blessedness is a most powerful antidote to present fear and suffering.

In summary, there must be a consideration of the believer's present privilege of access through the Lord Jesus, a remembrance of the past and both perseverance and expectation for the future:

- A) A Consideration of Present Privilege (4:14–16)
(Consider your Great High Priest and Access to God)
- B) Perseverance: Remembrance and Expectation (6:9–20)
(Have faith in your covenant—keeping God)
- A) A Consideration of Present privilege (10:19–25)
(Boldness and assurance through Christ)
- B) Perseverance: Remembrance and Expectation (10:32–39)
(Remember past afflictions and have patience now)
- A) A Consideration of Present Discipline and Privilege (12:12–14, 22–24)
(Look to the future in faithfulness)

The Date of Hebrews

The general consensus is that this letter was written c. 63–67, just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by

Titus. Had this letter been written after that traumatic event which ended the public worship and all Levitical and priestly functions, the issue would have been moot. There has been some discussion concerning the use of the perfect tense in 10:11, “standeth daily” [ἔστηκεν καθ’ ἡμέραν], as contrasted with our Lord’s “once—for-all” offering of Himself to God. Is this to be taken as a “historical present” referring to the service of the Tabernacle or to the Temple service in Jerusalem? The author of Hebrews, it must be noted, deals with the Tabernacle in the wilderness more than the Temple at Jerusalem.

It has been argued by some that the letter was written by one of Paul’s close associates immediately after Paul’s death and before the end of the Neronian persecution (c. 68).

The Theme of Hebrews

The theme is the superiority and sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ over the personages and institutions of the Old Testament and Old Covenant. The consummate finality of our Lord’s person and work reveals the temporary nature of the Old Covenant and all its attendant persons and ordinances, and reveals their inadequacy.

The New or Gospel Covenant and the present and eternal High Priestly ministry of our Lord reveal the transition from the shadow to the substance, from the imperfect to the perfect, from the earthly to the heavenly, from the temporal to the eternal (see esp. 9:1–10:14). Mark the following:

Christ superior to the Prophets	(1:1–3)
Christ superior to the Angels	(1:4–2:18)
Christ superior to Moses	(3:1–4:13)
Christ superior to Aaron	(4:14–10:18)
Christ superior as the New and Living Way	(10:19–12:29)

Leviticus and Hebrews

Hebrews is the New Testament counterpart to and the Gospel interpretation of the Old Testament book of Leviticus and the Mosaic institution of the Aaronic priesthood and sacrificial system as described in the Pentateuch. Leviticus was typical or preparatory; Hebrews is antitypical or the fulfillment and reality.

Note: [Gk: τυπός, from τύπτω, to strike a blow, and so orig., the mark left by a blow, an impression, hence a die, figure, seal, pattern]. Cf. the reference to the “law” [Pentateuch] as a “shadow” or “dim outline” in 10:1.

In these two books the interrelation of the Old Testament as preparatory and the New Testament as fulfillment and finality can be clearly seen. Mark the following couplet:

The New is in the Old concealed,
The Old is by the New revealed.

Without the epistle to the Hebrews, much in the Old Testament might be left to question or speculation. The fulfillment of the Old in the New and the great contrast between the Old and the New find their clear and unquestionable exposition in this epistle.

Contrasts and Comparisons

Hebrews is a letter which either contrasts or compares the person and work of our Lord with the personages and institutions of the Old Testament and Covenant. It is a contrast between the shadow and the substance, between the earthly and the heavenly, between the transitory Levitical priestly and sacrificial system and the everlasting preeminence of our Lord. A general survey of the contrasting priesthoods reveals the following:

Old Covenant Priesthood	References	The Lord Jesus Christ
Aaronic Priesthood	6:19–7:25	Priesthood of Melchisedec
Transitory Priesthood	7:16–24	Everlasting Priesthood
Old Covenant: Temporary	7:22; 8:6, 13; 10:20	New Covenant: Permanent
Yearly Atonement and remembrance	7:25; 9:12–15; 10:1–4, 12	A one-time, eternal Atonement
Sinful Priests	7:26–27; 9:7	A Sinless High Priest

Daily Sacrifices	7:27; 9:12, 25–26; 10:9–12	A once-for-all Sacrifice
A Shadow	8:5; 9:23–24; 10:1	The Substance
Obsolete Promises	8:6–13	Better Promises
Animal Sacrifices	9:11–15, 26; 10:4– 10, 19	The Sacrifice of the Son of God
Continual Sacrifices	10:11–18	One Sacrifice Forever

The Names and Titles of our Lord

There are twenty-five names, designations, descriptions and titles of our Lord in this letter. These all emphasize the fullness and finality of our Lord's Person and work:

Reference	Title or Designation
1:2–8; 6:6; 10:29	The Son of God
1:2	The Heir of all Things
1:3	The Brightness of His Glory
1:3	The Express Image of God's Person
1:4–14	Superior to Angels
1:8	O God
2:9	Crowned with Glory and Honor
2:10	The Captain of our Salvation
2:17	A Merciful and Faithful High Priest
3:1	The Apostle and High Priest
3:6	A Faithful Son over God's House
4:14	Our Great High Priest

Reference	Title or Designation
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5:6; 6:20; 7:1–17	A Priest Forever after the Order of Melchisedec
6:19	Our Forerunner
7:22	The Surety of a Better Covenant
7:24	The Possessor of an Inviolable Priesthood
7:28	A Holy, Undeified, Unique High Priest
8:1; 10:12	An Exalted High Priest
8:6; 9:15; 12:24	The Mediator of the New Covenant
9:15	The Mediator of a New Testament
10:21	A Great High Priest over the House of God
10:37	He that shall Come and shall not Tarry
12:2	The Author and Finisher of our Faith
13:8	The Same Yesterday, Today and Forever
13:20	The Great Shepherd of the Sheep

Key–Words and Phrases

There are several key–words or phrases in this epistle that are used repeatedly in connection with the theme:

- “Perfect,” “Perfection.” (Gk: various forms of τελείος, τελειόω, connoting that which is mature, complete, fulfilled or accomplished). These terms occur 15 times: 12 times in the English Version (2:10; 5:9; 6:1; 7:11, 19; 9:9, 11; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:23; 13:21). 3 additional times in the Greek text this term is translated in the English as “...them that are of full age...,” 5:14; “...consecrated...,” 7:28; “...finisher...,” 12:2.

- “Eternal,” “Forever,” “Everlasting.” (τὸν αἰῶν τοῦ αἰῶος, εἰς τὸν αἰωνίαν, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, αἰωνίου, αἰωνίαν). Used of the abiding or permanent character of our Lord and Christianity as contrasted with the Mosaic or Old Covenant. These terms occur 15 times (1:8; 5:6, 9; 6:2, 20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 9:12, 14–15; 13:8, 20–21).
- “Heaven,” “Heavenly.” (οὐρανός, often in pl. form as an Hebraism). Used to contrast the glory and ultimate character of the redemptive work of our Lord and Christianity as contrasted with the earthly sphere and ministry of the Mosaic institutions. These words occur 16 times (1:10; 3:1; 4:14; 6:4; 7:26; 8:1, 5; 9:23–24; 10:34; 11:16; 12:22–23, 25–26).
- “Partakers.” (Gk. uses two terms: κοινωνέω, “to have in common.” As a noun κοινωνός, “a companion, partner, partaker,” 2:14. μέτοχος, “a sharer in something, a partner,” 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8, 10). These terms are used to connote a definite participation, association or companionship in the realities of the Gospel. Occur 6 times in the English Version.
- “Having therefore...let us...” This phrase occurs twice (4:14–16; 10:19–24), and introduces the major practical sections of the epistle: the practical exhortation to truly appropriate and implement what believers are to possess in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- “Once.” (Gk. uses two terms: ἅπαξ and ἐφάπαξ). This term occurs 12 times (6:4; 9:7, 26, 27, 28; 10:2; 12:26, 27) and in its emph. form ἐφάπαξ 3 times (7:27; 9:12; 10:10).
- “Lest.” (Gk: Various particles: μήποτε, μή). Used to introduce several warnings about the fear of losing what believers are to possess in the fullness of the Gospel. This term occurs 10 times and is related to the 5 larger warnings against apostasy, which occur in this epistle (2:1; 3:12, 13; 4:1, 11; 11:28; 12:3, 13, 15–16).
- “Let us...” (Gk. use of the hortatory subjunctive as an exhortation). Occ. 12 times (4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1, 28; 13:13, 15). These exhortations and

encouragements are to persevere and make progress, not turn back.

- “Better.” (Gk: κρείσσων, from κράτος, “strong,” hence: “better, more useful, serviceable, more advantageous, excellent”). This word is used to emphasize the superiority of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the superiority of the Gospel Covenant over the Old Covenant. This term occurs 13 times:
 - (1) 1:4 “better than the angels.” This is descriptive of the glorified, exalted Son of God as the Mediator of the New Covenant compared with the angels, who are messengers and ministers for God.
 - (2) 6:9 “better things.” In view of possible apostasy from the Gospel, these “better things” are the realities associated with true faith.
 - (3) 7:7 “the less is blessed of the better.” An argument applied to the blessing from Melchizedek conferred upon Abraham, emphasizing the greatness of this King–Priest.
 - (4) 7:19 “a better hope.” The limitations or insufficiency of the Old Covenant are contrasted with the glorious sufficiency or hope of the Gospel Covenant.
 - (5) 7:22 “a better testament.” This is the New Testament or Gospel Covenant founded in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (6) 8:6 “a better covenant.” This is the New or Gospel Covenant, which is not characterized by the inadequacies of the Old Covenant (Cf. 8:7–12).
 - (7) 8:6 “better promises.” These are the promises of spiritual blessings as contrasted with the largely earthly blessings of the Old Covenant (8:10–13).
 - (8) 9:23 “better sacrifices.” These refer to the High Priestly ministry and intercession of our Lord (9:24).
 - (9) 10:34 “a better and an enduring substance.” The realities of the believer’s glorious inheritance as contrasted with earthly possessions.

- (10) 11:16 “a better country.” The pilgrimage of faith is not toward an earthly country or future, but transcends this life and views the glory of heaven.
- (11) 11:35 “a better resurrection.” This denotes the believer’s resurrection to glory. The context implies that to “accept deliverance” would have meant apostasy.
- (12) 11:40 “some better thing.” In the context of v. 39–40, this refers to the fullness of salvation and revelation in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, of which the heroes of old had only a rudimentary knowledge and promise.
- (13) 12:24 “the blood...that speaketh better things.” The contrast is between “the blood of Abel” that cried out to God for justice (Gen. 4:10) and the blood of our Lord that speaks pardon, peace and reconciliation.

Chapter 11

Hebrews Chapter eleven is known as the great “Faith Chapter” of the Bible. Its roots are found in chapter ten in the great encouragement to draw near to our Lord with the utmost confidence. Its fruits carry to the end of the epistle.

The faith described in chapter eleven is not that saving or justifying faith which looks back to the cross, i.e., to the person and redemptive work of our Lord, but a sustaining and persevering aspect of faith which is maintained and acts boldly concerning the eternal purpose of God (11:1–3), in obedience to God’s command (11:4, 30–35), in the face of great trials and seeming impossibilities (11:9–12), suffers to the utmost (11:36–38) and looks into the future (11:5, 7, 14–16, 20–29).

The catalogue is awesome: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. The writer then moves to acts of faith: the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, the walls of Jericho which fell flat⁶³ by faith, and the salvation of Rahab. He ends by listing quickly a host of other worthies (11:32–35).

⁶³ The Hebrew of Josh. 6:5 [תִּהְיֶה יֵרֵחוֹ] states that the walls fell from beneath and so spread out flat, an undeniable miracle.

But such faith does not necessarily preserve believers from all trials and suffering. Mark the “and others” of v. 36–38. These “heroes of the faith” remained faithful in spite of great suffering and even cruel forms of death. True, persevering faith, by its very nature as the gift of God, transcends the present life and suffering and looks to the perfection of the life to come.

Finally, the writer, after passing through the catalogue of the heroes of the faith and their glorious witness, points believers to the supreme example, the Lord Jesus Christ (12:1–3). This final consideration turns to the last great encouragement to persevere in holiness and maintain a faithful testimony (12:4ff).

A summary of this chapter in the greater context of its anticipation in chapter ten and its application and a closing admonition in chapters twelve and thirteen:

The Argument for Faith	(10:19–29)
The Attitude of Faith	(11:1–40)
The Application of Faith	(12:1–17)
The Admonition of Faith	(12:18–13:21)

The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews

The author of this letter quotes or alludes to the Old Testament Scriptures some 86 times, all from the LXX, even when it may differ from the Hebrew text.

Note: The LXX, or Greek version of the Old Testament (c. 250 BC) was the common version used in the Apostolic era by the Jewish people, most of whom spoke Κοινή Greek in addition to Aramaic. This was certainly true of the Jews of the Diaspora. Our Lord quoted from this version when he answered the question concerning the Great Commandment in the Law, even though it differed from the Hebrew text. Cf. Deut. 6:5 with Matt. 22:37.

Most references are from the Psalms. There are at least 29 direct quotations and the rest are allusions. None are introduced by their human authors, or with the usual Pauline formula, “it is written,” but all are given as directly from God Himself. This Christological hermeneutic is greatly significant in the context of Divine inspiration, identifying these statements as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ as Deity, as the everlasting Great High Priest

after the order of Melchisedec and as the Mediator of the New or Gospel Covenant.

It has been suggested that the author quotes more from the Psalms, as these were sung in synagogue worship and would have been memorized by his readers.

The List of the references, both direct quotations and scriptural allusions:⁶⁴

Old Testament	Hebrews	Old Testament	Hebrews
Direct Quotations			
Ex. 19:12	12:20	Psa. 45:6	10:5
Ex. 25:40	8:5	Psa. 45:6	1:8
Deut. 31:6–8	13:5	Psa. 95:7	3:7
Deut. 32:35	10:30	Psa. 102:25	1:10ff
Deut. 32:36	10:30	Psa. 104:4	1:7
Deut. 32:43	1:6	Psa. 110:1	1:13
2 Sam. 7:14	1:5	Psa. 110:4	5:6, 10
Isa. 8:17	2:13	Gen. 14:17ff	7:1
Jer. 31:31	8:8	Ex. 24:8	9:20
Hag. 2:6		Numb. 12:7	3:1
Psa. 2:7	1:5	Hab. 2:3	10:37
Psa. 8:5	2:6	Hab. 2:3	10:37
Psa. 22:22	2:11	Psa. 118:6	13:6
Psa. 40:6	10:5		
Allusions			
Gen. 1:11f	6:7	Lev. 16:18	9:12
Gen. 3:17	6:8	Lev. 16:27	13:11, 13
Gen. 4:4	11:4	Numb. 12:7	3:1
Gen. 4:10	12:24	Numb. 14:32	3:17

⁶⁴ This list has been adapted from B. F. Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 469–472.

Gen. 5:24	11:5	Numb. 16:38	12:3
Gen. 5:24	11:5	Numb. 24:6*	8:2
Gen. 12:1;23:4	11:8–9	Deut. 4:11	12:18
Gen. 14:17ff	7:1ff	Deut. 4:24	12:29
Gen. 18, 19	13:2	Deut. 9:19	12:21
Gen. 22:1f	11:17	Deut. 17:6	10:28
Gen. 22:17	11:12	Deut. 29:18	12:15
Gen. 23:4	11:13	Isa. 26:11	10:27
Gen. 25:33	12:16	Isa. 16:20	10:37
Gen. 27	11:20	Isa. 35:3	12:12
Gen. 47:31*	11:21	Isa. 41:8f	2:16
Gen. 48:16, 20	11:21	Isa. 45:17	5:9
Gen. 50:24f	11:22	Isa. 53:12	9:28
Ex. 2:2, 11	11:23	Isa. 63:11; 55:3	13:20
Ex. 12:21ff	11:28	Dan. 6:22	11:33
Ex. 16:33	9:4	Hos. 14:2	13:15
Ex. 19:10	9:13	Zech. 6:11ff	10:21
Ex. 19:16; Deut. 5:23, 25	12:19	Zech. 9:11	13:20
Ex. 26:33	9:2	Psa. 9:11; 89:50	11:26
Ex. 30:10	9:7	Psa. 34:14	12:14
Lev. 7:12; Psa. 115[116]:17	13:15	Prov. 4:26	12:13
Lev. 16:2, 12	6:19		

Note: * denotes where the LXX and Hebrew text differ.

The Theology of Hebrews

The theology of this epistle is distinct from the other New Testament books in what it emphasizes and how it approaches its doctrinal distinctives.

Bibliology

Bibliology is the doctrine of the Scriptures. The writer presents the quotations and allusions from the Old Testament as coming directly from the mouth of God and of Christ or the Spirit without the formula “it is written” unless within a quotation (e.g., 10:7)—the strongest affirmation of Divine authority.

The distinctive feature of this letter is that the quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament are all prophecies of and seen as fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. These reveal that Judaism was preparatory to Christianity. The institutions of Judaism and the Old Covenant were typical of the true antitypes of the New or Gospel Covenant. Halley states that this was “God’s final message to Judaism.”⁶⁵ Hagner states, “for our author, Judaism is outmoded....Judaism finds its fulfillment in Christianity.”⁶⁶

Note: During the early decades of Christianity, the great issue was the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. Note the controversy over the circumcision of Gentile believers (Acts 15:1–31; Gal. 2:1–10) and the relationship of Jewish and Gentile believers in fellowship (Gal. 2:11–21).

Once this issue had been settled the major controversies were the intrusion of Gnostic errors and heresies, e.g., Cerinthian, Docetic and Valentinian Gnosticism. The prologue of John’s Gospel (1:1–18), his Epistles, 2 Peter and Jude had to deal with the beginnings of these Gnostic heresies. During the first three centuries, there were some sixteen schools or movements of Gnosticism.⁶⁷

The progression is from shadow to substance (10:1ff), from prophecy and type to fulfillment and antitype.

Theology Proper

Theology Proper is concerned with the nature of God. The term “God” occurs sixty-eight times in this letter. God is

⁶⁵ Henry H. Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, p. 646.

⁶⁶ Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction*, p. 660.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of Gnosticism, see Vol. III, pp. 113–125 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

revealed in both his greatness (1:2; 3:4; 4:3–4; 11:3, 6; 10:31; 12:18–21; 29) and his grace (2:9; 4:16; 10:29; 12:15, 28; 13:25). This Divine grace is revealed in the blessed exaltation and provision of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Divine answer to the believer's needs and standing before God, the basis of acceptance and the expectation of hope. The author presents God as faithful to his covenant promise (6:13–20). Indeed, the terms “promise” and “promises” occur fourteen times in Hebrews, more than in any other New Testament writing.

Christology

Hebrews is the one of the greatest Christological writings in the New Testament. It supplements the other epistles in giving a detailed revelation of our Lord's superiority over the Old Testament persons and institutions. This is especially true of his High Priestly ministry and the superiority of the New or Gospel Covenant over the Old. The various facets of this revelation are all geared to deliver a group of Jewish Christians from apostatizing by returning to Judaism.

The writer begins with a magisterial statement in 1:1–4 asserting the deity of the Lord Jesus, his rule and superiority over all creation and his finality over both prophets and angels. Then another extended passage based upon the Old Testament revealing the deity of our Lord (1:8–12). The writer then asserts our Lord's true humanity in 2:6–18. This true humanity is both necessary to his self-sacrifice and an encouragement to approach him as the believer's sympathetic great High Priest (2:17; 4:14–16).

Further, more contrasts are made between the Levitical priests and our Lord. They were sinners and needed to offer sacrifices for themselves as well as for the people (5:1–4), this made them compassionate. Our Lord, though sinless, learned obedience through his sufferings that he might be a sympathetic High Priest (5:4–10; 4:14–16). Again, Aaron was chosen of God to be the High Priest; so was our Lord (5:4–6). The priesthood was peculiar in God's Divine call to the Tribe of Levi; our Lord was from the tribe of Judah (7:11–17). Finally, the Aaronic High

Priests did and could not continue because of death; our Lord lives forevermore, thus he has an inviolable priesthood (7:1–24).

This epistle contrasts and compares the Lord Jesus with Moses (3:1–19), Joshua (4:1–8) and the Aaronic priesthood (4:14–7:28) to demonstrate his superiority and the finality of his redemptive work (13:8).

The Lord Jesus is likened to Melchisedec, the mysterious King–Priest of Abraham’s day (Gen. 14:18–20). Melchisedec blessed Abraham and received tithes from him, implying that he was much greater than the patriarch (7:1–28). The argument is one from silence, as nothing more is known of Melchisedec, i.e., no genealogy is mentioned in Scripture.⁶⁸ This enabled the author to substantiate the everlasting kingship and priesthood of our Lord (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1–21) with David’s prophecy (Psa. 110:4).

Further, the contrast is made between a Levitical earthly priesthood and its continual offerings and our Lord’s heavenly priesthood with its once–for–all offering—the greatest contrast (9:1–26; 10:1–14).

The Lord Jesus is variously referred to as “the apostle and high priest” (3:1), “the author and finisher [perfecter] of faith” (12:2–4). This final description emphasizes him as our great example in enduring suffering and contradiction—a great encouragement to these Jewish believers (12:2–14).

Angelology

Angels are mentioned thirteen times in Hebrews. The superiority of our Lord over the angels has been examined. It must be noted from Jewish tradition and ancient writings, that the Jews considered both Abraham and Moses as greater than the angels.⁶⁹ The mediatorship of our Lord transcends the mediatorship of angels in the old covenant, an argument suited to these Jewish believers (1:7; 2:2).

⁶⁸ Some hold that Melchisedec was Shem, one of Noah’s sons, still living as an ancient personage after the flood.

⁶⁹ See references in Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology*, p. 303.

Hamartiology

Hamartiology [fr. ἁμαρτία, a general term for “sin”] is the doctrine of sin. The terms “sin” and “sins” occur in this letter twenty–six times. Most of the references pertain to forgiveness of sins through sacrifices ordained by God, of the inability of animal sacrifices to take away sins (10:1–4) and of the effectual work of the Lord Jesus through his suffering and death to atone for sin in finality (1:3; 9:12, 25–28; 10:10, 12–14). It is scriptural to speak of “the finished work of Christ.”

The greatest issue is, can Christians commit the sin of apostasy? The unified testimony of the New Testament necessitates a negative answer. Salvation is not piecemeal, but a whole in its entirety, from election to glorification, from eternity past to eternity future. Christian experience rests in the context of God’s sovereign grace and redemptive purpose.⁷⁰

But mere professing Christians can and do apostatize. For these to return to Judaism to escape persecution, would cast doubt upon their genuine conversion. This accounts for the stern warnings throughout the letter.

Note: in 3:12 the infinitive form of apostasy occurs as “departing [ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι] from the living God.” The emphasis here is upon unbelief, as illustrated in Israel’s rebellious unbelief at Kadesh–Barnea and the resulting Divine judgment (Numb. 13:1–14:37). In a very strong, awful warning, the enormity of such unbelief and apostasy is addressed and put into its awful perspective (10:26–31).

Soteriology

Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation [σωτηρία]. Christian experience falls within this context. These Jewish believers are called upon to remember their past sufferings, which they evidently endured faithfully by the grace of God (10:32–39). They had spiritually degenerated and needed to be re–taught the essentials of the gospel (5:10–14). They are further urged to persevere and progress in the faith (12:1–14, 22–24, 28). The

⁷⁰ The Apostle Paul reveals this truth in such passages as Eph. 1:3–14 and Rom. 8:28–39.

heroes of Chapter 11 are held up as examples, as is our Lord himself (12:1ff).

The final chapter of this letter deals with the practicalities of Christian experience, love, care, hospitality, faithfulness, fellowship and prayer. When Christian experience lags, Christian faithfulness in practical matters often follows.

Ecclesiology

The doctrine of the church [ἐκκλησία] is not prominent in this writing, but does occur (10:24–25). The term “church” in 12:23 refers to the congregation of Israel in the Old Testament, a common reference (e.g., Ex. 12:3, 6, 19, 47; 16:2, 9, etc.). The final reference is to the “general assembly” [πανηγύρει] and church [ἐκκλησία] in glory (12:23).

Note: The πανηγύρις referred to a national gathering of a whole people, as in the ancient athletic games. Some hold that the church in glory, unlike the present local assembly, will be comprised of all the elect of all ages.

Eschatology

Eschatology is the doctrine of final things [ἐσχάτος], which would include the fulfillment of prophecies and promises, future events and the end times.

There is an eschatological note struck with the New Testament and Covenant as the finality of the Old Testament and Covenant, coupled with our Lord’s everlasting priesthood.

Further, the very nature of biblical faith, as described in Chapter eleven of this letter, transcends time and reaches into the future and the world to come (11:5, 7, 9–10, 13–16, 22, 39–40).

Outline of Hebrews

It is advantageous to grasp the essence of a given biblical book with a simple outline. A simple two-fold outline is possible:

The Foundation of Faith (Chaps. 1–10)

The Fruitfulness of Faith (Chaps. 11–13)

Or a three-fold homiletical outline, which stresses the superiority of our Lord and Christianity:

The Superior Person of Christ	(1:1–8:5)
The Superior Provisions of Calvary	(8:6–10:39)
The Superior Principles of Conduct	(11:1–13:25) ⁷¹

As the key-word “better” and the theme demonstrate, the structure of the epistle emphasizes the superiority and finality of our Lord Jesus Christ over the persons and institutions of the Old Covenant.

I. The Superior Person of Christ	(1:1–4:13)
A. Christ is superior to the Old Testament Prophets	(1:1–3)
1. The contrast between the old and new revelation	(1:1–2)
2. The superiority and glory of Christ as Son, Revealer, Redeemer and exalted Lord	(1:2b–3)
a. Christ the Creator	(1:2b)
b. Christ the sovereign Lord	(1:3)
c. Christ the Glorious Redeemer	(1:3)
B. Christ is superior to the Angels	(1:4–2:18)
1. His superiority confirmed from Scripture	(1:4–14)
a. Christ as the glorified God–Man	(1:4–7)
b. Christ as very Deity	(1:8–9)
c. Christ and Creation	(1:10–12)
d. Christ and the angels	(1:13–14)
2. First Warning: Do not Drift...!	(2:1–4)
3. Christ as the true or Ideal Man	(2:5–9)
(Made lower than the angels during his humiliation for suffering and death).	
4. The necessity of the Incarnation	(2:10–18)
a. The unity of Christ with his people	(2:10–13)
b. The purpose of our Lord’s suffering and death	(2:14–18)
C. Christ is superior to Moses	(3:1–19)
1. Christ the Son contrasted with Moses the Servant	(3:1–6a)
2. Second Warning: Do not Disbelieve!	(3:6–4:11)
a. The exclusion from God’s promised rest through unbelief	(3:7–19)
b. The abiding reality of the promised, Sabbath–rest	(4:1–13)
3. The promised rest in Christ is superior to the rest under Joshua	(4:8–10)
4. The revelatory nature of the Word of God	(4:12–13)
II. The Superior Priesthood of Christ	(4:14–10:18)
A. His superior Person	(4:14–7:28)
1. His qualifications	(4:14–5:10)

⁷¹ Taken from John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, pp. 262–263.

- a. He has passed through the heavens into the very presence of God (4:14)
 - b. Through his testings and sufferings he is a sympathetic High Priest (4:15)
 - c. We have the greatest encouragement to come through with boldness (4:16)
 - d. The contrasts and comparisons between the Levitical priests and our Lord (5:1–5)
 - e. Our Lord learned obedience through his sufferings (5:6–10)
- 2. Third Warning: Do not Degenerate...! (5:11–6:20)
 - a. The rebuke for spiritual degeneration (5:11–14)
 - b. An encouragement to press onward to spiritual maturity (6:1–3)
 - c. A warning against apostasy (6:4–8)
 - d. An encouragement to press onward (6:9–20)
 - (1) A remembrance of the past and expectation of the future (6:9–11)
 - (2) The example of Abraham (6:12–15)
 - (3) The immutability of God's veracity (6:16–18)
 - (4) The hope set before them (6:19–20)
- 3. The Priesthood of Melchizedek contrasted with the Priesthood of Aaron (7:1–28)
 - a. The person of Melchizedek: an argument from silence (7:1–3)
 - b. The superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over both Abraham and the Levitical priesthood (7:4–10)
 - c. The two priesthoods contrasted (7:11–25)
 - (1) The transitory nature of the Levitical priesthood (7:12–19)
 - (2) Christ made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek by virtue of his endless life (7:20–28)
- B. His superior Priestly Work (8:1–10:18)
 - 1. A Superior or Heavenly Sanctuary (8:1–6a)
 - 2. A Superior or New Covenant (8:6b–13)
 - 3. The ministries under the Old and New Covenants contrasted (9:1–10:18)
 - a. The Heavenly Ministry vs. the Earthly Ministry (9:1–24)
 - b. The Continual and Imperfect vs. the Final and Perfect (9:25; 10:18)
- III. The Serious Perseverance of The Christian (10:19–13:17)
 - A. Encouragement to a Superior Approach (10:19–39)
 - 1. First encouragement to boldness and perseverance (10:19–25)

2. Fourth Warning: Do not Despise...!	(10:26–31)
3. Second encouragement to persevere	(10:32–39)
B. Past Examples of Faith and Perseverance	(11:1–40)
1. A Description of Faith	(11:1–3)
a. The faith of the elders anticipated	(11:2)
b. The relation of faith to understanding	(11:3)
c. The faith of the Antediluvians	(11:4–7)
(1) Abel	(11:4)
(2) Enoch	(11:5–6)
(3) Noah	(11:7)
d. The faith of the patriarchs	(11:8–22)
(1) Faith, obedience and patience: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah	(11:8–16)
(2) Faith and trial	(11:17–19)
(3) Faith and anticipation	(11:20–22)
e. The faith of Moses	(11:23–28)
f. The faith of Israel	(11:29–30)
g. The faith of Rahab	(11:31)
h. Examples of faith in exploits	(11:32–35)
i. Examples of faith in suffering and adversity	(11:36–38)
3. The goal of Faith	(11:39–40)
C. Personal Application and Exhortation	(12:1–29)
1. Christ the Great Example	(12:1–3)
2. The Significance of Discipline	(12:4–11)
3. The Fifth Warning: Do not Defile...!	(12:12–17)
4. The Superiority of the New Covenant Maintained	(12:18–29)
IV. Several Personal Admonitions and Conclusion	(13:1–25)
A. Personal Admonitions re Practical Duties	(13:1–6)
1. The duty of Christian love	(13:1)
2. The duty of Christian hospitality	(13:2)
3. The duty of Christian sympathy	(13:3)
4. The duty of Christian morality	(13:4)
5. The duty of Christian contentment	(13:5–6)
B. Personal Admonitions re Religious Duties	(13:7–17)
1. The duty of Christian example	(13:7–8)
2. The duty of doctrinal fidelity	(13:9)
3. The duty of bearing reproach for Christ's sake	(13:10–15)
4. The duty of Christian giving and obedience	(13:16–17)
C. Personal encouragements re prayer	(13:18–21)
1. The duty of Christian intercession	(13:18–19)
2. An example of Christian intercession	(13:20–21)
D. The Conclusion	(13:22–25)
1. A concluding comment re the nature of this letter	(13:22)
2. The anticipation of meeting them with Timothy	(13:23)
3. The closing salutation	(13:24–25)

Notes and Observations

1. (1:1–4). A single sentence of 73 words in Greek. One of the great Christological statements in the New Testament (e.g., Jn. 1:1–18; Eph. 1:3–14; Phil. 2:5–11 and Col. 1:13–22). This statement and the following statements in chapter one give an exalted view of our Lord both as superior to all and as very Deity.
2. (1:1). This letter begins with a fine, alliterated expression in the Gk.⁷² “In various parts and in various ways...” The scholarship of the writer is often exquisite in expression.
3. (1:1–2). The basic sentence structure is: “...God having spoken, spoke...” referring to and emphasizing the superiority and finality of the Son–revelation as contrasted with the partial revelation through the prophets.⁷³ “The story of Divine revelation is a story of progression up to Christ, but there is no progression beyond him.”⁷⁴
4. (1:2). The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to be the omnipotent Creator and Sovereign Lord over history, “the express image” of God.⁷⁵
5. (1:3). The finished or perfect and complete redemptive work of Christ is set forth at the very beginning of this epistle.
6. (1:5–12). A clear and unmistakable declaration of the Lord Jesus as very God. Based upon Old Testament passages (Psa. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; Deut. 32:43 [LXX]; Psa. 104:4; 45:6–7; Psa. 102:25–27; Isa. 34:4; 50:9; 51:6; Psa. 110:1).
7. (1:5–14). Our Lord is declared to be Deity in the fullest sense and in contrast to the angels, who are by contrast creatures, instruments and messengers in the purpose of God.
8. (2:1ff). The first warning. “...let them slip...” is lit: “drift away” [μήποτε παραρρῶμεν]. The danger is that of drifting

⁷² Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως...

⁷³ ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας...ἐλάλησεν...ἐν υἱῷ. “Son” is anarth.

⁷⁴ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 3

⁷⁵ χαρακτῆρ, “exact likeness and representation.”

from the truth, of being careless [“neglect,” ἀμελήσαντες] concerning the truth and finality of the gospel. Any departure from Divine truth is extremely dangerous! Our Lord’s superiority over the angels is also traced throughout this chapter.

An expository and homiletical outline of 2:1–4: 1. The Need of the Appeal (v. 1). 2. The Basis of the Appeal (v. 1–2). 3. The Urgency of the Appeal (v. 1f). 4. The Solemnity of the Appeal (cv. 1f). 5. The Reason of the Appeal (v. 1–2). 6. The Justification of the Appeal (v. 1f) and 7. The Conclusion of the Appeal (v. 1f).⁷⁶

9. (2:3–4). The truth and finality of the Gospel Covenant was adequately credentialed by signs and miracles by our Lord and the inspired Apostles, a greater credentialing than that of the old or Mosaic Covenant.
10. (2:5–18). A dissertation on the human nature of our Lord in his redemptive work, identifying himself with sinners, and especially with the Jewish nation. His human nature was essential for the work of redemption.
11. (2:6f). A reference to Psalm 8:4–6, and applied to our Lord.
12. The words “...should taste death for every *man*.” “Man” should be italicized in our Eng. version, as it is not in the text [ὕπὲρ παντὸς γεύσεται θανάτου], lit: “for everyone,” the term must be interpreted according to the context, which presupposes a covenant context. This passage does not teach a universal atonement.
13. (2:10ff). Our Lord had to suffer in His human nature and soul. This was not a sign of weakness, but of necessity to atone for sin.
14. (2:12–13). An accommodation of Psalms 22:22; 2 Sam. 22:3 and Isa. 53:12. One must remember that such use of Scripture was especially fitted to the Jewish mind. “Church” is “assembly”

⁷⁶ The expository outlines in these notes are mainly taken from W. H. Griffith-Thomas, *Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*.

or “congregation.”⁷⁷ To speak of “the Jewish church” in the Old Testament is eisegesis, as the church is a New Testament institution.

15. (2:14ff). The identification of our Lord with those he came to save was a necessity. This identification was for suffering and death; it did not include any sinfulness on the part of our Lord. He was and is impeccable.
16. (2:14–18). The writer reveals the necessity of our Lord’s redemptive work and also anticipates his suitability as the High Priest and Intercessor for God’s people through his sufferings.
17. (3:1ff). The author now begins to draw a parallel between our Lord and Moses, revealing our Lord’s superiority (v. 1–5).⁷⁸ Then he refers to the “provocation” or rebellion of unbelieving Israel at Kadesh–Barnea, which resulted in their remaining in the wilderness for forty years until that generation had died (Numb. Chaps. 13–14).
An expository and homiletical outline of 3:1–6: 1. The Address (v. 1f). 2. The Exhortation (v.1f). 3. The Description (v.1f). 4. The Comparison (v.2f). 5. The Reminder (v. 3–6).
18. (3:5–4:13). A lengthy argument and warning based on Israel’s unbelief and rebellion at Kadesh–Barnea. The emphasis is upon the unbelief of God’s Word and the danger of apostasy.
19. (3:12). The word “departing” is “apostasy from the living God” [ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος]. The writer emphasizes that God is the “living God” to emphasize the grave danger and who they are sinning against. Cf. Heb. 10:31. The sin of unbelief is set forth in its true and heinous nature!

⁷⁷ ...ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας...

⁷⁸ Jewish tradition held that both Abraham and Moses were superior to the angels.

20. (4:1–11). The rest for national Israel was in Canaan, the Land of Promise; the “rest” for God’s people now is a spiritual rest in Christ by faith.

An expository and homiletical outline of 4:3–13: 1. The Special Privilege. 2. The Significant Confession (v. 3–8). 3. The Special Explanation (v. 9–10). 4. The Solemn Warning (v. 11). 5. The Searching Admonition (v. 12–13).

21. (4:7–9). The writer quotes from *Psa.* 95:7–8, then refers to Joshua leading the nation of Israel into Canaan. The context demands “Joshua” rather than “Jesus,” as “Jesus” [Ἰησοῦς] is the Gk. form of the Heb. “Joshua,” יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. Note that the “rest” for God’s people is called here a “sabbath-rest” in Gk. [ἄρα ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμὸς τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ]. This rest is a spiritual rest in Christ.

Judaism—the Jewish religion—found its fulfillment in biblical Christianity. As has been previously noted, this epistle is God’s final word to the Jews concerning their religion and the Old Covenant (*Jer.* 31:31–34; *Heb.* 8:6–13).

22. (4:11–13). A final warning against unbelief in light of the Word and nature of the living God who searches the heart.

It is not too much to say that the Bible as the Word of God is essential for every aspect of the spiritual life. It convicts of sin (*4:12*); it converts the soul (*Psa.* 19:7); it cleanses the conscience (*Jn.* 15:3); it consecrates the life (*Jn.* 17:17); it corrects the wrong (*2 Tim.* 3:16); it confirms the right (*Jn.* 8:31); and it comforts and encourages the heart (*Psa.* 119:50, 54)...In particular, three things are essential: careful consideration; continual meditation; and close application.⁷⁹

23. (4:14–16). The transition is made to the High Priestly ministry of our Lord and its fullness, suitability and finality. “Passed into the heavens” should read “passed through the heavens.”⁸⁰ “in time of need” means an immediate access.⁸¹

⁷⁹ W. H. Griffith-Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁸⁰ ...διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς... (perf.).

⁸¹ ...εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν... Some would transl. “in the nick of time.”

24. (5:1–10). The priestly ministry of our Lord contrasted with the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood. The quotation in v. 6 is from Psa. 110:4. The reference in v. 7 is to the garden agony in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:44). The Levitical priests were chosen by God and were, as mere men, sinners, but our Lord is without sin and was qualified through his humanity and sufferings to be a sympathetic High Priest.
25. (5:11–14). Another warning which implies a spiritual degeneration for these Jewish believers who were tempted to revert back into Judaism to escape persecution. Mark the verbs “are” in v. 11 and “are become” in v. 12. Both are “have become” [γεγόνατε, perf.], denoting degeneration.
26. (6:1–9). Another encouragement and warning. v. 1–2 are the foundation for the old, “Six-Principle Baptists,” who held to this list as a matter of belief.
27. (6:4–6). Another stringent warning against the possibility of apostasy. Note the wording: “having fallen away” [παραπεσόντας, aor. ptc.], not a possibility, but seen as a fact for the sake of argument. Falling away is not to be taken lightly!
28. (6:9–12). The writer consoles his readers that they have not yet fully apostatized. Their past and present behavior belie the argument. Nevertheless, they must persevere in the faith and not be sluggish or dull!⁸²
- An expository and homiletical outline of 6:9–20: 1. Strong Confidence (v. 9–10). 2. Earnest Desire (v. 11–12). 3. Hearty Encouragement (v. 13–20).
29. (6:13–20). The author refers to the faith and perseverance of Abraham and the veracity of God as his great example. He then applies this principle of perseverance to his readers. The “anchor” [ἄγκυραν] was not a literal anchor, but a great rocky outcropping to which the forerunner [πρόδρομος] in a small skiff fixed the line from the ship, “anchoring” it fast. This

⁸² ...ἵνα μὴ νωθοί...

figure enables the writer to resume once again the role of our Lord in his High Priestly ministry.

30. (7:1–8:13). The Lord Jesus is our great High Priest, not after the order of Aaron, but that of Melchisedec—an everlasting priesthood based upon a better covenant and upon better promises. This argument of our Lord’s superiority is for the confidence and assurance of his readers in their temptation to revert back into Judaism.
31. (7:1ff). The writer argues that Melchisedec was greater than Abraham and a type of our Lord. His appearance and lack of genealogy is an argument from silence which would carry great force with the Jewish Christians, given the prominence given to Abraham (Gen. 14:18–20). Our Lord is then argued to be as priest after the order of Melchisedec, an eternal priesthood superior to that of Aaron, though our Lord came from the tribe of Judah and not Levi in fulfillment of Psa. 110:1ff.
32. (7:13–28). Our Lord has an everlasting priesthood far superior to that of Aaron, by the power of his endless life, impeccable human nature and his once-for-all sacrifice for sin [ἐφάπαξ].
 An expository and homiletical outline of 7:20–25: 1. An Unchangeable Priesthood (v. 20–22). 2. An Uninterrupted Priesthood (v. 23–25).
 An expository and homiletical outline of 7:20–25: 1. The Ability. 2. The Activity. 3. The Assurance. 4. The Approach.
33. (7:24). Our Lord has an unchangeable priesthood. Note the word “unchangeable” [ἀπαράβατον ἔχει τὴν ἱερωσύνην], it is emph. by pos. and is lit: “an inviolable priesthood.” Any priesthood in history since our Lord gave himself up as our Great High Priest in sacrifice and intercession is trespassing on his priesthood, including Romish priests, Mormon priests and Episcopal priests.

34. (7:25). The thought is that our Lord as our Great High Priest is able to keep on saving believers.⁸³

Salvation is three-fold—past, present and future. It includes deliverance from the penalty of sin (past); from the power of sin (present); and from the presence of sin (future). Each of these is clearly taught in Scripture, and “salvation” in its fullest meaning includes them all.⁸⁴

35. (8:1–13). A summary of the foregoing arguments concerning the vast superiority of the person and redemptive work of our Lord as contrasted with the Levitical priesthood and the Old Covenant. With a new, superior priesthood and New Covenant, the old priesthood and Covenant were rendered obsolete. How could these Jewish believers revert back into Judaism?! This was and is, indeed, God’s final word to Judaism.

An expository and homiletical outline of 8:7–13: 1. The New Covenant Needed (v. 7–8). 2. The New Covenant Promised (v. 8–9). 3. The New Covenant Described (v. 10–12). 4. The New Covenant Assured (v. 13).

36. (9:1–28). The writer continues to reveal the vast superiority of our Lord by contrasting the Old Covenant and Priesthood with the New, the earthly with the heavenly, and the blood of our Lord with the blood of beasts, the efficacy of Christ’s blood as contrasted with the blood of animals.

An expository and homiletical outline of 9:11–14: 1. A Better Priest (v.11). 2. A Better Sanctuary (v. 11). 3. A Better Sacrifice (v. 12). 4. A Better Method (v. 12). 5. A Better Blessing (v. 12). 6. A Better Guarantee (v. 13–14). 7. A Better Result (v. 14).

37. (9:27–28). Death does not end it all; “after this, the judgment.” God has ordained a Day of final Judgment in which every sin will be fully and finally judged. His moral self-consistency demands this, as does his holiness, righteousness and justice. The Lord Jesus is set forth as the

⁸³ ὁθεν καὶ σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελὲς δύναται...

⁸⁴ W. H. Griffith-Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

only sacrifice for sin and the only hope for sinners! His once-for-all sacrifice for sin is God's final answer, hope and assurance for sinful man.

An expository and homiletical outline of 9:23–28: 1. The sacrificial work of Christ (v. 23). 2. The priestly work of Christ (v. 24–26). 3. The Kingly work of Christ (v. 27–28).

38. (10:1). Σκιάν, shadow, dim outline. The “law,” i.e. the Books of Moses or the Mosaic era and legislation, the Old Covenant with its Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system. These anticipated the finality of our Lord's person and work.
39. (10:1–14). The contrast is between the Old and New or Gospel covenants, between the repetitious nature of the old system through its inadequacies and the finished work of Christ in its finality. The Levitical priest stood daily [ἑστῆκεν καθ’ ἡμέραν],⁸⁵ always repeating those functions and offerings which could, by their repetitious nature, never take away sins—but our Lord, after offering up one final, finished sacrifice [ἐφάπαξ], sat down, demonstrating his finished work to which nothing may or can be offered.
40. (10:14). It is correct and biblical to speak of “the finished work of Christ.”
41. (10:15–17). A reference to Jer. 31:31–34; which, together with Ezk. 11:19–20 and 36:25–27 anticipate the New or Gospel Covenant. Our Lord refers to this in Jn. 3:5, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”
42. (10:19–39). A lengthy and cumulative exhortation to faithfulness in view of the preceding. Mark the repeated “Let us” (v. 22, 23, 24) followed by a reasoned exhortation of admonitions and consequences.

An expository and homiletical outline of 10:26–39: 1. Warnings (v. 26–31). 2. Reminders (v. 32–34). 3. Counsels (v. 35–39).

⁸⁵ καθ’ ἡμέραν, “each and every day,” emph. the repetitious nature of the Levitical system.

43. (10:25). A reference to church meetings or Christian gatherings, which these Jewish believers had abandoned to escape persecution. Faithfulness to God often has a high price!
44. (10:26). This refers to returning to a life of willful sinning, a sinful lifestyle; in this context, apostasy from the truth.
45. (10:27–31). Once again the Old and New Covenants are contrasted. To apostatize from the New Covenant of grace in Christ is a greater sin than departing from the Old—a sin which these had not seriously considered.
46. (10:32ff). A call to remember their past actions and sacrificial love as Christians as an impetus to be faithful.
47. (10:38–39). A final warning against returning to Judaism—meaning apostasy!
48. (11:1ff). See pp. 69–70 for a summary of Chapter 11. A recounting of these great “heroes of the faith” is meant to encourage the readers to persevere and experience God’s blessings, even if it meant suffering. See p. 70 for an outline of this chapter.
49. (11:1). Not a precise definition of faith, but a description which is illustrated in the subsequent verses. This contrasts the faith of their heroes with their own inconsistencies.

An expository and homiletical outline of 11:1–3: The meaning of faith: 1. The Description (v. 1). 2. The Testimony (v. 2). 3. The Perception (v.3).

50. (11:3). Πίστει νοοῦμεν... A critical expression for presuppositional or biblical Apologetics. The Scripture gives the precedence to faith over understanding. These cannot be reversed without surrendering a vital biblical principle in defending the faith! All men are presuppositionalists by nature, i.e., they reason from their presuppositions [what they assume to be true].

Note: Evidential and Classical Apologetics put understanding before faith and thus surrender ground to the unbeliever. For a discussion of this vital and determining issue, see Robert Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge*, a superb work on this very issue. See also Paul S. Nelson, *Presuppositionalism: A*

Biblical Approach to Apologetics and the apologetic works of Greg L. Bahnsen, K. Scott Oliphant, John M. Frame, Cornelius VanTil, Abraham Kuiper, etc.

Note: One's presuppositions may be erroneous. E.g., Acts 19:35–36. The town clerk assumed as utterly true that the meteorite, which fell from the skies and was carved into the shape of Artemis, their female deity, was “fact,” and thus nothing could be said against it. This was a pagan presupposition based upon legend and pragmatism, yet it was held as absolute truth. The only sure ground of truth is the inscripturated Word of God rightly interpreted. Have we carefully examined our own presuppositions?

51. (11:4). Abel offered his sacrifice in faith; Cain did not. He was satisfied with mere external religion and ritual—a lesson lost on most of professing Christianity through the ages!
52. (11:5). Only two persons have bypassed death: Enoch and Elijah (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kgs. 2:1, 11).
53. (11:6). Faith is the primary ingredient in the believer's life; it defines him as nothing else will.
- 54 (11:7). Noah preached for 120 years and gained only his family—faithfulness in times of apostasy may mean little fruit.
55. (11:8–10). Each step Abraham took was a step of faith.
56. (11:11–12). Little is said of Sarah's faith, except here.
57. (11:13–16). The horizon of faith—it sees beyond the horizon of this world and this life!

An expository and homiletical outline of 11:4–16: The manifestation of faith: 1. Faith's worship (v. 4). 2. Faith's witness (v. 5–6). 3. Faith's work (v. 7). 4. Faith's walk (v. 8). 5. Faith's waiting (v. 9–10). 6. Faith's Willingness (v. 11–12). Faith's welcome (v. 13–16).

58. (11:17–19). Abraham reasoned [λογισάμενος] from God's Word that God would raise Isaac from the dead. The first instance of theology reasoned from God's word: God commanded him to kill Isaac; yet Isaac, yet unmarried would be the son through whom all of his posterity would come.
59. (11:20–22). Isaac, Jacob and Joseph mentioned briefly, yet their faith sustained them in expectation of future blessing.

60. (11:23–28). Much space is given to Moses, as he was the epitome of righteousness and example to the Jews. Here, it is his faith in facing opposition which is emphasized.
61. (11:29–30). Here, the nation of Israel itself is held up as an example of faith.
62. (11:31). The faith of Rahab, the first Canaanite convert, is held up as an example of faith in action in the face of imminent peril.
63. (11:32–35). A grouping of various Old Testament Jewish heroes whose exploits were legendary. What examples for these who were wavering when facing possible persecution for their faith!

Note: Jephthah is mentioned among Israel's heroes. Would he be if he actually offered his daughter as a human sacrifice? Read Judg. 11:30–40. The entire record of Jephthah reveals that he was godly and knew the Scriptures. Many take the view that he sentenced her to a perpetual virginity.

64. (11:36–38). “And others...” God may not always deliver us in a glorious fashion. Some were martyred for their faith by their own people! This chapter is not an idealistic, unreal portrayal. Ancient Jewish tradition holds that Isaiah was sawn asunder. In the time of Ahab and Jezebel many prophets were murdered with the sword.
65. (12:1–13). From heroes to harshness—from faith to faintheartedness—the necessity of Divine discipline. Our Heavenly Father disciplines each and every true child from his love and for our good. To be without chastisement is a sign of illegitimacy.
66. (12:1–3). The Lord Jesus is the supreme example for believers. To be free from suffering as a believer is an impossibility; but it must not be misunderstood. The heroes of Chapter 11 are envisioned as a great group of spectators urging believers on by their example. These believers are to patiently run the race—a marathon, not a sprint. These are to persevere with patience.

There are four *hapax legomena*⁸⁶ in these opening verses: v. 1, “weight” [ὄγκον], “easily besetting” [εὐπερίστατον]; v. 2, “finisher” [τελειωτήν]; v. 3, “consider” [ἀναλογίσασθε]. The writer is very precise in his description of the Christian’s race or spiritual life with its trials and opposition.

The import of “looking” [ἀφορῶντες] implies looking away from everything and everyone else to “the author and finisher of faith—Jesus”! A cumulative emph.

Our Lord looked ahead through the suffering of the cross to the glory and exultation beyond.

An expository and homiletical outline of 12:3–4: The Contest:
1. The great struggle. 2. The great Danger. 3. The great Comparison.

67. (12:9–13). Divine discipline is much more equitable than human, fatherly discipline.
68. (12:14). Holiness is the one great requirement for heaven. The rel. pron. “which” [ὃ] is masc. sing., referring to holiness alone.
69. (12:15). A warning concerning finally proving to be graceless, and thus only a mere professing Christian.
70. (12:16–17). The example of Esau. Some teach that one might seek to repent and not be able, i.e., they “have sinned away their day of grace” and can never be saved, no matter how they might cry out to God. This is not true! Esau sought to change his father’s mind with great crying and tears, not his own mind (Gen. 27:30–38).
71. (12:18–29). A contrast between Mt. Sinai with its awesome presence and the finality of the gospel with its far greater glory. To refuse such is utterly inexcusable!
72. (12:23). “The general assembly and church of the firstborn...” The first term [παινηγύρει], denotes a national inclusive, festive gathering. It signifies the Old and New Testament saints together in the church [ἐκκλησία] in glory.

⁸⁶ Gk: a *hapax legomenon* [occurring one time] refers to a word or expression which occurs but one time in the New Testament.

73. (12:24). The blood of Abel cried out for justice (Gen. 4:8–12); the blood of our Lord, though shed in violence, cries out for forgiveness, peace and reconciliation!
74. (13:1ff). Closing instructions and admonitions dealing with social (v. 1–3), moral (v. 4–6) and religious (v. 7–19) life.
75. (13:1–3). The exhortation to brotherly love is always appropriate, sadly! Hospitality is a chief Christian characteristic. “Angels” may refer to literal angels (Gen. 19) or to messengers [ἄγγέλους]⁸⁷ traveling from church to church. Christian sympathy toward those incarcerated as believers is a command!
76. (13:4). Christians are to be the most morally pure of people. Archbishop Latimer gave these words on a card to the immoral King Henry VIII for his birthday!
77. (13:5). Christian contentment in financial affairs. These words, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” occur several times in the Old Testament in similar expressions (Deut. 31:8; Josh. 1:5; 1 Kgs. 8:57; Psalms. 27:9). The writer conflates here the strongest expression with five negatives in the Gk: “I will never, never, leave thee and I will not, never, never forsake thee.”⁸⁸ C. H. Spurgeon preached upon this text. His title: “Never! Never! Never! Never! Never!”
- An expository and homiletical outline of 13:1–6: Love in the Individual life: 1. In relation to all Christians (v. 1). 2. In relation to needy Christians (v. 2). 3. In relation to suffering Christians (v. 3). 4. In relation to purity (v. 4). 5. In relation to contentment (v. 5–6).
78. (13:7, 17). Two commands to obey church elders. Their godly lifestyle and spiritual concerns are argued as reasons.
79. (13:8–9). The unchangeable Christ and unchangeable doctrine! Another exhortation for stability.

⁸⁷ The Gk. ἄγγελος is used seven times for messengers to and from churches.

⁸⁸ ... Οὐ μή σε ἀνῶ οὐδὲ οὐ μή σε ἐγκαταλίπω...

80. (13:10–15). A final argument for leaving their past Judaism and being steadfast in Christianity.
81. (13:18–21). A practical exhortation to prayer, intercession and perseverance.

The Epistle of James

Introduction

Although this short epistle has been the subject of much controversy over the centuries as to: authorship, certain doctrines largely omitted and some once considered questionable, and its practical and varied approach, these issues have largely been settled. Because of the controversies associated with this book, it was listed with the *Antilegomena* [ἀντιλεγόμενα],⁸⁹ or disputed books of the New Testament. Most of these books were accepted in the churches by the second century AD. Official Conciliar recognition by the State Church came much later. See “Canonicity.”

James, with Hebrews, is one of the two most “Jewish” books in the New Testament canon, James being the foremost. Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians in danger of apostatizing to avoid persecution during the Neronian era (c. 63–68).⁹⁰ James was written to early Jewish Christians, many of whom were still attending Synagogues⁹¹ and living in a society in which they were still considered as Jews (c. 30–44).

The Epistle of James was evidently the earliest New Testament writing, addressed to Jewish Christians of the *Diaspora* [διάσπορα] (1:1).⁹² These early Jewish believers were converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–41), and during the era of early persecutions, which were directed at Jewish believers (Acts 8:1–4; 9:1–2).

⁸⁹ *Antilegomena*, lit: “spoken against,” consisted of seven books: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. The NT Books were classified at the first as the *Homologomena* [lit: saying the same thing, or accepted books] and the *Antilegomena*, or disputed books. See pp. 25–26 of this volume.

⁹⁰ See pp. 59–62 of this volume.

⁹¹ Jas. 2:2, “assembly” is lit: “your synagogue.” τήν συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν.

⁹² Dispersion, Gk: διάσπορα, “sown throughout, scattered abroad,” referring primarily to the Jews and also Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. See Vol. II, pp. 432–433 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

Authorship

The opening statement simply identifies the author as “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...” (1:1). “James” is the English equivalent of the Gk. “Jacob” [Ἰάκωβος], a common Jewish name. There are no other distinguishing adjectives. Thus, James was well-known to his readers—but there were several men named “James” in the New Testament.

Which “James”?

There are at least forty references to “James” in the New Testament among our Lord’s disciples and followers. The possibilities can be narrowed to four: James the son of Zebedee, an Apostle and brother to John (Matt. 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mk. 10:35; 13:3; Lk. 9:54; Acts 1:13; 12:2). He died by martyrdom under Herod Agrippa I (c. 44) (Acts 12:1–2), too early to have penned this epistle. James the son of Alphaeus, also a Disciple and Apostle, known as “James the less” (Matt. 10:3; 27:56; Mk. 3:18; 15:40; Lk. 6:15; 24:10; Acts 1:13); James *the brother* of Judas,⁹³ distinguished from Judas Iscariot (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13); James, one of our Lord’s younger, half-brothers (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Gal. 1:19).

Three Theories

Three theories have arisen concerning the identity of “James” and the “brethren of our Lord”: first, the *Hieronymian*, or view of Jerome (c. 347–420) and that of the Romish Church, that our “Lord’s brethren” were actually cousins, the sons of Alphaeus and Mary, the sister of our Lord’s mother. This view, formed in controversy, was held to protect the alleged perpetual virginity of Mary and to exalt celibacy.

Second, the *Epiphanian*, or theory of Epiphanius of Salmas (c. 320–403), who held that these “brethren” were Joseph’s sons by a previous marriage. This view safeguarded the same ideas as the Hieronymian theory.

⁹³ The italicized words *the brother* have been changed to *the father* in some modern versions.

Third, the *Helvidian*, or view of Helvidius (c. 383), who maintained that these “brethren” were the natural sons of Joseph and Mary after the birth of our Lord. This view alone is in accord with the grammar of Scripture: The words “till” [ἐως] (Matt. 1:25) and “firstborn” (Lk. 2:7) imply a normal marriage and family after the virgin birth of our Lord. These “brethren” were then younger half-brothers to the Lord Jesus. This view both protects the doctrine of the Virgin Birth and also exalts the biblical status of marriage (Gen. 1:27–31; 2:18–25).

Almost all now agree that the author of this epistle was James, a younger half-brother of our Lord. He was not converted until after the resurrection, when he saw the resurrected and glorified Christ (1 Cor. 15:4–8). He very early assumed the most prominent position in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:12), and was its foremost elder or “pastor” until his death by martyrdom (c. 62). Both the subject matter and style of this epistle are fitting for the commanding personality and influence of James in the Jerusalem Church. He was evidently married (1 Cor. 9:5).

Ancient Christian tradition from Hegesippus (c. 110–180) stated that James was called “James the Just.” He was an alleged Nazarite and vegan. He was such a man given to prayer that his knees became as camel’s knees with large callouses. He was said to have full access to the Temple and spent much of his time there, dressed in linen garments, in prayers and intercessions.

Tradition has handed down two versions of the martyrdom of “James the Just.” The version of Josephus (c. 37–100) is that between the death of Festus, the Roman governor (62) and the arrival of Albinus, Annas the high priest took advantage of the interim and convened the Sanhedrin, which tried James concerning his faith in Christ. After his positive testimony to our Lord’s deity and Messiahship, the Sanhedrin had James stoned to death.⁹⁴ The version of Hegesippus is that James was cast down

⁹⁴ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, XX, Chap. IX, Par. 1.; William Whiston, *Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 423.

from the pinnacle of the temple, then beaten to death with a fuller's club.⁹⁵

James and Jude

The epistles of James and Jude were written by younger half-brothers of our Lord (Jas. 1:1; Jude 1), neither of whom were among his original disciples. There are two considerations: first, mark their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ in their epistles. Both declare themselves to be the “willing bond slaves” [δοῦλος] of our Lord, claiming no determining or advantageous earthly or familial relationship:

James: (Jas. 1:1). “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...” [Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος]. The const. makes the Lord Jesus equal with God, emphasizing his deity. James reveals no earthly familiarity.

Jude: (Jude 1). “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...” [Ἰούδας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, ἀδελφὸς δὲ Ἰακώβου]. Jude likewise identifies himself as a willing bond slave to our Lord with no mention of earthly ties to our Lord.

Second, Jude further identifies himself as the “brother of James,” implying that James was well-known and there was no question concerning his identity.

Note: Some seek to evaluate the religious atmosphere of the home life of Joseph and Mary by the style and contents of the Epistles of James and Jude. Their writings are steeped in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature.⁹⁶ Doubtless their upbringing and the religious atmosphere of their home in their formative years would be reflected in their personalities and writings.

Note: James was an unbeliever until he saw the resurrected Christ after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). This is significant. He lived with our Lord during his pre-ministry days, at times must have heard his preaching and teaching, evidently saw some of his miracles, yet lived in a state of unbelief. Let no one minimize

⁹⁵ Eusebius, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, I, pp. 104, 125–128.

⁹⁶ Jude 14–15 refers to the Pseudopigraphic work, the *Book of Enoch*, but simply uses it to illustrate truth, as Paul did when quoting heathen poets. See *Survey of the Bible*, IV, pp. 63–64.

the unbelieving state of the unconverted! True belief—saving faith—is the gift of God and a matter of free and sovereign grace.

Note: Though not an original disciple, James rose to the highest rank in the Jerusalem Church. He was ranked with the Apostles as he had seen the resurrected Lord. This should be a great encouragement to the Lord's servants who labor in the truth. It is neither tradition nor human relationships, but Divine providence and studied dedication to the work of God which advance men in the Lord's service.

The Recipients

This letter is addressed “to the twelve tribes scattered abroad...my brethren...” (1:1–2), identifying the original readers as Jewish Christians of the *Diaspora* who, at this early date, were still living in their Jewish communities and many were still attending synagogue worship (2:2).⁹⁷ The term “church” [ἐκκλησία] occurs once (5:14), implying some primitive Christian assemblies in given instances.

The first Christians were Jewish.⁹⁸ James writes to these as Christians and also as Jews, giving a very strong Jewish flavor and approach to this epistle in its content and style. Religion and culture would be the strongest to his readers, and the Old Testament Wisdom Literature strongly influenced his style and approach.

Provenance and Date

The place of writing was evidently Jerusalem, the home of James and the Jerusalem Church—his residence and sphere of power and influence (Acts 15:13ff; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12).

The date must have been previous to the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15, which was convened about 50–51 AD. The contents reveal a very early date as Christianity was exclusively Jewish in the first decade—limited to Jews and

⁹⁷ Jas. 2:2. The word “assembly” is “synagogue.” ...εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν...

⁹⁸ The Jewish–Gentile controversy among Christians surfaced with the conversion Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:1–11:18). The later Jerusalem Conference (c. 50–51) sought to settle the matter (Acts 15:1ff).

proselytes. The writing further designates leaders as “elders” and “teachers,” not “bishops” and “deacons.” As the first New Testament Epistle, most give the date at c. 44–46.⁹⁹

Canonicity

The Eastern Church accepted this writing fairly early, and it is first referred to as Scripture by Origen (c. 184–250), although it was not recognized by some of his contemporaries. This epistle was included in the *Old Syriac* and *Peshitta* (c. 250). It was not included in the *Muratorian Canon* (c. 170). In the fourth century it was accepted through the influence of Jerome (c. 347–420) and Augustine (c. 354–430).

The reasons given for this reluctance were the question of authorship, its predominately Jewish nature, and its practical and ethical rather than doctrinal content. The Western Church did not recognize it officially until the Third Council of Carthage (397).

In more modern times, this epistle was questioned by Erasmus and Luther¹⁰⁰ because of its alleged teaching of justification by works, which allegedly contradicted Paul’s teaching of justification by faith alone. This seeming contradiction is explained under “James and Paul on Justification and works.”

Occasion and Purpose

The occasion which called forth this letter to these early Jewish believers is very generally what might be true of Christians in general: temptations, trials, favoritism, failure in practice to live up to the scriptural truth of a holy life, and misconceptions of the Christian life. Added to this was their traditional Jewish social background and a tendency toward social injustice.

⁹⁹ Paul’s first epistle, to the Galatians, the second writing of the New Testament, would be dated about 49–50 AD. See this *Survey of the Bible*, IV, pp. 214, 285–286.

¹⁰⁰ Luther called James “a right strawy epistle.” [Ger: *eyn rechte stroern Epistel*].

As to James' purposes, he emphasizes the ethics of the Christian life as the practical manifestation of right doctrine—godly, consistent behavior in the face temptations, trials and injustice. This letter has been called “A Practical Guide to Christian Life and Conduct” (Jensen). Mark the following:

- He admonishes his readers to have the right, spiritual attitude toward temptations and trials (1:2–18).
- He exhorts them to receive and live out the truth with the proper attitude—Christian consistency (1:19–27).
- He writes against showing partiality towards the wealthy and neglecting the poor—true Christian equity (2:1–13).
- He demonstrates the deadness of a professed faith without the attendant works—true faith must be active (2:14–26).
- He warns his readers about the dangers and sins of the tongue (3:1–12).
- He discusses the nature of both false and true wisdom and their practical manifestations (3:13–18).
- In the strongest terms he rebukes his readers for their worldliness, antagonism and sinful pride, and yet encourages them to true godliness and humility (4:1–10).
- He admonishes his readers to be considerate of one another and warns against self-righteousness (4:11–12).
- He warns them of presumption and pride in relation to the future—the future is anticipated by faith and must be left to God's will (4:13–17).
- He paints an awful picture concerning the excesses and dishonesty of the wealthy (5:1–6).
- He encourages his readers to patience when facing the inequities of life and experience (5:7–12).
- By both encouragement and exhortation he commands a consistent Christian approach to suffering, trial and prayer, giving Elijah as a great practical example of effectual prayer (5:13–18).
- He reveals the importance of delivering a fellow professing believer and a true Christian brother (5:19–20).

Themes

The Christian Ethic

This epistle deals with a variety different subjects from a very practical or ethical perspective. Ethics may be defined as the moral principles which govern one's behavior and interaction at a practical level. The Christian's ethics must derive from the Word and Spirit of God. These are coalescent and non-contradictory. The Spirit of God never leads apart from or in contradiction to the Scriptures. Thus, the overall theme may well be the ethics of Christian experience. Note this epistle with the practical Christian ethic as its theme and manifest in its contents:

- The Christian Ethic in trials and temptations. Note how our ethic, if Christian and consistent, is to determine our attitude (1:2–18).
- The Christian Ethic and a Christian consistency from the Scriptures evidenced in attitude, approach and action (1:19–27).
- The Christian Ethic and favoritism among believers; treating the rich with courtesy and the poor with equity (2:1–13).
- The Christian Ethic and a faith which is revealed through good works. It is an empty or faulty ethic which fails to produce good works (2:14–26).
- The Christian Ethic and a sanctified tongue; grace transcends nature. Only God can control the tongue (3:1–12).
- The Christian Ethic and a consistent behavior which reveals the true inner person. The anatomy of true, godly wisdom (3:13–18).
- The Christian Ethic: spiritual fidelity and godly humility. Sin is spiritual adultery. Our spiritual health is to be gauged by faithfulness or unfaithfulness (4:1–10).
- The Christian Ethic and a contradictory, self-righteous attitude. There is no antinomian grace (4:11–12).
- The Christian Ethic: living by faith and not by presumption, as does the world. Tomorrow belongs to God. One may sin greatly by omission as well as commission (4:13–17).

- The Christian Ethic and social injustice. Grace engenders equity in our dealings and tempers prosperity (5:1–6).
- The Christian Ethic and the grace of patience under adversity. Even the greatest may be sorely afflicted and tried (5:7–12).
- The Christian Ethic and prevailing prayer. What Elijah was in himself and what he was in the context of Divine power and purpose (5:13–18).
- The Christian Ethic and our evangelistic obligations. The end of truth is its expression in the lives affected by it (5:19–20).

The Tests of Faith

Since faith is also referred to or implied throughout in its varied manifestation [a Christian ethic], we have the testings or proofs of true Christian faith on a practical, daily level. Consider the following:

- Faith tested by patience when facing the adversities of life—the attitude of faith (1:1–18).
- Faith tested by its attitude toward the Word of God—obedience and reflection (1:19–27).
- Faith tested by its reaction to social distinctions—a scriptural equity (2:1–13).
- Faith tested by its production of works—a living faith vs. a dead faith (2:14–26).
- Faith tested by its production of self-control—the power of the tongue and the nature of godly wisdom (3:1–18).
- Faith tested by its reactions to the world—godliness and social justice (4:1–5:12).
- Faith tested by its resort to prayer—prayer as faith in action—faith articulate (5:13–18).
- Faith tested by its evangelistic endeavors—compassion in action (5:19–20).

Excursus:

The “Problem of Evil”

1:13–16 deal with the source of evil, sin and temptation. God is not the author of sin. This introduces the so-called “Problem of

Evil.” The following is an introduction into this theological–philosophical issue, which is more of a “problem” for unbelievers who would find fault with God rather than themselves or their thought processes.

This “Problem” can be stated in the following terms: “How can evil exist in a universe created and governed by an all–powerful, benevolent [inherently and completely good] God?” This “problem” is more psychological than logical, theological or philosophical. Man would rather call God and his actions into question than submit himself to God in complete trust, even to a God who is benevolent in the context of his omnipotence and righteousness (Rom. 9:11–24).

This question is largely a matter of unbelief in the face of Scriptural testimony to the purpose and patience of God in the fulfillment of his eternal purpose. But it remains a question which is often asked as a rebuttal to believers in general, and to those who hold to biblical Divine sovereignty in particular.

The possible answers, according to human reasoning, are: first, if evil exists [and it does as a sad and awful reality], then there is no omnipotent [all–powerful], benevolent God—the argument of the atheist.

Second, evil exists and therefore, if God exists, he must be either limited in his power or arbitrary in his moral character—the argument of those who espouse a non–biblical [pagan] concept of God.

Third, evil exists, therefore there is more than one God or there are equal dualistic forces [good and evil] in conflict. This is the non–biblical [pagan] argument of those who would posit a dualism (a “good god” and “bad god” or opposing good and evil forces or principles) in conflict for control of the universe.

Fourth, evil does not exist, except as an illusion in our human thinking. This is the non–biblical view of some western cults and Eastern religions (e.g., Christian Science, Buddhism). This would make any ultimate distinction between good and evil arbitrary, and thus deny the moral self–consistency of the Divine character.

Fifth, evil exists as a mystery, independent of God, who remains to a given [limited] degree powerful and benevolent, necessarily operating in a utilitarian sense. This is the inconsistent argument of some (including Pelagians and Arminians) who attempt to deliver God from the charge of being the “author of sin” and so unscripturally limit his power in order to retain his goodness.

Finally, evil exists in the universe of an omnipotent, benevolent God, who is completely sovereign over it and uses it for his own glory and the highest good—the argument of the biblical Christian [consistent Calvinist].

This final assertion is the only view that can be consistently aligned to the teaching of Scripture (e.g., Gen. 50:20; Judg. 2:15; 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 2 Kgs. 22:16; Psalms 76:10; Isaiah 10:5–15; 45:7; Amos 3:6; Acts 4:27–28; Romans 8:28; 9:11–21). Every other view, deriving from sinful humanistic reasoning, and so calling God and his actions into question (Romans 9:19–21), seeks to point out an incoherence [inconsistency] in the Scriptures and the Christian system.

These views either deny God and his power over evil, or limit God and seek to bring him down to the finite level (Romans 1:21–25) and destroy his sovereignty and moral self-consistency—and thus any sufficient or consistent basis for Divine coherence.

The existence of evil in a universe created and governed by an all-powerful and benevolent God is not incoherent if God has a morally sufficient reason for this evil to exist. Such a view does not take all the mystery out of the problem of evil.

God is infinite, and so are his wisdom, power and purpose. We are finite, and simply cannot comprehend all that is implied in this profound issue. Why God, who is absolutely morally self-consistent, should ordain evil, must to a given degree remain a mystery to finite beings.

Further, when considering the problem of evil, one must take into account the reality of time. What might be considered as evil in the context of past or present reality may later prove to be

great blessing or to result in such (Gen. 42:36; 50:20; Acts 4:27–28; Rom. 8:28–31).

Finally, only if God is in absolute control of evil can he ordain it for good, and we can trust the purpose, prophecies and promises of his Word. Do we trust the purpose of God, although we may not understand it? Do we complain against his providence? Can we by faith grasp the truth of Rom. 8:28?¹⁰¹

Note: This excursus is only a bare introduction to the “Problem of Evil.” For a complete discussion, see the author’s pamphlet on this subject and the author’s *Selected Shorter Writings*, pp. 192–204. This issue has been considered at length in the survey of Job [*Survey of the Bible*, I, pp. 359–362] and briefly noted in the survey of Habakkuk [*Survey of the Bible*, II, pp. 317–318].

* * * * *

Style and Characteristics

The Greek of James is the highest grammatically and expressively in the New Testament, with the exception of the Epistle to the Hebrews.¹⁰² Several of the New Testament writers reveal a fairly high standard of Greek, such as the Apostle Peter.

The style of James is terse and authoritative. He writes with the intensity of strong religious and moral convictions.

A singular feature of his style is the use of *duadiplosis*¹⁰³ ...the linking together of clauses and sentences by the repetition of the leading word or some of its cognates...[e.g., see 1:2–6, 12–15, 21–25; 3:2–8].... The use of such a method by an ordinary writer would be fatally monotonous, but the vividness of his imagery and the force of his thoughts save him from this danger.¹⁰⁴

The style also varies with diatribe, irony, metaphor, simile and vividness. He launches into his subject immediately without

¹⁰¹ Extracted from the author’s *Catechism on Bible Doctrine*, Q. 27, pp. 66–67.

¹⁰² See D. A. Hayes, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, III, pp. 1563–1564.

¹⁰³ From the Gk. *δυαδιπλόσις*, See also *ἀναδιπλόσις*. A rhetorical device for reduplication of words or thoughts.

¹⁰⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Non-Pauline Epistles*, p. 56.

a lengthy introduction (1:1–2). His writing is filled with commands. There are fifty–nine imperative verbs out of the 108 verses in this short writing. The English and Greek may not agree with the number of imperatives...

Imperative or Command	Reference
Count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations	1:2
Let patience have her perfect work	1:4
Let him ask of God	1:5
Let him ask in faith	1:6
For let not that man think that he shall receive...	1:7
Let the brother of low degree rejoice...	1:9
Let no man say when he is tempted...	1:13
Do not err my beloved brethren	1:16
Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath	1:19 (3)
Lay apart all filthiness...	1:21
Receive with meekness the engrafted word	1:21
Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only	1:22
Have not the faith of our Lord...with respect of persons	2:1
Sit thou here in a good place...Stand thou there	2:3 (2)
Hearken my beloved brethren	2:5
Thou shalt love thy neighbor	2:8
Do not commit adultery... Do not kill...	2:11 (2)
So speak ye... So do...	2:12 (2)
Depart in peace... Be ye warmed and filled	2:16 (2)
Show me thy faith without thy works	2:18
Thou doest well	2:19
Be not many masters [teachers]	3:1
My brethren, these things ought not so to be	3:10
Let him show out of a good conversation [lifestyle]	3:13
Do not glory [boast]...Do not lie against the truth	3:14 (2)
Submit yourselves therefore unto God	4:7
Resist the devil and he will flee from you	4:7
Draw nigh to God...Cleanse your hands ye sinners	4:8 (2)
Purify your hearts ye double–minded	4:8
Be afflicted, and mourn and weep	4:9
Let your laughter be turned into mourning	4:9
Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord	4:10
Speak not evil one of another	4:11
Go to, now, ye that say...	4:13
Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl...	5:1 (2)
Be patient, therefore, brethren...	5:7
Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts	5:8 (2)

Grudge not against one another, brethren	5:9
Take, my brethren, the prophets...for an example	5:10
Swear not...let your yea by yea...	5:12 (2)
Let him pray...let him sing..	5:13 (2)
Let him call for the elders...let them pray...	5:14 (2)
Confess your faults...pray for one another...	5:16 (2)
Let him know...	5:20

The style of James is characterized by energy, vivacity and vividness of representation. He has no liking for mere abstractions, but throws everything into picturesque and dramatic forms....He wastes no words, and uses no circumlocution...in its rugged abruptness, in the pregnant brevity of its phrases, in the austerity of its demand upon the reader, in concentrated irony and scorn, this epistle stands alone among the writings of the New Testament.¹⁰⁵

James refers to nature repeatedly by way of illustration and comparison: waves, wind, grass, sun, heat, horses, fire, birds, serpents, fountain, sweet and bitter water, figs, olives, vines, vapor, gold, silver, rain, heaven, earth and fruit. He speaks of trials, testings, prayer, faith, social justice and Christian relationships.

He also writes of the common issues of life: looking into a mirror, the pleas of the destitute, giving to the poor, wealth and poverty,¹⁰⁶ the helm of a ship, the troublesome tongue, sowing and harvesting, taming animals, labor and wages, the evil of worldliness and the danger of judging others. James also refers to Old Testament characters to illustrate truth: Abraham, Isaac, Rahab, Job and Elijah. His style, subject matter and practicality have led one writer to call this epistle “The Proverbs of the New Testament.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, p. 294.

¹⁰⁶ James tackles the issues of the rich and poor twice in extended passages: 2:1–9; 5:1–6.

¹⁰⁷ C. W. Slemming, *The Bible Digest*, p. 830.

James graphically reveals his acquaintance with the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the Wisdom Literature,¹⁰⁸ the *Apocrypha*, and parallels to our Lord's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters five through seven.

Note: Both James and Jude had a thorough acquaintance with Jewish literature, including the *Apocrypha* and even the *Pseudopigraphica*, as has been previously noticed concerning Jude. Scroggie notes:

...there are...references or allusions to passages in all the Books of the Pentateuch, Joshua, 1 Kings, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and to no less than seven of the twelve minor prophets.

Scroggie then notes concerning the Apocrypha that there are from fifteen to thirty-two allusions to the Book of Ecclesiasticus and as many as twelve from the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon.¹⁰⁹

The following chart reveals the Old Testament allusions used by James.

James	Old Testament Allusions
1:10	Isa. 40:6
1:19	Prov. 17:27; Eccl. 5:2
2:1	Prov. 24:23
2:8	Lev. 19:18
2:11	Ex. 20:13–15; Deut. 5:17
2:21	Gen. 22:2, 9
2:23	Gen. 15:6
2:25	Josh. 2:1; 6:17, 23
3:9	Gen. 1:26
4:6	Prov. 3:34
5:4	Deut. 24:15, 17; Mal. 3:1
5:5	Jer. 12:3

¹⁰⁸ The Wisdom Literature includes Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. There are also elements in the Apocryphal Books, which are not reckoned in our Bible as inspired.

¹⁰⁹ Scroggie, *Op. cit.*, p. 297.

5:7	Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1
5:11	Job 1:21–22; 42:1–17
5:17–18	1 Kgs. 17:1; 18:41
5:20	Prov. 10:12 ¹¹⁰

The following chart, contained in several works, reveals the parallels between James and our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. James may have heard it personally as a yet unconverted person or was well-instructed by some who did.

Note: Both James and Peter echo much of our Lord's teaching in their epistles. See the notes on 1 Peter.

James	Matthew
1:2	5:10–12
1:4	5:48
1:5; 5:15	7:7–12
1:9	5:3
1:20	5:22
2:13	5:7; 6:14, 15
3:17–18	5:9
4:4	6:24
4:10	5:3–4
4:11	7:1–2
5:2	6:19
5:10	5:12
5:12	5:33–37

There are also parallels with the Epistle of 1 Peter, who seems to have been influenced by James' Epistle.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Adapted from Scroggie, *Loc. cit.*

¹¹¹ See p. 140 of this volume.

Theology

As has been previously noted, the Epistle of James is given to Christian ethics more than a direct approach to theology as found in the well-developed theology of the Apostle Paul. Nevertheless, ethics demand a basis in theology, and such is found throughout this writing.

Bibliology

Although this epistle concentrates on the practicality of the Christian life and experience, the Scriptures are presupposed as foundational. This writing is steeped in scriptural allusions. The Word or Scripture is directly referred to at least nine times (1:18, 21–25; 2:8–13, 23; 4:11; 5:13).

Theology Proper

Theology Proper is the study of God. James presupposes the reality of God throughout this epistle. God gives wisdom and answers the prayer of faith (1:5–6). He does not tempt to sin (1:13). He is immutable and unalterable light (1:17) and the God of saving power (1:18). He takes note of consistent religion (1:27). God evaluates men spiritually, not outwardly (2:5f).

He is one in essence (2:19). His righteous nature determines His relationship with men (4:4, 6–8). He recognizes and rewards true humility (4:10). God alone is the lawgiver (4:12). His will reigns supreme (4:13). He is the God of justice who hears the cries of the oppressed (5:4). God will judge in righteousness (5:7–9). He is a God of mercy (5:11). He is a prayer-answering God (5:14ff).

Christology

Christology is the doctrine of Christ. Our Lord is only spoken of directly twice (1:1; 2:1) and indirectly twice (5:7–8). If the term “Lord” refers to God the Son rather than the God the Father, then he may be referred to several other times (4:10, 15; 5:10–11, 14–15). Our Lord is not held up as our example, nor is the believer’s union with Christ or the redemptive work of the atonement stated, as would be true of Paul’s writings. The emphasis is upon ethics, and so upon God as the believer’s Heavenly Father and judge.

Pneumatology

Pneumatology is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There is no express reference to the person or work of the Holy Spirit, but it might be presupposed in relation to Christian experience, faith, faithfulness and prayer, all of which are impossible apart from the enabling ministry and grace of the Spirit.

Satanology

Satanology embraces the biblical teaching concerning the devil, demons and evil. There is a single reference directly concerning the devil (4:7), one about being “devilish” (3:15) and several to “evil” (1:13; 2:4; 3:8, 16; 4:11, 16). The devil is real, but must be resisted. Earthly wisdom, as contrasted with godly wisdom is “devilish.” Evil is a reality, but God never tempts one to evil; evil derives from one’s own lusts and results in sin and death. Evil may exist in one’s motives, thoughts, speech and actions.

Deontology

Deontology¹¹² is the doctrine of the Moral Law of God. In a very broad sense, descriptive of Christian ethics in terms of God’s law. James refers directly to God’s Law as the express command of God (1:25; 2:8–12; 4:11–12) and generally to the Word of God as the believer’s standard of conduct. He makes special reference to the “royal law” of loving one’s neighbor as one’s self (2:8–13).

Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is the doctrine of the church. The term “church” is mentioned but once (5:14). The term “synagogue” is also mentioned as “assembly” [συναγωγή] (2:2). In the first decade of Christianity, believers were comprised of converted Jews and Jewish proselytes. The interrelationship of believers, however, is implied, suitable to both synagogue and church.

¹¹² δέοντος, pres. ptc., fr. δεῖ, what is requisite, necessary, due or proper. In philosophy, used of moral obligation. Used to designate man’s obligation to the moral law of God. See P. B. Fitzwater, *Christian Theology*, pp. 348ff.

Anthropology

Anthropology is the doctrine of man. There is one reference to man as being made as the image-bearer of God to reveal the seriousness of cursing another human being (3:8–9). The sinfulness of human nature and the necessity of grace are presupposed throughout this writing.

Soteriology

Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation [σωτηρία]. This truth and reality are also presupposed throughout, with references to believers' faith, trials and temptations, and persecution or injustices by the unconverted rich. The emphasis, keeping with the theme of the Christian ethic, is the believer's behavior in the context of grace. There is one reference to regeneration or the "new birth" in its connection with the word of truth (1:18). The issue of justification is considered separately as an excursus.

Eschatology

Eschatology is the doctrine of final things. This reality largely shapes the message of James. Time itself is seen as culminating in a future day of judgment or reward (1:5–12). Death is viewed as the culmination of lust and sin (1:13–16). A future kingdom is assumed (2:2–5), as is a day of judgment (2:13). The brevity of life and the inevitability of death (4:14–15). Patience is commanded in view of the day of judgment (5:7–9).

Practical Theology

This is inclusive of the Christian ethic and the believer's behavior, which encompasses the entire epistle: faith and trials, faith expressed in consistent, godly living; warnings against favoritism, teaching on prayer, etc. See the section on the themes of this epistle.

Excursus: James and Paul on Justification and Works

One subject is of the greatest interest and importance—the teaching of James on justification and the alleged contradiction of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone. This one doctrine, more than any other, determined the delay in accepting this book into the New Testament canon.

The contrast between Paul and James concerning justification by faith is a major concern. Luther thought that James contradicted Paul, an anachronism, as James wrote before Paul's first epistle. Luther wrote that James was "a right strawy epistle" because it seemed to him to teach justification by works and denied justification by faith alone. A close study reveals that James and Paul are in agreement, that "justification is by faith alone, but by a faith that does not stand alone." A faith without corresponding works is a dead faith, not saving faith.

Mark the following comparison and contrast: It has been alleged that, while Paul teaches justification by faith alone, without works (Rom. 3:24–31; 4:1–8; Gal. 2:16), James teaches justification by faith and works (Jas. 2:14–26). An alleged contradiction has been perceived which has led to various errors concerning the nature of justification, even to the confusion of justification and sanctification.

This has resulted in the belief in an infused righteousness rather than an imputed righteousness. It must be remembered that the Bible as the inscripturated Word of God is necessarily coherent [does not contain any inherent contradictions—the analogy of faith]. Any seeming contradictions are the result of human misunderstanding and doctrinal prejudice.

Note: Justification is righteousness imputed; sanctification is righteousness imparted. The believing sinner is justified by faith, i.e., declared righteous before God through the imputation of Christ's righteousness reckoned to him.

Sanctification is righteousness imparted, and is inseparable from justification by virtue of the believer's union with Christ. Thus, justification and sanctification cannot be separated, i.e., one cannot simply be justified and yet remain unsanctified. Those who are justified are likewise sanctified.

Justification provides the basis for sanctification with saving faith in the former (Rom. 3:24ff; 4:4–12; 5:1–2) and the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit in the latter (Rom. 5:5; 8:13; 2 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 4:4–5; Eph. 1:13–14; Col. 3:5ff; 1 Pet. 1:14–16). To profess faith without corresponding works is to posit "a dead faith," a faith which is only professed, but not possessed.

The following contrasts and comparisons reveal the respective emphases of James and Paul, and their compatibility:

first, James wrote to Jewish Christians, some of whose profession of faith was contradicted by their conduct.

Paul wrote to Gentile believers who had fallen prey to the Judaizers who taught that one must become a Jew in order to become a Christian, i.e., sought to bring them under the bondage of the law (e.g., Acts 15:1). James was dealing primarily with faith; Paul primarily with justification. Thus, the subjects, the religio-cultural situations, the reasons for writing and the readers were diverse.

Second, James denounces a dead faith; Paul writes concerning the necessity of a living faith. James describes what a living faith is as evidenced in the life and experience—i.e., “works;” Paul writes concerning faith as the instrumental means in justification.

Third, James writes against antinomianism, which, while professing faith, lacks its necessary and proper fruit. Paul writes against legalism, which sought justification either through a works-righteousness [self-righteousness, law-keeping], or a combination of both faith and works.

Fourth, the concern of James was with faith and its manifestation by good works. The concern of Paul was with the instrumental means of justification, which is through faith alone. Good works are the evidences of our faith and of justification, but never their cause.

Fifth, the emphasis of James is that “we are saved by faith alone, but by a faith that does not stand alone.” The emphasis of Paul is that we are justified by faith alone. In other places Paul states that this faith is not alone, but “works by love,” i.e., evidences itself as a living faith (Gal. 5:6).

Both James and Paul decry a “dead” faith, and hold that true faith must evidence itself in good works (Jas. 2:14, 18, 26; Titus 3:8). James speaks of justifying our faith before men. Paul speaks of our justification before God by faith alone.

Sixth, both James and Paul point to Abraham as the great example of justification by faith, and by a faith that evidences itself in good works (Jas. 2:21–24; Rom. 4:1–3, 9–22).

The issue is the juxtaposition of two incidents in Abraham's life. Paul points to Gen. 15:6, which focuses on the faith of Abraham apart from any and all his subsequent works. James points to the act of faith in the offering up of Isaac, which occurred about twenty-five years later (Gen. 22). Thus Paul, using Abraham as an example, emphasizes justification by faith alone, and James, using Abraham as an example, emphasizes that justifying faith evidences itself in acts of faith, i.e., good works.

* * * * *

Excursus:

Prayer and Anointing with Oil

The reference of James to anointing with oil in connection with the prayer of faith (5:14–15) has caused consternation among some who would deny its validity today, and given undue license among others who claim that such an action guarantees healing, emphasizing the “prayer of faith” as absolute. Others have used this text to credential “faith healing services.” A brief exploration should prove helpful. The following observations are adapted from a booklet by the author.¹¹³

Two Texts

There are but two direct New Testament references to anointing with oil in the context of sickness:¹¹⁴

Mark 6:7–13. ⁷ And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; ⁸ And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse....¹² And they went out, and preached that men should repent.¹³ And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

James. 5:13–15. ¹³ Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him,

¹¹³ *Prayer and Anointing with Oil: An examination of James 5:13–15: A Biblical and Historical Study*. P.I.R.S. Publications, 2012. 25 pp.

¹¹⁴ There are references to anointing with oil as a rite of hospitality in that hot, dry climate (Lk. 7:44–46), an anointing recognizing royalty (Heb. 1:9), and pouring on oil in a medicinal procedure (Lk. 10:34).

anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

The first text, Mk. 6:7–13, was concerned with our Lord's commission to his disciples, and the anointing with oil was performed in the context of miraculous healing and the exorcism of demons. This was a unique instance and has little or no bearing upon the second text, Jas. 5:13–15, which is concerned with a sick church member in a private setting with the church's eldership.

It should be noted that we have no record that our Lord or any of the Apostles after our Lord's resurrection anointed the sick with oil. The whole passage implies a local church context and the eldership.

Basic Issues

If anyone is sick ["weak"] to the point of incapacitation [We might use the term "bed-ridden"], he is urged to call for the elders of the church [προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας]. The aor. imp. connotes a sense of urgency and determination. Their visitation, or response to this summons in the context of v. 14–15, would include some inquiry into the cause, nature and extent of the sickness, as the church is directly or indirectly involved.

It seems that the intercessory prayer and anointing with oil would largely depend upon the discernment and prerogative of the elders and the relation the individual had with the congregation.

Anointing with Oil not Limited to the Apostolic Era

There is nothing within the immediate and larger context which would limit such an action as prayer for the sick or anointing with oil to the charismatic era of Apostolic Christianity, i.e., in the era of the charismatic gifts [gifts of the Spirit peculiar to that age] practiced in the early churches. Indeed, the entire context and the calling for elders seem to preclude such a limitation of the time-frame.

Further, if such practices as praying and anointing with oil were only for the Apostolic Era and those with charismatic gifts, why call for the elders of the church? Why not call for those so gifted (1 Cor. 12:1–11, 28–31 esp. v. 9)? Would not calling for the elders as spiritual office-holders and leaders, still seem to set at naught the Spirit's diverse ministry through those who possessed the specific *charismata* [spiritual gifts] of healing?

Further, why limit the prayer and anointing to sickness? Why not the blind or crippled, the withered or maimed? It is presumed that the supernatural gift of healing would have effected cures among these also.

The Sick Person is to Summon the Elders

Summoning for the elders of the church [προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας] to the bedside of the incapacitated person would necessarily presuppose a felt need on the part of that individual, a subjective investigation as to the sickness itself, a prompting of the Holy Spirit and a desire to deal with the cause and nature of the incapacity, including the confession of sin, if necessary.

The elders did not attend to the sick person without being asked or summoned by that person. If any of these were lacking, the necessary biblical context for visitation, prayer and anointing with oil would be precluded.

The individual is to call the elders of the church to come to his or her bedside. For an incapacitated person to call for the elders of the church for prayer and anointing would presuppose that this individual had been prompted by the Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit to commit to such an action. All of this would presuppose a strongly felt need and would be indicative of a heart and mind submissive to the Scriptures and to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Every sickness has a spiritual and mental aspect, as well as a physical aspect.

Such a summons of the elders of the church would presuppose that the person's relation to the church [ἐκκλησία, assembly, congregation], both collectively and individually, was

scriptural and without offense. The context (vs. 13–18) implies that every aspect has been taken into consideration.

Such sickness may be providential chastisement which would bring the individual to the point of being willing to confess and make things right (1 Cor. 11:30–32; Heb. 12:4–14). This would also necessarily include any sin or offense against another church member or against the congregation as a whole.

There is no mention of the elders seeking out the sick to visit and pray for them and anoint them with oil. The entire context puts the prayer and anointing with oil in a private setting which has nothing in common with an alleged “healing service,” which would be public in nature. To apply this situation to a public forum would invalidate the biblical context.

The term for “anointing with oil” is *aleipho* [ἀλείφω], which denotes to “anoint, rub, daub, smear.” It is the usual or general term for anointing persons or things. The usual term for sacred and metaphorical anointing is *Chrio* [χρίω]. This has caused some to dismiss the idea of anointing with oil as a symbolic act of renewed consecration when done “in the name of the Lord” and in conjunction with specific prayer. Ἀλείφω is used for physical, literal anointing in the New Testament. It was necessary for James to use this term when referring to a literal anointing.

This Anointing not Medicinal

Taking the idea of “rubbing” or “daubing,” some refer this act to the use of medicine—the prayer dealing with the spiritual aspect and the oil dealing with the medicinal aspects of the sickness (see Lk. 10:34, where ἐπιχέων, pouring, is used).

Others vehemently disagree, holding that James would have told the sick to call for the doctor and not the elders.¹¹⁵ Even if the anointing with oil only pointed to the necessity of medical treatment, its use was still symbolic, and the question is only concerning its purpose, not its efficacy.

¹¹⁵ B. H. Carroll, *Interpretaton of the English Bible*, XIII, pp. 47–50; Robert Johnstone, *Lectures Exegetical and Practical on The Epistle of James*, pp. 402–404; Peter H. Davids, “The Epistle of James,” *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, pp. 193–194.

And would not the oil be placed upon the exact location of the sickness? If so, then some application might be indiscreet if the location would concern the more private locations of the body. Among those who would disagree concerning its medical properties, most consider the symbolism to be that of spiritual power, healing, recovery or focusing on the Divine presence, especially with the invocation of the Divine Name.

This Anointing not Sacramental

The anointing with oil in the context of prayer in the James passage would not have a sacramental sense, as the efficacy was in the intercessory petition, not the anointing. [Both the Romish and Greek Orthodox Churches have rites in which one is anointed with oil, but for sacramental¹¹⁶ purposes].

Indeed, it would work confusion to attribute a sacramental character rather than symbolic to the anointing with oil—an almost magical quality to a physical substance. The former was effectual; the latter was symbolic, and at most an act to bolster the faith of the elders and the incapacitated person. Could it not be in part an acknowledgement that all healing comes from God, that such healing derives from the work of the Holy Spirit and is subject to His prerogative?

This Anointing is Symbolic

It is not the anointing with oil, but the prayer of faith which saves or restores the sick person. The act of anointing is manifestly symbolic. The efficacy is in the prayers of the elders. The physical act of anointing is an act of faith supporting the prayer.

The Prayer of Faith: Presuppositions

The prayer of faith, i.e., prayer offered up in faith, is performed by the elders of the church. Supporting them in this act of faith is or ought to be a unified and praying church. The elders themselves have been solemnly prepared for this meeting and anointing. They come to the bedside of the incapacitated

¹¹⁶ Sacramental, i.e., conferring or imparting grace to the recipient. Thus, mystical or spiritually empowering.

individual in the fullness of faith to intercede and seek the recovery of the sick.

Historical Observations

Although most evangelicals today would discount the practice of anointing with oil when praying over or for the sick, it has been practiced up to the present among some groups, including among some Baptists. There are records of such prayers and anointings—and healings or restoration since the time of the Puritans. Most Puritans, with the Reformers, considered it an ancient practice for the Apostolic Era.

A few Puritans did, however, practice anointing coupled with prayer. This practice was also found among several groups of Baptists and has continued to this day. Those who practice such, do so because it was and is scriptural as an act of faith.

For further study: The booklet by the author contains a specific history of this biblical practice with reference to the General Baptists, Particular Baptists and even to the Reformed Baptists and others, with references. See: Daniel M. Doiani, *James: Reformed Expository Commentary Series*, pp. 189–204; Kees van Kralingen, “Anointing with Oil,” *Reformation Today*, Numb. 237, Sept.–Oct. 2010; Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, XI, pp. 458–462.

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Outline of James

It is ever advantageous to have a simple outline of a biblical book to keep the general theme in mind—if it encapsulates the essence of the given book. Even though James contains many subjects, a pattern is discernable:

With the theme of a living faith in its varied circumstances:

- Living Faith Tested by Trial (1:1–27)
- Living Faith Proved by Works (2:1–26)
- Living Faith Evidenced by Conduct (3:1–4:17)
- Living Faith Exercised by Opposition (5:1–20)¹¹⁷

A more extended, yet simple outline:

- The Believer and his Battles (1:1–16)
- The Believer and his Bible (1:17–27)

¹¹⁷ Adapted from M. C. Tenney, *Op.cit.*, p. 266.

The Believer and his Brethren	(2:1–13)
The Believer and his Beliefs	(2:14–26)
The Believer and his Behavior	(3:1–4:12)
The Believer and his Boasting	(4:13–5:6)
The Believer and his Burdens	(5:7–20) ¹¹⁸

James' Epistle may be outlined according to the testing of faith:

A) Faith Tested by Problems	(1:1–17)
B) Faith tested by the Word	(1:18–27)
A) Faith tested by Partiality	(2:1–13)
B) Faith tested by its Works	(2:14–26)
A) Faith tested by Personality	(3:1–18)
B) Faith tested by the World	(4:1–5:12)
A) Faith tested by Prayer	(5:13–20)

This writing may be analyzed according to the testing of faith as follows:

The Introduction	(1:1–18)
A. The Need for patience and wisdom	(1:2–8)
1. Our attitude in trials	(1:2)
2. Our discernment concerning trials	(1:3)
3. Our patience during trials	(1:3–4)
4. Our faith and need of wisdom in trials	(1:5–8)
B. The Poor and the Rich	(1:9–11)
1. The attitude of the poor	(1:9)
2. The attitude of the rich	(1:10–11)
C. The Origin and Result of Temptation	(1:12–16)
1. Blessing for enduring temptation	(1:12)
2. Temptation does not derive from God	(1:13)
3. Temptation derives from lust and results in sin and death	(1:14–16)
D. The Word as the Instrument of life	(1:17–18)
1. God is the giver of all good gifts	(1:17)
2. God is the giver of spiritual life	(1:18)
I. Faith Tested by its Attitude toward the Word of God	(1:19–27)
A. The Word is to be Heard and Obeyed	(1:19–25)
1. Our reaction to the Word of God	(1:19–20)
2. Our relation to the Word of God illustrated	(1:21–25)
B. The Word is to Issue Forth in True Religion	(1:26–27)
1. Vain religion and its cause	(1:26)
2. Pure religion and its evidence	(1:27)

¹¹⁸ Adapted from John Phillips, *Op. cit.*, pp. 266–267.

- II. Faith Tested by its Reaction to Social Distinctions (2:1–13)
 - A. Warning against Partial Judgment (2:1–4)
 - 1. Partiality forbidden (2:1)
 - 2. Partiality illustrated (2:2–4)
 - B. Divine and Human Judgment Contrasted (2:5–7)
 - 1. Financially poor; rich in faith (2:5)
 - 2. Financially rich; wicked in action (2:6–7)
 - C. The Law and True Judgment (2:8–13)
 - 1. The Royal Law kept (2:8)
 - 2. The Royal Law broken (2:9)
 - 3. The law and the principle of inclusiveness (2:10–11)
 - 4. Living in the context of God's law (2:12–13)
- III. Faith Tested by its Production of Works (2:14–26)
 - A. Faith without Works is Futile and Dead (v. 14–17)
 - 1. A dead faith described (2:14)
 - 2. A dead faith illustrated (2:15–17)
 - B. Creed and Conduct (2:18–20)
 - 1. True faith revealed through works (2:18)
 - 2. Derision concerning a dead faith (2:19–20)
 - C. Faith which Works is Illustrated (2:21–26)
 - 1. The example of Abraham (2:21–24)
 - 2. The example of Rahab (2:25)
 - 3. Faith without works—a dead faith (2:26)
- IV. Faith Tested by its Production of Self-Control (3:1–18)
 - A. The Need to Control the Tongue (3:1–6)
 - 1. The necessity of a controlled tongue (3:1–2)
 - 2. Illustrations of necessary control (3:3–4)
 - 3. The tongue little, its power great (3:5–6)
 - B. The Lack of Controlling the Tongue (3:7–12)
 - 1. The untamed tongue (3:7–8)
 - 2. The contradictory tongue (3:9–12)
 - C. The true Means of Controlling the Tongue (3:13–18)
 - 1. Wisdom and the control of the tongue (3:13)
 - 2. False wisdom and Sins of the tongue (3:14–16)
 - 3. Godly wisdom and its attributes (3:17–18)
- V. Faith Tested by its Reactions to the World (4:1–5:12)
 - A. The Seat and Remedy of Evil (4:4:1–12)
 - 1. The awful nature of worldliness (4:1–3)
 - 2. Spiritual adultery (4:4–5)
 - 3. Grace the gift of God to the humble (4:6)
 - 4. An exhortation to submit and resist (4:7)
 - 5. Stringent commands against evil speaking (4:8–12)
 - B. The Uncertainty and Discipline of Life (4:13–5:12)
 - 1. The sins of presumption and omission (4:13–15)

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| 2. A warning to the rich and their exploitation | (5:1–6) |
| 3. An encouragement to patience | (5:7–11) |
| 4. A warning against unlawful oaths | (5:12) |
| VI. Faith Tested by its Resort to Prayer | (5:13–20) |
| A. Discourse on Prayer | (5:13–18) |
| 1. An exhortation to prayer and praise | (5:13) |
| 2. Resorting to intercessory prayer in sickness | (5:14–15) |
| 3. Mutual confession and intercessory prayer | (5:16a) |
| 4. Effectual prayer illustrated by Elijah | (5:16b–18) |
| B. Discourse on Saving a Soul | (5:19–20) |
| 1. The restoration of a brother | (5:19) |
| 2. The conversion of a sinner | (5:20) |

Notes & Observations

- (1:1). James presents himself as a willing bond slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. No earthly ties are closer than spiritual relationships. This is true in principle of every believer, but often sadly neglected.
- (1:2–4). The reading is lit: “carefully weigh it out with unmixed joy!” we have much to experience and learn from our trials! Our attitude toward trials presupposes the sovereignty of God governing our situation—if we face these in faith and learn patience. Spiritual maturity often means a steep, rocky path.
- (1:5–8). Are we willing to pay the price for patience and wisdom? Unbelief haunts even the best of believers. Impatience and unbelief are the great enemies of prayer.
- (1:9–11). This life is temporary, and conditions may vary. Everything is subject to change except God and the Divine purpose. We must beware of the seduction of the world.
- (1:12). There are blessings in trials. These do not come upon us randomly, but in Divine providence and according to the Divine purpose.
- (1:13–16). The source of temptation for the believer is indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 7:17, 20). Remember, every sin has the smell of death about it!
- (1:17). The immutability of God is not a section in abstract theology, but an ever-living and vital truth. We must hang our every hope upon this sure peg.

8. (1:18). Salvation is ultimately determined by the free grace of God. Both the source and nature of salvation rests with him. Such is infallibly manifested in a true conversion, which by its very nature is life-transforming.
9. (1:19–20). Only grace can adequately govern the nature. True, saving grace becomes living grace, and such is ever sufficient grace.
10. (1:21–22). C. H. Spurgeon once preached upon this text and divided it into three parts: (1) Before the Sermon, (2) During the Sermon and (3) After the Sermon.
11. (1:23–25). A homely illustration with a definite spiritual application. May our lives mirror the clear teaching of the Scriptures!
12. (1:26–27). True religion is seen here in its practical manifestation. Right doctrine ought to lead to a consistent, beneficent life.
13. (2:1–7). Grace is gratuitous and impartial; the people of God should be also. This is one noticeable point where the world and the church must stand in sharp contrast.
14. (2:8–13). The Moral Law of God, i.e., the Ten Commandments, are a unity, and capable of infinite expansion in their application as case law. The summary of the “second table” of the Moral Law, to love our neighbor as ourselves (Lev. 19:18), is most inclusive the more we contemplate it. No one among fallen, sinful mankind keeps this commandment completely—yet we must strive to do so. The true Christian life is selfless in its actions if it is Scriptural in its principles.
15. (2:14–26). The summary thought is that faith without works is a dead faith in contrast to a biblical or living faith. Sadly, many “professing Christians” possess only a dead faith as they lack the works of a living faith. This is particularly true of those who have merely made a “religious decision” without the necessity of repentance or the witness of the Holy Spirit in dealing with the reigning power of sin (Cf. Rom. 6).
16. (2:19). Some have nothing more than a devils’ faith! And the demons figuratively get “goose bumps” or “their hair stands

on end”!¹¹⁹ This is contrasted with casual faith which causes no great fear or reverence.

17. (3:1–2). A warning to religious teachers [διδάσκαλοι, hence “didactic”] to be consistent and not stumble [πταίομεν] or cause others to do so.¹²⁰ The teacher must be a mature¹²¹ believer, whose lip and life correspond.
18. (3:3–12). A discourse on the “Troublesome Tongue.” It has been said that God gave us two hands and two feet, two eyes and two ears—but only one tongue. Nothing reveals a person’s true nature as much as his speech. It is a window into his soul—the exhalation of his soul. What he speaks and how he speaks reveals the inner man.
19. (3:9). Man was created as the image-bearer of God, i.e., in His image and likeness. Some can destroy their neighbor with one word and then pray to God as though eminently spiritual. God necessarily takes note of such contradiction.
20. (3:13–18). A searching, vivid contrast between true and false wisdom. This is a warning against pride and self-righteousness. Behind an evil tongue and its venom is a distorted personality and graceless spirit. How easy it is to fall into base envy and strife!
21. (4:1–3). James’ second diatribe against the awful reality of lust (Cf. 1:13–16). This time it is directed against faulty praying. Motive in prayer is essential to answered prayer.
In the Model Prayer (Matt. 6:9–13) we are to be taken up with God’s Name, Kingdom and Will before we even consider our own necessities! Prayer filled with self is a selfish prayer. In many unanswered prayers we find the taint of selfishness which has caused us to pray amiss.

¹¹⁹ φρίσσουν, to shudder, lit: “to be rough, bristle, stand up.” The imagery, though demons are spiritual beings, is graphic: demons get goose bumps or their hair stands up with fear.

¹²⁰ πταίω, “to stumble or cause to stumble or fall.”

¹²¹ τέλειος, “perfect” does not mean ‘perfection,’ but completeness or maturity, being a mature, i.e., consistent person.

22. (4:4–10). Many who would blush at the very thought of sexual adultery may often be guilty of spiritual adultery! The friendship of the world may be a great and deciding force in the life of the believer. It may enable us to categorize sin and minimize it in our own thinking. James put the initiation on us, not on God.
23. (4:7). Submit, Resist, Flee—what forceful terms. First, we must submit ourselves to God. This is primary. Then, we are to resist the devil—and he will flee from us. Faith is strengthened by submission, and God’s grace is effectual in causing the devil to flee.
24. (4:11–12). Since the Fall, fallen, sinful man has demonstrated a “god-complex.” He naturally believes himself to be better than others. Religiously this manifests itself as self-righteousness. May we never assume to usurp God’s prerogative as Judge!
25. (4:13–17). Man either lives by presumption or by faith. The unsaved live by presumption and lay out their purposes and plans; this must not characterize the godly. Faith in God acknowledges God and his will in all things. “If the Lord will...” ought to be our characteristic.
26. (4:17). James is as penetrating as ever—he deals with sins of omission as well as sins of commission. We may well be guilty of the former more than the latter.
27. (5:1–6). A broad condemnation of the rich, saved or unsaved. Wealth often changes a person or determines his or her character, purposes and attitude toward life in general—and inevitably one’s attitude and behavior toward others. The power of grace to humble is greater than the power of wealth to corrupt. The wealthy believer must never behave as the rich unbeliever.
28. (5:7–11). An exhortation and encouragement to be patient. This is James’ second time to deal with this subject (Cf. 1:2–4). First in trials, and now in relationships. The Lord is not slow, neither is he hurried in his purpose. The examples of the prophets and of Job are held before us. What may seem to be

crushing trials and awful and unjust treatment and disappointment now may result in blessing and recompense.

29. (5:12). A parallel to our Lord's teaching in Matt. 5:34–37. There is here a subtle inference to the troublesome tongue, that unruly member which at times of unrestraint, articulates our unbelief, distrust and failure of faith. Our hearts may cause our lips to sin.

30. (5:13–16). A series of commands in our relation to other believers, to afflictions, rejoicing, sickness and intercessory prayer. These all presuppose the context of a church where the Word of God is to govern all relationships and every circumstance.

31. (5:13). Afflictions and rejoicing—two extremes of God's people. The answer to one is prayer and to the other, the singing of Psalms. Singing should have its proper place in the believer's life (Psa. 100:2; Eph. 5:18–20; Col. 3:16–17), not merely in the worship service, but personally, privately, even in prayer and in times of joy or sorrow.

True, biblical Christianity is a singing religion, which marks us out as unique among the religions of the world. We sing in times of joy, in times of sorrow, in times of trial and in times of private and public worship. Biblical truth and realities set to music are a blessed form of worship!

32. (5:14–15). Intercessory prayer for the sick is characteristic of evangelical Christianity. Those who are sick should be encouraged to call for the spiritual leadership to intercede for them.

The prayer of faith: true, persevering, fervent prayer is faith articulate. It reveals our faith possibly more than anything else!

33. (5:16a). What a humbling act—to confess our faults to one another! This presupposes great humility and godly understanding and sympathy on both sides.

34. (5:16b–18). Elijah's prayer for rain is one of the high points of effectual prayer in the Old Testament. Despite his weaknesses, he was a man of prayer—and his prayers were

answered in an awesome manner. His fervency and perseverance must be noted.

If studied carefully, and compared with 1 Kgs. 17:1ff; 18:1; Lk. 4:25 and Jas. 5:17–18, it must be noted that Elijah had been praying long [at least 6 months] before he presented himself before Ahab, praying that it would *not* rain! Then he prayed three years later on Mount Carmel and it began to rain once more. Yes, the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much!

35. (5:19–20). Whether seeking to restore a sinning brother or seeking the conversion of an unconverted person, it is a spiritual work of great magnitude. Our lives must be lived out to a given degree in the lives of others, their concerns our concerns, their welfare our motivation, and above all else the glory of God as the *summum bonum*, or highest good.

The Epistle of 1 Peter

Introduction

This relatively short epistle of 105 verses and 34 imperatives¹²² resembles James in its vehement style and breadth of subjects, and its series of admonitions and encouragements. The general scope of subjects is revealed in the following outline of the epistle:

Introduction	(1:1–2)
1) The Realities and Nature of Salvation	(1:3–9)
2) The Realities and Nature of Scripture	(1:10–12)
3) The Realities and Necessity of Sanctification	(1:13–25)
4) The Realities and Necessity for Separation	(2:1–12)
5) The Realities and Necessity for Submission	(2:13–3:13)
6) The Realities and Necessity of Suffering	(3:14–4:19)
7) The Realities and Nature of Shepherding	(5:1–7)
8) The Realities and Nature of Satan	(5:8–11)
Conclusion	(5:12–14)

Written toward the end of Peter's life and ministry, it betrays none of the inconsistencies which were demonstrated in his earlier years, such as his occasional impetuosity and weakness. Yet it reveals his passion and zeal, which had remained unabated. It also reveals a godly, scriptural maturity and sanctified boldness. It has been said that "no epistle has caught so much of the spirit of Jesus."

B. C. Caffin summarizes this letter to suffering believers in a comprehensive statement:

...this epistle....is characterized by a depth of conviction, a vivid realization of the spiritual blessings, the living hope, the abiding joy, which spring from a true faith in Christ; by a firm grasp of the necessity of reality in the Christian life, of resolute self-denial and patient obedience; by a deep and true sympathy with suffering Christians; by a steadfast faith in the Lord's atonement and the power and preciousness of his example; by an earnest presentation of the duties of humility, brotherly love, endurance, trustfulness, perseverance; by a calm and holy wisdom, worthy of the first of the Apostles...¹²³

¹²² For the chart listing the 34 imperatives, see pp. 145–146.

¹²³ B. C. Caffin, *The Pulpit Commentary*, XXII, p. i.

Authorship Biographical¹²⁴

The author is the Apostle Peter, the foremost among our Lord's original Disciples. Peter was the son of Jonas ["dove"]. "Simon" [Σίμων] derives from "Simeon" [Heb: שִׁמְעוֹן, "heard"] Our Lord named him "Peter," [Gk: Πέτρος] or "Cephas" [Aram: קִפְאָס], "rock, stone, pebble," prophetic of his later life and ministry with its stability.

He, with his brother, Andrew, and James and John the sons of Zebedee, was a fisherman and part of their fishing partnership on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. He evidently left his share of the business with his family and even his own wife when he became a Disciple. After Our Lord's resurrection, he evidently took his wife with him on at least some of his missionary journeys (1 Cor. 9:5).¹²⁵

By nature, he was transparent, bold (Matt. 14:25–32),¹²⁶ impetuous (e.g., Jn. 13:4–10), at times very courageous to the point of irrationality;¹²⁷ at other times he proved cowardly (Jn. 18:16–27). He was usually the first to speak out, was vehement in repentance (Matt. 26:69–75; Lk. 22:31–34, 54–62), and manifested a great devotion to our Lord (Matt. 16:13–23).¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Some of this material has been abbreviated from the biographical sketch of Peter in this *Survey of the Bible*, III, pp. 196–198.

¹²⁵ ...ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα περιάγειν ὥς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι...καὶ Κηφᾶς; The language implies that some of the Apostles in their later ministry took their wives with them.

¹²⁶ Matt. 14:28, the Eng. "Bid me" seems weak. The word was a vehement "command" or "order me!..." [κέλευσόν με, aor. imp.].

¹²⁷ At the end of the Garden agony, Judas came with a small Roman army of 480 men [a Roman cohort (σπεῖρα), comprised of a commanding officer, 6 centurions, each with 80 men], besides the Temple guard. Peter immediately drew a sword and sought to defend our Lord to the death, cutting off the ear of Malchus, which our Lord healed (Jn. 18:3–12).

¹²⁸ It is noteworthy that Satan seduced Peter at the height of his fervent concern for his Lord.

There are many more references to Simon Peter in the Gospels than any other Disciple: over 113 references in the Gospel records, and over 160 in the New Testament. He was the natural leader among the Disciples and often their spokesman.¹²⁹

Peter, together with James and John, formed the inner circle of our Lord's Disciples. They alone were with him on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–9; Mk. 9:1–9; Lk. 9:28–36), at the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5:36–43; Lk. 8:49–56), and closest to him during his garden agony (Mk. 14:32–35).

After our Lord's resurrection and ascension, he was the foremost among the believers at Jerusalem in the earliest years, and the inspired, powerful¹³⁰ preacher on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–40). He would later share in the leadership of the Jerusalem Church with James. He traveled throughout Palestine (Acts 9:32–12:25) and was later in "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13). Tradition has him crucified at Rome toward the end of the Neronian persecution (c. 67–68), upside down, holding that he was not worthy to be crucified head up as was our Lord (Jn. 21:18–19).

Authenticity¹³¹

This epistle had an early and full acceptance among the Apostolic and ancient churches, and was numbered with the *Homologomena* [ὁμολεγούμενα], or accepted books. Internal evidence includes the salutation (1 Pet. 1:1) and the undesigned coincidences between this epistle and Peter's discourses in Acts:

¹²⁹ Peter's name always occurs first in the four lists of the Disciples.

¹³⁰ Note the two occurrences of ἀποφθέγγεσθαι in v. 4 ["utterance"] and 14 ["said"], and occurring only once more in the New Testament (Acts 26:25, ["speak"]). It denotes a powerful, inspired, prophetic, authoritative declaration.

¹³¹ Authenticity is concerned with authority deriving from the correct authorship; genuineness with the state of the writing being uncorrupted from the original. See Walter W. Wessel, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 80.

1 Peter	Acts
1:17	10:34
1:21	2:32–36
1:21	10:40–41
2:7–8	4:10–11
2:17	10:28
3:18	3:14

External evidence: The Petrine authorship was accepted throughout primitive Christianity. There are possible allusions in Clement of Rome (d. 99), Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–108), the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 70–132), and definite references in Irenaeus (c. 130–202), Basilides (c. 120–140), Hermas (c. 150), Polycarp (c. 69–155), Papias (c. 60–163) Origen (c 184–253), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) and Tertullian (c. 160–240). This epistle was contained in the Old Syriac (2nd century), Latin (3rd century) and Egyptian [Coptic, 3rd century] Versions as Petrine.

Questions and Objections

The high quality of Greek have caused some to question Peter's authorship. However, it has been proven that the Jews were bilingual and the General Epistles reveal a command of the language. Further, Silvanus¹³² or Marcus¹³³ was probably Peter's amanuensis (1 Pet. 5:12–13).

Note: Concerning Peter's use of the Greek: all quotations are from the LXX, which was the common version even among the Jews in the Apostolic Era. An examination of his sermons (e.g., Acts 2:14–40; 10:25–43) and writings reveal an adequate grasp of the language, with varied grammatical constructions and fluid expressions of thought. The single longest Greek word in the New Testament is found in Acts 10:41, προκεχειροτονημένοις, "chosen before"—containing twenty letters.

Various objections to Petrine authorship have been raised since the nineteenth century from radical biblical criticism. Two

¹³² 1 Pet. 5:12. The same person known as "Silas" [the shortened form] in Acts (15:32, 34, 40; 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14–15; 18:5).

¹³³ Marcus the same person as John Mark.

may be considered: first, the references to persecution cause some to posit the time of writing in the early second century, during the reigns of Nerva (96–98), Trajan (98–117) or Hadrian (117–138). However, the first Roman persecution under Nero (c. 63–68) fits the occasion. Second, the unity of the epistle has been questioned because of seeming conclusions at 4:11 and 5:10–11. It may be answered that other epistles have such conclusions or doxologies within them, e.g., Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 15:33; 16:20, 24.

Peter and Paul

There is a general parallel which exists between these two Apostles in their ministries. The Book of Acts, as has been noted, can be divided into two parts according to the ministries and prominence of these two Apostles: Peter (Chapters 1–12) and Paul (Chapters 13–28). Baxter¹³⁴ has an interesting parallel of the two Apostles:

Peter	Paul
First recorded Sermon (2:14–40)	First recorded Sermon (13:15–41)
Lame Man Healed (3:1–8)	Lame Man Healed (14:8–10)
Simon the Sorcerer (8:10–13, 18–24)	Elymas the Sorcerer (13:6–11)
Healing influence of a shadow (5:12–16)	Healing influence of a handkerchief (19:11–12)
Laying on of Hands (8:14–17)	Laying on of Hands (19:1–7)
Peter Worshipped (10:24–26)	Paul Worshipped (14:11–18)

¹³⁴ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, VI, p. 12. Copied from this *Survey of the Bible*, III, p. 256.

Tabitha Raised from the Dead (9:36–42)	Eutychus Raised from the Dead (20:7–12)
Peter Imprisoned (12:3–10)	Paul Imprisoned (24:27ff; 28:30–31)

The contents of this epistle and that of the second [2 Peter 3:15–16] reveal that Peter was familiar with Paul’s writings, and held them to be inspired Scripture.

Provenance

The place of writing is given as “Babylon” (1 Pet. 5:13). This may refer to a military outpost in Egypt, to the Mesopotamian province, which had the largest Jewish population outside of Palestine, or symbolically to Rome (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Some ancients thought it symbolically referred to Jerusalem.¹³⁵ The mention of the “seven mountains” (Rev. 17:9) may refer to the seven hills on which Rome is situated.

Those who hold that “Babylon” is to be taken literally seek to void the idea that Peter was in Rome for twenty-five years; the Romish Church claiming him as the first “Pope.” Paul wrote to the Roman Christians in 58 AD, and never mentioned Peter (Rom. 16:3–16), voiding any idea that Peter was there and in leadership. Further, it is questionable that Peter used the term “Babylon” symbolically.¹³⁶

Another argument is that Mark [Marcus] was with Peter (1 Pet. 5:13), and was in Rome with Paul (2 Tim. 4:11). However, Mark was probably with Timothy in Asia Minor, not in Rome when Paul wrote toward the very end of his life.

¹³⁵ Cf. Rev.11:8. Jerusalem was symbolically called several names for its sinfulness and rebellion.

¹³⁶ For an extended discussion, see this *Survey of the Bible*, IV, p. 241.

The location of these believers in northern Asia Minor would coincide somewhat with Peter's location, if "Babylon" referred to the literal province in the Middle East.

Thus, the alternatives are essentially two: either literal Babylon or Rome. The context of 1 Pet. 5:13 does not lend itself to symbolism, but to a literal interpretation. Finally, "Babylon" was not used of Rome until the end of the first century some thirty-five years later in the Book of Revelation.

Recipients and Date

Although there is a distinct Jewish and Old Testament form to this epistle [Proportionately, more Old Testament references and allusions than any other New Testament book], the recipients were both Jewish and Gentile Christians. The readers were the "elect strangers" [ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις]¹³⁷ of the Dispersion [διασπορᾶς]¹³⁸ (1:1). Yet there are references which would fit only Gentile believers (1:14; 2:9–10; 3:6; 4:1–4).

The various cities mentioned were spread north of Cilicia and the Taurus Mountains and across Asia Minor and to the East. Much of this area had been evangelized by Paul either on his third (Acts 19:10, 26) or fourth missionary journey after his first Roman imprisonment.¹³⁹ However, his fourth and final missionary journey would be after Peter's first epistle.

The date of Peter's first epistle is probably about 64 AD, at the beginning of the Neronian persecution (c. 64–68).¹⁴⁰

Purposes

As with the Epistle of James, the purposes are manifold: (1) the relation of trials and suffering to the purpose of God in salvation (1:1–12). (2) To admonish believers to live holy, godly lives, and grow spiritually for a witness and testimony to the world (1:13–2:12). (3) To exhort believers to submit to lawful

¹³⁷ The Gk. text of 1:1. "Elect" is to be construed with "strangers."

¹³⁸ διασπορᾶς may refer to the Dispersion or simply to those dispersed throughout Asia Minor as spiritual pilgrims or strangers.

¹³⁹ See this *Survey of the Bible*, IV, pp.207–208.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 209–210.

civil authorities (2:13–17). (4) To exhort the submission of servants¹⁴¹ to their masters (2:18–25). (5) To encourage believing wives to be in submission to unbelieving husbands (3:1–6). (6) To instruct believing husbands to properly live with and understand their wives (3:7–8). (7) To encourage believers to understand and have the proper attitude in suffering (3:9–4:19). (8) To give guidelines to the eldership (5:1–4). (9) To exhort believers to humility (5:5–7). (10) To warn believers of the great threat of the devil (5:8–9). (11) To encourage believers in the grace of God through suffering (5:10–11).

Note: A few scholars and historians hold that this epistle was a baptismal sermon (3:18–22), which would explain the instructions to believers concerning the Christian life and its faithfulness and consistency, even in the face of suffering. The proof of a baptismal sermon, however, is rather weak.

Theme: Suffering

The overall theme is suffering, which is the key-word, occurring sixteen times (1:11; 2:19, 20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:1, 13, 15, 16, 19; 5:1, 10). Note that our Lord is to be our great example in suffering (2:20ff; 3:17–18), and suffering is to be expected in our Christian experience (2:18ff; 3:14–18; 4:15–19).

The Neronian persecution (c. 64–68) was the first state and general persecution of Christians. Christianity was declared a *religio illicita*, or illegal religion.¹⁴² Nero set fire to Rome to rebuild and rename it after himself as “Neropolis,” the City of Nero. Close to two-thirds of the city were devastated. He blamed the Christians. Persecution spread to the provinces. Some leaders, as Paul and Peter, were evidently brought to Rome and executed. Peter was crucified; Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded.¹⁴³

This theme of suffering forms the central thrust of each chapter:

Suffering and the Saint (Chapter 1)

¹⁴¹ οἰκέται, household servants.

¹⁴² In the first decades of Christianity, it was considered a form of Judaism and so was protected as a *religio licita*.

¹⁴³ See this *Survey of the Bible*, IV, pp. 209–211.

Suffering and	Subjection	(Chapter 2)
Suffering and	Sanctification	(Chapter 3)
Suffering and the	Savior	(Chapter 4)
Suffering and	Satan	(Chapter 5)

The subject of suffering is given a broad coverage in this epistle. Mark that the Christian's reaction to suffering is opposite that of the world of unbelievers; faith, steadfastness and perseverance are marks of grace.

The Suffering of the Christian	The Response of the Christian
Suffering various present trials and testings 1:6–7	We are exhorted to understand that these are temporary; we are to live in anticipation of future glory. 1:7–25
Suffering for a godly lifestyle through misunderstanding 2:7–12	Maintain a consistent, godly lifestyle. 2:7–12
Suffering deservedly and wrongfully 2:18–20	A Christ-like patience, even under wrongful suffering 2:19–25
Suffering for righteousness' sake 3:8–9, 17	Refrain from vindictiveness; seek peace and follow the example of Christ 3:8–18
Suffering for a temperate lifestyle 4:1–5	Remain temperate; the reward is great. 4:1–11
Fiery Trials and reproach 4:12, 14	Face such awful trials by glorifying God with rejoicing by faith in future glory 4:12–19
Suffering from Satanic attack 5:7–9	Resist in the faith by the enabling grace of God. 5:7–10

Faith, Hope and Love

Peter begins his letter on high spiritual and moral ground for the believer. An expectant Hope (1:3–4), an experiential Faith (1:5–7) and an expressive Love (1:8–9) are to characterize the Christian. These are necessary as Christians face persecution, are to live in harmony, submit to all legitimate authority, and live in anticipation of future glory.

1 Peter and other Biblical Writings

The Old Testament references and allusions permeate this epistle, and would necessitate a study in themselves. There are eight references, but numerous allusions, e.g., the Passover (1:19), a chosen race and royal priesthood (2:9), Abraham, Sarah (3:6) and Noah (3:20).

1 Peter	Old Testament
2:6–8	Isa. 8:14–15; 28:16; Psa. 118:22
2:22–25	Isa. 53
3:10–12	Psa. 34:12–16 ¹⁴⁴

The following parallels are from the New Testament: James, Romans and Ephesians:

1 Peter	James
1:6–7	1:1–3
1:24	1:10
4:8	5:20
5:5–9	4:6–10

1 Peter	Romans
1:1	12:4–7
1:17	13:1–7
2:6–10	9:25–32
2:11	7:23
2:13	13:1–4
2:24	6:11
3:9	16:17
4:1	6:6
4:10–11	12:6–7

1 Peter	Ephesians
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¹⁴⁴ Psalm 34 is alluded to throughout the epistle.

1:1	1:4–7
1:3	1:3
1:14	2:8
1:20	1:4
2:2–6	2:18–22
2:18	6:5
3:1	5:22
3:22	1:20
5:5	5:21

Two Difficult Passages

1 Peter 3:18–22 is considered one of the most problematic passages in the New Testament. The terminology used may have more than one meaning: e.g., “preached,” “spirits,” “prison,” “saved by water,” “baptism doth also now save us,” etc. This passage has led some to believe in a “second chance” of salvation after death, or a universalism which would include the salvation of fallen angels, etc.

There are four main views of this passage:¹⁴⁵

Interpretation	Meaning of “Spirits”	Meaning of “in the Spirit”	Purpose
Harrowing of Hell	Humans	Christ before his resurrection	Releasing OT Believers
Sinful Antediluvians	Humans	Christ before his resurrection	To give a “second chance” to the wicked
Fallen Angels	Fallen Angels	Christ after the resurrection	Announcing Christ’s victory
Augustinian View	Humans	The Holy Spirit in Noah’s preaching	The wicked in Noah’s day

¹⁴⁵ Chart adapted and modified from Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 3–20, as given and modified from Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Cradle, The Cross and the Crown*, p. 852.

One of the most widely held views is that our Lord through his Spirit preached through Noah to those who were alive in his day and are now in hades [“prison”]. Noah and his family were saved “through water,”¹⁴⁶ i.e., the flood in God’s judgment upon the antediluvian world. Baptism figuratively portrays the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. The resurrection and ascension of our Lord promises victory to those who suffer now.

Note: If, as some would assert, our Lord proclaimed his victory to the demonic spirits in hell who were active in Noah’s day but are now in the abyss, the essential meaning is the same—our Lord’s death and resurrection are the great proclamation of his victory over the powers of darkness and sin. And this is Peter’s main thought—encouragement of final victory to those now suffering.

The second passage, often associated with the first, is 4:6. The verb “preached” [εὐηγγελίσθη, “evangelized”] is different from 3:19 [ἐκήρυξεν], which simply means “to declare, publish.” The context (4:1–7) seems to imply that the gospel was preached unto people who had died by the time Peter wrote his epistle. God will be the judge of both those who had died and those who were still living.

Note: Peter is careful to state that baptism does not cleanse the body or the soul. Baptism is at once an act of obedience, identification and submission. It is an act of obedience to God and His Word (See Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:41). As such, it is “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet. 3:20–21). It is an act of identification in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ [immersion into water and emergence from water] (Rom. 6:3–5). As such, it focuses upon his saving work and efficacious blood and so is a symbolic cleansing from sin (See Acts 22:16). It is an act of submission to the “Name” of the Lord Jesus, i.e., a public acknowledgment of his Lordship over the life (Acts 2:38).

Theology

Note: Christian Theology has five branches: (1) Exegetical Theology: doctrine which derives from the text itself, and is concerned with exegesis and hermeneutics or interpretation. (2)

¹⁴⁶ δι’ ὕδατος, “through water,” not “by [means of] water.” There is no reference here to either baptismal regeneration or the notion that baptism is essential to salvation.

Biblical Theology: biblical doctrine in its progressive development from Genesis to Revelation. (3) Historical Theology: the development of doctrine from the close of the scriptural canon to the present—often a study of creeds, confessions, councils and controversies. (4) Systematic Theology: the systematic approach to all doctrines, attempting a coherent [non-contradictory] system of doctrine. (5) Practical Theology, which is concerned with such issues as evangelism and Christian experience.¹⁴⁷

This epistle is very broad in its doctrinal subjects, from the nature and character of God, the redemptive work and example of our Lord, to the hope of future glory and suffering in the Christian experience.

Theology Proper

The theology of Peter is Trinitarian (1:1–2). God is our spiritual Father (1:3). Because God is sovereign, we are to have great confidence in him (4:19). We are further to reflect his moral character in our lives (1:15–16).¹⁴⁸ The Divine nature and purpose are the grounds for holy living (1:3–9, 15–16). God is merciful (1:3), holy (1:15–16), accessible (1:17; 3:18), righteous (2:23), longsuffering (3:20) and faithful (4:19). He has worked out his eternal redemptive purpose in and through the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2–3, 13, 19; 2:5, 21–25; 3:18–21; 4:1,11; 5:10).

Christology

This epistle is filled with references to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see Divine foreordination in the incarnation of our Lord in the eternal, redemptive purpose (1:17–23). We mark his sinless nature and life (1:19), his suffering and death (2:24), his ascension and reign in glory (3:22) and his second coming (1:7, 13; 4:13; 5:1, 4). The Lord Jesus is our great example in both serving and suffering as Christians (2:20–25; 3:14–18). Note the following:

- Christ our Example in Character enduring Falsehood (2:19–24)
- Christ our Example in Courage overcoming Fear (3:13–18)
- Christ our Example in Confidence revealing the Future (4:1–2, 13; 5:1)

¹⁴⁷ The basic study with its various subjects may be found in the author's *Theological Propaedeutic*, or general introduction to and survey of Christian Theology.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Rom. 8:29.

Pneumatology

The person and work of the Holy Spirit are closely aligned to the redemptive work of our Lord (1:11).¹⁴⁹ He sanctifies the elect (1:11). He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (1:11). He is active in gospel preaching (1:12). He was active in the resurrection of our Lord (3:18), and as the Spirit of glory he rests upon suffering believers (4:14).

Angelology

Angelic beings are mentioned twice in this epistle (1:12; 3:22). The first mention reveals angels desiring to fathom the eternal redemptive purpose in its progressive manifestation. The second is concerned with our Lord's exaltation over angels and all other powers.

Demonology is a subject considered under Angelology. The devil is mentioned once (5:8–9), not in his usual deceptive methods or disguise, but as a roaring lion! He is to be resisted in the faith.

Hamartiology

Sin is noted twice (2:22; 4:1). The first implies the impeccability or sinless of our Lord in nature and action. The second reveals the disciplinary effect of suffering as Divine chastening—a break with sin.

Soteriology

Four aspects of salvation are mentioned. 4:18 notes that if the righteous are barely saved with much difficulty, it must be much worse for the ungodly. The main concern of this epistle is the atonement or redemptive work of our Lord—his redemptive suffering as the sacrifice for sinners (1:2, 18–20; 2:20–24; 3:18ff; 4:1). The third aspect is concerned with the believer's standing in grace and its nature (1:15–16; 2:9). The final concern is the eschatological aspect of our future and complete salvation (1:3–5, 8–9; 4:13; 5:1).

¹⁴⁹ See Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19.

Ecclesiology

The church is possibly mentioned in an ideal sense in 2:5. It is noted clearly in 4:17 in the abstract. The term “church” in 5:13 is italicized and does not occur in any Greek text or the Latin; it may be implied. Church relationships are implied in the references to the elders (5:1–5) and to the interrelationships of believers (1:22; 2:1–2, 17; 3:1–9; 4:7–11).

Eschatology

This entire epistle has an eschatological emphasis which includes repeated references to the return of our Lord in glory and his exaltation (1:3, 21; 3:21–22; 4:13; 5:1, 10–11), and the glorious hope and anticipation of the believer’s full and final salvation (1:3–9, 13; 4:7, 13; 5:4, 10–11). Believers are to live and be sustained, even in suffering persecution, by the example of our Lord and the glorious anticipation of his return in glory.

Christian Experience

Christian experience is grounded in the Divine purpose (1:2–4; 2:11–16). With its service and suffering (2:13–24; 3:14–17; 4:1–2, 12–19), its trials and testings (1:6–9; 2:19–24; 4:12–13), and its moral, ethical and doctrinal demands (1:13–16; 2:1–5, 9–12; 3:8–13; 4:3–11; 5:5–7), Christian experience is meant to conform believers to the Lord Jesus Christ as their great example and Lord (2:21–24). We are to persevere, sustained by the certain anticipation of our final salvation (1:17–23).

Believers are generally considered in their individual lives and also in their interrelationships with other believers. The practical admonitions and encouragements were necessary as the Neronian persecution (c. 64–68) was in its early stages.

The Imperatives

The thirty-four imperatives are spread throughout this epistle and introduce each subject. Some references are paraphrased. The imperatives are taken from the Greek, and some from the English; there are grammatical differences as to number:

The Imperative or Command	Reference
Be sober... Hope to the end for... grace	1:13 (2)
Be holy in all manner of lifestyle	1:15
Pass the time... here in fear	1:17
Love one another... fervently	1:22
Desire the sincere milk of the Word	2:2
Be subject to every ordinance of man	2:13
Honor all men	2:17
Love the Brotherhood... fear God...	2:17 (2)
Honor the king	2:17
Servants be in subjection to your masters	2:18
Wives be in subjection to your own husbands	3:1
Husbands dwell with your wives according to knowledge	3:7
Be ye all of one mind	3:8
Be not afraid of their terror	3:14
Neither be ye troubled	3:14
Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts	3:15
Arm yourselves to suffer	4:1
Be of a sound mind... Be ye therefore sober...	4:7 (2)
Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial	4:12
Rejoice as partakers of Christ's sufferings	4:13
Let none of you suffer... as an evil doer...	4:15
Let him not be ashamed... Let him glorify God	4:16 (2)
Let them that suffer commit their souls to Him	4:19
Feed the flock of God which is among you	5:2
Be subject unto the elders	5:5
Gird yourselves with humility	5:5
Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God	5:6
Be sober [re your adversary the devil]	5:8
Be vigilant [re your adversary the devil]	5:8
Whom resist, steadfast in the faith ¹⁵⁰	5:9

Husbands and Wives

Peter gives instructions for wives with unconverted husbands (3:1–2), and for believing wives and husbands in general (3:3–7). The issue in v. 1–2 is that believing wives with unbelieving husbands are to be in submission to their spouses and lead a

¹⁵⁰ Chart adapted and modified from Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, pp. 352–353.

blameless lifestyle so as not to give their husbands an occasion to find fault. Note carefully that “without the word” should be translated “without a word,”¹⁵¹ i.e., the wives must not nag the husbands concerning spiritual matters. The life, not the language, is to be effectual.

3:3–6 refers to believing wives in general. It is the inner person, not the outer which is commended.

Note: The reference to Sarah calling Abraham “Lord” is interesting and noteworthy. The entire incident is found in Gen. 18:1–15. The immediate context is Sarah’s unbelief, laugh and crude remark to herself concern her inability to have a child and Abraham’s impotence (18:11–15). Yet Sarah calling Abraham her “lord” is taken out of its context and made a positive statement of honoring her husband and his headship.

3:7 then deals with the husband. The statement may possibly be in the form of a linguistic *chiasmus*,¹⁵² a figure in which the first and third clauses and second and fourth clauses are joined: A chiastic reading:

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, as unto the weaker vessel, giving honor unto the wife, as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

The husband is to understand that his wife¹⁵³ in her femininity is the weaker vessel and treat her accordingly. He must get to know her as a woman with what this entails. He is to honor her as a spiritual partner and equal before God as a believer, that his prayers be not hindered. Husbands and wives are “one flesh” before God and are not meant to function separately as to their spiritual standing or in their prayers.

¹⁵¹ ἄνευ λόγου, “without a word,” anarthrous, i.e., without the def. article., referring to talk, not to the Word of God.

¹⁵² *Chiasmus*, or cross, a common Semitic idiom.

¹⁵³ τῇ γυναικείῳ, lit: the feminine one, i.e., emphasizing her femininity. The husband must understand her as being feminine, with what this implies in her nature, cares, dress, looks and needs.

Outline of 1 Peter

This epistle lends itself to an analysis pertaining to the Christian life and experience in three major areas. A closely organized, general development might be:

Salutation	(1:1)
The Destiny of the Christian	(1:2–2:10)
The Duty of the Christian	(2:11–3:12)
The Discipline of the Christian	(3:13–5:11)
Conclusion	(5:12–14)

An alternative outline, expressed in general terms, with our Lord as our hope and example in the midst of trial and suffering:¹⁵⁴

Introduction	(1:1–2)
The Living Hope—and What Goes with It	(1:3–2:10)
The Pilgrim Life—and How to Live It	(2:11–4:11)
The “Fiery Trial”—and How to Bear It	(4:4:12–5:11)
Conclusion	(5:12–14)

Analysis

Taking the major subjects of the believers’ lives, their great salvation, their relationship to the world and each other, and their anticipation of the finality of their salvation, mark the following analysis:

Introduction	(1:1–2)
A. The Recipients throughout Asia Minor	(1:1)
B. The Trinitarian Salutation	(1:2)
I. The Calling of the Christian: Salvation	(1:3–2:10)
A. The Doctrine Expounded	(1:3–12)
1. This salvation described	(1:3–5)
2. This salvation experienced	(1:6–9)
3. This salvation revealed	(1:10–12)
B. The Duty Enjoined	(1:13–25)
1. The exhortation for a living hope	(1:13)
2. The exhortation for a holy life	(1:14–16)
3. The exhortation for a reverent life	(1:17–21)
4. The exhortation for a loving life	(1:22–25)
C. The Design Exhibited	(2:1–10)
1. An encouragement for spiritual growth	(2:1–3)

¹⁵⁴ Adapted from J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, VI, p. 303.

2. An encouragement to holiness	(2:4–10)
II. The Character of the Christian: Submission	(2:11–3:12)
A. Submission to God and Separation	(2:11–12)
1. The godly Pilgrim	(2:11)
2. The godly Lifestyle	(2:12)
B. Submission to Civil Relations	(2:13–17)
1. Submission to the State	(2:13–14)
2. Submission: Reason and Motivation	(2:15–16)
3. Submission: Its Scope	(2:17)
C. Submission in Social Relations	(2:18–25)
1. Servants and Masters	(2:18)
2. Reason for submissive Suffering	(2:19–20)
3. Christ our great Example in Suffering	(2:21–25)
D. Submission in Domestic Relations	(3:1–7)
1. The Submission of the Wife	(3:1–6)
2. The Obligation of the Husband	(3:7)
III. The Conflict of the Christian: Suffering	(3:13–5:14)
A. Discipline in the World	(3:13–4:6)
1. The blessedness of Christian Suffering	(3:13–14)
2. The Reaction of Christian Suffering	(3:15–17)
3. Christ our great Example in Suffering	(3:18–22)
4. Our Attitude in Suffering as a Christian	(4:1–2)
5. Past Sinfulness and Present Godliness	(4:3–5)
6. Motivation from Future Judgment	(4:6)
B. Discipline in the Church	(4:7–5:7)
1. Present Conduct in view of future Judgment	(4:7)
2. Behavior in Church Relationships	(4:8–9)
3. Communal Conduct: Gifts and Graces	(4:10–11)
4. The Necessity of Steadfastness in Suffering	(4:12–14)
5. Refrain from Criminal and Sinful Suffering	(4:15)
6. The Suffering approved by God	(4:16)
7. The Judgment of God and Suffering	(4:17–18)
8. Suffering and the Faithfulness of God	(4:19)
9. The Duties and Motives of the Eldership	(5:1–2)
10. The Elders to be Examples to the Church	(5:3)
11. The Future Reward of the Elders	(5:4)
12. An Appeal for humility among the Congregation	(5:5–6)
13. An Appeal for trusting God	(5:7)
C. Discipline in the Spiritual Realm	(5:8–11)
1. An Appeal for vigilance concerning the Devil	(5:8–9)

2. A Final Encouragement for Those who Suffer	(5:10)
2. The Closing Doxology	(5:11)
Conclusion	(5:12–14)
A. The Testimony of Silvanus, the Amanuensis of Peter concerning the Grace of God	(5:12)
B. Concluding Greetings and Benediction	(5:13–14)

Notes and Observations

- (1:1–2). The recipients of this epistle were those believers, both Jewish and Gentile, in the upper and eastern part of Asia Minor. If Peter wrote from Babylon to the east, then he would probably have made contact with most of these in his travels.
The term “elect” in v. 2 in the Gk. is in v. 1, “elect strangers” (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις). Note how Peter speaks inclusively, bringing all of salvation together here, in a Trinitarian formula.
- (1:3–5). The resurrection of our Lord is much more than a historical fact to be believed. It is basic to our sanctification and hope of eternal glory. We shall be with him and see him as he is (Lk. 20:36; Jn. 11:25; Rom. 1:1–4; 4:24–25; 6:5–14; Phil. 3:10–11; 1 Jn. 3:2–3). We are to be motivated by this “living hope.”
- (1:6–9). Note that “gold” and “it” are neut; faith is fem. It is not our faith which is tried by fire, but gold [χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς]—although in 4:12 we read of the “fiery trial.” Our faith will be tried or put to the test in the providence of God to prove it as genuine. This is the key to Christian suffering! Mark that the eschatological emphasis of this epistle is woven throughout, as here, in the anticipation of being glorified with the resurrected and glorified Christ.
- (1: 10–12). A reference to the progressive nature of Divine revelation from the Old Testament prophets to the New Testament historical reality. Consider such passages as Isa. 53.
- (1:13–14). An exhortation and encouragement to gear up for the coming persecution. The Neronian persecution (c. 64–68) began at Rome and spread throughout the Provinces. Leaders

such as Peter and Paul would be brought to Rome to be judged.

6. (1: 15–16). An exhortation to holiness. Note the terminology: biblical holiness is to reflect, to be conformed to the moral character of God (Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26). See also Rom. 8:29. Note the wording “...so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” in the Gk.: καὶ αὐτοὶ ἅγιοι ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ γενήθητε, “...and holy in every aspect of your lifestyle, become ye!” This implies a strong emphasis for progression in holiness.
7. (1:17–21). The greatness and glory of our salvation must motivate us to live holy lives. We are to consider the eternal purpose of the Lord God who delivered His Son for our redemption! Here, again, the resurrection of our Lord becomes a determining factor and reality. Peter usually gives a historico–theological context to his encouragements and admonitions.
8. (1:22–25). True, transparent Christian love is the universal badge of believers (Jn. 13:34–35). The truth endures when all else passes away.
9. (2:1–3). Christian experience, knowledge and true spirituality are progressive in nature (2 Pet. 3:18). Note that such progression is both negative and positive. “Taste excites the appetite” (Bengel).
10. (2:4–8). Our Lord is the “living stone,” We are “living stones.” “He is the chief corner stone.” We are a spiritual house, as it were. Mark the centrality of Christ—everything revolves around him!
11. (2:9–10). Our true identity and our identity in this world are to be distinct and determinative. “a peculiar people” [λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν] suggests God’s prized possession or property.

Note: The term “peculiar” derives from the Latin *pecus*, “cow.” In ancient times, something was “worth many cows,” such as a young man might give for his bride. The idea is that of being a prized possession or precious to its owner.

- v. 10 may have special reference to Gentile believers, who have been brought into covenant relationship with God through the Lord Jesus (Rom. 8:14–17; Gal. 3:13–18, 28–29).
12. (2:11–12). The believer is a foreigner here. Heaven is his homeland. The Christian life is not one of indulgence, but of circumspection. Lusts war against the soul! Honesty is a true Christian virtue. The life speaks louder than words. The unregenerate have no moral standard with which to judge God's people. Good works are often disdained by those who cannot face the truth.
 13. (2:13–16). Believers must support law and order (Rom. 13:1–7). These early Christians were unjustly considered troublemakers of the state. Their lawful behavior would silence their detractors and oppressors. The supreme reason, however—it is the will of God!
 14. (2:17). Honor to whom honor is due, including the rulers. Often bad government is better than no government. Love other believers. Sad that such must be commanded!
 15. (2:18–20). Household servants (οἰκέται), not necessarily slaves (δούλοι). One's testimony often stands or falls with his work. Godly patience is called for whether suffering justly or unjustly.
 16. (2:21–24). The Lord Jesus is ever our Great Example in living, sacrificing, toiling, praying and suffering. The very name "Christian" (Χρίσττιανος) is reflected in this! (Acts 11:26).¹⁵⁵ His suffering was vicarious; ours may be testimonial.
 17. (2:25). The Lord Jesus is our Shepherd (Psa. 23:1–6) and the Bishop [overseer] of our souls. What a blessed relationship! The body may and will perish, but the soul lives on. The glory of the resurrection will complete our salvation (Rom. 8:15–23).

¹⁵⁵ For a description of the name "Christian," see the quotation by Farrar, *Survey of the Bible*, IV, p. 90.

18. (3:1–2). The testimony of the wife before her unconverted husband—in-home evangelism. A godly wife may be a powerful testimony.
19. (3:3–6). The godly behavior and submission of the wife implies both enabling and sustaining grace in the personality. See previous notes concerning Sarah calling Abraham her “lord.”
20. (3:7). See previous notes. Husbands must understand their wives as women, just as a wife must understand her husband as a man. For Christian couples, this implies grace and patience in both personalities! “That your prayers not be hindered” reveals that the importance God places on the marriage relationship!
21. (3:8–12). This close, loving, compassionate [sympathetic], tender relation presupposes a church setting. How often believers fail in this! Failure here may reveal the great hindrance in answers to prayer!
22. (3:13–18). Suffering for righteousness’ sake may become the source for a good testimony. “Answer” [ἀπολογία] is an “apology,” or a reasoned defense. When we sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, we have power and influence in evangelism. Once again, our Lord is our great Example!
23. (3:19–22). Refer to previous notes.
24. (4:1–2). Closely connected to 3:18–22. Self-denial and the mortification of sin (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5ff) must be characteristic of our lives.
25. (4:3–5). The life of the believer is to remain distinct from that of the unbeliever. Grace, by its very nature is both spiritually and morally transforming (See 1:15–16; 2:9).
26. (4:7). Prayer is the primary mark of grace (Acts 9:11). It is also the highest mark of grace and the greatest duty. We are never more truly spiritual than in private, fervent prayer (Jas. 5:16b).
27. (4:7–11). An urgent call to: personal holiness (v. 7), brotherly love (v. 8–9) and definite service (v. 10–11).

28. (4:12–13). Suffering purifies faith and glorifies God, who is the giver of all grace. Suffering grace testifies to the truth and reality of Christianity. He who has saved us may also call us to follow him in suffering.
29. (4:14–16). There are two types of suffering: just and unjust. The criminal suffers justly; the believer, unjustly. He who suffers unjustly credentials his faith.
30. (4:12–19). An outline of this section:
- An Experience of Suffering (v. 12)
 - An Explanation of Suffering (v. 14–16)
 - An Encouragement in Suffering (v. 12–16)
 - An Expectation from Suffering (v. 13, 17)
 - An Examination about Suffering (v. 15, 17, 18)
 - An Exhortation in Suffering (v. 19)
31. (5:1–4). Herein is a personal appeal (v. 1), genuine motives (v. 2–3) and a glorious prospect (v. 4). Note that Peter does not place himself above other pastors, but addresses them as equals in Divine service. The command to “feed” [ποιμάνετε] means to pastor or shepherd the flock of God, and implies leading, providing and protecting.
32. (5:5–7). Humility, like love, is the band or sash which ties and holds all together and in place (Col. 3:14, σύνδεσμος). Note the word “cares” in v.7 [πάσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν], “anxieties.” Cf. Phil. 4:6–7, where the same word is used.
33. (5:8–9). Note: The earnest call (v. 8a), the solemn reason (v. 8b), the urgent duty (v. 9a) and the helpful reminder (v. 9b). This seems not to denote the devil in his wiles [τὰς μεθοδείας], but in the fierceness of his onslaught with boldness. He must be resisted with all effort and grace!
34. (5:10–11). The closing encouragement and doxology. Suffering, though horrible, is for the moment; glory is forever!
35. (5:12–14). Peter’s amanuensis identifies himself as Silvanus. The place of writing, Babylon. Peter’s companion, John Mark or Marcus. John Mark had now matured and was an encouragement, not a discouragement.

The Epistle of 2 Peter

Introduction

The Epistle of 2 Peter remains the most controversial book in the New Testament. The reasons vary and some are longstanding. Countless pages have been written in various critical works. An extended discussion is beyond the scope of this Bible Survey. A short survey of the issues:

2 Peter, with the Epistles of 2 and 3 John and Jude were listed with the *Antilegomena*¹⁵⁶ [ἀντιλεγόμενα, “spoken against”], or disputed writings, as they were written late in the first century and probably not well-circulated due to this time of persecution.

Due to changes in style from 1 Peter, the lack of external evidence, and its relation to the Book of Jude, many skeptics hold that 2 Peter was a pseudonymous work of the early second century—a forgery in Peter’s name to give it authenticity long after Peter had been martyred.

External evidence: although there are possible allusions among a few early Church Fathers, this epistle was not directly mentioned until Origen (c. 253) and not directly quoted until Methodius, Bishop of Lycia (d. 311). The book was not formerly accepted into the canon until the Councils of Laodicea (363), Hippo (393), and Carthage (397), although it had acceptance in various churches before that time.

The relationship of 2 Peter to Jude: Many believe that the writer, whether Peter or someone else, copied from Jude and not the reverse. This issue derives from the nature of the two books and the fuller development of Jude over 2 Peter, which seems to be summary in form. This question is academic, as the order of the books in the canon is not chronological.

These issues may be dealt with briefly in this survey.

¹⁵⁶ The *Antilegomena* [ἀντιλεγόμενα, “spoken against,” or disputed] consisted of seven books: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. The seven disputed books were generally accepted before the end of the second century.

Authorship of 2 Peter

Internal evidence for the Petrine authorship of this second Epistle is more than sufficient. The author identifies himself immediately (1:1) as “Simon Peter, a servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ.” His Apostleship is mentioned twice (1:1; 3:2). He reveals his imminent death [ἐξοδος] as foretold by the Savior (1:13–15). It is important to note that this was before John’s Gospel record had been written (Jn. 21:15–19) (c. 90–98).

Peter refers to hearing the very voice of God from heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–9). He further writes that this was his second epistle to them (3:1). He also acknowledges his close friendship with the Apostle Paul, whose writings he held as Scripture (3:15–16). Further, there is a correspondence in vocabulary between this Epistle and the sermons and speeches of Peter in Acts, and some terms in common with 1 Peter.

Note: Both 2 Timothy and 2 Peter were written by Apostles whose martyrdom was imminent (2 Tim. 4:6–7; 2 Pet. 1:13–15). Both warn of apostates within Christian churches (2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17–18; 3:1–9, 13; 4:3–4, 10, 14–15; 2 Pet. 2:1–22; 3:3ff), and both exhort their recipient[s] to godliness, faithfulness and steadfastness (2 Tim. 1:6–14; 2:1–2:10–16, 19–26; 3:14–17; 4:1–2, 5; 2 Pet. 1:5–11; 3:1–2, 8–9, 11–15, 17–18).

External evidence of Petrine authorship is less than any other book in the New Testament canon. One valid reason may be the shortness of 2 Peter and the shortness of the Johannine Epistles and Jude as to their being quoted.

Another reason could well be the tumultuous times in which 2 Peter was written and afterward. The Neronian persecution (c. 64–68) was followed by spasmodic Roman persecutions under Domitian (81–96), Trajan (98–117), Marcus Aurelius (161–180) and Decius (250–251). During some, and especially during the Decian persecution, many Christians were martyred and all Christian writings which could be discovered were ordered destroyed. This could well account for later Christian writings, such as the Epistle of 2 Peter and those Epistles of John and Jude to be hidden and not widely circulated. Most of Paul’s Epistles had been widely distributed before the Neronian persecution.

The change of style between 1 and 2 Peter is understandable. In the first letter, Peter had an amanuensis, Silvanus; in the second, he either used another amanuensis or probably penned the letter himself—his final “testament” or dying words and counsel to fellow-believers. The circumstances were also different. The first Epistle was written by an apostolic missionary in the midst of his labors; this Epistle was written from a dank, dark dungeon by an old man anticipating his imminent martyrdom.

The Provenance, Recipients and Date

The traditional place of writing was Rome, as Christian leaders, such as Paul, were arrested and brought to Rome for a final trial before Nero. Peter was doubtless imprisoned under deplorable conditions as a ringleader of the Christian sect, as was Paul.

Note: Paul, who was in a Roman prison, does not mention Peter in 2 Timothy. Peter had either already been martyred, or was not yet in Rome, as both would have probably been incarcerated in the lower dungeon of the Mamertine prison prior to their trials.

This Epistle does not point to a given locality as to its recipients, except that Peter’s second Epistle was sent to them, implying that they were the recipients of his first letter (3:1). It is addressed to believers in general, without specifying the exact locality (1:1). The salutation implies it was written without distinction to both Jewish and Gentile believers.

The date was necessarily just prior to Peter’s martyrdom (c. 65–67). Nero died by assisted suicide on June 6 of 68 AD. Most assume that Peter died shortly before the Apostle Paul.

The Occasion and Purpose

False teachers were beginning to rise within the churches, causing doctrinal departures and bringing in doctrinal heresies and lawless, immoral practices. Peter’s answer to these false teachers, their doctrines and practices, was three-fold: first, to encourage believers to grow in grace, i.e., in the cultivation of the spiritual life. Doctrine and practice are inseparable. Second, to warn against these false teachers with their heresies and sinful practices. Third, to emphasize the believer’s hope in the Lord’s

return and the end of the world in judgment. These major realities coincide with the three chapters divisions in our English Bible. See the outline of 2 Peter.

Who were these False Teachers?

Only one comment is made as to the doctrine of these heretics—their denial of the Lord they professed to own (2:1). This departure was evidently to both our Lord's person and his redemptive work. The remainder of the chapter is given to a vivid and denunciatory description of their behavior, their effect upon other professing believers and their ultimate end. One can easily see the fatal effect of being defective in the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in either his person or his work! The general tendency, because of a lack of sound doctrine and the depraved nature of unregenerate man, is antinomian.

The Key-Word: Knowledge

The key-term of this Epistle is “knowledge,” which occurs sixteen times and is the translation of several cognate Gk. terms (1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 20; 2:9, 20, 21 [twice]; 3:3, 17, 18).

Note: The term οἶδα, or εἶδω, denoting perceptive knowledge, occurs 3 times (1:12, 14; 2:9). The term γινῶσις, intelligence, understanding, emphasizing experience or experimental knowledge occurs 6 times (1:5, 6, 16, 20; 3:3, 18). Πρόγινωσις, to know beforehand, occurs once (3:17). The term ἐπίγινωσις, emphasizing full or complete knowledge, occurs 6 times (1:2, 3, 8; 2:20, 21 [twice]).

The False Teachers: Gnostics

Peter contrasts the certain knowledge of Divine realities with the alleged “knowledge” [γινῶσις] claimed by these false teachers. This emphasis on the believer's true, biblical, doctrinal and experiential knowledge as contrasted with that of these false teachers has led most to identify these false teachers as early Gnostics.

Gnosticism was a Greek syncretic philosophical system that gained entrance into Christianity in the latter part of the first

century in several forms.¹⁵⁷ The Apostle Paul evidently wrote against an incipient form of this early heresy in the Epistle to the Colossians. Both 2 Peter and Jude were concerned with early forms, as was the Apostle John in both his Gospel and his Epistles.

Note: The Gospel of John 1:1–18 is, in part, a statement against Cerinthian Gnosticism, which denied the Deity of our Lord. In John's Epistles, he warns against Docetic Gnosticism, which denied our Lord's true humanity (1 Jn. 1:1–4; 4:2–3; 2 Jn. 1:7). There are also repeated references contrasting a converted lifestyle with those who walk in darkness and do not practice righteousness.

The references in chapter two to their being given to pleasure and wantonness have caused some to attribute this to Epicureanism, but Gnosticism held to various forms of antinomianism, immorality and a denial of biblical truths. This philosophical–theosophical system would become the greatest internal challenge to Christianity for the first three centuries, according to church historians. With “knowledge” as the key–word, this Epistle is, again, three–fold in its approach. See the outline of 2 Peter.

The character and actions of these false teachers are worthy of note. Every age has had its false religious professors and has suffered from their teachings and behavior. At times some of these teachings or characteristics have been retained in Christianity in a modified form.¹⁵⁸ Religious tradition can be a very dangerous influence! Mark the following:

- They denied the Lord that bought them (2:1). This must refer to their defective, empty profession of faith, not their actual redemption.

¹⁵⁷ See this *Survey of the Bible*, III, pp. 118–125 for a full discussion of Gnosticism, its various forms and its effect upon early Christianity. Some forms, though modified, are with us even today!

¹⁵⁸ The modern ideas of “easy–believeism” and the “carnal Christian” who lives in sin and in a state of spiritual death—a denial of converting grace—may be an example. See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, VII, p. 70

- They would draw followers after them who would scandalize Christianity (2:2). Error and heresy usually find a hearing due to the ignorance and unregenerate state of mere professors.
- They would prove covetous and false in order to take advantage of true believers (2:3). Religious liars are often believed, sadly!
- They lead sinful and immoral, lawless lives and mock Divine things (2:10). Making light of religious realities is the first step in apostasy.
- They profess to be knowledgeable, but are brutish in spiritual matters (2:12). The danger of an undue emphasis upon experience and a corresponding lack of biblical doctrine.
- They are a blot on true religion and antinomian in their behavior (2:13). Man by nature is an antinomian; mere religious professors are both graceless and often very gullible.
- They are openly immoral and their behavior seduces the weak (2:14)—a travesty of “Christian liberty.”
- They are blatant hypocrites who seduce through the lusts of the flesh (2:17–18). They teach, but do not practice.
- They are deceitful concerning the power of reigning sin under which they live (2:19). God saves a person from himself and from the reigning power of sin, as well as sin’s ultimate consequences.
- They have denied their religious profession and have become more wicked than the ungodly (2:20–22). Apostates are more frequent than may be supposed.

The Two Petrine Epistles

The differences of style and circumstances of these two Epistles have been discussed previously. A comparison may be advantageous. Both reveal Peter’s vehement style. The first was written to suffering Christians to encourage them in a time of trial, evidently at the very beginning of the Neronian persecution. The second contains his final words to those same believers who were about to or beginning to experience false teachers and apostates within the churches. This distinction and summary may be outlined as:

1 Peter: Key: “Affliction”— An Encouragement in Persecution.

2 Peter: Key: “Apostasy”— An Exhortation to Persevere.

Some main thoughts in contrast between the two Epistles:

1 Peter	2 Peter
Consolation	Warning
Hope in facing trials	Full Knowledge to face error
An emphasis on Christian suffering from those without	An emphasis on apostasy from within the churches
The sufferings of Christ	The glory to follow
The redemptive title: Christ	The redemptive title: Lord
An encouragement to persevere amid undeserved persecution	An appeal for doctrinal and practical steadfastness against heresies
Instructions concerning external enemies	Instructions concerning internal enemies
Seeks to instill hope in a time of suffering	Seeks to encourage with the anticipation of the ultimate future.

Now, Parallels between the Two Epistles:

1 Peter	Commonality	2 Peter
1:10–12	Inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures	1:19–21
1:2	The doctrine of election	1:10
1:23	Regeneration: New Birth	1:4
2:11–12	Necessity for holiness	1:5–9
3:19	Fallen Angels in prison	2:4
3:20	The protection of Noah and his family through the Flood	2:5
4:2–4	Riotous living, immorality and Divine judgment	2:10–22

4:7–11	Exhortations to Christian living	3:14–18
4:11	A Doxology in the context of practical Christianity	3:18

2 Peter and Jude

It is evident that Jude or Peter copied much from the other. It is possible that Peter summarized in 2:1–3:3 what Jude had written earlier, or that Jude, under Divine inspiration, enlarged and added to what Peter had written. A deciding issue would be that who and what Peter warned about as either imminent or just commencing, Jude described as already existing and progressing in the churches. Other wording seems to substantiate this (Jude 17–19).

A brief chart comparing 2 Peter and Jude by verse or reference:

2 Peter	Jude		2 Peter	Jude
2:1	v. 4		2:15	v. 11
2:4	v. 6		2:17	v. 12–13
2:6	v. 7		2:18	v. 16
2:10	v. 8		3:2	v. 17
2:12	v. 10		3:3	v. 18
2:13	v. 12			

Mark the following comparison of thoughts and words between 2 Peter 2:1–3:3 and the Epistle of Jude, v. 4–18:

2 Peter	Jude
2:1 Heretics bring in heresies secretly	v. 4 Heretics enter in secretly
2:1 Denying the Lord	v. 4 Denying the Lord God
2:2 The way of truth maligned	v. 4 Pervert the grace of God
2:2 Licentious ways	v. 4 Licentiousness

2:3 Judgment pronounced long ago	v. 4 Long ago ordained to judgment
2:4 Fallen angels chained in darkness	v. 6 Fallen angels chained in darkness
2:6 Sodom and Gomorrah an example of Divine judgment	v. 7 Sodom and Gomorrah the cities an example of Divine judgment
2:10 Depraved lusts	v. 7 Unnatural lusts
2:10 Presumptuous, self-willed, brash	v. 8 Defile the flesh, despise dominion, brash
2:11 Angels do not bring accusations	v. 9 The archangel did not bring accusation
2:12 Slander in their ignorance	v. 10. Slander in their ignorance
2:12 Like brute beasts to be destroyed	v. 10 Like brute beasts corrupt themselves
2:14 These are Adulterers, reprobates and cursed children	v. 11 Woe to these who have gone in the way of Cain
2:15 Followed the way of Balaam	v. 11 Ran after the error of Balaam
2:15 Wages of unrighteousness	v. 11 Error for the sake of reward
2:13 Blots and blemishes in the feasts	v. 12 Blots in the love feasts
2:13 Deceitful revelers in your feasts	v. 12 Feasting without fear
2:17 Waterless springs	v. 12 Waterless clouds
2:17 Wind-driven mists	v. 12 Wind-driven clouds
2:17 Mist of darkness reserved forever	v. 13 Blackness of darkness reserved forever
2:18 Unbridled boasters who allure through lusts	v. 16 Unbridled detractors, and yet seeking recognition

3:2 Remember the commandments of prophets and Apostles	v. 17 Remember the words of the Apostles
3:3 In the last days, scoffers walking after their own lusts	v. 18 Mockers in the last time, walking after their own lusts

Theology

The major subjects in this Epistle are the exhortations and encouragements to godly living, the warnings against false teachers and the eschatological realities of the end of the world and the creation of the new. Other doctrinal truths are, however, present.

Bibliology

The classic passage of 1:19–21 is at the forefront. This reveals that Divine inspiration superintended the speeches and writings of the prophets and Apostles. Cf. 3:14–15, where Paul’s writings are considered as Scripture.

Theology Proper

God the Father is revealed to be supra-temporal, i.e., above time (3:8), and true to his promises, including the seeming delay for the fulfillment of his redemptive purpose (1:4; 3:3–4, 13). He is likewise longsuffering for this end (3:9, 15). Salvation is presented here as possessing the true, transforming, full knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus (1:2–3, 8ff; 2:20–21).

Note: To state that God is supra-temporal, is to state that God is above and beyond time. Time is a created element. It is linear, with a beginning and an end (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1–3; Rev. 10:6). God is not contained in time; time is contained in God. Further, time progresses from the future to the present and from the present into the past, as all has been predestined in God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 1:3–14; Rev. 4:11).

Christology

This Epistle commences with the revelation of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ—he is both “God” and “Savior” (1:1).

Note: τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “God” is articular and “Savior” is anarthous.

When the copulative καί connects two nouns of the same case, if the article ὁ or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle; i.e., it denotes a further description of the first-named person.¹⁵⁹

The same Gk. idiomatic construction is repeated in 2:20; 3:2, 18. The Deity of our Lord is stressed in opposition to the false teachers who evidently denied it.

Pneumatology

The one reference to the Holy Spirit occurs in 1:19–21 with reference to the Divine inspiration of Scripture. He superintends the whole of Divine inspiration.

Soteriology

Salvation is equated with the saving knowledge of God and his truth—a salvation manifested in a converted lifestyle which conforms to the Word of God. The exhortations and encouragements are for a constant progression in grace and truth (1:3–11, 20–21; 3:1ff, 11–14, 17–18).

The First Cults

More verses are devoted to the behavior and practices of these false teachers than their doctrines (1:16a; 2:2–3; 2:10, 12–15, 17–19). But behind all erratic and wicked behavior stands a faulty doctrinal basis. These denied the full Deity of our Lord or his true humanity and his redemptive work (2:1).

Defective knowledge and an utter lack of grace stands behind every cult. This began in the latter decades of the first century and has continued to modern times. Further, fallen, sinful man is by nature an antinomian—and religion is easily distorted when its adherents prove graceless. The natural tendency of a graceless religion is either a stilted legalism or an antinomianism, which caters to the flesh and its appetites. Legalism and antinomianism are inherently related. When men deny God's Moral Law, they inevitably construct a law of their own—a

¹⁵⁹ Dana & Mantey, *A Manual of The Greek New Testament*, p. 147.

system of “Do’s and Don’ts” which is unbiblical. Antinomianism leads to legalism.

Eschatology

The strands of final things are woven throughout this Epistle, directly or indirectly (1:3–4, 11, 13–15; 2:1, 3–6, 9, 12–13, 17, 20; 3:4, 7, 9–14, 17). Peter refers to his own imminent death (1:13–15), but most passages are concerned with the judgment of the ungodly, especially the false teachers, the end of this present world in a nuclear holocaust, and the re-creation of the universe—“new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Four Excurses

Divine Inspiration

2 Peter 1:19–21 is one of the two major New Testament passages which are key to understanding the Divine inspiration of Scripture. The other is 2 Tim. 3:16–17.¹⁶⁰ That passage, written by Paul, declares that every particle, word, phrase, and grammatical construction is “God-breathed” [πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος]. Thus, it is profitable in its application to the life of the believer, making him “symmetrically developed” [ἄρτιος] and completely outfitted [ἐξηρτισμένος] for every good work.

Peter’s emphasis must be understood in the context of the rising or beginning of the apostates or false teachers. The main thrust is that the Word of God did not originate with or in the spirit of man [πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται], but the Old Testament prophets were “borne along” [ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν]¹⁶¹ by the Spirit’s power and influence, giving their words Divine authority. This had an immediate application to the rise of false teachers who

¹⁶⁰ For comments on 2 Tim. 3:16–17, see this *Survey of the Bible*, IV, p. 371, Obs. 22.

¹⁶¹ ...ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι... “Borne along as a ship is borne along by the waves and wind” [Acts 27:17, “were driven,” same term, ἐφέροντο]—a graphic and suitable picture of the influence of the Spirit inspiring the writers of Scripture.

claimed to possess an esoteric, superior knowledge [γινῶσις], and that such knowledge was inherent to themselves.

Note: Lit: “no prophecy of Scripture of its own self becomes.” The idea that “no Scripture is of any private interpretation” means that only the church or religious authority may properly interpret Scripture is a mistranslation. This has been used to further the power of religious authorities. Any interpretation must be in accord with the “analogy of faith,” or the principle that “Scripture interprets Scripture,” and must never be detached from the given context or arbitrary.

Man by nature is depraved, and nothing so marks out a man as religious depravity! In the name of religion every foul sin and corruption has been exhibited, murder justified and both immorality and outright perversion practiced with pride! This is noted, not only in Peter’s Second Epistle but throughout the history of Christianity—and even today.

The graphic and lurid details concerning these false teachers is but the manifestation of mere religion as practiced without the fear and grace of God and the boundaries of his Holy Word. At the root of all of the awful things reiterated in this Epistle stands the truth of the Divine inspiration of Scripture—our one objective source of knowledge as believers.

The Three Worlds

In chapter three (3:5–13), Peter views history as three successive “worlds,” the old world that perished in the flood, the present world which is destined to be destroyed by fire, and the world to come—“new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

It must be noted that the “old world” which perished in the Flood was destroyed in time and history. This is a prevailing instance which cannot be ignored. Signs of the Flood of Noah’s time are witnessed in and by the various sciences and there are Flood epics and legends in almost every culture. This reveals that fallen, sinful man is very selective in his approach to history and “science”!

If “evidences” could convince men of their need of salvation, surely the Flood would be sufficient as a sure sign of God’s judgment and their need to be reconciled to him. Peter declares

that these are “willingly ignorant” (3:3–5). Man’s thinking is determined by his presuppositions, and in light of these, he views what validity he will give to any “evidences.”

Again, this present world is destined to be destroyed in a great and final cataclysmic explosion and fire (3:7–10). Yes, the “Big Bang” is not a theory, but it is future, not past. Contemplating such should serve as a correction to the modern “Green Movement” and “Climate Change” philosophy which seek to preserve this earth and its present status forever.

Further, we must consider the “world” to come. It will be “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Consider this: sin has so permeated and devastated this world and universe that the only final answer is its utter destruction and re-creation!

Finally, it will be a new world characterized by “righteousness.” Nothing and no one unrighteous shall enter. The final Day of Judgment will be passed, the wicked sentenced to eternal fire (Heb. 10:27; Rev. 20:11–15), and the elect of God shall alone inhabit this new, righteous world.

Remember!

Four times in this Epistle, Peter calls his readers to remembrance (1:12, 13, 15; 3:1). Peter’s admonition was necessary in his day, and it is even more so in our day. The truth has been given as God’s Word and inscripturated for succeeding generations of believers. His readers were admonished to remember the glorious truth of the gospel and its transforming power in the life. He urged their remembrance so that after his departure they would remain steadfast. The Word of God is unchangeable, and commitment to its truth is to be unchanging. The cry of the Enlightenment, strangely, should be ours: *ad fontes!*¹⁶²—for us, back to the Bible!

The same principle applies for each succeeding generation of Christians. We must beware of two things: first, of departing

¹⁶² *Ad fontes*, Lat: “back to the sources.” From the Latin Vulgate Version, probably from Psalms 42:1, referring to the springs or waterbrooks.

from the truth of God's Word, and second, from espousing any new teaching or any behavior unbecoming of a biblical Christian. Peter's readers were in danger of both and so are we. The grandchildren of these ancient Gnostics, as it were, are still among us. Departing from the truth of Scripture and bringing in new teachings and practices, will seduce many to a worldly approach to Christianity with its corresponding lifestyle. "Remember!"

The Vital Importance of 2 Peter

Some biblical critics claim that the Epistle of 2 Peter is a forgery, written by a later hand in his name. A forgery, of course, could never be inspired Scripture. What would we miss in the canon of Scripture without this Epistle? We would lack one of the classic statements concerning Divine inspiration (1:19–21). We would miss the Apostle Peter's final "testament" or dying counsel to believers. We would miss several classic passages concerning the necessity and nature of living a godly life from Peter's very and always practical approach (1:3–11; 3:11–18).

Further, we would be without a specific revelation of the end of this present world in sudden and complete judgment by cataclysmic fire and the creation of the "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13 is an inspired enlargement of Isa. 65:17 and 66:22 and anticipates Rev. 21:1–6.

These realities should be kept in mind when we consider the idea that this Epistle is considered by some to be a forgery, or give it a questionable and reluctant place in the New Testament canon. Is there anything in this Epistle that is counter or contrary to the rest of the scriptural canon?

Outline of 2 Peter

By dividing chapter one into two subjects, a four-fold outline reads:

- Know Your Salvation (1:1–11)
- Know Your Scriptures (1:12–21)
- Know Your Adversaries (2:1–22)

Know Your Prophecy (3:1–18)¹⁶³

The Three chapters lend themselves to a three-fold development, as noted previously in the occasion and purpose for this Epistle:

Chap. 1: Conviction of the Faith: An Encouragement to Persevere

Chap. 2: Contention for the Faith: An Exhortation to Persevere

Chap. 3: Consummation of the Faith: An Emphasis on Perseverance

An analysis of 2 Peter revolves around the key-word of “Knowledge:

Salutation	(1:1–2)
I. The Knowledge of God and the Believer’s Advancement	(1:3–21)
A. The maturity of believers	(1:3–11)
1. The impartation of Divine life	(1:3–4)
2. Advancement in the Christian life	(1:5–11)
B. The Testimony of the Apostle	(1:12–18)
1. His personal concern	(1:12–15)
2. His personal testimony	(1:16–18)
C. The Authority of Scripture	(1:19–21)
1. The certainty of Divine revelation	(1:19–20)
2. The nature of Divine inspiration	(1:21)
II. The Knowledge of God and the Believer’s Adversaries	(2:1–22)
A. The Doctrine of these Heretics	(2:1–3a)
1. Their heretical doctrines and denial of the Lord	(2:1)
2. Their harmful influence and damage to the truth	(2:2)
3. Their covetous nature and hidden motives	(2:3a)
B. The Doom of these Heretics	(2:3b–9)
1. The anticipation of sudden judgment	(2:3b)
2. Example of judgment: fallen angels	(2:4)
3. Example of judgment: the antediluvian world—Noah an exception	(2:5)
4. Example of judgment: Sodom and Gomorrah—Lot an exception	(2:6–8)
5. Certain future judgment anticipated	(2:9)
C. The Description of these Heretics	(2:10–22)
1. Their insolence surpasses even the angels	(2:10–11)
2. Ignorant, brutish, lawless and deceitful	(2:12–13)
3. Immoral, perverted and false prophets for gain	(2:14–16)

¹⁶³ Taken from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, p. 491.

4. Brash hypocrites and slaves to sin	(2:17–19)
5. Heretics and apostates from the faith	(2:20–21)
6. Proverbially returning to a filthy and depraved lifestyle	(2:22)
III. The Knowledge of God and the Believer's	
Anticipation	(3:1–18)
A. The Saints Exhorted—a call to remembrance	(3:1–2)
B. The Scoffers Exposed— their willful ignorance of past judgment	(3:3–7)
C. The grace of God in this day of grace	(3:8–10)
D. The Saints Exhorted—the Anticipation of glory	(3:11–18)
1. An exhortation to godliness in view of the temporal nature of the existing world	(3:11–12)
2. An encouragement to persevere with an eye to the future	(3:13–14)
3. A reference to Paul's Epistles as an added reason	(3:15–16)
4. A final exhortation to remain steadfast	(3:17–18a)
Doxology	(3:18b)

Notes & Observations

1. (1:1–2). Peter introduces himself as both a bond slave and an Apostle. A bond slave was the lowest in that society, but it is the very highest position if the master is the Lord Jesus, God manifest in the flesh! Faith, as presented here, is subjective, i.e., our personal grasp of saving truth in Christ. The foundation of saving or experiential faith is always the objective faith, i.e., the body of Divine, saving truth we grasp and trust in.
2. (1:2–3). Salvation does not stand in ignorance. “Religious decisionism” may be a momentary religious experience, but not true converting grace! Saving grace comes to the repentant sinner as saving power.
3. (1:4). “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises”—is this how we view our own salvation and Christian walk? Do we glory in the grace of God?
4. (1:5–7). What a list of Christian virtues we are to progress in and possess! The word “add” [ἐπιχορηγήσατε] is the source of our English word “choreography.” The idea is that of a chorus line singing. Faith is not to sing a solo! She

is to be surrounded by these added graces to sing in unison and harmony.

5. (1:8–11). Assurance of salvation or assurance of faith is not to be an option. Mark the progression of thought:
 Assurance Commanded: "...give diligence...!"
 Assurance Conditioned: "...if ye do these things..."
 Assurance Certain: "...ye shall never fall..."
6. (1:12–15). "Remembrance" repeated three times. This ought to be a key-term for every believer. We need to go back to biblical truth and remember the teachings of Scripture. The canon of Scripture is complete, and this makes any alleged new religious teaching suspect.
7. (1:15). Peter and our Lord used the term "decease" [ἐξοδος] for their death—the way out, implying life beyond the grave. Paul used the term "depart" [ἀναλύω], or "to pull up stakes," (Phil. 1:19–23), both terms imply that this present life is transitory—a lesson for every believer.
8. (1:16). "Cunningly devised fables," i.e., the doctrines of these false teachers. Remember, the inscripturated Word of God is our only objective source of truth, everything else is subjective and relative, and never the final authority. Faith is placed above feeling.
9. (1:16–18). Peter had heard the very voice of God from heaven, as had Abraham, Moses and the prophets. He could never forget.
10. (1:19–21). See 2 Tim. 3:16–17 for the practical relation between Divine inspiration and Christian experience. Here, a contrast between the reality of Divine inspiration and the authority of these false teachers Peter is about to describe.
11. (2:1). These false teachers would deny either the Deity [Cerinthianism] or the true humanity of our Lord [Doceticism]. If the person of Christ is assaulted, his redemptive work must likewise be modified—and this leads to all sorts of heresies.
12. (2:1). This is does not teach universalism. These false teachers masqueraded as believers and are described as to their profession, not their possession.

13. (2:2). The influence and effect of these false teachers—they caused true Christianity to suffer wrong and be misunderstood. The actions of some condemn the many.
14. (2:3). Religious deceivers and liars are the worst. The truth is easily perverted by false converts. Religion becomes a cloak for the worst of men.
15. (2:4–8). Examples of Divine judgment: the fallen angels, the Flood of Noah’s day and the sudden and complete destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Awful examples—and the last two were in time and history!
16. (2:7). “...delivered just Lot...,” i.e., righteous Lot [δίκαιον Λώτ]. Lot was a righteous man, but horribly vexed by the ungodly people and practices of Sodom. What a tragedy! Voluntary association with the wicked and ungodly must have the worst of consequences.
17. (2:12). Brute beasts such as cattle have but one purpose—to be slaughtered and butchered. These apostates will likewise be condemned without escape.
18. (2:13). Perhaps the love feasts in the early churches, which usually preceded the observance of the Lord’s Supper. Christian fellowship, which ought to be characterized by godly conversation and communion, were absolutely corrupted by these profligates.
19. (2:14). These cannot look upon a woman without lusting after her. Slaves to sexual lust and the basest immorality—an undeniable sign of an unrenewed nature.
20. (2:15–16). Balaam was set in heart and mind to sell his soul for a reward. Even God miraculously speaking through his donkey did not dissuade him (Numb. 22:1–24:25; 31:6–9, 15–16). Balaam succeeded in corrupting Israel by sexually seducing the men with the Midianitish women. Only God, in grace, can change the sinner!
21. (2:17–19). These evil persons sought to spread their influence to others to corrupt them. They taught, but they did not practice.

22. (2:20–21). Apostasy is always a possibility with mere professing Christians (e.g., Heb. 3:12, and the word “departing,” ἀποστῆναι). Can a true believer apostatize and finally be lost? No, but some mere professing Christians can and do.
23. (2:22). A true proverb. A dog will vomit, then later return to lap it up. And the sow? Mark carefully the aor. middle voice of the verb “washed:” [λουσαμένη]. Lit, “she once washed herself.” The first act was unnatural, the second revealed that her nature had not changed. The same was true of these apostates—their nature had not been changed by God’s grace and they reverted back to their old ways.
24. (3:1–2). We often need our minds stirred to remembrance concerning the words of the prophets and Apostles, i.e., the Scriptures. The truth of God has been given once; it remains absolutely true and absolute truth. Nothing can be added or detracted from it. Remember!
25. (3:3–4). There will always be scoffers who will ridicule God’s Word and God’s purpose. They will put any thought of Divine judgment far off into the future and live only for the moment. They are fools concerning the reality of time!
26. (3:4–6). The Flood is a universally known fact that occurred in time and history. If evidences could save a person, true believers would be innumerable. But all facts are interpreted—or willingly avoided—by one’s presuppositions.
27. (3:6–10). This present world and universe as we know it exists for the good pleasure of God and his fiat decree (Cf. Rev. 4:11). By this same decree they will one day suddenly be completely destroyed in a nuclear holocaust!
28. (3:8–9). What holds back this utter, nuclear destruction? — God’s redemptive purpose. When his redemptive purpose is complete and the last of his elect are gathered, then the end shall infallibly come. This universe exists, in this sense, by God’s restraining grace, as it cries out for Divine judgment.

29. (3:11–13). Believers must count this world and life as temporary. Our focus must be on eternity and the world to come!
30. (3:14–17). This present life is to be lived for God's glory with a holy energy and godliness! Life is too short for self-indulgence and sinful ease. We must focus on the life and world to come, which will be characterized by righteousness. Godly living is the best preparation!
31. (3:18). Peter ends his second Epistle with a final exhortation to continue to progress in both grace and knowledge. This was written in the context of the anticipation of the ultimate future. This is the vision we must have if we are to remain consistent in our Christian lives and experience.

The Epistle of 1 John

Introduction

Only two books in the New Testament, Hebrews and 1 John, do not identify their authors, give their titles, commence with a salutation, or name their recipients—and yet both authors were well-known to their readers and a definite, even intimate relationship between writers and readers is easily detected.

The Epistle of 1 John from the very first was considered a Johannine writing and never questioned by early Christians or any of the Church Fathers. It was a pastoral and polemical letter or sermon from an aged Apostle—the last living Apostle—probably to Christians in a group of churches in Asia Minor.

Many attempts have been made to find a consistent structure to this epistle, but there is hardly any agreement among scholars. Its style and expressions are Hebraistic or Aramaic, the grammar is very simple, and characterized by repetition, antithesis, and emphasis. This writing also reveals a paternal approach and an uncontested authority. “Simplicity of language and majesty of thought are here united” (Scroggie). It stands unique among the Books of the New Testament canon.

Authorship

Biographical

John [Gk: Ἰωάννης] derives from the Heb. [יְהוָה נָחֵם] “to whom Yahweh is gracious.” John was the younger brother of James and a son of Zebedee, and so a cousin to our Lord (Matt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40; Jn. 19:25; 21:2). He was also related to the priestly hierarchy (Jn. 18:15–16). He and Andrew, though working in the fishing industry with their father, were at first disciples of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:35ff).

John was the third member of the inner circle of our Lord’s Disciples (Peter, James and John). He was the second most prominent among the Disciples, next to Peter, who was the natural leader and strongest personality. John was also known as “the Beloved Disciple” (Jn. 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20), and the one

who “leaned on our Lord’s breast” at supper (Jn. 21:20).¹⁶⁴

He, with Peter and James, were with our Lord when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mk. 5:22–43). These three were with him on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1ff) and the closest to him in his garden agony (Matt. 26:37).

John was the only Disciple who personally witnessed the crucifixion when the others had fled and were in hiding. Our Lord delivered his mother into John’s keeping just before he died (Jn. 19:26–27), an understandable act if they were close relatives.

John was the first Disciple to truly believe in our Lord’s resurrection (Jn. 20:1–10). He later became a pillar of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9). He fades from history from the middle of Paul’s ministry (Gal. 2:9) until the final decade of the first century.

John’s brother, James, was the first Apostle to die (Acts 12:1–2) and John was the last, living to the end of the first century, according to tradition. Our Lord, during his earthly ministry, called these two “Boanerges” [“Sons of Thunder”] (Mk. 3:17; Lk. 9:52–56). Age had evidently lessened his harsh demeanor, but neither his zeal nor his condemnation of the false teachers. He still thought and wrote in absolute terms.

Tradition states that John, with a multitude of Jewish Christians, left Jerusalem at the beginning of the Jewish War (c. 66) and settled at Ephesus some years before the destruction of Jerusalem (70). There, except when he was exiled to the Island of Patmos, some thirty miles off the coast of Asia Minor, he spent the remainder of his life.

At Ephesus he acted as the inspired apologist against Cerinthian¹⁶⁵ and Docetic Gnosticism. Early tradition states that John died at Ephesus of natural causes in the reign of Trajan (98–117).

¹⁶⁴ The language is figurative. The Roman form of dining practiced by the Jews was for two intimate friends to sit facing one another, reclining on their sides on couches. John was our Lord’s closest dining companion, facing him.

¹⁶⁵ Cerinthus the Gnostic also lived at Ephesus, and the two allegedly met in public.

John penned five books of the New Testament canon: The Gospel record which bears his name, three Epistles [1, 2 and 3 John] and the Book of Revelation.

External Evidence

From the earliest times, this epistle was considered to be the work of the Apostle John, and has never been questioned except by modern radical critics.¹⁶⁶ From the early second century it was classified, along with 1 Peter, among the *Homologomena* ["accepted writings" and canon] and not the *Antilegomena* ["disputed writings," i.e., Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2, 3 John, Jude and Revelation].

Polycarp (c. 69–156), a disciple of John, quoted from this epistle.¹⁶⁷ Irenaeus (c. 130–202) refers to Papias (c. 60–130) as a hearer of John and companion of Polycarp. Papias used passages from 1 John in his *Epistle to Diognetus*. Irenaeus himself quoted several passages from 1 John.

The *Muratorian Canon* refers to two of John's Epistles (c. 170). This epistle was included in the Old Syriac Version (2nd century). Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) frequently quoted from 1 John and referred to John himself in his writings. Tertullian (c. 155–240) quoted from 1 Jn. 4:1–3 and ascribed it to John. This epistle was also quoted by Origen (c. 184–253), Cyprian (c. 200–258), and Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 200–265). Eusebius (c. 265–340) placed it among the *Homologomena*.

Internal Evidence

The author represents himself as an eye-witness and intimate of our Lord (1:1–4; 4:14) and writes with the finality of apostolic authority. He was also intimately known to his readers. For the writer to identify himself would have been superfluous.

Perhaps the greatest internal evidence rests in the close parallel of John's Gospel with this first Epistle. The parallels are

¹⁶⁶ Recent radical critics hold that the Johannine writings are to be attributed to the "Johannine community" and are anonymous products of the second century.

¹⁶⁷ Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians*, Chapter 7, quoted 1 Jn. 4:2–3.

not only theological, ethical, stylistic, similar in vocabulary and personal, but there are at least fifty—one linguistic and grammatical parallels in the Greek text—not only words—but exact phrases in both the Gospel record and this Epistle. Whoever wrote the Gospel, also wrote the Epistle.

Note: Such intricate linguistic and grammatical studies have been done by Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832–1910) and A. E. Brooke (1863–1939). Brooke has listed these in full detail in his critical commentary on the Johannine Epistles.¹⁶⁸

Some examples from our English Version may serve to illustrate some of the parallels:

Gospel	Phrase	Epistle
20:31	These things are written that...	2:26; 5:13
3:21	To do the truth	1:6
8:44	The truth is not in anyone	1:8
8:44	To be of the devil	3:8
8:47	To be of God	3:10
8:23	To be of the world	2:16
14:17	The Spirit of truth	4:6
1:12	To be called children of God	3:1
10:11, 17–18	To lay down his life	3:16
9:41	To have sin	1:8
3:16, 36	To have eternal life	3:15
5:24	To pass from death unto life	3:14
16:33	To overcome the world	5:4
1:29	To take away sin	3:5
6:56	To remain in him	2:28
3:31	To speak of the world	4:5
8:12	To walk in darkness	2:11
3:33	To receive the witness of men	5:9

The following chart illustrates the relation of the Gospel of John with all three of the Johannine Epistles. The First Epistle

¹⁶⁸ A. E. Brooke, *Johannine Epistles* (ICC). Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994 reprint, pp. i–xix.

has a strong parallel with the Gospel; the circumstances of writing for Second and Third John are diverse, as the truth was being assailed and the commandment to love one another was critical.

Subject	Gospel	1 John	2 John	3 John
Light and darkness	8:12; 12:46	1:5–7; 2:9–11		
Unity of Father & Son	5:20; 10:30, 38; 14:10	1:3; 2:22–24	1: 3, 9	
References to “the truth”	8:32; 18:37	2:21; 3:19	1: 1, 3–4	1: 3, 4, 8, 12
Paraclete	14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7	2:1		
Hated by the world	15:18–19; 17:13–16	3:13		
God sending Christ into the world out of love	3:16	4:9		
Christ coming in the flesh	1:14	4:2	1: 7	
Christ laying down his life for others	10:11, 15, 17–18; 15:12–13	3:16		
Being born of God	1:13; 3:3–8	2:29; 3:9		
Knowing God	1:10; 8:55; 14:7; 16:3	2:3–5, 13; 14; 3:1, 6; 4:6–8		
Abiding in God/Christ	6:56; 15:4–10	2:6, 27–28; 3:6, 24; 4:13–16		
New & old Commandment	13:34	2:7	1:5	
Love one another	13:34; 15:12	2:27–28; 3:11, 23	1:5	
Water and blood	19:34–35	5:6–8		
Joy complete	15:11; 16:24; 17:13	1:4	1:12	

Love expressed in keeping the commandments	14:15, 23; 15:10	5:2–3	1:5–6	
Antichrists		2:18–19, 22; 4:3	1:7	
Christ has come or not come in the flesh	1:14, 18	4:2–3	1:7, 10, 12	1:10

Provenance and Date

As the Apostle John lived at Ephesus for the last three decades of the first century, except for his exile on the Island of Patmos, the place of writing was most certainly Ephesus.

There are two approaches to dating the New Testament books. [Some modern conservatives hold that the entire canon was complete before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD]. The traditional view, long held by most is that the Johannine corpus was written c. 80–96 AD, making these the final books of the canon. These, then are God’s final inspired words to men, penned by the aged and last of the Apostles.

The Recipients

Because of the intimacy of the Johannine writings between the author and his readers, it is held by most that these were written to a circle of churches in Asia Minor which the aged Apostle may have overseen and with whom he had retained close contact. Because John never once quotes from the Old Testament, some have held that these were mostly Gentile believers.

His loving familiarity and authority is revealed as he calls his older readers “fathers” (2:13–14), many of these “young men” (2:13–14) and most, “my little children” or simply “little children” (2:1, 12–13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), a term of affection, as the aged Apostle was probably like a father to them.

Occasion and Purpose

Four times in this epistle, John informs his readers why he wrote:

“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1:4)

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (2:1)

“These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you” (2:26)

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (5:13)

Thus, the two main reasons for the writing of this epistle: first, the spiritual state of the recipients. This did not seem to be a time of overt outward persecution, but there was danger of accommodating the world (2:15–17). The freshness of the faith of some had waned (1:4). Sin may have been taken lightly by others (1:7–10; 2:1–3, 5). The joy of their salvation had lost some of its fervency (1:4; 2:20, 27–28). Some may have lacked assurance (2:3–4; 5:13).

These needed to be admonished to remain steadfast and to have joy in the Lord and his truth. The aged and beloved Apostle writes to his readers in definite terms that reveal his love, but also his strictness and faithfulness to the truth. He admonishes them to live out the truth they professed and already knew.

Second, the entrance of heretics into the churches. Some had seceded (2:18–19); others remained and were seeking to seduce believers (2:26). The tests for these heretical teachers were the truth of our Lord’s true and complete humanity, which these heretics denied (4:2–3). Also, godly living, or “the practice of righteousness,” which these lacked (2:29; 3:7–10).

The Heretics

There were two heretical forces at work at that time: *Cerinthianism* and *Doceticism*. These were schools of Gnostic philosophy.

Gnosticism is...the grandest and most comprehensive form of speculative religious syncretism known to history. It consists of Oriental mysticism, Greek philosophy, Alexandrian, Philonic, and Cabalistic Judaism, and Christian ideas of salvation, not merely mechanically complied, but, as it were, chemically combined...

Gnosticism is a heretical philosophy of religion, or, more exactly, a mythological theosophy, which reflects intellectually

the peculiar, fermenting state of that remarkable age of transition from the heathen to the Christian order of things.¹⁶⁹

Cerinthus resided at Ephesus at this time and he and his disciples taught that the Lord Jesus Christ was a mere man. The “Christ element” came upon him at his baptism and left him in his garden agony, thus he died as a mere man and his death was not redemptively efficacious. Salvation, common to all schools of Gnosticism, was by an esoteric knowledge [hence, γνῶσις, “knowledge”].¹⁷⁰ The modern representatives of this heresy are Christian Science, the Russellites and Unitarians, all of which deny the Deity of our Lord.

The other form of Gnosticism was *Docetic Gnosticism* [fr. δοκέω, “to seem”]. This heresy held that all matter was inherently evil, therefore the Lord Jesus Christ could not have a true humanity, but was a phantom being with no human body or human nature. They denied the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ Jesus. Again, salvation was through an esoteric knowledge.

Note: As all matter was considered inherently evil, there was no connection or relationship between the flesh and the spirit. This belief led to licentiousness and open wickedness, as what was done in and through the body allegedly had absolutely no relationship to the spirit. This was the beginning of the “carnal Christian” heresy in its fullness! This gross sexual, social and religious antinomianism had made its way into the churches, as also witnessed by the Epistles of 2 Peter and Jude.

The Apostle John wrote his Gospel with the *Cerinthians* in mind (1:1–18; 20:31) and his first Epistle with the *Docetics* in mind (1:1–4; 4:2–3, 7).

Key Terms

The key-word of this epistle is “fellowship” [κοινωνία, “to have in common”], occurring four times (1:3 (twice), 6, 7). True believers have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

¹⁶⁹ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, II, pp. 448–450.

¹⁷⁰ For a discussion of Gnosticism, see this *Survey of the Bible*, III, pp. 118–125.

“Light” [φῶς], occurring six times (1:5, 7 (twice), 8, 9; 2:10). God as light predominates the first half of this epistle. God is light as to his nature. True fellowship is in the light. The opposite is darkness (1:5, 6; 2:8, 9, 11 (thrice), which is the sphere of unbelief and error.

“Love.” God as love predominates the second half of this epistle. This term occurs thirty-two times in this epistle and in three forms: “Love” [ἀγαπάω, verb] twenty-eight times (2:10, 15; 3:10, 11, 14 (twice), 18, 23; 4:7 (twice), 8, 10 (twice), 11 (twice), 12, 19 (twice), 20 (thrice), 21 (twice), 5:1 (twice), 2 (twice). “Love” [ἀγάπη, noun] eighteen times (2:5, 15; 3:1, 16, 17; 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16 (thrice), 17, 18 (thrice), 5:3). “Beloved” [ἀγαπητοί, n. from the adj. ἀγαπητός], occurring five times (3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11). True Christ-like or Christian love remains the one great credential of the true believer (Jn. 13:34–35; 1 Jn. 2:5; 4:7–12).

“Knowledge” and “know.” Knowledge was the key-word for the Gnostics who held that their esoteric knowledge [γνώσις] was the key to salvation, not faith and redemption through the blood of Christ. This blood was literal, physical (1:7; 5:6 (twice), 8), as were our Lord’s sufferings. He propitiated [appeased] the wrath of God (2:2; 4:10), all of which the Docetic Gnostics denied.

John uses two terms for “knowledge” and “know”: [εἶδω, οἶδα, an objective perception or full knowledge]¹⁷¹ and [γινώσκω, a more subjective, experiential knowledge].¹⁷² Εἶδω and its cognates occur fifteen times (2:11, 21 (twice), 29; 3:2, 5, 14, 15; 5:13, 15 (twice), 18, 19, 20). Γινώσκω and its cognates occur twenty-five times (2:3 (twice), 4, 5, 13 (twice), 14, 18, 29; 3:1 (twice), 6, 16, 19, 20, 24; 4:2, 6 (twice), 7, 8, 13, 16; 5:2, 20). The uses of these two terms may be noted in 2:29:

If ye know [εἰδῆτε] that he is righteous, ye know [γινώσκετε] that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

¹⁷¹ Is the pres., but idiomatically, οἶδα, the perf., is often used.

¹⁷² The terms ἐπιγινώσκω, vb. and ἐπίγνωσις, n. for full, complete knowledge do not occur in this epistle.

The first [εἰδῆτε] refers to the objective perception of faith; the latter [γινώσκετε] to experiential or relational knowledge.

Note: Care must be taken to note the distinction between the pres. and perf. tenses in the Gk. E.g. 2:3–4:

And hereby we do know [γινώσκουμεν, pres. a present claim to a saving relation] that we know him [ἐγνώκαμεν, perf. come to know him, i.e., have entered into and are continuing in this saving relationship], if we keep his commandments.⁴ He that saith, I know [ἐγνώκα, perf., come and continue to know] him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Theology

Bibliology

There are no quotations from the Old Testament. There are thirteen references to the Apostle writing to these churches (1:4; 2:1, 7, 8, 12, 13 (thrice), 14 (twice), 21, 26; 5:13). His Gospel record, letters and the Book of Revelation form the final inspired words of Scripture. John closes out the canon of inspired Scripture.

Theology Proper

God is light (1:5) and he is love (4:8, 16). The entire letter can be divided between these realities. He is faithful, just and forgiving (1:9). He is loving in the context of his covenant relationship to believers (2:5; 3:1; 4:8–10, 12, 16, 19). He keeps His promise (2:25). He is true and faithful; there is no falsehood in him (1:10; 5:10).

Christology

The Lord Jesus Christ is the exegesis¹⁷³ or revelation and representation of the Father (1:1–4, 7; 2:22–24; 3:1–2; 3:16; 5:1, 5). He himself is Divine, the Word of life (1:1–4; 3:16; 5:20). Our Lord is called the “Son” twenty-one times in this epistle, demonstrating his relation to the Father. He is impeccable (3:5), the one and only Redeemer (2:1–2; 3:5; 4:14; 5:11–13). He is our Paraclete (2:1).

¹⁷³ See Jn. 1:18. ἐξηγήσατο, the vb. form of “exegesis,” a true revelation and representation of the original.

Note: The Holy Spirit is also our Paraclete [παράκλητος, one called alongside to help: “helper,” “comforter” (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7)].The Holy Spirit indwells believers and enables us to pray aright (Rom. 8:26–27); our Lord intercedes before the Father. It is interesting and edifying to note that in prayer, we both have and need both—two Paracletes.

In the incarnation he demonstrated his true humanity; he was not a phantom (4:2–3; 5:6). The hypostatic union of the two natures in one person is implied throughout. Our Lord came to dismantle the works of the devil (3:8).¹⁷⁴

Against the Gnostic heresies, John proclaims the true and full Deity of our Lord as the revelation and manifestation of God, and his true and full humanity.

Pneumatology

The Holy Spirit is directly referred to five times as the Spirit of God and of truth (3:24; 4:2, 6, 13; 5:6), and twice indirectly concerning the anointing or unction he gives to the believer (2:20, 27).¹⁷⁵ This stands in contrast to the false teachers and heretics who were bereft of the Spirit.¹⁷⁶

Hamartiology

“Sin” is mentioned twenty-two times (1:7, 8, 9 (twice); 2:1 (twice), 2:2 (twice), 12; 3:4 (twice), 5 (twice), 8, 9 (twice), 10; 5:16 (four times) and 5:17 (twice). Believers do not and cannot live in or practice sin or unrighteousness (3:10). The heretics lived lives which were characterized by sin.

The verb tenses and auxiliary expressions in Gk. are vital for our understanding. A failure to understand this has led some to believe in a “sinless perfection.” E.g.,:

1:8. If we say that we have no sin [ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

¹⁷⁴ 3:8, the word “destroy” is λύση, “to loose” or dismantle.

¹⁷⁵ The references in 5:7–8 are discussed under “The Johannine Comma” in this study of 1 John.

¹⁷⁶ See Jude 19. He wrote against the Gnostics also, especially their licentious behavior.

Sin is seen here as a reality in the life. There is no sinlessness for the believer in this life. He still must deal with a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption (See Rom. 7:13ff).

1:9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned [οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν], we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The claim to having never sinned is exposed here as heresy. Sins are to be confessed and forsaken—the reality of the mortification of sin (See Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5).

2:1. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not [μὴ ἀμάρτητε]. And if any man sin [ἐάν τις ἀμάρτη], we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

The aor. subj. here twice refers to an act of sin. Believers do not live in sin or habitually practice sin, but they do commit acts of sin and act out of character at such times.

3:9. Whosoever is born of God [Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ] doth not commit sin [ἀμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ]; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin [οὐ δύναται ἀμαρτάνειν], because he is born of God.

A literal transl: “Every single one without exception having been born of God sin does not [habitually] practice (pres.)...he cannot continue in sin...” (pres.inf.).

3:8. He that committeth sin [ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν] is of the devil; for the devil sinneth [ἀμαρτάνει] from the beginning.

He who habitually practices sin (art. pres. ptc. of ποιέω, to characteristically practice)...is continually sinning (pres.).

What of the sin unto death (5:16–17)? This evidently refers to sins which were either outlandish sins such as prideful blasphemy, sins for which a death penalty was proscribed or returning to a life of sin (Cf. Heb. 10:26). These would indicate the unconverted state of the sinner.

John finds no middle ground. One is either practicing righteousness or practicing sin! Thus, the true believer does not, cannot live in sin; the heretics practiced unrighteousness as a way of life.

Soteriology

The doctrine of salvation is noted in both its positive and its negative realities, i.e., those who are truly converted and are the children of God and those who are unconverted and of the devil.

The genuine believer is one who possesses saving faith (5:4–6. Cf. Rom. 1:17; 3:21–26; 5:1–2; Eph. 2:8–10; Heb. 11:6), holds to the truth of our Lord’s Deity and true humanity (1:1–4; 4:2), has fellowship in the light (1:1–5, 7; 2:10, 14), loves the brethren (2:10; 3:10; 4:7, 21; 5:1, 2), and practices righteousness (2:29; 3:7). These characteristics would well-define believers in every age.

Some have rightly written on 1 John with the theme of “Tests of Eternal Life,” and such fits the theme throughout this epistle.

Eschatology

John writes of that day being the “last time” (2:18) and the day of his coming (2:28). The inspired Apostles evidently had no Divine revelation concerning the length of our present age. Paul placed himself among the living at the Lord’s return (1 Thess. 4:17) [...ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι...].

A sign of the last time was the presence of antichrists (2:18, 22; 4:3. Cf. 2 Jn. 7), i.e., false teachers who denied the truth preparing the way for the final and ultimate Antichrist. Paul describes the final Antichrist in detail (2 Thess. 2:3–4).

The rise of false teachers and licentious men entering the churches were of the greatest concern to John, Peter (2 Pet. 2:1–22) and Jude (4–19).

Troublesome Passages

Committing Sin

The various grammatical constructions regarding “committeth sin,” “sinning” and “sinneth not” have been considered. The English lacks the necessary grammatical distinctions to adequately differentiate between practicing sin, living in sin, continually sinning and not practicing or living in

such. The idea of “Sinless perfection” has been derived from such misunderstanding.

We must first translate according to the “Analogy of Faith,” i.e., taking the Scriptures as a unified, non-contradictory whole. Second, we must have recourse to the original languages, in this case, New Testament or Κοινή Greek, which was highly idiomatic. These will usually quickly clear up any misunderstanding.

Sin and Lawlessness

3:4 makes reference to sin as the “transgression of the law.” Some would use this to teach a reference to the Moral Law or Decalogue. The literal translation is: “sin is lawlessness” [Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία], referring to sin in its nature as being lawless.

The Johannine Comma

5:7–8. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

This passage has been used by some as a proof-text for the Trinity. It is highly questionable that this was originally part of 1 John. Most scholars hold that this was a marginal note which crept into the text. There are other alleged instances of such in the New Testament.

The earliest quotation of this passage as a part of the text is in a fourth century treatise, *Liber Apologeticus* by a Spanish heretic, Priscillian (d. 385) or a follower, *Instantus*. In the fifth century this gloss was quoted by some Latin Fathers, and from the sixth century onward it is found in the *Old Latin* and the *Latin Vulgate* (c. 406).¹⁷⁷

Erasmus omitted this passage from his first two editions of his translation of the New Testament (1516, 1519), as it did not appear in any Greek text. The Romanists finally produced a questionable sixteenth century Greek text with this reading.

¹⁷⁷ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 717.

The passage is absent from every known Greek manuscript except four, and these contain the passage in what appears to be a translation from a late recession of the Latin Vulgate.¹⁷⁸

It is extremely difficult to account for its omission in the hundreds of Greek mss. before the sixteenth century. Through the Latin and some late texts, this gloss found its way into the *King James Version* (1611) and the *Textus Receptus* (1633, the *Stephanus* or majority text).¹⁷⁹

Style and Structure

Style

It has been previously noted that the style and expressions in this writing are Hebraistic or Aramaic, and that the grammar is very simple, and characterized by repetition, antithesis, and emphasis. John's style has been called cyclical, even symphonic, and he uses chiasms at times. "His sentences often assume a triple form." (Hiebert).

John is contemplative rather than argumentative...He is mystical rather than logical....an epistle of recurrent ideas rather than hard and fast divisions.¹⁸⁰

I John is symphonic rather than logical in its plan; it is constructed like a piece of music rather than like a brief for a debate. Instead of proceeding step-by-step in unfolding a subject...John selects a theme and maintains it throughout the book, and introduces a series of variations, any one of which may be a theme in itself.¹⁸¹

Structure

R. C. H. Lenski, the Lutheran Greek exegete and scholar comments on the peculiar nature of the structure of 1 John:

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* Metzger further states that the passage was added by a later, more modern hand in these Greek mss.

¹⁷⁹ See Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7-8*. The writer attempts to prove the validity of this passage. This work is referred to here for the information it contains, not its validity.

¹⁸⁰ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, VI, pp. 321-322.

¹⁸¹ Merrill C. Tenney, *Op. cit.*, p. 377.

This letter is built like an inverted pyramid or cone...the line of thought simply spirals in rising, widening circles until all is complete....I have never found the like in all literature.¹⁸²

The approach one takes to this epistle may be from an attempt to follow the subject matter or an approach governed by linguistic analysis. The problem is stated by Akin:

Few issues are more difficult in Johannine studies than the structure of 1 John. There are almost as many opinions as there are commentaries on the book.¹⁸³

Many divide this epistle into two major parts, leaving the development open to the writer's variations, e.g.,

Prologue	(1:1–4)
I. God is Light	(1:5–3:10)
II. God is Love	(3:11–5:12)
Epilogue	(5:13–21)

Others divide 1 John into three parts, e.g.,

I. Prologue	(1:1–4)
II. Part One: The gospel that God is light and we must walk in the light as Jesus walked	(1:5–3:10)
III. Part Two: The gospel that we must love one another as God has loved us in Christ	(3:11–5:12)
Conclusion: statement of author's purpose	(5:13–21)

Or, a very simple, very general outline:

I. God is Light	(1:1–2:17)
II. God is Righteous	(2:18–2:29)
III. God is Love	(3:1–5:13)

Another three-fold outline:

- I. Experiencing the Light of God (Chaps. 1–2)
- II. Experiencing the Love of God (Chaps. 3–4)
- III. Experiencing the Life of God (Chap. 5)

Still others divide this epistle into four or five parts, depending on how the prologue is classified, e.g., a four-fold outline:

¹⁸² R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Peter, John and Jude*, p. 366.

¹⁸³ Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John* (NAC), p. 37. Akins devotes 11 pages to various outlines and analyses of 1 John, and critiques each approach.

The Fellowship of Light	(1:1–10)
The Fellowship of Love	(2:1–4:21)
The Fellowship of Witness	(5:1–10)
The Fellowship of Life	(5:11–21)

Or a five–fold outline:

I. Prologue: The Word of Life	(1:1–4)
II. Light and Darkness	(1:5–2:27)
III. The Privileges and Responsibilities of God’s Children	(2:28–4:6)
IV. Faith in God and Love One Another	(4:7–5:12)
V. Epilogue and Final Remarks	(5:13–21)

Some would find a seven–fold outline according to the various contrasts:

1. The Light vs. the Darkness	(1:5–2:11)
2. The Father vs. the World	(2:12–2:17)
3. Christ vs. the Antichrist	(2:18–2:28)
4. Good Works vs. Evil Works	(2:29–3:24)
5. The Holy Spirit vs. Error	(4:1–4:6)
6. Love vs. Religious Hypocrisy	(4:7–21)
7. The Regenerate vs. the Pretenders	(5:1–21)

Others take the three tests of obedience [the moral test], love [the social test] and belief [the doctrinal test] to frame this epistle:

I. The Preface	(1:1–4)
II. The Apostolic Message and Its Moral Implications	(1:5–2:2)
III. The First Application of the Tests	(2:3–27)
IV. The Second Application of the Tests	(2:28–4:6)
V. The Third Application of the Tests	(4:7–5:5)
VI. The Three Witnesses and Our Consequent Assurance	(5:6–17)
VII. Conclusion: Three Affirmations and Concluding Exhortation	(5:18–21) ¹⁸⁴

Some would find suggestive auxiliary studies derived from the various contrasts or the repetition of words or phrases, e.g, according to seven tests:

1. False Communion: “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie.” (1:6)
2. False Consecration: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1:8)

¹⁸⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John (TNTC)*, p. 61.

3. False Conscience: "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and His Word in not in us." (1:10)
4. False Confession: He that sayeth I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar." (2:4)
5. False Conduct: "He that sayeth he abideth in Him ought to walk even as He walked" (2:6)
6. False Character: "He that sayeth he is in the light, and hateth his brother is in darkness" (2:9)
7. False Charity: "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (4:20)

Outline of 1 John

For the various approaches to the structure and analysis of 1 John, see the preceding section. This analysis or outline generally follows the concept of assurance, as some would hold that 1 John gives such assurance through the "Tests for Eternal Life".¹⁸⁵

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| Introduction: Purpose and Joy | (1:1–4) |
| A. Personal Testimony | (1:1–3a) |
| 1. First-hand testimony to the Reality of Christ | (1:1) |
| 2. First-hand Testimony to His Deity and humanity | (1:2) |
| B. Communal Fellowship | (1:3b–4) |
| 1. A call for fellowship | (1:3b) |
| 2. A Call to experience an abiding Joy | (1:4) |
| I. Assurance through the Test of Fellowship | (1:5–2:17) |
| A. The Foundation for Fellowship | (1:5) |
| B. The Failure for Fellowship | (1:6–10) |
| 1. The implications for fellowship | (1:6–7) |
| 2. The implications for integrity | (1:8–10) |
| C. The Furtherance of Fellowship | (2:1–17) |
| 1. An appeal in light of God's character | (2:1–6) |
| 2. The signs of love and separation | (2:7–17) |
| II. Assurance through the Conflict of Faith | (2:18–4:6) |
| A. The Conflict between Truth and Falsehood | (2:18–28) |
| 1. Three considerations: eschatological, ecclesiastical and charismatic | (2:18–21) |
| 2. The criterion: truth and the liar | (2:22–26) |
| 3. The promise and imperative to abide | (2:27–28) |
| B. The Conflict between Righteousness and Sin | (2:29–3:12) |

¹⁸⁵ This outline as been adapted from D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Non-Pauline Epistles*, pp. 219–221 as to its major headings. He adapted this from the outline of Raymond E. Gingrich, *An Outline and Analysis of the First Epistle of John* (1943).

1. The practice of righteousness	(2:29)
2. The present reality of redeemed sonship	(3:1–3)
3. Sin defined by its lawlessness	(3:4)
4. The impeccability of the Lord Jesus	(3:5)
5. The sign of the children of God and those of the devil: the practice of either sin or righteousness	(3:6–11)
6. The example of Cain and his evil works	(3:12)
C. The Conflict between Love and Hypocrisy	(3:13–24)
1. The criterion: love of the brethren	(3:13–15)
2. The practical and sacrificial nature of true Christian love	(3:16–21)
3. The witness of answered prayer and the presence of the Spirit	(3:22–24)
D. The Conflict between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of Error	(4:1–6)
1. An exhortation to test the spirits	(4:1)
2. The criterion for testing the spirits	(4:2–3)
3. The criterion for testing others	(4:4–6)
III. Assurance from the Evidence of Love	(4:7–5:5)
A. The Character of Redemptive and Godly Love	(4:7–16)
1. The first exhortation to love	(4:7–10)
2. The second exhortation to love	(4:11–14)
3. The confirmation of love	(4:15–16)
B. Love, fear and faith	(4:17–5:5)
1. The commendation of love and condemnation of fear	(4:17–21)
2. The commendation of faith	(5:1–5)
IV. Assurance from the Witness of the Spirit	(5:6–12)
A. The External Witness	(5:6–9)
B. The Internal Witness	(5:10–12)
Conclusion: Faith and Action	(5:13–21)
A. The Assurance of Faith	(5:13)
B. The Assurance of Answered Prayer	(5:14–15)
C. Discernment and Intercession	(5:16–17)
1. A sin unto death	(5:16)
2. A sin not unto death	(5:17)
D. True and Certain Knowledge	(5:18–20)
1. Certainty of the Christian's practice	(5:18)
2. Certainty of the contrast with the world	(5:19)
3. Certainty of our union with Christ	(5:20)
E. A Closing Admonition	(5:21)

Notes & Observations

1. (Chapter. 1). John refutes three denials of the heretics:

- The denial that sin breaks our fellowship with God (1:6–7)
- The denial that sins exists in our nature (1:8–9)
- The denial that sin shows itself in our conduct (1:10–2:2)¹⁸⁶

2. (Chapters 1–2). A suggestive outline of the first two chapters of this epistle:

- The Communion with God Observed (1:1–2:2)
- The Commandments of God Obeyed (2:3–11)
- The Commendation of God Obtained (2:12–29)¹⁸⁷

3. (1:1–2). This eternal life found its embodiment in the Lord Jesus Christ, the God–man. This introductory statement coincides with Jn. 1:1, which reveals an ascendancy: the Eternity of the Word, the Equality of the Word and the Deity of the Word.
4. (1:3). True Christian fellowship must be in the truth, as it is preeminently spiritual, not simply social, denominational or even religious—it is with the Father and the Son.
5. (1:4). “That your joy might be full” [ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη, perf.], i.e., might be full and remain full. The effect of the truth is meant to be permanent!
6. (1:5–7). The first major reality: God is light. This is figurative for spiritual light and truth in contrast with darkness which is synonymous with sinfulness and error. True, spiritual fellowship is in the light.
7. (1:8). Every believer has sin, i.e., sin is a sad reality in the life. We are beset with a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption as long as we are in this body (Rom. 7:14–25).

Note: There are several issues which are essential: first, Paul declares that, before the absolute righteousness of the law he is the epitome of weakness—“made of flesh” (ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι, not σάρκικός, bearing the characteristics of the flesh). Second, the source of his agony was not the “old man” or “old nature,” but sin. Third, there ought to be no chapter division after v. 25. At 8:1ff, Paul takes up the reality of the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification after dealing with the principle of the breaking of

¹⁸⁶ These outlines adapted from John R. W. Stott, *Loc. cit.*

¹⁸⁷ These outlines adapted from John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, pp. 274–275.

the reigning power of sin in Rom. 6:1–14. There is no “getting out of Romans chapter 7 into Romans chapter 8” in the believer’s experience.

8. (1:9). Confession means to take sides with God against our sin, lit: “to say the same thing” [ὁμολογέω] as God says. Thus, confession necessarily implies forsaking such sin.
9. (1:10). If we say that we have never sinned or have achieved sinlessness [οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν] we deceive ourselves and are devoid of truth.
10. (Chapter 2). The first application of the tests distinguishing believers from the heretics:

Obedience, or the moral test	(2:3–6)
Love, or the social test	(2:7–11)
Digression re the church and the world	(2:12–17)
Belief, or the doctrinal test	(2:18–27)
11. (2:1). The vbs. here [ἵνα μὴ ἁμαρτήτε...καὶ ἐάν τις ἁμαρτή] refer to committing acts of sin (aor. subj), i.e., acting out of character as believers. Here the Lord Jesus is called our advocate or Paraclete [παράκλητον], i.e., he intercedes before throne of God (Heb. 4:14–16) as the Holy Spirit intercedes from within (Jn. 14:17; Rom. 8:26–27).
12. (2:2). The Lord Jesus is our propitiation, i.e., he appeased the wrath of God against our sins and atoned for them. He is the only one God will accept, and so the only Savior in and for the entire world (Rom. 3:21–26; 5:1–2).
13. (2:3–5). Mark the use of the perf. tense: “Hereby do we know that we have come to know him” [γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν], i.e., assurance of salvation is largely based on our obedience. Disobedience in itself is sin! Obedience is both an assurance and also the path of all blessing.
14. (2:6). The term “walk” refers to one’s lifestyle or manner of life [περιπάτησεν]. We are to have the lifestyle of our Lord!
15. (2:7–11). A contrast of lifestyles based on walking in the light and loving our brethren. Both are evidences of saving grace.
16. (2:12–14). Note the various spiritual levels of Christian experience: “fathers,” “young men” and “little children.” There is always room for progression and spiritual growth.

17. (2:15–17). The strong prohibition not to love the world or what is in the world. Note that “life” is what makes life satisfying apart from God in its satisfaction, comfort and advantages [ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, not ζωή]. All this is in the process of passing away, but the one doing God’s will abides forever.
18. (2:18). The inspired Apostles did not know how long the age of grace and gospel would last (Cf. Paul in 1 Thess. 4:13–18). There were marks even at that time that seemed to herald the final days. The antichrists through the ages all anticipate the final Antichrist.
19. (2:19). Evidently some of the heretics left the ranks of professing Christianity and separated themselves. Sadly, some remained and sought to seduce believers.
20. (2:20, 27). The unction or anointing [χρῖσμα] refers to the work of the Holy Spirit leading believers into the various and full aspects of the truth. These are the true “Charismatics”!
21. (2:21–26). John writes in absolute terms and contrasts. There is no middle ground between truth and error, or between light and darkness, or between salvation and reprobation.
22. (2:27–28). The indwelling work of the Holy Spirit sustains, guides and enables the true child of God.
23. (2:29). Lit: the one practicing [πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν] righteousness. This refers to a life lived in the context of the truth. There were evidently mere professing Christians in John’s day as there are today.
24. (Chapters 3–4). The second and third applications of these tests to distinguish between believers and the heretics:
 - Elaboration of the moral test: righteousness (2:28–4:6)
 - Elaboration of the social test: love (3:11–18)
 - Digression concerning assurance (3:19–24)
 - Elaboration of the doctrinal test: belief (4:1–6)
 - Further elaboration of the social test: love (4:7–12)
 - Combination of the doctrinal and social tests (4:13–21)

An outline on experiencing the love of God:

- Love that is pure (3:1–9)
- Love that is practical (3:10–24)
- Love that is perfect (4:1–21)

25. (3:1). Three considerations: first, the term “manner” originally meant “from what place or region” [ποταπήν]. This is nothing less than a heavenly love which has been given to us and remains with us [δέδωκεν, perf.] as God’s children! Second, the textual evidence is for the additional words [καὶ ἐσμέν], “and we are!” Third, the world does not know or understand us because it did not know him.
26. (3:2–3). Even in our present state, we are the sons of God; the anticipation: we shall see our Lord as he is! This anticipation should urge us on to holiness of life!
27. (3:4). A commentary on the lawless nature of sin has already been considered under “Troublesome Passages.”
28. (3:5–8). The stark contrast between a converted life and a life of sin.
29. (3:9). A verse often used to teach sinless perfection. The vb. in the pres. tense gives the truth plainly. “Every single one having been begotten of God sin does not habitually practice, for his seed remains in him and he cannot continue in sin because God is the source of his spiritual birth.”
30. (3:10a). This emphasizes the practice of unrighteousness, i.e., a sinful lifestyle. [πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην], lit: “every single one without exception not practicing righteousness...”
31. (3:10b–15). True, Christian or Christ-like love is the true badge of the people of God (Jn. 13:34–35). Sadly, the history of Christianity is steeped in blood! Why? False religion, the idea of a state church which by nature becomes the persecutor, and mere professing Christians in name only who, in fact were ungodly men.
32. (3:16–20). True Christian love is self-sacrificing and practical, never merely theoretical.
33. (3:21–24). Heart obedience to God’s commands and a true, consistent love for the people of God are the outward signs of a regenerate heart.
34. (4:1–3). Two considerations: first, believers are not to be naïve, but are to exercise discernment. Second, a warning

against the Docetic Gnostics who denied the incarnation and true humanity of our Lord.

35. (4:4). A truth to be remembered! The Spirit of God who indwells and enables us is greater than the evil one and his minions.
36. (4:5–6). Those who love and receive the truth we may hold as brethren; those who do not reveal themselves to be of the world.
37. (4:7–11). The short, striking declaration on the love of God and the truth that God is love, and this love has been demonstrated to the fullest extreme. Such love ought to motivate believers to love one another!
38. (4:12–17). The second striking statement concerning the love of God. This ought to be reflected in our faith, testimony and actions.
39. (4:18). The fear of God is not incompatible with love, but the fear of man is.
40. (4:19). The love of the believer is reciprocal and responsive, not causative.
41. (4:20–21). The heretics claimed to love God, but did not love the brethren—this revealed their duplicity and hypocrisy.
42. (Chapter 5). The three tests together; the three witnesses and three affirmations:

The three tests: moral, social and doctrinal	(5:1–5)
The three witnesses	(5:6–12)
The resulting assurance	(5:13–17)
The three affirmations	(5:18–21)

An outline on experiencing the life of God:

- The life received (5:1–5)
- The life recorded (5:6–12)
- The life revealed (5:13–21)

43. (5:1–3). The believer's assurance is bound up with loving both the Father and the Son, in loving the brethren and living in obedience to God's commandments.
44. (5:4–6). Some find here a reference to the Nicolaitans, a group of ecclesiastics who sought to rule over the people (Rev.

- 2:6, 15). Faith overcomes the world. It is the greatest defensive weapon in the believer's arsenal.
45. (5:10–13). This record has been inscripturated and is now the Bible, the very inspired Word of God. To believe God is to believe the Bible; to deny the Bible is to deny God.
46. (5:13). Assurance of faith and salvation is bound up in the Scriptures. True Christianity is the religion of one book, the inspired Word of God.
47. (5:14–17). Prayer and the will of God. Prayer does not and cannot change God's will. But the one who prays is brought into conformity to that will if he prays acceptably.
48. (5:18–20). Closing comments once more reiterating the reality of a righteous life and true, saving knowledge.
49. (5:21). Idolatry is more pervasive than most realize. Not all idols are material. Many are immaterial, dwelling the mind or heart. Whatever or whomever we think about, spend our time, energy and finances on, determines our morality and is put first in our lives is our "god." An idol is anyone or anything which becomes an end in itself.

The Epistle of 2 John

Introduction

The Second and Third Epistles of John are the shortest books in the Bible. In the Old Testament Canon, Obadiah is the shortest book, only one chapter in length, containing 21 verses and 668 words in the English Bible [248 words in Hebrew; 471 in the LXX]. In the New Testament Canon, 2 John has thirteen verses and 310 words in the English Bible [245 words in the Greek text]. 3 John has fourteen verses and 307 words in the English Bible [219 words in the Greek text].

2 and 3 John are two of the six personal letters or epistles in the New Testament, the others being 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

Note: Some might possibly include the Gospel according to Luke, as it is addressed to an individual (Lk. 1:1–4), but it does not possess the characteristics of a personal letter; it is a lengthy dissertation on the life and ministry of our Lord, as the second writing, the Book of Acts (Acts 1:1–3), although addressed to the same individual, is a history of the early churches and the ministries of Peter and Paul.

These two short epistles are characteristic of personal letters written in the Greco–Roman Era. These were written on single sheet of papyrus paper about 8 X 10 inches in size—the usual size for a typical letter in personal correspondence. As customary for that era, each contains a salutation, giving the writer's identity, the recipient[s], then the body of the letter and a final conclusion or benediction.

Background

The state of Christianity toward the end of the first century was characterized by several factors: first, the Jewish animosity against and persecution of Jewish and Gentile Christians, which characterized the Book of Acts, ended with the Jewish War and destruction of Jerusalem, Herod's Temple and the final suicidal incident at Masada (c. 66–74). The Emperor Vespasian (c. 69–79) brought more than 60,000 Jewish prisoners of war as slaves to build the Colosseum in Rome (c. 70–78). Through this war and the later, final Bar–Hokba rebellion (c. 132–136), national

Judaism ceased to exist. Judaism would no longer threaten Christianity.

Second, the old issues between Jewish and Gentile Christians had been settled through the preaching of the Apostles and the Jewish War. Until the Jewish War, the Jerusalem Church remained somewhat cultural or nationalistic (Acts 15:1–29; 21:16–27:32; Gal. 2:1–21). The Epistle to the Hebrews was the final word for those Jewish Christians who thought of nominally returning to Judaism to escape persecution as believers.

Third, before the final Jewish War, most of the Jewish Christians had fled Jerusalem, many migrating into Asia Minor. The Apostle John and many others settled in the area of Ephesus. As the last remaining Apostle, he exercised a leading role among the believers and churches throughout that region and beyond until the beginning of the reign of Trajan (c. 98–116).

Fourth, there were sporadic Roman state persecutions, which occurred with varying severity until the Emperor Constantine in 330 AD, who, evidently for political reasons, made the Christianity of that day the official religion of the Roman Empire the “Constantinian Change.” Under Domitian (c. 81–96), the Apostle John himself was exiled to the Island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor where he wrote the Book of Revelation.

Note: The “Christianity” which the Emperor Constantine made the state religion was not New Testament Christianity, but an ecclesiastical and sacerdotal, priestly system. This is known as “The Constantinian Change,” and the emergence of a state church with baptismal regeneration, an ecclesiastical hierarchy of priests, bishops and popes, which were sanctioned by the state and furthered by her power.

Note: Times of persecution always tend to purify Christianity. Such times thin out the nominal professors and steel true believers. Christianity “thrives on persecution. Prosperity has often been fatal to it, persecution, never.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ James Stalker, *Life of Paul*, p. 34; Also *Survey of the Bible*, IV, p. 73.

Finally, the first elements and influence of the various Gnostic sects¹⁸⁹ began to infiltrate the churches. This intrusion and subsequent influence are reflected in the writings of John in his Gospel and three Epistles, and also in the Epistles of 2 Peter and Jude (Jude v. 4–19; 2 Pet. 2:1–3:1). The early and leading schools were those of the Cerinthians and Docetics. The former denied the Deity of our Lord; the latter his true humanity. These often brought with them a licentious lifestyle which caused havoc in some of the churches, as they sought to spread their beliefs and assume the influence and position of teachers.

Peter and Paul were missionaries or itinerate preachers, as were their helpers and associates. In the final decades of the first century, Christianity was both extended and built up by such itinerate preachers both during and after the martyrdom of the Apostles and their immediate associates (e.g., Apollos, Acts 18:24–19:1; Titus 3:13, etc.) (Titus 3:10; Heb. 13:1–2, 23; 2 Jn. v. 1, 10). John himself, as the sole surviving Apostle, evidently made such missionary journeys to visit the churches (2 Jn. v. 12; 3 Jn. v. 13–14).

Among these itinerate preachers came the early Gnostics as itinerate teachers and philosophers, and found a hearing in many of the churches as they presented themselves as “Christians.” As there were no church buildings until late in the third century, Christians and assemblies met in homes and in the context of hospitality to these itinerate preachers and teachers (2 Jn. v. 10).

Note: The proper term for a gathered church is ἐκκλησία, an assembly. The Eng. word “church” derives from the Greek κύριοκος, “of or belonging to the Lord,” i.e., the Lord’s house. Thus, early in Christian history, the idea of the church as an entity other than an assembly of believers—a building, denomination or of Christians in general—began as a departure from the New Testament concept and truth. Many today speak of “The Church” as synonymous with Christianity in general, and thus confuse it with the Kingdom of God. Old time Baptists referred to their church buildings as “meeting houses” for the assembled churches.

¹⁸⁹ For a discussion of Gnosticism, see this *Survey of the Bible*, III, pp. 118–125.

Note: Gnosticism had many variations as a syncretic philosophy, taking aspects of either Judaism or Christianity and seeking to infiltrate and amalgamate the Christian religion with their oriental mysticism and Greek philosophies. John wrote against these false teachers, pointedly the Docetics and their antinomianism or lawlessness. These held that all matter was inherently evil, thus Christ could not have had a human body—a point John emphasizes (Jn. 1:14; 1 Jn. 1:1–4; 4:2–3; 2 Jn. v. 7).

Stemming from this heresy was the subsequent idea that there was absolutely no relationship between the flesh and the spirit, thus what was done or practiced in the flesh had no relation to what was done spiritually. This manifest itself in a rank antinomianism with licentiousness and wanton excess—the first “carnal Christian” doctrine (2 Pet. 2:1–3:1; Jude v. 4–19; 1 Jn. 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 9, 11, 15–17a, 19, 22–23, 26; 3:4, 6, 8, 10, 14–15; 4:3, 5, 20)!

Christians and churches have always had to contend with mere professing believers whose lives have often been a scandal, and with those who enter into their realm of fellowship with corrupt doctrine and lifestyles. These seek to promote some type of antinomianism under the guise of “Christian liberty.” It was so in John’s day; it is sadly also true in ours.

Authorship

2 John was listed among the *Antilegomena* or disputed writings by Eusebius (c. 260–340). The issues were, first, the lack of a personal name for the writer; he was designated only as “The Elder” [ὁ πρεσβύτερος],¹⁹⁰ which caused Papias (c. 60–130) to assume this was another “John,” one being the Apostle; another being the Elder, both of whom were leaders among the churches. This has proven to be without substantiation. Peter referred to himself as a “fellow elder” [ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος] (1 Pet. 5:1). In a personal, private letter this would be proper and acceptable. John never mentioned himself by name in any of his writings.

¹⁹⁰ Note that ὁ πρεσβύτερος refers to the position of an elder in the church, not πρέσβυς, πρεσβύτες, an aged man, although the tone of the letter is paternal and the Apostle himself was probably in his late eighties or nineties.

Second, this was a short, personal letter, and as such, did not have the circulation of a longer, more official document. The shortness and personal nature alone would account for its lack of distribution.

The external witnesses to the canonicity of this epistle are found in Irenaeus (c. 140–203), who quoted 2 John v. 7–8 and 10–11.¹⁹¹ Clement of Alexandria (c. 155–215) recognized this as being an epistle of John's. The Muratorian Canon (c. 170) mentioned two epistles by John. Origen (c. 185–253) mentioned the two epistles, but stated that some did not agree on their genuineness. Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 200–265) referred to both 2 and 3 John. Cyprian (c. 200–258) acknowledged the Johannine authorship of these writings.

2 and 3 John are not found in the Old Syriac (2nd century), or the Peshitta (2nd century), but *Ephrem Syrus* [Ephrem the Syrian] (c. 306–373) quoted them. They are also included in the Thebaic (c. 200) and Memphitic (early 3rd century) Egyptian Versions. The two epistles were accepted as canonical by the Council of Carthage (397).

Internal evidence points to Johannine authorship with parallels to 1 John, the use of Johannine expressions, the themes of truth, love and obedience to God's commandments, and warnings against the false teachers.

The Recipients of 2 John

This short, personal, private letter is addressed to "the elect lady" [ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ]. This may be a proper name, Kyria,¹⁹² which was a common feminine name in that era.

There are five possibilities, as advanced by scholars, commentators and church theologians: first, Kyria was a godly lady of repute who hosted a church in her home, and whose

¹⁹¹ It may be that he thought he was quoting 1 Jn., but the recognition is the same.

¹⁹² Κυρία is the fem. of Κύριος, or "Lord." The Heb. equivalent would be "Martha," from the Heb. fem. מרת, "lord." See the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, III, p. 2000.

family had a good and consistent testimony. Second, The woman's name was the "Lady Elekta." Third, this was the code name and designation for a church. Fourth, the term "Elect Lady" is an honorary title for an outstanding sister. Fifth, this designates the church in general—the universal church—a concept which we do not find in the New Testament, and consider such to be confused with the Kingdom of God.

We hold that the reference and designation is to an honorable Christian lady of repute and her children, whose home was used as a meeting place by the local church in her town. The reference to her "elect sister" in verse thirteen might well refer to the family of her sister who were close to the Apostle and living in Ephesus when he wrote.

Provenance and Date

Without any reference point in the letters themselves, we may assume that the place of writing was Ephesus, from whence the aged Apostle and "Elder" John made forays to the various churches in Asia Minor when the necessity arose. In Both 2 and 3 John, he writes of his intended journey to see and converse with these recipients.

The dates would be in the final years of the first century if, as ancient historians claim, John lived into the reign of Trajan (c. 98–116). This would have been probably after his exile to the Island of Patmos. Thus, these would be the final books of the New Testament to be written. Lack of existing evidence means this is somewhat conjectural.

Purposes

This short, personal letter reveals several purposes: first, John commends Kyria and her children for their love and loyalty to the truth (v. 1–4).

Second, he desires Kyria and her children to continue to walk in love. This love is manifested in keeping God's commandments.

Third, he warns Kyria concerning the false teachers, whom he calls deceivers and antichrists because they denied the true humanity of our Lord. These were not to be allowed in their

house meetings. Early churches met in homes, and such an informal atmosphere tended to give these heretics an advantage. (v. 7–11).

Fourth, John reveals his intention to travel to see them personally, as he has many things to discuss with them. Finally, he sends greetings from Kyria's sister and her family.

Contribution to the Canon

There are several issues: first, all three of John's Epistles give us an understanding of the contemporary situation existing among the churches of that era. There was a variety of itinerant preachers and others, perhaps Christian business travelers, who would attend the house meetings.

Second, the Gnostics sought to be included as "Christians," and used the informality of home meetings to advance their teachings.

Third, the major doctrinal issue at that time was the Deity and true humanity of our Lord. These truths could never be compromised. To deny that our Lord became incarnate is a denial of his whole redemptive work, active and passive obedience, his resurrection, his present High Priestly ministry and his return as Judge.

Fourth, true Christian love was to be expressed in obedience to the Lord's commands—not a love of mere talk, but a love of positive action.

Finally, it is evident that these early Christians were given to fellowship. This was true from the very first (Acts 2:42ff). Sanctified fellowship is a great blessing and unique to biblical Christianity.

Key–Words

The key–words are "truth," occurring five times (2 Jn. v. 1, 2, 3, 4), and "love," occurring four times (2 Jn. v. 1, 3, 5, 6) all in such a short, personal note!

The exhortation occupies verses 4–11 and is in two parts. In verses 4–6 we have the practical aspect of continuing in the truth: we are to "walk" in "love." Then in verses 7–11 we have the

doctrinal aspect of continuing in the truth: we are to “look” or watch against error.¹⁹³

There is a Divine balance between “truth” and “love.” We are to be uncompromising concerning the truth, and be loving in the practical sense of walking in obedience to the Divine commandments. Truth without love may become harsh; love without truth may compromise the latter. It is not unloving to be uncompromising concerning the truth of God. This letter gives us the perfect balance.

Note: There is a tendency on the part of many in our day to preach that God loves each and every human being equally and that our Lord suffered and died for all human beings without exception. This is a love without discrimination.

This term “world”¹⁹⁴ [κόσμος] can have several meanings, depending on the given context: the created universe, mankind, the world of evil and sinfulness; the world system, which is under the evil one; or Gentiles and Jews as comprising the human race. In John 3:16, “world” does not mean every human being without exception, but in the context, the Gentiles as well as the Jews. This alone fits the context and was understood in this sense by both our Lord and Nicodemus (3:14–18). Nicodemus thought before our Lord’s declaration that God loved only the Jews, and his only thought toward the Gentiles was that of judgment. Our Lord corrected him in 3:17. Redemptive grace reaches out to all, both Jew and Gentile.

Should it be supposed that God loves every human being equally and Christ died for every human being equally and without exception, then the atonement would be universal, non-vicarious, non-propitiatory and ineffectual unless man’s repentance and faith be added to it. This would mean that our Lord died for no one in particular; his suffering and death simply made salvation possible, not actual. This idea of a powerless,

¹⁹³ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, VI, p. 329.

¹⁹⁴ There are three terms for “world”: κόσμος, order, arrangement [Hence, Eng: “cosmetic”], adornment, human race, Jews and Gentiles; αἰών, age; οἰκουμένη, the inhabited earth. The context must determine the exact meaning.

theoretical “atonement” cannot be squared with Scripture.¹⁹⁵ It posits that God has done all that he can, everything is now left up to the sinner, and salvation is by mere human trust—this would be an abandonment of grace altogether. Justification because of faith would be graceless and meaningless—and it would be salvation by works. No one could take comfort, as the Apostle Paul did when he stated, that Christ “loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

The Apostle John teaches love with discrimination, as it was not unloving to not let the heretical teachers into one’s home. The truth was at stake.

Genre and Style

This short, personal letter falls into the genre of most personal correspondence of that era in structure and style. Some have classified this as a paraenetic¹⁹⁶ letter because of its advice concerning truth and love, and its exhortation concerning the heretics who should neither be allowed into one’s house meetings nor bidden Godspeed.

Theology

The contents of this short, personal letter are mostly practical in nature and abbreviated, as the aged Apostle had much more to write, but preferred to talk “face to face” when he arrived. What this epistle contains, therefore is the very essence of the issues involved.

Some have described the contents as “The Fundamentals of the Faith” or “Back to the Basics of Christianity” (MacArthur). These basics are contained in the terms “truth,” “love” and obedience to the commands of God. One must walk in the truth, love consistently in a scriptural context, and live in obedience to God’s commands. This love was scriptural and discriminatory, as

¹⁹⁵ This was the governmental theory of the atonement as taught by Charles G. Finney and other inconsistent universalists. He likewise denied the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers—the denial of the vicarious nature of our Lord’s suffering and death! His “decisionist” system was wholly defective and divorced from Scripture.

¹⁹⁶ Paraenetic, fr. the Gk. παραένεσις, pertaining to moral or religious instruction.

it was determinative of one's religious and social relationships (v. 10–11).

Theology Proper and Christology

God is marked as “Father” and the Lord Jesus Christ as his “Son,” implying the Deity of our Lord (v. 3, 7, 9; Heb. 1:2–12) and also his true humanity (v. 7). These particular heretical teachers are then identified as Docetics because of their denial of our Lord's true humanity.

As we study the three Johannine Epistles, we could say that John's theology was centrally Christological, as this was the doctrine assailed at that time.

Practical Theology

The major part of this short letter is on Christian ethics or walking in the truth and walking in love. This must govern one's ecclesiastical and social relationships (v. 1–6, 10–11).

Eschatology

There is mention of losing one's reward (v. 8), implying a future judgment and accounting. The Christian perspective of life must always have a futuristic or eschatological aspect—one of giving an account, as well as the blessedness of future glory and glorification (Rom. 8:14–23, 34–39; 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Structure and Outline

The structure of this short, personal letter is rather simple: first, salutation and greeting (v. 1–3); second, practical and doctrinal discussion of both truth and love (v. 4–6); third, an exhortation concerning heretics who denied the truth of our Lord's person and incarnation, who must not be welcomed into one's house meetings or be bidden Godspeed (v. 7–11); fourth, a closing word concerning an imminent meeting and a greeting from close relatives (v. 12–13).

There are several analyses or outlines of this short epistle: These all divide naturally at the same verses. One emphasizes the lady Kyria as the central figure:

John Commends the Lady	(v. 1–4)
John Commands the Lady	(v. 5–6)
John Cautions the Lady	(v. 7–13)

A two-fold outline gives a very simple approach to 2 John:

- Introduction (v. 1-3)
- I. The Path of the Believer (v. 4-6)
- II. The Peril of the Believer (v. 7-11)
- Conclusion (v. 12-13)

Another two-fold outline centers on love and truth:

- Introduction (v. 1-3)
- I. The Practical Aspect: Walk in Love (v. 4-6)
- II. The Doctrinal Aspect: Watch in Truth (v. 7-11)
- Conclusion (v. 12-13)

A four-fold outline is suggestive, centering on Christian hospitality:

- I. The Basis of Christian Hospitality (v. 1-3)
- II. The Behavior of Christian Hospitality (v. 4-6)
- III. The Bounds of Christian Hospitality (v. 7-11)
- IV. The Blessings of Christian Hospitality (v. 12-13)

Outline of 2 John

- The Salutation (v. 1-3)
 - A. The Writer: the “Elder” (v. 1a)
 - B. The Readers: the Elect Kyria and family (v. 1b-2)
 - 1. The determining nature of the truth (v. 1b)
 - 2. The eternal nature of the truth (v. 2)
 - C. The Salutation: a benediction from the Father and Son in truth and love (v. 3)
 - 1. The graces given (v. 3a)
 - 2. The source of such graces (v. 3b)
- I. The Truthful Admonition (v. 4-6)
 - A. The Occasion: rejoicing in the truth (v. 4)
 - 1. Rejoicing in the children’s walking in the truth (v. 4a)
 - 2. Rejoicing in the children’s obedience (v. 4b)
 - B. The Appeal: walk in love (v. 5-6)
 - 1. An old Commandment to love one another (v. 5)
 - 2. An encouragement to walk in love (v. 6)
- II. The Faithful Exhortation (v. 7-11)
 - A. The warning against false teachers (v. 7-9)
 - 1. The Docetics: their deceit and heresy (v. 7)
 - 2. An exhortation not to lose one’s reward (v. 8)

- 3. The doctrine of Docetics (v. 9a)
- 4. The orthodox doctrine of Christianity (v. 9b)
- B. The prohibition of aiding false teachers (v. 10–11)
 - 1. The exclusion of heretics from one's house (v. 10a)
 - 2. The prohibition of giving a heretic a benediction (v. 10b)
 - 3. A warning concerning guilt by association (v. 11)
- The Conclusion (v. 12–13)
 - A. The revelation of an anticipated visit (v. 12)
 - B. The greeting of the sister and her children (v. 13)

Notes & Observations

1. (v. 1). The fellowship and communion between believers ought to be of the highest order, a holy familiarity which is spiritual, moral and ethical. Christian love should be morally unassailable.
2. (v. 2). Truth gives to love its moral and true spiritual character. The Christian ethic stands unique among all social relationships and all of the world's religions. Further, we find here that eschatological aspect of the believer's experience—an anticipation of future glory.¹⁹⁷
3. (v. 3). This is a truly Christian benediction. Everything comes to us through grace, and mercy reminds us of our humble and liable state, even as believers. The peace which comes from God is unique. It is both peace with God and the peace of God. These graces are given from and through both the Father and the Son. The Christology of John permeates and is essential to his theology.
4. (v. 4). "Truth" is predominant in the first part of this short letter. This truth is embodied in the gospel. When the truth of the gospel is consistently manifest in the lives and experiences of believers, it is a cause for great joy!
5. (v. 5). This was our Lord's "New Commandment" (Jn. 13:34–35). Not only to love one another, but to love with a Christ-like love. How rare is such among professing

¹⁹⁷ v. 2, ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, "shall be unto eternity."

Christians! Little wonder that both our Lord and the Apostle John made this the touchstone of true faith!

“From the beginning” is a favorite expression of John’s (1 Jn. 1:1; 2:7, 13–14, 24; 3:8, 11; 2 Jn. v. 5–6). This evidently looks back to the very beginning of the Gospel ministry of our Lord.

6. (v. 6). True Christianity is a religion of both truth and action. Sadly, to many, it is mostly talk. The love John speaks about is a love which manifests itself in proper action—essentially keeping God’s Commandments, i.e., an obedient love.
7. (v. 7–11). John labels these Docetics as deceivers because they sought to pass themselves off as believers to gain entrance into the house meetings to sow their corrupt doctrines. They were to be avoided denied entrance and excluded. There could be no compromise when the purity of the truth was at stake!
8. (v. 7). John calls these heretics “antichrists” (1 Jn. 2:8, 18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. v. 7). He did not soften the contrast or the awful denotation. Those that oppose or seek to seduce from the truth of Christ are antichrists. There was no ecumenism in John’s day.
9. (v. 8). This may well be a warning against apostasy. Does our religion allow for a time of weakness or even compromise under the guise of kindness?
10. (v. 9). Every biblical doctrine is interrelated with the other aspects of Divine truth. The doctrine of Christ is all-determining. Christology is central to Christianity. Any Defect concerning the person or work of our Lord may prove fatal.
11. (v. 10–11). The indicative anticipates that such will seek to enter into their fellowship at house meetings. These are neither to be received nor given the usual greeting between believers [χαίρε, lit: “Rejoice!”]. Friendliness and hospitality without discernment would act as a furtherance of such deceivers.

12. (v. 12). The aged Apostle intends to visit this family and house church, as he has much further say, but would do it “face-to-face” [lit: “mouth-to-mouth to speak”].¹⁹⁸ What joy there must have been in those early days when Christians gathered for worship and fellowship! The same const. occurs in 1 Jn. 1:4 with the perf. tense: “that our joy may be filled up and remain full!”¹⁹⁹
13. (v. 13). The children from the believing sister’s family—cousins in the flesh, but brethren in the Lord. How true Christianity transforms families! Remember, the Old Testament was family-oriented (as seen in the feasts and in worship); the New Testament is church-oriented, as brethren in the Lord are closer than brethren in the flesh. What a blessing when these are both!

¹⁹⁸ v. 11. ...στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσαι...

¹⁹⁹ v. 12. ...ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη. perf. ptc.

The Epistle of 3 John

Introduction

The reader is referred back to the First and Second Epistles of John in this Bible Survey. This introduction is, by necessity, somewhat redundant of the introductions to the two previous Epistles.²⁰⁰

The third Epistle or Letter of the Apostle John is the shortest book in the Bible. It has fourteen verses and 307 words in the English Bible [219 words in the Greek text]. This was a personal, private letter to a beloved brother in the Lord named Gaius, who had proven himself faithful as a believer, and church member. He had also shown himself hospitable to the itinerant preachers and missionaries, and had evidently aided them financially.

This personal note is one of six personal letters in the New Testament—four by the Apostle Paul and two by the Apostle John.²⁰¹

Both Second and Third John are characteristic of personal letters written in the Greco–Roman Era. These were written on a single sheet of papyrus paper about 8 X 10 inches in size—the usual size for a typical letter in personal correspondence. As customary for that era, each contains a salutation, giving the writer’s identity, the recipient[s], then the body of the letter and a final conclusion or benediction.

This third letter differs from the second, which is more general in both encouragement and admonition. It is addressed to a faithful brother, Gaius, as an encouragement. It further contains a warning concerning Diotrephes, either an elder or usurper of power in the church who maliciously gossiped about John, refused his letter and his preachers, and misused church discipline for his own benefit. John promises to deal with him when he arrived on his intended trip. The letter finally gives a fine commendation of Demetrius, who probably carried this letter to Gaius.

²⁰⁰ 1 John, p. 177; 2 John, p. 203 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

²⁰¹ See p. 203 of this volume.

The political and religious circumstances of the final decades of the first century have been discussed in the introductions to 1 and 2 John. There was some Government persecution of Christians. Gnostic sects were rising to threaten Christianity from within, intruding into the churches and masquerading as “Christians.”

Also from within, as this letter reveals, we may have the beginnings of an arbitrary, autocratic eldership or the undue, evil influence of a powerful, influential member. This letter gives an insight into the matters of hospitality to and provisions for itinerant preachers, which were vital to the spread of the gospel and the teaching of Christianity during that era.

Excursus:

The Rise of Ecclesiasticism

The Apostles had no successors. Monarchical bishops already existed in the time of Irenaeus (c. 140–203). Elders or pastors shepherded and oversaw the affairs and ministry of local churches. The first step in the ecclesiasticism that would corrupt and characterize the second and third centuries by the *Katholikos* party in the churches was the development of the monarchical bishop who was elevated above local pastors. By the fourth century there would exist Metropolitan bishops who ruled over vast geographical areas and their churches.

The monarchical bishop was a presiding elder who became the overseer and administrator of several local assemblies—an office without biblical warrant in the New Testament, as the Apostles had no successors, and each assembly was self-governing under the Lordship of Christ and the Word of God. Prominent personalities assumed such a position through influence, scholarly positions and often, it seems, through the lack of suitable pastors in smaller or rural churches.

This is important for two reasons: first, it reveals how quickly after the death of John, the last Apostle, various errors crept into the churches. Baptismal regeneration was beginning to be practiced by 150 AD in the time of Justus Martyr (c. 100–165). Coincident with this unscriptural practice was clinical baptism

through pouring and later sprinkling for those who were infirmed or physically disabled and could not be immersed.

Note: the time-frame of 100–313 AD has been called “The Era of Transition.” It extended from the end of the Apostolic Era (c. 98) to the establishment of the state church under the Emperor Constantine (c. 330). It was characterized by various departures from the primitive faith: these included the rise of ecclesiasticism, and the beginning of sacerdotalism. The pastors or elders were increasingly seen as priests [fr. *sacerdos*, priest] with baptismal regeneration and the implementation of clinical baptism by pouring and the elevation of the ordinances to sacraments conveying grace and giving salvific power.

The second reason is that the author of this letter, the “Elder,” has been thought by radical biblical critics,²⁰² to be another other than the Apostle John. They, following Papias (c. 60–130) and a few others, held that there were two individuals of prominence in the Ephesian Church, the Apostle John and the “Elder John,” a fictitious person who allegedly came from what has been called the “Johannine Community” at Ephesus in either the late decades of the first or early second century.

If so, then this “Elder John,” attempting to be a monarchical bishop, would not have apostolic authority and was, in fact, intruding into the affairs of the church administered by Diotrephes. John was wrong; Diotrephes was right! Such conjectures have enabled these radical critics to reconstruct both biblical doctrine and history, and even reverse the thrust of this epistle. With such conjectures, they drain the epistle of any inspired authority or relevancy.

Authorship

Both 2 and 3 John were listed in the *Antilegomena* or disputed writings by Eusebius (c. 260–340). The reasons for their slow acceptance: first, these letters were very short. Second, they were personal, private letters and so their distribution was slow and their dissemination was circumstantially providential among the churches. Third, they are focused on only a few items of a

²⁰² See pp. 51–54 of this volume.

more practical nature and were not lengthy doctrinal dissertations which would allegedly minister to many.

Papias and several subsequent writers attributed these to the “Elder John,” whom, we have noted, was fictitious. John, as the last living Apostle, and now very old, would be “The Elder” in a unique sense, using this title rather than “Apostle,” in a more informal and venerable sense as he was well-known throughout the churches.

The oldest external evidence for this epistle is found in the Muratorian Canon (c. 170). Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) and Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 200–265) referred to both 2 and 3 John. Cyprian (c. 200–258) acknowledged the Johannine authorship of these writings, as did Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 349). Their final acceptance into the inspired canon was at the third Council of Carthage (397).

All three of John’s Epistles are by the same author through overwhelming evidence, subject-matter, style and vocabulary, and these in turn have much in common in with the Gospel of John as to style and vocabulary.

The Recipient and the Circumstances

This short, personal letter was addressed to Gaius, who was evidently not an official, but a godly, active member of a church in Asia Minor.

Note: Gaius, or Caius, is the Latin equivalent of Γάιος, “of the earth, earthy,” one of the most common masculine names of that era. There are three other men named “Gaius” in the New Testament, all in the Pauline writings: Gaius of Macedonia, one of Paul’s later traveling companions (Acts 19:29), Gaius of Derbe, another of Paul’s companions (Acts 20:4), and Gaius, one of Paul’s early converts at Corinth and his host in whose home he later penned the Epistle to the Romans (1 Cor. 1:14; Rom. 16:23). As this short, personal letter was written some thirty-five to forty years later to a church member in Asia Minor, it is very doubtful if this Gaius was one of those previously mentioned.

Gaius was a Christian brother and faithful, beloved friend to the Apostle [Elder] John. Some suggest that he was an elder in

that church. The letter implies a long, close and enduring friendship in the gospel. What a blessing it is to have such friends—beloved brethren—in the Lord, who walk in the truth and have proven faithful over the years! John writes to Gaius, who may have been one of his converts from his earlier ministry, and commends him for his faithfulness, referring, perhaps, to him as one of his spiritual children (v. 4).

In v. 5–8, John refers to the faithfulness of Gaius in providing hospitality for the itinerant preachers and missionaries, and helping them financially. Had Gaius been disciplined out of the church by Diotrephes? It is possible, but the evidence would be very circumstantial. As John makes mention of this to Gaius in the third person, “...them...them...” (v. 10), we may assume that he had not.

He then discusses Diotrephes (v. 9–11), an autocratic elder or member of that church who arbitrarily dismissed both John himself through his letter, and those sent by him, initiated malicious gossip about John and his preachers, and even excluded under discipline some from the church who would help these missionaries.

Note: Was John's letter, previously written to the church either the Epistle of 1 or 2 John? Evidently not. This is another “lost letter,” as was the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:9). God evidently preserved some writings and not others in his prerogative and providence. The New Testament Canon, as we possess it, is sufficient for both faith and practice.

Note: “...prating against us with malicious words...” [λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς]. φλυαρῶν, pres. ptc. The term means idle talk, but it is modified by “malicious,” making this a serious charge of gossip and rumor meant to ruin the reputation of the Apostle John and his preachers.

What the Apostle Paul had forewarned concerning some among professing Christians was already coming to pass (1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:1–7; 4:3–4).

John himself would take matters in hand when he arrived on his intended trip (v. 10). As an Apostle, John would have a unique authority over and influence throughout all the churches.

He would have a Divinely-given authority to deal with Diotrephes and the church.

Was Diotrephes an unconverted person? As v. 9–10 deal directly with Diotrephes, and v. 11 seems to be a general, concluding comment on Diotrephes’ life, conduct and spiritual state, John may have considered him an unconverted church leader. There have sadly been many who have followed in the steps of Diotrephes! Anyone who seeks to have preeminence and is self-promoting should be suspect. Nothing is more harmful to a church than an unconverted pastor, elder or deacon—a negative reflection upon the church as a whole, one through whom the evil one may destructively work, and one whose influence would stifle the gracious work and blessing of the Spirit.

Was Diotrephes a Gnostic or false teacher who had intruded into the church and gained power and authority? Some support this theory. Had he been such, however, it would have been evident and John would have made this an issue. The Apostle writes only concerning his behavior, not his doctrine.

Most believe that Demetrius, a faithful missionary and itinerant preacher was the bearer of this letter (v. 12), and was already known to Gaius.

John had much more to discuss, but not with “ink and reed,”²⁰³ but would wait until they could meet and “speak mouth-to-mouth” [καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν].

The Purpose and Occasion

These have been discussed in the previous section. Evidently, several itinerant preachers or missionaries had been rebuffed and sent away by Diotrephes, and those who would aid them and show them necessary Christian hospitality, had been

²⁰³ v. 13, ἀλλ’ οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράφειν, “Ink” [μέλανος] refers to a black ink; καλάμου refers to a reed used as a pen or writing instrument. See 2 Jn. 12.

excluded from the assembly under discipline.²⁰⁴ This was a gross misuse of church discipline.

John evidently had some communication with Diotrephes through a previous letter or these preachers, but to no avail. Now it was time to take action with Apostolic authority. He writes to his long-time convert and close friend, the faithful Gaius, to prepare for this visit, and to introduce and recommend Demetrius, a tried and true brother, who carried this letter to Gaius.

The Necessity and Nature of Christian Hospitality

Such Christian hospitality as described in this personal note and the circumstances surrounding it, including the nature and extent of church authority and discipline, justify the inclusion of this third Epistle in the inspired canon: first, most believers were relatively poor, yet were to be hospitable to the itinerant preachers and missionaries. This entailed providing for their necessities—food, shelter, and helping them financially as they ministered among the churches and evangelized and planted churches. This hospitality was often sacrificial.

Second, these itinerant preachers or missionaries were wholly dependent upon the hospitality of other believers, which included financial support, if possible. As they traveled from place to place, stopping only to preach and be refreshed and re-supplied, they could not be self-employed, as was the Apostle Paul (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor. 4:12). They were utterly dependent upon the churches, and would not take anything from unbelievers (v. 7).²⁰⁵

This unique Christian hospitality played a major role in the spread and furtherance of the gospel. Thus, this short, personal

²⁰⁴ v. 10, “casteth them out of the church,” [ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει]. The same wording used of the excommunicated, previously blind man in John 9:34 [ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω].

²⁰⁵ “Gentiles” in v. 7 is lit: “nations” [τῶν ἐθνικῶν, fr. ἐθνικός], i.e., the people of the culture, i.e., unbelievers.

letter lays down missionary principles and provisions, and church authority, order and discipline. Both home and foreign missions were identical at that time and under those circumstances.

Further, Diotrephes was the prototype of many who have succeeded him throughout history—arbitrary leaders or those who assume prominence and seek to control the church and its ministries through their personal influence, families, finances or various nefarious means, including gossip, intimidation and innuendo. At times, those in disagreement have been excluded under discipline. Politics have replaced fellowship.

Church discipline has at times been misused as a political ploy for personal advantage. Many church splits have originated from the clan of Diotrephes—beginning with personal pride, position and power. Thus, this letter lays down principles of church authority, church discipline and their abuse.

The role of the evil one must not be excluded (Matt. 13:4, 19; Eph. 4:27; 6:10–18; 1 Tim. 3:6–7; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:8–10). He is constantly at work to disrupt and discredit the work of God. His major theater of conflict is often the local assembly or gathered church. Sadly, he always seems to find willing recruits!

Finally, a letter or recommendation for Demetrius. Even today, we usually become acquainted with and introduced to missionaries on deputation through letters of recommendation from their home or sending church. Missionaries are sent forth by the churches, preach at the various assemblies, are entertained by its members, and depend upon these churches for their financial and spiritual support.

Excursus: Danger and the *Didache*

Diotrephes was the prototype of others who would seek to control churches unlawfully through various autocratic and nefarious means. This and other essential issues eventually gave rise to a short manual of church order in the second century called the *Didache* [Διδαχὴ], i.e., “The Teaching.” This is a short [2,300 words in Gk.] manual of church order:

Note: The *Didache* has fifteen chapters dealing with the two ways of life and death, baptism, the Lord's Supper, fasting, prayer and church organization and order.²⁰⁶

This manual was necessitated in part by itinerant missionaries, the intrusion of Gnostic sects, those who would take advantage of the hospitality of the churches, and those who would arbitrarily and autocratically seek to rule the churches. Some quotations from this ancient Christian document will reveal that this was a pressing issue at that time, and that there were persons who sought to unscripturally control the churches through various means:

5:1 But the path of death is this....pride, malice, self-will, covetousness, filthy talking, jealousy, audacity, pride, arrogance...

5:2 There are they who persecute the good....lovers of a lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to the good nor to righteous judgment, watching not for the good...from whom meekness and patience are afar off, loving things that are vain, following after recompense, having no compassion on the needy, nor labouring for him that is in trouble, not knowing him that made them...who turn away from him that is in need, who oppress him that is in trouble, unjust judges of the poor, erring in all things. From all these, children, may ye be delivered.

11:12 But whoever shall say in the spirit, Give me money, or things of that kind, listen not to him; but if he tell you concerning others that are in need that ye should give unto them, let no one judge him.

15:1 Elect, therefore, for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not covetous, and true and approved, for they perform for you the service of prophets and teachers.²⁰⁷

The Didache also contains some admonitions and descriptions concerning true and false prophets [preachers or missionaries]:

²⁰⁶ This document was lost for centuries and was discovered in 1873 by Philotheos Bryennios, Metropolitan of Nicomedia, in the *Codex Hierosolymitanus*. A Latin version of the first five chapters was discovered in 1900 by J. Schlecht.

²⁰⁷ *The Didache*, Chap. 5:1, 2; 11:12; 15:1.

11:1 Whosoever, therefore, shall come and teach you all these things aforesaid, him do ye receive;

11:2 but if the teacher himself turn and teach another doctrine with a view to subvert you, hearken not to him; but if he come to add to your righteousness, and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.

11:4 Let every apostle²⁰⁸ who cometh unto you be received as the Lord.

11:5 He will remain one day, and if it be necessary, a second; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet.²⁰⁹

Thus, the problems with which the Apostle John had to deal with became characteristic in these early churches where Christian hospitality—feeding, providing, listening to the preaching, helping financially—was co-extensive with the spread of the gospel.

Churches have always had to scripturally deal with the attributes and manifestations of fallen, sinful human nature. Unregenerate human nature may be inherently drawn to religion for reasons of its own. Those who love the truth, desire its furtherance, should seek to show kindness, and be open for fellowship in the truth.

Note: Traditionally, *The Didache* has been seen and studied as a second-century document, but many contemporary paedobaptist scholars view it as a first-century document. Some suggest it was drawn up after the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15. We would strongly protest, as it also teaches a triune baptism by effusion [pouring water upon the person], rather than immersion. Such a departure was not known in the Apostolic Era, but began to be practiced later in the second century, attendant with baptismal regeneration, clinical baptism by effusion and the trend toward sacerdotalism.

Provenance and Date

In the absence of contrary data, the place of writing was evidently Ephesus, where John returned after his exile to the Island of Patmos under Emperor Domitian (81–96). The date

²⁰⁸ The term “apostle” as used in this context has the general sense of one being sent, i.e., a missionary or preacher.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Chap. 11:1, 2, 4, 5.

would then be in the final years of the first century (c. 95–98), and would be the final writing of the aged Apostle and the last book of the New Testament to be written. Upon John’s return to Ephesus, he wrote his final letters and planned a necessary journey to some of the churches in Asia Minor (2 Jn. v. 12; 3 Jn. v. 10, 13–14).

Note: Both the Old Testament and the New Testament writings are arranged in a topical manner, not a chronological order. The Book of Revelation is the logical and topical consummation of Scripture, but not necessarily the final writing chronologically.

Theology

The emphasis of this letter is more upon evangelism, ethics, church order and church discipline than systematic theology. In short, the leading doctrinal issues are all personal and ecclesiastical. It is theology translated into the life of the individual and the church. It is faith revealed by proper conduct. The themes of “love” [occ. 5 times]²¹⁰ and “truth” [occ. 6 times] permeate this short letter, either directly or indirectly.

God is mentioned in v. 11 in relation to one’s actions as a professing believer. The one doing good is of God; the one not doing good is not of God. The lifestyle and action reveal one’s spiritual state. The Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned by the term “The Name” [τοῦ ὀνόματος] in v. 7. This emphasizes our Lord’s authority and power.

Structure and Outline

This short letter naturally divides itself according to the three personalities involved: Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius.

Salutation	(v. 1)
I. Gaius the Hospitable One	(v. 2–8)
II. Diotrephes the Preeminent One	(v. 9–11)
III. Demetrius the Faithful One	(v. 12)
Conclusion	(v. 13–14)

²¹⁰ v. 6, “charity” [τῇ ἀγάπῃ] should be transl. as “love.”

Another approach would be:

Introduction	(v. 1)
A) The Prosperity of Gaius	(v. 2–8)
B) The Pride of Diotrophes	(v. 9–11)
A) The Praise of Demetrius	(v. 12)
Conclusion	(v. 13–14)

Taking the repeated theme of the truth as the governing principle:

Introduction	(v. 1–4)
I. Encouraging Workers for the Truth	(v. 5–8)
II. Reproving Opponents of the Truth	(v. 9–11)
III. Commending a Witness for the Truth	(v. 12)
Conclusion	(v. 13–14)

Outline of 3 John

Introduction and Salutation	(v. 1–4)
A. The Writer	(v. 1:1b)
C. The wish for economic and spiritual prosperity	(v. 2)
D. The rejoicing over the report of faithfulness	(v. 3)
E. The joy of hearing one's children walk in the truth	(v. 4)
I. The Confirmation of Gaius	(v. 5–8)
A. An encouragement for continuance	(v. 5–6)
B. An appeal for faithfulness of ministering	(v. 7–8)
II. The Condemnation of Diotrophes	(v. 9–11)
A. The sad report of being rebuffed and refused	(v. 9)
B. The case against the behavior of Diotrophes	(v. 10)
C. The justification for disciplinary action	(v. 11)
III. The Commendation of Demetrius	(v. 12)
A. The universal report of faithfulness to the truth	(v. 12a)
B. A personal and reliable testimony to the truth	(v. 12b)
Conclusion and Benediction	(v. 13–14)
A. In place of a letter, a personal visit	(v. 13–14a)
B. A personal benediction and corporate salutation	(v. 14b)

Notes & Observations

1. (v. 1). Much stronger than merely, “Dear Gaius.” This is true, godly, Christian love which finds its fullness in the context of Divine truth. John uses this verbal adj. “beloved” [ἀγαπητός] four times in this letter of Gaius (v. 1, 2, 5, 11).

This is a sanctified, rational love and the resulting affection which surpasses natural human relations.

Note: there are four different terms for “love” in Gk.: ἔρος, a sexual love, which does not occur in the New Testament; φιλία, a love which is grounded in one’s emotions and enthusiasm; στόργη, the love, affection and devotion expressed between siblings; ἀγάπη, a love which is distinctly Christian, self-sacrificing and grounded in the rational nature—a love which is constant and expressed in consistency.

This is the key to the conversation between our Lord and Peter in Jn. 21:15–17. Our Lord used ἀγαπάω; Peter used φιλέω. He had an emotional, enthusiastic love for our Lord, but our Lord wanted something deeper and more consistent—self-giving, self-sacrificing, a love which could and would suffer for His name.

This is not say that Christian love lacks in emotion or devotion. Far from it! Mark Paul’s words in Rom. 12:9–10. He uses both φιλαδέλφια, brotherly love, and φιλόστοργος, an affectionate, devoted love expressed between siblings, the closest of relatives. True, Christian love embraces both the mind and the heart! It is to love without reservation.

2. (v. 2). Gaius was evidently a wealthy Christian. Can a Christian remain faithful and yet be wealthy? He can prosper greatly—to the extent that it does not harm his soul’s prosperity. Economic prosperity, social standing, popularity and advancement are legitimate, as long as they do not hurt our soul’s prosperity. Historically, the Christian faith has done better in adversity than in prosperity. It takes more grace to be in prosperity than in adversity!
3. (v. 3). A blessed report from these itinerant preachers. The wealth of Gaius was sanctified by proving and providing in his generosity to these missionaries. Prosperity and piety are a rare, but blessed combination! Gaius had no contradiction between his faith and his walk or lifestyle [περιπατέω]. When the church fails, the individual may take up the slack if and as he or she is able—this is true fellowship [κοινωνία] in the gospel.

4. (v. 4). Lit: “A greater than this I do not have joy...” A strong expression. “than to hear that my [τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα, emph.] children in the truth [ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, art.] are walking!” Here of John’s spiritual children. Thus, Gaius was evidently a convert of John’s ministry. It is also true of natural parents concerning their offspring. To hear of the faithfulness of one’s spiritual or natural children is the greatest of blessings. This presupposes a possession of the truth and then its expression in the life.
5. (v. 5–8). A personal and an ecclesiastical testimony to the truth as expressed in the life. Some have one, but not the other. Gaius was consistent. He had a testimony which could not be spoken against.
6. (v. 5). Faithful behavior rises from a faithful heart and mind. The brethren in the church and the visiting preachers were to be treated the same. No narrowness or party spirit here! Gaius opened both his heart and his home.
7. (v. 6). These itinerant preachers made known to the church, perhaps in a public meeting, the Christian fellowship and hospitality of Gaius. “...after a godly sort...,” i.e., in a manner worthy of God (1 Thess. 2:12. See Also: Rom. 16:2; Eph. 4:1; Phi. 1:27; Col. 1:10). Every aspect of Christian service is to be sanctified. These preachers were God’s representatives and were to be treated as such.
8. (v. 7–8). These went forth, i.e., evidently sent out from churches (Rom. 10:15) in and for “The Name,” implying the Lord Jesus Christ. They were commissioned by him and for him, and so represented him—and thus could not ethically and would not morally take any support from unbelievers.
Because of the Divine commission and nature of this work, these ought to be received and supported. In this way everyone could be a co-worker in the work of evangelism and missions.
9. (v. 9–10). The sad and tragic matter of Diotrephes. “Mere church authority cannot set aside the authority of our Lord.” (B. H. Carroll). Here, one spiritually unqualified and

autocratic person controlled the church. John's letter was refused, his reputation maligned, and his position ridiculed. Not only were the missionaries refused, but those who would support them were disciplined out of the church. Against such arbitrary and assumed authority, John would come with apostolic authority and deal with the matter and with Diotrephes.

10. (v. 11). "follow" [μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν] is "mimic, imitate." Diotrephes a negative, evil example. This verse is a general statement concerning the test of orthodoxy for any and all persons (1 Jn. 2:17, 29; 3:7, 10).
11. (v. 12). The commendation of Demetrius, whose life and ministry were evidently well-known. The blessing of a consistent life and testimony in relation to the truth! The very opposite of Diotrephes. A spiritual recommendation is far superior to one which is merely personal, ministerial or denominational.
12. (v. 13–14). "John's heart was both full for Gaius and burdened for Diotrephes" (D. L. Akin). Such could only be communicated in a personal meeting. This short letter was in anticipation of such.

Thus ends the shortest writing in Scripture, but one which sets forth the New Testament principles of missions, church authority and discipline, letters of commendation and the need for faithfulness in being fellow-helpers in the cause of Christ.

The Epistle of Jude

Introduction

The Epistle of Jude has been called “the most neglected book in the New Testament” (D. J. Rowston). Some of the reasons: it is one of the shortest letters of the New Testament,²¹¹ the author was not an Apostle; the limited subject matter; it has a close affinity to the Epistle of 2 Peter, which was the last book to be accepted into the New Testament canon; many scholars have considered it to be a pseudonymous work of the early second century, the recipients are unnamed, and the writer quotes or refers to several Jewish Apocryphal books.

Authorship

The author identifies himself at the outset as “Jude the servant [δοῦλος, bond slave] of Jesus Christ and brother of James...”²¹² Jude [Ἰούδας, also “Judas” or “Judah”] signifies “praise,” and was a very common Jewish name.

There are several men named “Jude” or “Judas” in the New Testament:

- (1) Judas *the brother* of James (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13). [Note the words “brother of” are italicized.²¹³ The usual relationship is that of a son, and so “Judas the son of James” also named Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus].
- (2) Judas Iscariot, a Disciple and the betrayer of our Lord (Matt. 10:4; Jn. 18:3; Acts 1:16–19). He was evidently the only Judean among our Lord’s Disciples.²¹⁴
- (3) A native of Damascus, where Paul lodged after his conversion (Acts 9:11).
- (4) An insurrectionist from Galilee (Acts 5:37).

²¹¹ 607 words in English; 460 words in Greek.

²¹² Ἰούδας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, ἀδελφὸς δὲ Ἰακώβου...

²¹³ Lit: Ἰούδαν Ἰακώβου, “Judas of James.”

²¹⁴ “Iscariot” [אִישׁ קִרְיֹת], i.e., the man [אִישׁ] from Kariot [קִרְיֹת] a village in southeastern Judea.

- (5) One of the physical ancestors of our Lord (Lk. 3:30).
- (6) An emissary, surnamed Barsabas, who, with Silas, who took the letter from the Jerusalem Conference to Antioch (Acts 15:22, 27, 32).
- (7) Jude, the brother of James, both younger half-brothers of our Lord (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Acts 1:14).

Neither Jude nor James were Apostles, and were unbelievers until the resurrection of our Lord (1 Cor. 15:6–7). James would become well-known as the main leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12). Thus, Jude, almost an obscure figure, would address his readers as “the bond slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James.”

Note: Neither James nor Jude would identify with our Lord as to their physical relationship. He was their exalted and glorified Lord—this they clearly understood (Cf. James 1:1).

Note: The two Epistles of James and Jude are the most steeped in the Old Testament Scriptures and Jewish traditions of any New Testament books—perhaps a reflection of their upbringing and home life with Mary and Joseph.

Note: To preserve the perpetual virginity of Mary, the mother of our Lord, some have posited that Jude and James were sons of Mary’s sister and therefore cousins, not half-brothers, of our Lord.

Jude was evidently married and perhaps took his wife on some of his evangelistic journeys (1 Cor. 9:5).²¹⁵

Note: According to Hegessipus (c. 110–180) and preserved by Eusebius (c. 260–340), the Emperor Domitian (81–96) had the grandsons of Jude brought before him to inquire if they were of David’s seed. He had initiated the second persecution of Christians and evidently knew that the Jewish Messiah was closely allied to the Christians. They affirmed that they were of the lineage of David, but were farmers and had only 39 acres of land, which they tilled themselves, exposing their hands, calloused and worn with physical labor.

They further stated that Christ’s kingdom was not of this world, but spiritual, and that Christ would return at the end of the world

²¹⁵ This may refer to the headship over the wife or to the wife traveling with her husband.

to judge the quick and the dead. Domitian, despising them and their low estate, ended the persecution against the Christians.²¹⁶

Canonicity

The genuineness of this epistle has never been questioned, except by radical critics who consider it a pseudonymous writing [forgery] of the second century, when Gnosticism was fully developed. Among the several reasons for discounting such a view is that a forger would not attribute such a writing to a non-Apostle or person of such little prominence.

As to external witnesses, there are probable allusions to this writing in Clement of Rome (c. 96), Polycarp (69–155), Athenagoras (second century) and Theophilus of Antioch (d. 183). It was recognized by the *Muratorian Canon* (c. 170), Tertullian (c. 160–240) and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215). It was absent from the *Old Syriac* and *Peshitta* (second century) due to its use of Apocryphal literature. Eusebius (c. 260–340) placed Jude among the *Antilegomena* or disputed books. Jude was, however, accepted in most of the churches at an early date, and formally brought into the canon at the Third Council of Carthage (397).

The contribution of Jude to the canon of Scripture: He reveals that antinomianism and libertinism were not new, that Christianity was not immune to such intrusions of licentious persons, and that God punishes sin—an inescapable principle, as illustrated repeatedly in history.

Occasion and Purpose

Jude was strongly moved²¹⁷ to write his brethren, predominantly Jewish Christians, concerning their “common salvation,” i.e., that salvation which they held in common and was thus the great bond of doctrine and fellowship between them.

But reports reached him concerning an alarming situation threatening the churches—certain false teachers and apostates

²¹⁶ S. D. F. Salmond, *Pulpit Commentary*, XXII, “Jude,” Introduction, p. iii. This work gives the full account.

²¹⁷ V. 3, “I gave all diligence,” πάντα σπουδῇ.

who had surreptitiously gained entrance into the churches. These denied the essential doctrine of Christ and had brought into the churches their licentious teachings and lascivious conduct, an antinomian or libertine spirit, and were seducing the churches.

He rails on these with the strongest and most severe language found in the New Testament. Thus, his essential purpose was both polemical and pastoral.

His purpose was six-fold: first, to urge his readers to earnestly contend for the faith—the Apostolic or primitive faith which was once-for-all delivered unto believers (1:3).

Note: v. 3, “earnestly contend” [ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι]. “It has been suggested that the word Jude uses here means to fight standing upon a thing which is assaulted, and which the adversary desires to take away, and it is to fight so as to defend it and retain it.”²¹⁸

Mark the final words of v. 3: τῇ ἁπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει. All these words modify the term “faith”—a very strong expression making all these but one elongated word emphasizing the uniqueness and perpetuity of the body of Divine truth: “the-once-delivered-unto-the-saints-faith.”

Second, to warn them of the insidious methods of these apostates intruding into the churches (1:4). Third, he describes these as both false teachers and apostates and their certain Divine judgment in the strongest terms possible. He describes their character and influence rather than their doctrines (1:5–16). Fourth, he reminds them of the predictions by the Apostles of such persons and their wicked influence (1:17–19). Fifth, he seeks to stimulate his readers to spiritual growth and a discerning evangelism (1:20–23). Finally, he assures them of God’s blessing and faithfulness in an exquisite doxology (1:24–25).

Provenance, Date and Recipients

Provenance

Lack of internal evidence on the residence or travels of Jude lends itself to speculation. As Jude was associated with James and the Jerusalem Church, some hold that Jerusalem or at least Palestine was the source of this epistle.

²¹⁸ Wilbur M. Smith *Therefore Stand*, p. 482.

Date

The date may be fixed with more precision. There are reasons to hold that this was written about 67–68 AD. What Peter had prophesied and anticipated happening in the churches (2 Pet. 2:1–3:2) was already beginning to manifest itself. Further, had this been written after the destruction of Jerusalem (70), such a mighty, traumatic event would have been noted—especially for Jewish believers.

Recipients

Who were the recipients of this epistle? Arguments have been made for Christians in general and for Jewish Christians in particular, as Jude refers to Jewish Apocryphal literature and legends with which they would have been very familiar. As to geographical location, many would argue for the churches in Asia Minor, following the previous epistle by Peter (2 Peter).

Because of the description of these apostates, and identifying them with an incipient Gnosticism, some have argued that the destination was the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor. The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians in the Lycus Valley had to deal with an incipient Gnosticism, which would reach its full development in the second century.

The Apostates

From the context, it may be noted that churches, by their very nature: (1) were given to hospitality, especially to itinerant preachers and teachers.²¹⁹ (2) may have been susceptible to those who would profess to be teachers and at first might seem to be knowledgeable in the doctrines of Scripture. (3) Under the guise of fellowship, personal freedom and appealing to the natural desires of fallen, sinful mankind, some—even many—might be carried away with false doctrine, libertinism and antinomianism, especially among those who were mere professing Christians. Once such persons were entrenched in the churches, they would spread their nefarious teachings and lifestyles.

²¹⁹ See comments on the Epistle of 3 John in this volume.

Note: graceless religion has always existed. Within professing Christianity such takes on two extremes: legalism, with its list of “do’s” and “don’ts,” which has little foundation in Scripture, but is attractive to those whose religion is outward, ritualistic and furthered by a personal, unsanctified determination. The other extreme: antinomianism, which preaches freedom and liberty, but actually enslaves with sin and self-indulgence. Both are unscriptural in their extremes, but find acceptance with fallen, sinful religious human nature. Sadly, both become attractive with some in Christian churches.

Jude, although mentioning their doctrinal heresies of denying the truths of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, writes concerning their baneful characteristics:

Descriptions from History

1. These ungodly men had entered the churches surreptitiously (v. 4).
2. They were moral reprobates who perverted the grace of God (v. 4).²²⁰
3. They were doctrinally apostate, denying the person and work of the Sovereign Master and Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4).
4. Their eternal judgment by God was absolutely certain, as witnessed throughout history in the destruction of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness (v. 5), the fallen angels (v. 6) and Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7).
5. These were given to depraved fantasies, and were immoral, defiant and blasphemous. They were ignorant of spiritual realities, and were brutish sensualists. But even Michael the Archangel, mindful of Satan’s power, deferred judgment to God’s authority (v. 8–10).
6. Jude then pronounces a curse upon them, and classifies these with Cain, who dared lie in the very face of God (Gen. 4:9–10), Balaam, who seduced Israel into immorality and Divine judgment (Numb. 31:16), and Korah, who defied Moses, the

²²⁰ V. 4, No positive decree of reprobation, but “marked out for destruction.” Men are condemned for their sins, not because God is arbitrary.

man of God, and the God-ordained authority for Israel (Numb. 16) (v. 11).

Descriptions from Nature

7. These are likened unto “spots” [or rocks, reefs]²²¹ in the church’s love feasts, where they openly displayed their indulgence (v. 12a).

Note: The early church held a common fellowship meal before the observance of the Lord’s Supper. This was one of the major causes of problems in the Corinthian Church—the Lord’s Supper evidently lost its distinctiveness as a Divine ordinance, separate from a mere fellowship meal with its informalities. The Lord evidently judged the Corinthian Church for its error (1 Cor. 11:17–34).

8. These are likened unto clouds without water, carried along by the winds—a show of promise without positive results and only casting up dust (v. 12b).
9. These are then likened to trees which do not produce good fruit; indeed, they are themselves dead and without hope (v. 12c).
10. These are likened to wild waves, covered with foam—a picture of their religious relativism and shamelessness (v. 13a).
11. Jude moves from the sea to the night sky. These resemble wandering stars or planets fading into the blackness of outer space (v. 13b).

Their Destruction Prophesied

12. Their certain doom and utter destruction had been foretold from the ages past. Their rebellion was against the Lord and He would exercise certain justice and judgment (v. 14–15).
13. These were detractors and opposers of truth and good, given to their evil lusts. Their conversation was geared to their own advantage (v. 16).

²²¹ σπιλλάδες, fr. σπιλλάς, a rock or reef which could wreck a ship. Morally, of one who could wreak moral damage and destruction.

An Apostolic Warning

14. The Apostles had previously warned about such mockers whose lifestyles would be determined by their wicked desires. (v. 17–18).
15. These were governed by a party–spirit, were factious, sensual and devoid of the Spirit—apostates (v. 19).

There is an extremely important principle revealed throughout the core of this epistle: godless behavior follows false doctrine. Thus, there are necessarily evil, even wicked results from any departure from the teaching of truth!

Style

“In style this Epistle is much like that of James, poetic and vivid” (Scroggie). As with James, much of Jude’s imagery is taken from nature. He uses eighteen words [ἅπαξ λεγόμενον] which do not occur elsewhere in Scripture.²²²

Its style is broken and rugged, bold and picturesque, energetic, vehement, glowing with the fires of passion. In the build of its sentences it is more Aramaic than Greek, but it has at the same time a considerable command of strong, varied and expressive terms. Hebrew phrases and idioms betray the Jewish training and Jewish standpoint of the writer. It combines some of the peculiar features of Old Testament prophecy with those of the Jewish Apocalyptic literature.²²³

All of Jude’s many examples either foretell of the certainty of Divine judgment or describe the baneful characteristics of these apostates. Considering the gravity of seeking to destroy the truth of the gospel and the person of our Lord, could any language be less severe?

A defining characteristic of Jude’s style is his presentation of things in triads for rhetorical effect. This runs throughout the whole of this letter: (1) “Jude...servant...brother...” (2) To them that are called...beloved...kept.” (3) “Mercy...peace...and love.” (4) “ungodly men...turning...denying” (5) “Israelites...angels...

²²² ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, “spoke only one time,” i.e., words which occur only once in Scripture.

²²³ S. D. F. Salmond, *Op. cit.*, p. i.

cities of the plain.” (6) “Defile...despise...set at naught.” (7) “Cain...Balaam...Korah.” (8) “These are...these are...these are...” (9) “ungodly...ungodly...ungodly.” (10) “Murmurers...complainers...walking after their own lusts.” (11) “Separate...sensual...having not the Spirit.” (12) “building...praying...looking.” (13) “Save...pulling...hating.”

Excursus: The Apostates and Modern Christianity

What would Jude write today concerning the low state of Christianity, the widespread “carnal Christian” heresy, the vast numbers of mere professing Christians whose lives are often a scandal, and the contemporary innovations to accommodate and mimic the world?

Note: Many in modern evangelical Christianity accommodate the sinfulness and worldliness of many by reversing regeneration and conversion, teaching that regeneration [the “new birth”] is the Divine response to man’s faith, making such “faith” mere human trust and eviscerating regeneration and conversion into a mere “decisionism” or momentary emotional or irrational religious experience.

Sanctification is necessarily three-fold: positional, definitive and practical or progressive. All three aspects are interrelated and each is absolutely essential to the scriptural teaching on salvation in general and sanctification in particular.

Positional sanctification refers to the believer’s union with Christ. Definitive sanctification refers to the breaking of the reigning power of sin at regeneration by virtue of the believer’s union with Christ (Rom. 6), and progressive sanctification refers to the increase of grace and holiness in the believer’s experience (Heb. 12:14; 2 Pet. 3:18). Justification and sanctification cannot be separated, i.e., a believer cannot be justified and yet unsanctified. Righteousness imputed cannot be separated from righteousness imparted. There is no place for the so-called “carnal Christian” who is “saved” [made his religious decision] but still living in sin. This would negate the necessary realities of regeneration and conversion.

The fragmentation of sanctification and the “carnal Christian” heresy are taught favorably by a Dispensational theologian of note in the following terms:

....every believer is now said to be sanctified positionally, holy, and by so much a saint before God. This position [union

with Christ] bears no relationship to the believer's daily experience more than that it should inspire him to holy living.... As positional sanctification is absolutely disassociated from the daily life, so experimental sanctification is absolutely unrelated to position in [union with] Christ.²²⁴

...Those *believers* who are dominated by the flesh respond to the flesh and those that are dominated by the Spirit respond to the Spirit (Rom. 8:5). In any case the carnal or fleshly mind functions in the realm of spiritual death and the spiritual mind in the realm of spiritual life and peace (Rom. 8:6)...Too much emphasis can hardly be given to the fact that the *Christian* may function in his life either in the realm of spiritual death—separation from God—or the realm of things related to the Holy Spirit...The *Christian* is saved and safe in Christ, yet in his manner of life he may prove σαρκικός [carnal] or πνευματικός [spiritual].²²⁵

Such thinking is absolutely counter to Scripture, to the realities of regeneration and conversion, and separates sanctification from justification—but such is the common belief of many in modern, evangelical Christianity! The contrast in Rom. 8:5–9, as revealed by the larger (Rom. 5:1–8:39) and more immediate (Rom. 8:1–16) context, is between an unconverted and converted person.

* * * * *

Theology

Bibliology: Jude & 2 Peter

The doctrine of Divine inspiration and its attendant subjects are critical to this epistle. The major issues are: first, what is the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude? The parallels are too exact to be denied. [The following study has been reproduced from the study on 2 Peter in this volume].²²⁶

It is evident that Jude or Peter copied much from the other. It is possible that Peter summarized in 2:1–3:3 what Jude had written earlier, or that Jude, under Divine inspiration, enlarged and added to what Peter had written. It would be strange for an Apostle to copy from a non-Apostle, but the tendency would

²²⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, VII, pp. 279–280.

²²⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Op. cit.*, p. 70. (*Italics and brackets added*).

²²⁶ See pp. 160–162 of this volume.

have been to summarize from an earlier work. The deciding issue would be that who and what Peter warned about as either imminent or just commencing (2 Pet. 2:1ff), Jude described as already existing and progressing in the churches. Other wording seems to substantiate this, as Jude refers to a prior warning by the Apostles (Jude 17–19).

A brief chart comparing 2 Peter and Jude by verse or reference:

2 Peter	Jude		2 Peter	Jude
2:1	v. 4		2:15	v. 11
2:4	v. 6		2:17	v. 12–13
2:6	v. 7		2:18	v. 16
2:10	v. 8		3:2	v. 17
2:12	v. 10		3:3	v. 18
2:13	v. 12			

Mark the following comparison of thoughts and words between 2 Peter 2:1–3:3 and the Epistle of Jude v. 4–18:

2 Peter	Jude
2:1 Heretics bring in heresies secretly	v. 4 Heretics enter in secretly
2:1 Denying the Lord	v. 4 Denying the Lord God
2:2 The way of truth maligned	v. 4 Pervert the grace of God
2:2 Licentious ways	v. 4 Licentiousness
2:3 Judgment pronounced long ago	v. 4 Long ago ordained to judgment
2:4 Fallen angels chained in darkness	v. 6 Fallen angels chained in darkness
2:6 Sodom and Gomorrah an example of Divine judgment	v. 7 Sodom and Gomorrah the cities an example of Divine judgment
2:10 Depraved lusts	v. 7 Unnatural lusts

2:10 Presumptuous, self-willed, brash	v. 8 Defile the flesh, despise dominion, brash
2:11 Angels do not bring accusations	v. 9 The archangel did not bring accusation
2:12 Slander in their ignorance	v. 10. Slander in their ignorance
2:12 Like brute beasts to be destroyed	v. 10 Like brute beasts corrupt themselves
2:14 These are Adulterers, reprobates and cursed children	v. 11 Woe to these who have gone in the way of Cain
2:15 Followed the way of Balaam	v. 11 Ran after the error of Balaam
2:15 Wages of unrighteousness	v. 11 Error for the sake of reward
2:13 Blots and blemishes in the feasts	v. 12 Blots in the love feasts
2:13 Deceitful revelers in your feasts	v. 12 Feasting without fear
2:17 Waterless springs	v. 12 Waterless clouds
2:17 Wind-driven mists	v. 12 Wind-driven clouds
2:17 Mist of darkness reserved forever	v. 13 Blackness of darkness reserved forever
2:18 Unbridled boasters who allure through lusts	v. 16 Unbridled detractors, and yet seeking recognition
3:2 Remember the commandments of the prophets and Apostles	v. 17 Remember the words of the Apostles
3:3 In the last days, scoffers walking after their own lusts	v. 18 Mockers in the last time, walking after their own lusts

Polemics

There are two terms for an intelligent defense of the faith: apologetics [ἀπολογία, “defense”]²²⁷ and polemics [πολεμικός, “war-like”]. Apologetics is a defense of the Christian faith against teaching or doctrine outside the Christian system or other religions. Polemics is a defense of one doctrine or more within the Christian system, differences between doctrinal parties. Jude was engaging in polemics, as these false teachers and licentious persons were professing Christians and so within the Christian system. What a powerful polemicist Jude was!

Bibliology: Apocryphal Literature

Second, what is the relationship of Jewish Apocryphal literature to Scripture? Jude alludes to or quotes from *The Assumption* or *Testament of Moses* (v. 9) and the *First Book of Enoch* (v. 6, 14–15).

This second issue is much more complex. Did Jude refer to these, accepting their contents as true, or as illustrations of the certainty of Divine judgment? According to the *First Book of Enoch*, the fall of the angels was their sexual lusting for human women, resulting in a race of giants.²²⁸ A single ms. of the LXX [*Alexandrinus*], following the *Book of Enoch*, reads in Gen. 6:2, “the angels of God,” rather than the “sons of God.”²²⁹

The argument is largely based on Jude’s use of the *Book of Enoch*. Did he believe everything the book stated? Or did he simply use such materials with which the Jewish Christians were well-acquainted to demonstrate the certainty of Divine judgment? We hold to the latter, as angelic beings are non-sexual (Matt. 22:29–30), though appearing as men in human form. Their alleged sexual lust had to occur before their fall, which according

²²⁷ See 1 Pet. 3:15, where ἀπολογία is translated “answer.”

²²⁸ The word translated as “giants” [γίγαντες] in the LXX is נְפִלִים, “fallen ones.” The Eng. followed the LXX. E. W. Bullinger translated this “monsters of iniquity,” referring to their depraved behavior.

²²⁹ ‘Οι ἁγγέλοι τοῦ θεοῦ...

to Scripture would be impossible. According to the Book of Enoch, when the progeny of “giants” were produced by the sexual union of angels and women, their spirits at death became demons.

Note: It has been further argued that “in like manner with these” [ASV] [τούτοις, masc., “with these” not translated into the KJV] v. 7, refers back to “angels” in v. 6. The terms for Sodom, Gomorrah and the cities being in the neut., and “angels” being masc., and thus the meaning would be that the cities went after “strange flesh” as did the angels. But the term τούτοις is either masc. or neut., and so referring to the cities, its closer antecedent.

Note: The Book of Enoch contains elements of Jewish legends and fables which would contradict the New Testament teaching on demons and other issues.

The reference to the *Assumption of Moses* and the Archangel Michael disputing about the body of Moses was allegedly because the devil wanted to locate and expose Moses’ body to be worshipped by the Israelites (Deut. 34:5–6). Jude parallels this with the pride and disdain of the apostates toward the glorious truths of Scripture and leaders in the churches. The prophecy of Enoch (v. 14–15) was used as another historical example of the ancient warning about such men and their certain judgment by God.

It is safe to say that Jude used Apocryphal literature, with which the Jews were very familiar, to illustrate the certainty of Divine judgment upon those who perverted the way of truth and lived in ungodliness. He did not agree with all of the contents of these books, with their legends and fantasies, or hold them as inspired—though they may have contained some truth handed down through ancient traditions.

The same is true of James, who alludes to the Greek Philosopher Plato in Jas. 1:17.²³⁰ The same holds for the Apostle Paul, who appropriated Apocryphal literature [*Book of Jubilees*] in naming the Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim.

²³⁰ Samuel M. Jackson, “Platonism,” *The New Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, IX, p. 90.

3:8), and spiritualized the rock in the wilderness and identified it with our Lord (1 Cor. 10:4). He quoted Greek poets and philosophers in his Athenian address, and in his writings quoted or alluded to other pagan authors.

Note: Paul quoted or referred to Epimenides (Acts 17:29 and Titus 1:12), Menander (1 Cor. 15:33), Aratus the Cilician (Acts 17:29), and Cleanthes. F. W. Farrar recognized at least fifty specimens of Greek rhetorical expressions in the writings and addresses of Paul.²³¹

Jude loosely paraphrases a passage from the Book of Enoch in v. 14–15²³² to illustrate the reality and absolute certainty of Divine judgment upon such ungodly sinners.

Book of Enoch Chap. 2	Jude 1:14–15
Behold, He cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon them, and to destroy the ungodly and reprove all the carnal [or, and will destroy and convict the ungodly with all flesh], for everything which the sinners and the ungodly have done and committed against Him.	Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard <i>speeches</i> which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Theology Proper

Theology Proper, or the Doctrine of God is noted in this epistle in the following: He is the Author of the believer's salvation and assurance (v. 1, 24–25). He is the God of all grace (v. 4) and love (v. 21), and is sworn to punish sin by virtue of His moral self-consistency (v. 4–17). He is omnipotent and all-wise, and deserving of the highest praise (v. 24–25).

Christology

The Lord Jesus Christ is “Lord” over each and every believer. We are bond slaves under His Sovereign Lordship (v.1,

²³¹ See Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, I, p. 291.

²³² Alfred Plummer, *The Expositor's Bible*, VI, p. 660.

4, 17). Further, he is called “Lord,” “Sovereign Master” or “Lord God” in v. 4, a reference to His Deity.

Note: the Crit. Text reads δεσπότην, i.e., “Sovereign Master or Lord.” The TR reads δεσπότην Θεόν, adding the word “God.” Either reading points to the Deity of our Lord, as the first designation is arthrous [possesses the def. art.] and the latter is anarthrous [without the def. art.], thus referring to the same person.

Crit.: τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν.

TR: τὸν μόνον δεσπότην Θεόν, καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν.

The grammatical rule is stated by Dana & Mantey. The Gk. const. of one def. art. conjoining two substantives of the same case [“Granville Sharps rule”]:

When the copulative καί connects two nouns of the same case, if the article ὁ or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle; i.e., it denotes a further description of the first-named person.²³³

There are other passages which affirm the Deity of our Lord, e.g., Jn. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:2–12.

Pneumatology

There are two references to the Holy Spirit in this short epistle: first, “sensual, having not the Spirit” (v. 19). This is descriptive of unregenerate, unconverted persons. These are thus apostates, having apostatized from their outward profession of faith. See Heb. 3:12 and the term “departing” [τῷ ἀποστῆναι], the verbal form of apostasy. True believers are kept by the power of God (1 Pet. 1:5); false (Rom. 8:9), temporary (Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21) or mere outward professors are apostates.

Second, “praying in the Holy Ghost” (v. 20). This refers to true, spiritual prayers in which the Holy Spirit moves as intercessor and enabler (Rom. 8:26–27; Eph. 6:18).

²³³ Dana & Mantey, *A Manual of The Greek New Testament*, p. 147.

Angelology

This has been considered at length under the section on Apocryphal literature and the comments on v. 6–7.

Soteriology

The attention of this epistle is on the subject of false teachers and their apostasy. These openly demonstrate their religious state by their libertine, antinomian and reprobate lifestyles in addition to their doctrinal heresies. The term “faith” in v. 3 refers, not to experiential faith or trust, but to the body of Divine, inscripturated truth, i.e., faith as an objective body of doctrinal truth: “the–once–delivered–unto–the–saints–faith!

Evangelism

The short remarks on evangelism are yet pithy and profound (v. 22–23). Evangelism under such conditions must be compassionate, yet characterized by discernment and a sanctified approach.

Excursus:

Faith–Objective and Subjective

The term “faith” is used both objectively and subjectively in Scripture. Objectively, it refers to that body or system of Divinely–revealed doctrinal truth which comprises the standard for believers. Faith in this sense is inclusive, determinative, self–consistent and non–contradictory (Acts 6:7; 14:22; 16:5; 24:24; Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:23; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:23; 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:2; 3:9; 4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:7; Tit. 1:4; 3:15; 1 Pet. 5:9; Jude 3).

Subjectively, faith is the trust, reliance and commitment of the believer to the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the response of the whole man to the whole Christ, i.e., utter and unreserved commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior for salvation and reconciliation to God through His imputed righteousness.

Note: mention must be made of “the faith of Christ,” which is mistakenly interpreted to mean “Christ’s faith.” This is an objective genitive [gen. in form, but idiomatically meaning “faith in Christ”], e.g., Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9, etc.

This righteousness was wrought or accomplished by our Lord's active and passive obedience. By His active obedience—His perfect life—he fulfilled the demands of the law perfectly and completely, providing a perfect, obedient righteousness. Through His passive obedience [Lat. *passivus*, suffering], or His suffering and death, He fully and completely paid the penalty due our sins. This is the reality of a truly substitutionary or vicarious atonement.

The resurrection of our Lord is then the manifestation or guarantee that God the Father accepted the redemptive work of His Son (Rom. 4:24–25). Thus, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner receives the perfect and complete righteousness which God demands to be reconciled to Him. This is justification by faith (Rom. 3:21–26)—the imputation of the perfect righteousness of our Lord to sinners by or through faith alone.

Objectively, faith is established and unchanging as expressed in and through Scripture; subjectively—in personal experience—faith may be genuine or false, merely traditional, creedal, confessional, merely outward, ritualistic or temporary as mere human trust; or it may be genuine, inwrought by the Spirit of God and corresponding to Scripture.

The genuineness or falseness of one's faith may be discerned by the consistency of one's profession of faith, love of and conformity to the truth of Scripture and consistent lifestyle—what the apostates in Jude's epistle completely lacked and evidenced by the exact opposite in character and action.

Assurance of faith,²³⁴ or assurance of one's salvation is necessarily three-fold: inferential, evidential and internal. Each of these is but an aspect of the whole:

Inferential assurance is inferring from various verses of Scripture that one is saved, a believer, e.g., Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9–10. But by itself such may be only

²³⁴ Also called the perseverance of the saints, or final perseverance.

presumption. [Sadly, this is the only “assurance” many have in modern evangelical Christianity!].

Evidential assurance refers to manifesting the various marks of grace or the characteristics of a true believer in the life: Faithfulness, love of the brethren, faithfulness to the private [prayer and the study of the Word] and public [church attendance, fellowship] means of grace. By itself, however, evidential assurance may be mere legalism.

Some marks of grace include the reality of saving faith as the governing principle of life (Rom. 1:12; 4:16; 5:2; Eph. 2:8–10), the growth or addition of graces in the life by the enabling grace of God (2 Pet. 1:4–11),²³⁵ the reality that the reigning power of sin has been broken in the life (Rom. 6:1–23), evidence of a praying heart (Acts 9:11; 1 Thess. 5:17), dealing with indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 7:17, 20), mortifying sin (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5), engaging in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10–18), experiencing the chastening hand of God in correction (Heb. 12:3–14), having an affinity for the people of God (Jn. 13:34–35; Rom. 12:9–10; Jn. 3:10–18). Living a consistent, godly life in the practice of righteousness (1 Jn. 3:9–10).²³⁶

Internal assurance refers to the witness of the Holy Spirit in the life and experience, testifying that one is a true child of God (Rom. 8:14–16; Gal. 4:4–7), enabling one to pray aright (Rom. 8:26–27), and bearing His fruit in the life and experience (Gal. 5:22–23). However, by itself this may be mere mysticism. The Holy Spirit works to conform us to the image of God’s Son (Rom. 8:29), leads us according to the Scriptures and illuminates our minds to understand them (1 Jn. 2:20, 27).

²³⁵ 2 Pet. 1:5, “add.” [ἐπιχορηγήσατε], the source of the Eng. “choreography.” Faith is not to “sing a solo,” as it were, but voice her reality in the context of these graces!

²³⁶ Note that in 1 Jn. 2:1 and 3:9 the distinction is made between committing acts of sin, i.e., acting out of character as a believer, and living in sin, which, for the true believer is impossible. If such occurs, the chastening hand of God intervenes.

Thus all three aspects—inferential, evidential and internal—are necessary to a true, full assurance of faith.

* * * * *

Ecclesiology

The doctrine of the church is implied in the context of these apostates and their baneful influence. The church is the assembly of God's people, and it was in this context that these apostates wrought their evil influence. The disruptive and seductive, lascivious behavior would have certainly been manifested in their times of fellowship and the love feasts.

Eschatology

The specter of Divine, final, eternal judgment hangs over the entire section concerning these apostates (v. 4–19). In contrast, the future blessedness of the believer is anticipated (v. 21, 24).

Doxology

The closing doxology of this writing (v. 24–25) is one of the most moving in Scripture. It contains the elements of a Divinely-given enablement and assurance, a presentation before the God of glory, and an exceeding joy through the Lord Jesus. It concludes with a paean of praise to the attributes of God's glory and power—a doxology which is as glorious as the condemnation of the apostates is merciless.

Structure and Outline

After the introduction and salutation (v. 1–2), Jude reveals his original and subsequent, more urgent purpose for writing (v. 3).

He then proceeds to describe the false teachers and apostates as to their doctrine (v. 4) and then a very graphic description of these licentious persons (v. 5–19), which occupies most of this short epistle. He illustrates these and their certain judgment from the past (v. 5–7), then proceeds to describe them as to the present (v. 8–19). He uses historical and Old Testament examples (v. 8–11), examples from nature (v. 12–13), from the Book of Enoch (v. 14–15), and finally, from their present behavior as murmurers, complainers, given to lust, flatterers and mockers (v. 16–19). He

reminds his readers that the Apostles of our Lord had warned against such persons (v. 18).

Jude then contrasts true believers and urges them to be strong in faith, given to earnest, effectual prayer, embracing the love of God, and living in anticipation of eternal life (v. 20–21). He then makes an appeal for a discerning evangelism (v. 21–22).

Jude's epistle concludes with a blessed doxology which embraces The Lord's sustaining and infallible grace for and to the believer (v. 24) and a paean of praise to the Lord Himself (v. 25).

An analysis with a two-fold outline majoring on the apostates and the believer's duty is given by Scroggie:

- Introduction (v. 1–4)
- I. An Exposition of the Danger (v. 5–16)
- II. An Exhortation to the Duty (v. 17–23)
- Conclusion (v. 24–25)

Another two-fold outline compares these apostates and how to deal with them:

- Introductory Salutation (v. 1–2)
- I. Why to Contend for the Faith—Apostate Teachers (v. 3–16)
- II. How to Contend for the Faith—Assurance of Truth (v. 17–23)
- Concluding Doxology (v. 24–25)

A six-fold outline (McArthur):

- I. Desires of Jude (v. 1–2)
- II. Declaration of War Against Apostates (v. 3–4)
- III. Damnable Outcome of Apostates (v. 5–7)
- IV. Denunciation of Apostates (v. 8–16)
- V. Defenses Against Apostates (v. 17–23)
- VI. Doxology of Jude (v. 24–25)

Outline of Jude

- Introduction and Salutation (v. 1–2)
 - A. Introduction. (v. 1)
 - 1. Jude identifies himself (v. 1a)
 - a. A bond slave of Jesus Christ (v. 1a)
 - b. The brother of James (v. 1a)
 - 2. Addresses believers as to their spiritual position: sanctified, preserved, called (v. 1b)
 - B. Salutation (v. 2)

- His desire for their spiritual well-being (v. 2)
- I. His Explanation: The Apostates Identified (v. 3–4)
 - A. His admonition to stand for the faith (v. 3)
 - B. His urgent purpose for writing: The Apostates (v. 4)
 - 1. Their surreptitious entrance into the church (v. 4a)
 - 2. Their being marked out for condemnation (v. 4b)
 - 3. Their denial of the person and work of our Lord (v. 4c)
- II. His Exposition: The Apostates Destroyed (v. 5–16)
 - A. The Past: Examples of certain judgment (v. 5–7)
 - 1. A call to remembrance: judgment upon the unbelieving Israelites (v. 5)
 - 2. The eternal judgment of the fallen angels (v. 6)
 - 3. The fiery judgment of Sodom, Gomorrah and the surrounding cities (v. 7)
 - B. The Present: The Apostates Described (v. 8–16)
 - 1. The character of these apostates (v. 8–11)
 - a. They are depraved and degenerate (v. 8a)
 - b. They are blind to spiritual realities (v. 8b–9)
 - c. They are like brute beasts (v. 10)
 - d. They are likened to Cain, Balaam, and Korah (v. 11)
 - e. They are reefs, waterless clouds, dead trees, raging waves, wandering stars (v. 12–13)
 - 2. The condemnation of these apostates (v. 14–15)
 - Such were prophesied by Enoch to be certainly judged (v. 14–15)
 - 3. The condition of these apostates (v. 16)
 - a. Murmurers against the truth (v. 16a)
 - b. Complainers about the truth (v. 16b)
 - c. Lead by their own lusts (v. 16c)
 - d. Ingratiating themselves for personal advantage (v. 16d)
- III. His Exhortation: The Believers Instructed (v. 17–23)
 - A. An exhortation to remember the words of the Apostles concerning these apostates (v. 17–18)
 - 1. There would be mockers (v. 17a)
 - 2. Walking after their own lusts (v. 17b)
 - B. An exhortation to discern these apostates (v. 19)
 - 1. Given to the sensualities, unspiritual (v. 19a)

- 2. Bereft of the Holy Spirit and so
unregenerate (v. 19b)
- C. An exhortation for a true, practical spirituality (v. 20–21)
 - 1. Be strong in faith, prayerful in crisis (v. 20)
 - 2. Maintain a strong, godly walk in anticipation
of eternal life (v. 21)
- D. An exhortation for a discerning evangelism (v. 22–23)
 - 1. Have compassion on those who are being
seduced (v. 22)
 - 2. Be very careful about those who have been
seduced by wickedness (v. 23)
- Conclusion and Doxology (v. 24–25)
 - A. Believers are pointed to God as preserver,
enabler and sanctifier of His people (v. 24)
 - B. God is seen in His glorious attributes of might,
dominion and power (v. 25)

Notes & Observations

1. (v. 1). “Jude, of Jesus Christ a bond slave.” This is the place of every true believer! The term “servant” is usually “Bond slave” [δοῦλος] referring to believers. John Trapp called him *haerticorum malleus*, a hammer against the heretics whom he opposed to the utmost. He was whole-hearted in his faithfulness to the truth and his opposition to heresy and those who promoted it.
2. (v. 1). His readers are identified as set apart by God unto holiness, preserved by the Lord Jesus and called. Mark that it is the Divine work of grace which identifies them—not their profession, but their position and possession!
3. (v. 2). This salutation includes “mercy.” Every salutation in the New Testament which contains this word implies and presupposes persecution or trial and opposition (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; 2 Jn. 1:3). Then follows “peace.” This is possible even in the pervading turbulence of the apostates—because this peace comes from God, not man.
4. (v. 3). We may begin to write about one thing and be moved by God to write about another. May the Lord govern our

communications. Who knows what blessed and copious fruit one letter might bear?

5. (v. 3). Doctrine and practice are necessarily and inherently related. Without a firm grasp of biblical truth—faith as the systematic and non-contradictory, inclusive teaching of Scripture—we cannot have or maintain consistent practice. Indeed, our practice reveals the consistency or inconsistency of our doctrine!
6. (v. 3). Jude wrote about the primitive, Apostolic faith. From this we must not depart! Christians are not called to be innovative or original, but to be faithful—and faithfulness presupposes a set standard to which believers conform.
7. (v. 4). Christians and churches are always susceptible to departures from the faith. Worship, fellowship and friendship may prove seductive. Above all, the Christian must be a true, sincere and intense student of Scripture. The inscripturated Word of God is the one and only standard and touchstone of truth!
8. (v. 4). Christian liberty is legitimate; license is not. There are several principles which must govern such: first, the objective standard for all behavior is the Word of God. Second, God alone is the Lord of the conscience. Third, the supreme motive for all things is the glory of God. Fourth, we must ever take into account the conscience of the weaker brother (Rom. 14:1–23).

Every Christian society has its rules concerning diet, drink and dress, and concerning associations or relationships. We must submit to the Scriptures before God with a clear conscience, calling “sin” what the Bible calls “sin,” and stop calling “sin” what the Bible does not call “sin.” And we must take care not to offend those who disagree. Our motive must be pure and our attitude one of grace.

9. (v. 4). Carnal and immoral behavior is scandalous. The close relationships within a church fellowship are especially vulnerable to the fallen, sinful nature of mere professing Christians who are, in reality, unregenerate.

10. (v. 5). What a glorious prospect lay before Israel when the nation left Egypt! Freedom from slavery, the “Promised Land” that flowed with milk and honey! But soon they fell to unbelief and outright rebellion. God justly judged that entire generation for their sins and they fell in the wilderness. How tragic! Obedience to God and faithfulness to His Word are not small matters! They are the very essence of life and blessing.
11. (v. 6). If angels fell from their glorious estate, how careful must we be as to ours! The devil who seduced them to rebellion now assaults God’s earthly people, and we must be prepared, outfitted and ready for spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10–18).
12. (v. 7). Many say that “God is love,” meaning that He overlooks sin and failing, and will never judge sin. But this is not biblical. He sent the flood to wipe out the entire human race, save for Noah and his family. He sent great plagues and death upon the Egyptians and He destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah and the cities of the plain for their wickedness. God’s love is a holy, righteous love, consistent with His moral character. Never presume upon His love!
13. (v. 8–9). Pride and presumption are native to fallen, sinful human nature, but never to a state of grace.
14. (v. 10). Many have little or no knowledge of what they scoff against. Their thinking is limited to this world and they lack true spiritual perception—or they would bow in fear before the God of heaven and earth!
15. (v. 11). Cain. He was extremely religious, but lied to God, to His very face! Balaam, after failing to curse Israel, and turning to bless them, counseled Balak to seduce the Israelitish men through fornication. Sadly, Balaam was successful, but He paid with his life (Numb. 25:1–5; 31:8, 16).

Korah rebelled against the leadership of Moses, claiming spiritual leadership, and caused the deaths of many leaders and their families in sudden Divine judgment—the earth

opened and swallowed them up (Numb. 16:1–49). These wicked men were like Cain, Balaam and Korah—they made themselves great in their own eyes and brought devastation to God’s churches.

16. (v. 12–13). Jude takes metaphors from nature to describe these apostates. He is graphic and draws a tumultuous picture. Religious leaders and teachers, if unconverted, bring devastation to the Lord’s people and churches. May we not be deceived!
17. (v. 14–15). Jude paraphrases the Book of Enoch to illustrate the certain judgment of unconverted church leaders.
18. (v. 16). How tragic when God’s people are seduced by false teachers and unconverted persons who spread their influence and cause divisions through their twisted teachings.
19. (v. 17–18). Remember! This word should often ring in our ears lest we forget the Apostolic teaching of the truth—the primitive faith worthy of all acceptance!
20. (v. 18–19). Error and heresies are never new. Contemporary departures from the faith are but old heresies redressed and repeated. Beware of those who are divisive [ἀποδιορίζοντες], emphasize the sensual and are bereft of the Spirit!
21. (v. 20–21). The figure is that of building upon something [ἐποικοδομοῦντες]. Faith is to be our foundation, and all must be based upon and built on this sure foundation. [ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ προσευχόμενοι], emphatically, holy or spiritual prayers. True prayer is intensely spiritual, authored, enabled and sustained by the Holy Spirit. See Rom. 8:26–27; Eph. 6:18. Mark that the command to pray and intercede is immediately conjoined with our spiritual warfare!

We are to keep ourselves in the love of God. This does not pertain to conversion but to communion. The figure is that of keeping up a fire by putting fuel upon it. Hearts enflamed with God’s love are effectual in prayer and service!

Grace views us as utterly unworthy; mercy views us in our weakness and infirmities and is moved to help. We are saved by grace and kept by mercy. Grace saves; mercy anticipates.

22. (v. 22–23). Some objects of evangelism necessitate our involvement, and we must give of ourselves, our time, energies and compassion. Others necessitate the utmost care and caution as they might seek to contaminate us with their wickedness and depraved influence. We may love the sinner, but we must hate his sin and avoid any contact with it. The figure is that of snatching something out of the fire without getting burned, while fearing the heat and effects of the fire. “Avoid all that leads to sin or looks like sin” (Matt. Henry).

23. (v. 24–25). A most wholesome and glorious doxology. A fitting statement to conclude this letter. We do not labor in our own strength or depend upon our own resources.

From his severe and somber warnings and exhortations, St. Jude turns in joyous and exulting confidence to Him who alone can make them effectual” (A. Plummer).

Compare this doxology with Rom. 16:25–27 and 1 Tim. 6:11–16.

Jude points his readers to the omnipotent God who alone is able to guard them from falling and to present them faultless before His glorious presence with joy. Our strength, enablement, protection and anticipation are bound up in the God of all grace, wisdom, power, majesty and glory. We are to find our all-sufficiency in Him.

So closes this short, stern, stringent epistle—with awful descriptions of and warnings for the wicked and ungodly, and unspeakable love, mercy and grace to believers who must contend and stand firmly by the faith. We stand for the present and anticipate the blessings of eternal glory.

The Book of Revelation

Introduction

The Book of Revelation is the one exclusively prophetic book of the New Testament.²³⁷ This book is not a “mystery,” but a “revelation,”²³⁸ as its title reveals: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,”²³⁹ i.e., the full and final revelation which our Lord gave to John of himself, the vindication of the Divine purpose, the final phases of the history of redemption, the final judgment upon Satan and his evil person and designs, upon wicked and unrepentant sinners, all culminating in the City of God [“New Jerusalem”] and a renewed universe for the people of God.

“It is an apocalypse with respect to its contents, a prophecy in its essential spirit and message, and an epistle in its form.”²⁴⁰ This writing is the final book and capstone of Scripture. As Genesis is the Book of beginnings; Revelation is the Book of consummation.

The Book of Revelation is the climax of God’s Book, the last chapter of world history. The opening Book of Genesis records the beginnings of the universe and the human race, and this closing book prophetically views the coming, eternal new heaven and new earth. In Revelation, Genesis’ reporting of man’s Fall and consequent curse sees its fulfillment in Divine judgments for sin, which reaches into eternity.²⁴¹

It is predominantly Christocentric as it reveals the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the “Prince of the Kings of the earth,” the returning King, the Lord over His churches, the “Alpha and Omega,” “The Almighty,” “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah,” the “Lamb of God,” the “White Horse Rider,” and the Final Judge of

²³⁷ By contrast, the Old Testament has seventeen prophetic books, from Isaiah to Malachi in our English Bible.

²³⁸ Ἀποκάλυψις, a revelation or unveiling, a pulling aside of the veil.

²³⁹ Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, an obj. gen., i.e., the revelation which Jesus Christ gives or reveals.

²⁴⁰ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 431.

²⁴¹ Irving L. Jensen, *Survey of the New Testament*, p. 492.

all men, who died and now rules and reigns with power over history and humanity. He holds the keys of hell and death. This writing also reveals the absolute sovereignty of God throughout the present and future history of the world, the universe and beyond. What the Old Testament prophets foretold as mysteries in their apocalyptic visions and symbols comes to a revealed fruition and finality.

Note: “The Lion of the Tribe of Judah” when seen by John is a little Lamb! ὁ Ἀρνίον is the diminutive form. This diminutive form is used throughout the book. Imagine the awful cries of both the great, leading and the insignificant men of the earth, “Save us from the wrath of the little Lamb!” (6:16).

Authorship

The author names himself four times (Rev. 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8) as the recipient of these apocalyptic visions with their vivid imagery and descriptive symbolism. Was this John the Apostle, the author of the Gospel record and Epistles? Radical biblical critics deny this, and attribute this book to either the “Elder John,”²⁴² a figment of their imagination, whom they assume also lived in the area of Ephesus at that time, or even another well-known “John”!²⁴³ The major reasons are that the state of the Greek is less polished than the Gospel and Epistles, and the fact that John did not name himself in his other writings.

Revelation was written before the Epistles while John was exiled to the Island of Patmos some 35 miles off the coast of Asia Minor east of Ephesus, evidently alone and without an amanuensis whom he may have used for his other writings. The ecstatic state of John in exile and the giving of the visions and symbolism doubtless influenced his writing. He wrote as and what he saw in an ecstatic state, which was overpowering and both magnificent and awesome. Further, he needed only to identify himself as “John,” being very well-known as the aged

²⁴² See p. 216 of this volume of this *Survey of the Bible*.

²⁴³ One biblical scholar humorously muses on just how many well-known “Johns” there were in the area of Ephesus!

Apostle. Further, there are undeniable similarities between this final book and the other writings of the Apostle John.

Authenticity

The authorship of the Apostle John was almost universally accepted from the earliest time. The two exceptions were Dionysius of Alexandria (231–265), who objected because John never named himself in his other writings, and the vocabulary and style were different. He, in turn, was quoted by Eusebius (265–340).

Note: There was some opposition in the late second century. Marcion the Gnostic excluded it from his canon. Some opposed it because of the influence of the Montanists, an early Anabaptist sect who used the Apocalypse to promote their chiliast views, prophetic anticipations and alleged visions. They were opposed by the Alogi, who protested the Johannine authorship of both John's Gospel and the Revelation.²⁴⁴

Most of the early Church Fathers were chiliasts²⁴⁵ in their view of Revelation, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian and Victorinus.²⁴⁶

There are possible traces of Revelation in the Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius (d. 108?), The Gospel of Barnabas, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, etc. The earliest direct reference to the Apocalypse and Johannine authorship is from Justin Martyr (c. 100–165). Irenaeus (c. 130–202) named John as the author and quoted from Revelation five times. Revelation is listed in the Muratorian Canon (c. 170). Clement of Alexandria (150–215) adds his testimony. Tertullian (c. 155–240) quoted from most of the chapters of Revelation. Origen (c. 184–253) quoted from Revelation and attributed it to John. Victorinus of Pettau (d. 304) wrote the first commentary on Revelation.

²⁴⁴ See R. K. Harrison, *Op. cit.*, p. 429.

²⁴⁵ *χίλια* is the Gk. term for “thousand.” The early Christians were “Chiliasts,” believing in a literal millennium. The Latin is *mille*, hence the eschatological term: “millennium.”

²⁴⁶ See H. C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 326.

Provenance and Date

John informs his readers that he was exiled for his faith on the Island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor (1:9). This was during the reign and in a time of persecution under the Emperor Domitian (81–96). The time of this writing would be c. 96, both while he was exiled on Patmos and perhaps with final added comments once he was released and returned to Ephesus.²⁴⁷

Some would place John's exile during the reign of Nero, when a time of intense persecution occurred. Among the reasons given was the fact that the Hebrew number 666 gives the numeral equivalent of Emperor Nero's name (13:18).

Note: the alphanumeric code of assigning a numerical value to a name or word is known as *gematria*, and originated as an Assyro–Babylonian–Greek system which was adopted into Jewish culture. This was possible because numbers were often written as various letters of the alphabet in both Hebrew and Greek.

Further, some numbers were then used to signify certain values. E.g., in Revelation is the number “seven,” which is used at times to signify perfection or completeness. E.g., the seven spirits of God are symbolic of the Holy Spirit Who is one, but symbolized as seven (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

Care should be taken in Bible study not to import *gematria* into prose as an esoteric exercise in search of truth through mystically seeking explanations through numerology.

Note: Emperor worship was used against the Christians at the end of the first century onward to the time of Constantine in the early fourth century. This was a direct conflict between the Roman State and Christians. The issue was the confession *Καίσαρ Κύριος* [“Caesar is Lord”] vs. *Χρίστος Κύριος* [“Christ is Lord”]. In many ways, this has been the essence of the ongoing conflict between the church and state, between true believers and the given totalitarian government.

Also, the elementary state of John's use of the Greek—not as polished as in his Gospel and Epistles. In Rev. 11:1–2, the temple is seen as still standing, implying that Jerusalem had not yet been

²⁴⁷ 1:9, John writes, “I was [ἐγενόμην, aor.] on the Isle called Patmos...” implying that he was no longer there when writing this statement.

destroyed, and thus demanding an earlier date. It must be remembered that this was a vision, not reality. Most scholars fix the time during the reign of Domitian, over two decades after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, asserting the existence of Emperor worship.

Recipients

The recipients or readers to whom this Apocalypse was addressed were seven churches located in Asia Minor: Ephesus (2:1–7), Smyrna (2:8–11), Pergamos (2:12–17), Thyatira (2:18–29), Sardis (3:1–6), Philadelphia (3:7–13) and Laodectia (3:14–22).

These were seven local churches in Asia Minor at the end of the First Century. There is neither need nor cause to spiritualize these churches into the various phases of “the dispensation of grace” or as representing “the church age” between our Lord’s two advents, as their future perceived conditions would not be relevant at the time of writing.

Note: Dispensational Premillennialists, following the Scofield Reference Bible and other Dispensational teaching, decry the tendency of both postmillennialists and Amillennialists to spiritualize the millennium and other parts of Revelation, holding such to be symbolic rather than literal. The Dispensationalists pride themselves in being “literalists,” yet they begin this prophecy by spiritualizing chapters 1–3 and these seven local churches as symbolic of “the church age” from the ascension of Christ to the rapture!²⁴⁸ There seems to be a lack of consistency in every hermeneutical and millennial approach to Revelation. We consider these to be local churches that existed in the time of John.

Note: By holding to the idea that the seven churches symbolize the various ages of “the Church” between the first and second Advents, many hold that we are living in “the Laodicean Age,” the time of the great “falling away” or apostasy of the church (2 Thess. 2:1–3ff), and so it is useless to pray for revival and spiritual awakening. One’s view of prophecy may incapacitate one’s zeal and usefulness.

²⁴⁸ The term “rapture” derives from the Latin of 1 Thess. 4:17, when believers will be “caught up” [ἄρπαγησόμεθα, i.e., Gk. for “seized.” E.g., the “harpy eagle” as a “raptor.”] [Lat. *rapiemur*, fr. *raptura*, “to seize”].

The scroll of the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ was written and directed to the angel [ἄγγελος] of each church. The term may denote a spirit being or “angel,” but it properly denotes “messenger,”²⁴⁹ and refers to the pastor, elder or overseer of each church as the one who is responsible for the church’s spiritual welfare.

Note: Each church, except Laodemia, had retained some good characteristics, but was experiencing laxness in some areas, and several had compromised with the world through allowing immorality and the beginnings of ecclesiasticism—perhaps the reference to Nicolaitanism.²⁵⁰

Note: In the church at Thyatira, a woman prophetess was allowed to lead and influence the church, seducing some to adopt pagan practices and indulge in immorality. This is the first recorded instance of a woman in church leadership, a situation forbidden by Scripture (1 Tim. 2:8–15). Its disobedience was made known with this woman called “Jezebel.”

Note: on the mountain above Pergamos was a temple and a huge altar to Zeus—a central place for pagan worship—a possible reference to “Satan’s seat.”

Note: the church at Sardis is described as “dead.” A church may be socially and religiously alive but spiritually dead. This occurs when religion becomes mere outward and formal, but devoid of spiritual life and reality. Worldliness and a denial of Scripture are rampant in our day! Often entertainment replaces worship.

Note: The affluence and spiritual “lukewarmness” of Laodemia is an application from the banking center located there and the lukewarm water from nearby hot springs which became tepid by the time it reached Laodemia. One of Laodemia’s products was an eye salve, to which John makes application spiritually.

Note: Rev. 3:20 portrays our Lord as standing outside the church, seeking entrance for fellowship. The application of this verse to evangelism of the lost and knocking at the “heart’s door” is questionable. Application is not interpretation, and this passage has certainly confused the two. Further, care must be

²⁴⁹ Angels in the Old and New Testaments were God’s servants and messengers to man. Human messengers are the representatives of the churches, and so responsible for their welfare (2 Cor. 8:23).

²⁵⁰ The name may derive from the leader, Nicholas, or the etymology, νικᾶω, to rule, and λαός, people, hence to rule over the people.

taken to properly present the truth of salvation and the power of our Lord when such is applied in evangelism.

The departures from the faith, the entrance of false teachers, their antinomianism and moral corruption, and the beginnings of Gnostic influences foretold and described so vividly in 1 Tim. 6:3–5; 2 Tim. 3:1–8, 13; 4:3–4; 2 Peter 2:1–3:4 and Jude v. 4–19 had taken root, and in some instances were pervasive by the time John is given this revelation.

Genre and Style

Genre

The Book of Revelation is classified as Apocalyptic Literature because of its visions, symbolism and eschatological emphasis. Apocalyptic writings were usually for people under persecution or adversity, holding out to them hope in a future, supernatural deliverance. The message would be couched in terms of visions and symbolism, which became the vehicle for the message.

Uninspired Jewish Apocalyptic Literature

Uninspired Jewish apocalyptic literature (c. 200–100 BC) arose in the Intertestamental period during the Greco–Roman Era under the Selucid Empire to give hope to the Jews concerning the coming of the Messiah, and included such writings as the *Books of Enoch*, *The Assumption of Moses*, *The Apocalypse of Baruch*, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, *the Book of Jubilees*, etc. These writings were pseudonymous and attributed to some great personage of the past. These promised a supernatural deliverance in the future and abounded in visions and symbols.

Note: Palestine and the Jews were under Greek domination from the time of Alexander the Great to the Roman conquest (c. 323–63 BC). First, under the Egyptian Greeks or Ptolemies (c. 305 BC), then under the Syrian Greeks or Selucids (c. 200–165 BC) until the Jewish revolt under the Maccabees (c. 165–63 BC) to their conquest by the Romans (63 BC).

Inspired Biblical Apocalyptic Literature

Inspired, biblical apocalyptic books include Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah. These name their authors and prophesy of catastrophic events, world powers in conflict, the rise and fall of

great empires, the coming Messiah, a Messianic Age of glory and blessing, and a future resurrection and new heavens and earth. Various passages throughout the Old Testament might be classified as prophecies of the future fulfilled in the Messiah (e.g., Psa. 2; 22), an age of victory and blessedness—and some prophesied of a re-created universe.

The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ given to John identifies its author, was given during a time of Roman persecution and difficulties or laxness among the churches, and its message was portrayed through visions and symbols. These viewed the present circumstances, and revealed the near and distant future and final consummation from both an earthly and a heavenly perspective. God is seen as absolutely sovereign and the history and future are viewed from a Christocentric perspective in both judgment and ultimate glory.

Style

The Book of Revelation is couched in visions and symbolism as Apocalyptic Literature. The language is Greek; the symbolism is Hebrew, reiterating Old Testament apocalyptic passages. John was commanded to write what he witnessed in the four visions. He was transported into an ecstatic state. His grammar may well have been determined by this ecstatic state, the subject-matter and the circumstances. The symbols are arbitrary and representative, not literal, e.g., a beast with seven heads and ten horns, a dragon, a woman clothed with the sun, etc. (12:1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16; 13:1–2; 17:3).

There is an inspired, representative numerology revealed in series of sevens: seven churches, candlesticks, stars, spirits, lamps, seals, angels, thunders, plagues, mountains, heads, kings, beasts, and vials. There are series of four: four beasts, corners, and angels. There are series of twelve: twelve thousand from each tribe of Israel, stars, gates, foundations and manner of fruits. All of these symbols and numbers are representative of realities, powers, persons, places, events or systems.

The style of John, with its Hebraistic Greek, demonstrates his ecstatic state and the awesome visions with their symbolism that he was commanded to describe.

Revelation: Old and New Testament Sources

Of the 404 verses in Revelation, over 265 contain Old Testament language, and there are over 550 allusions to the Old Testament.²⁵¹ Relevant Old Testament passages include: Gen. 3:15; Deut. 4:30–31; Isa. 11:1–13:22; 24:1–27:13; 40:1–66:24; Daniel 7:1–12:13; Ezk. 38:1–39:29; Zech. 4:1–6:15.

Relevant New Testament passages include the following: Matt. 24:1–25:46; Mk. 13:1–37; Lk. 21:1–36; 1 Cor. 15:12–28, 36–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 2 Thess. 1:6–10; 2:1–15; Tit. 2:11–13; Heb. 1:1–14; 9:24–28; 2 Pet. 2:1–3, 10; Jude v. 4–19. There are also short passages which point to the future resurrection, judgment and eternal righteousness.

Occasion and Purpose

The occasion of this writing was the Lord's command for John to write what he would see and hear. This is the only New Testament book which has such a command. What was the occasion? The churches were suffering or would suffer government persecution—the second of a series of Roman State persecutions directed against Christians which would continue spasmodically until the Emperor Constantine made the religion of the *Katholikos* party the state church (c. 330).

What was the providential setting? The aged Apostle was exiled on the remote island of Patmos under solitary circumstances which allowed him great freedom of time and isolation to experience the visions and write the book without interruption.

What was the purpose? The churches needed encouragement for the present and for a future time of testing. They also needed warning and exhortation, as some within the churches had grown lax, worldly, compromising and even scandalous. Some in the churches were unconverted—mere outwardly professing Christians—and there was already the rise of ecclesiasticism.

²⁵¹ W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, p. 372; John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 282.

Each church addressed had some defects which needed correction or compromise which necessitated repentance.

Further, these believers needed to understand the immediate and ultimate future for their encouragement and perseverance. The Lord Jesus Christ is sovereign over history and all worldly powers. This is revealed through his many titles and actions. Their prayers would be answered and make a difference. The ongoing conflict between the purpose of God and Satanic powers and human governments would result in the ultimate victory of the Lord over all earthly, satanic and demonic powers.

There is coming the final judgment which will end all opposition, and there will be a new heaven and earth filled with the glory of the Lord and the blessing of his people. Finally, there is a repeated revelation of blessing for those who keep the words of this prophecy and remain faithful.

Theology

As previously reiterated, Revelation is Christocentric. Other doctrinal truths are either implied or described.

Bibliology

The underlying premise of this book is that “the Scripture must needs be fulfilled.” Revelation is the full and final manifestation of God’s absolute sovereignty, infallible purpose, and eternal plan of both redemption and judgment. This book rests upon previous Old and New Testament revelation as already noted. The Scriptures form a non-contradictory unity with Revelation as the ultimate fulfillment and realization of the eternal redemptive purpose. Its ultimate consummation will be the final judgment of the wicked and the creation of the new heaven and earth.

Theology Proper

Revelation is the full and final manifestation of the absolute sovereignty of God over his creation. His eternal purpose is and will be manifest as infallible. His moral self-consistency is seen in the final judgment of the devil, his demons and the unrepentant among men. His love, grace and mercy are marked in the final redemption of his people. Sin has fractured the universe, and thus

it will be completely eradicated through the new creation of heaven and earth.

Christology

The Lord Jesus Christ is manifested in all his power and glory, and in the revelation of his many titles. The humiliation and suffering of his first advent as the God-Man are gone forever. In his glorified and almighty state he exercises invincible power and authority.

Pneumatology

The Holy Spirit is seen in his ministry among the churches and throughout all the earth (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

Soteriology

The visions look back upon the salvation of the redeemed. Their redemption is now complete and their position secured throughout eternity. They are portrayed as rejoicing in the fullness of glory.

Ecclesiology

Chapters two and three are occupied with the seven churches. The role and place of the New Testament church will give way to the church in glory or the heavenly body of believers assembled for the first time and comprised of the elect of God (Heb. 12:18–24; Rev. 21:1–22:14). The church in glory or the elect of God will inhabit the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

Eschatology

Revelation forms the final chapter and consummation of all eschatology. Redemption and judgment are complete and final. The Lord Jesus Christ reigns as Prophet, Priest and King; sin is eradicated once-for-all, and the universe is created anew. The righteous are in the city of God and the devil and wicked are in the lake of fire forever. God reigns in sovereign splendor and His purpose is infallibly fulfilled.

Five Hermeneutical Approaches

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. Biblically, it is the first step in exegetical theology after establishing the reading of the text from the original languages. Our Lord stated such to

the lawyer in Lk. 10:26, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” Hermeneutics is critical, and it is at this point that the great differences in the approaches to the meaning and understanding of Revelation become apparent.

The presuppositions of the given interpreter become apparent, as they expose his entire approach to Scripture in general and to Revelation in particular. Visions and symbolism are the most difficult to interpret, but the visions and meaning in Revelation are largely based on the apocalyptic passages of the Old Testament. Thus, one reveals his overall approach to Scripture.

The structure and outline of Revelation is fairly straightforward and easily arranged, as the key seems to be found in 1:19, “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” The great differences lay in the different interpretations. Does the book read successively from beginning to end, or should it be seen as a series of cyclical events which are either successive or concurrent and parallel? What should be taken as literal and what should be taken as symbolic and figurative? What is past [historical]? And what is future [prophetical]? And what is simply symbolic without regard to time?

Note: the Book of Revelation is part of Scripture, and as such—dealing subjects vital the second coming of our Lord and the final judgment and eternal state—some general understanding is necessary. The main thrust of our ministry, however, is preaching the gospel. Many have become distracted and even consumed with prophetic and symbolic studies and speculation.

The great and gifted C. H. Spurgeon, who majored on Gospel preaching, stated first in all seriousness, then in sarcasm, what may be the attitude of many:

I am not now going into millennial theories, or into any speculation as to dates. I do not know anything at all about such things, and I am not sure that I am called to spend my time in such researches. I am rather called to minister the gospel than open prophecy.²⁵²

²⁵² C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, X, p. 429.

Only fools and madmen are positive in their interpretation of the Apocalypse.²⁵³

Note: Spurgeon's ministry had to contend with the religious and eschatological ferment of his day: the Ervingites, Darbyites, Plymouth Brethren and the beginnings of Dispensational Premillennialism. Spurgeon reacted against such undue emphasis upon prophetic speculation.

The following section describes in very general terms the various interpretive approaches to Revelation. It must be noted that in each approach, there are variations among its adherents.

The Preterist Approach

The preterist²⁵⁴ approach views Revelation in terms of what transpired in John's day prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (70 AD) or through the first three centuries of the Christian Era.²⁵⁵ This interpretation leaves no place for far future events. All is focused on the historic past. Nero is the "beast" of Revelation and the number 666 refers to him and the persecution which occurred at that time. The one exception is Revelation chapters 21–22, which refers to the ultimate state.

Some within the preterist school hold that Revelation chapters 4–11 refer to Jewish opposition against the church, chapters 12–19 refer to the reign of Nero. Chapters 20–22 refer to the future.

The Historicist Approach

The historicist view holds that Revelation is a panorama of historical events throughout church history, from John's day to the end of the world. The Pope of Rome is the Antichrist and Babylon the harlot is ecclesiastical and political Rome. Some see in chapters 4–19 the various kingdoms of the West, the rise and wane of historic Islam and various wars between European powers. The Reformers, Puritans and prominent persons in

²⁵³ Quoted in Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, p. 263.

²⁵⁴ Lat: *praeteritum*, that which is past, a term still used linguistically for the past tense in some ancient languages.

²⁵⁵ The first three centuries were the times of spasmodic imperial persecutions against Christians; some severe and intense, others less severe and limited in geographical scope.

Church History generally held to this view, especially the Postmillennarians.

The Futurist Approach

The futurist interprets Revelation as descriptive of events and persons yet to come. Chapters 1–3 describe the past and present. Chapters 4–22 refer to the distant future. This view holds to the imminent return of our Lord, and to a literal millennium, the final judgment, the re-creation of the universe and the New Jerusalem as future. The distinguishing feature is a future, literal millennium.

The futurist school is divided between Dispensational Premillennialism and Covenant, Historical or Moderate Premillennialism. The former views the future with a sharp distinction between national Israel and the “Church;” the latter holds Jewish and Gentile believers as included within the Church. The former holds to a pre-tribulation, secret “rapture;” the latter holds that the “Church” will go through the Tribulation. The former foresees a “Jewish millennium” with a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem and “memorial” animal sacrifices; the latter does not. The former holds to two phases of our Lord’s Second Coming: a secret “rapture,” then a visible coming in power and glory at the end of the seven-year Tribulation to initiate the millennium; the latter views the Second Advent of our Lord as one visible event.

The Idealist Approach

The Idealist approach, also known as the poetic, spiritual or iteristic²⁵⁶ approach, views Revelation as symbolic of the great conflict between good and evil—the cosmic conflict between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. “...the pictorial unfolding of great principles in constant conflict, though under various forms, and eclectic in its character.”²⁵⁷ This removes Revelation from any specific historical past or prophetic future.

²⁵⁶ Lat: *itero*, “to repeat.”

²⁵⁷ Quoted by J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, VI, p. 336.

The Eclectic Approach

As with the other hermeneutical approaches [each by necessity is tinged with some aspects of the other views], the eclectic is a combination of two or more of the preceding attempts to understand the Book of Revelation in a consistent manner. Even the futurist approach views chapters 1–3 as partially historic. Many eclectics are Amillennialists. Most approaches have some elements of the futurist view. It has been stated that the eclectic approach to Revelation “embraces the strengths and rejects the apparent weaknesses of the other four approaches.”²⁵⁸

Conclusion

The pervading issue is to find a consistent method of interpretation which takes into account the Old Testament foundations in Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, and find their full and most consistent meaning in Revelation. The incompleteness, esoteric or hidden character of some apocalyptic passages in the Old Testament are more fully portrayed in Revelation as the final word and revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Dan. 12:8–9).

Three Views of the Millennium

The interpretation of Revelation has led to three basic views, each of which centers on the nature of the millennium (Rev. 20:1–10). Premillennialism views the 1,000 years as literal and future; Postmillennialism views this time as present, figurative and cumulative; Amillennialism views the millennium as present and symbolic.

Premillennialism

This view of a literal thousand year reign of Christ on the earth takes two forms: first, Dispensational Premillennialism. Revelation chapters 1–3 are historical and symbolic, describing the present “Church Age” between the first and second advents of our Lord. The seven churches are symbolic of the various stages

²⁵⁸ Joel R. Beeke, *Introducing the Book of Revelation*, p. 8.

of faithfulness or faithlessness from the Apostolic Age to the “Rapture.”

The secret “rapture” of the “Church” occurs between chapters 3 and 4. Chapters 4–19 refer to the time of the “Great Tribulation” or “Seventieth Week of Daniel,” which lasts for seven years. This time–frame is itself divided into two periods, Revelation chapters 4–11 emphasize the first three and a half years of Tribulation, chapter 11:15–18 refers to the Second Advent, and chapters 12–19 is cyclical concurrent with chapters 4–11, emphasizing the final three and a half years of the Tribulation.

Note: the deciding issue hermeneutically is 10:11, and the words “...you must prophesy again...” [πάλιν προφητεῦσαι], meaning a second time, going over the same time period once more in chapters 12–19.²⁵⁹

At the end of the Tribulation our Lord will return visibly in power and glory—the second phase of his second coming—and establish his millennial kingdom over which he will reign for a literal thousand years. This millennial kingdom will be predominantly Jewish with a rebuilt temple of Jerusalem and “memorial” animal sacrifices. This is said to be mandated by Old Testament prophecies which must be literally fulfilled.

The final satanic rebellion and defeat of the devil and his demons will take place (Rev. 19:11–21) and then the final “Great White Throne” Judgment for all unbelievers (Rev. 20:11–15).

Chapters 21–22 describe the new creation and the heavenly city or New Jerusalem, which is symbolic in its perfections.

The major issue in interpretation is, should the New Testament be brought into conformity to the literalism of the Old Testament, or should the Old Testament be interpreted and understood in the light of the New? Dispensational theology makes the Old Testament determinative in interpretation and all non–Dispensational theology makes the New Testament determinative and explanatory of the Old.

²⁵⁹ See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pp. 187–188.

Note: This view, as held by many, believes in a postponed kingdom, i.e., that when Israel rejected Christ as their King during his earthly life and ministry, the kingdom was postponed until his millennial reign. These make a distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God.

Note: In the Gospel records, the term “Kingdom of Heaven” is used nineteen times by Matthew. In every case in parallel passages in the other Gospel records, the term “Kingdom of God” is used, making these two synonymous.

Note: Adherents to Dispensational Premillennialism include the devotees of the Scofield Reference Bible, the followers of J. N. Darby, the Plymouth Brethren, most Evangelicals and almost all Fundamentalists.

Second, Covenant, Moderate or Historical Premillennialism. This interpretation usually views the seven churches as local churches existing in John’s day. The “Church” will go through the Tribulation [Mid— or Post-Tribulationists]. The Lord’s second coming will be once, in glory and power after the Tribulation. While holding to a literal millennium, these do not see it as a “Jewish” millennium, but inclusive of all believers, Jews and Gentiles comprising “the Church.” The sequence of events from the millennium to the end of time are in accord with Revelation chapters 20–22.

Note: The early Christians were chiliasts [literalist millennarians]. The premillennial view was allegedly resurrected by Francisco Ribera (1537–1591), a Romish Jesuit priest, who sought to protect the Pope from being called the Antichrist. But this does not set aside the fact of the Chiliastic belief of the early Christians.

Note: Adherents associated with Historic Premillennialism include G. Eldon Ladd, C. H. Spurgeon, John Gill, and many who hold to a literal millennium, but deny the Dispensational framework.

Postmillennialism

The Postmillennial position—that our Lord’s second coming will occur after the millennium—had many adherents into the early twentieth century, as civilization seemed to be progressing and the great missionary agenda took the gospel to the far corners of the earth. Two World Wars and the Modernist–Fundamentalist

controversy of the early twentieth century caused their numbers to dwindle.

These hold to the gradual increase of God's kingdom through the gospel until most nations will be Christianized—a type of historicist approach (Rev. chapters 1–19). A time of great revival, known as “the Latter–Day Glory” will witness the conversion of great multitudes and of national Israel. The Lord will return after the millennium, which to these is an indefinite, extended time marked out by this gospel age. The final chapters of Revelation (20–22) are future and final.

A second, recent, more refined approach is that of “Reconstructional Postmillennialism,” which anticipates the development of a Christianized society after the Tribulation period.

Note: Adherents include Loraine Boettner, most of the Puritans and early Evangelicals. Proponents of Reconstructional Postmillennialism, a movement established by R. J. Rushdoony, include the followers of his teachings.

Amillennialism

The meaning of Amillennialism: the negative alpha prefix “a” implies “no”—thus, no literal millennium. These consider the one thousand years to be a symbolic number, as the other numbers in the visions and symbolism of Revelation. This view is also called a “realized millennium,” as these view the millennium as being fulfilled spiritually through the reign of Christ over his kingdom now.

These usually consider the binding of Satan that he should no longer deceive the nations (Rev. 20:3) to be fulfilled at the cross with its redemptive work, and point to the spread of the gospel throughout the world as proof.

A common approach to the interpretation of the Book of Revelation is to view the events as different co-extensive and concurrent cycles which are occurring simultaneously during this present age. Thus, this view could be considered eclectic to a degree, partaking of the historicist, futurist and idealist approaches—according to one of its contemporary adherents. A common structure of Revelation embracing this view:

1. The Son of Man and the Seven Churches (1:1–3:22)
2. The Lamb and the Seven Seals of God’s Scroll (4:1–8:1)
3. The Seven Trumpets (8:2–11:19)
4. The War with the Dragon (12:1–14:20)
5. The Seven Vials of Wrath (15:1–16:21)
6. The Fall of Babylon the Whore (17:1–19:21)
7. The Victory of Jerusalem the Bride (20:1–22:21)²⁶⁰

Note: Adherents of the Amillennial view include most of the modern Reformed scholars, and some Evangelicals, including many of the eclectists.

Note: Another view, termed “inaugurated eschatology,” views the “Kingdom of God” as initiated during our Lord’s first advent and continuing of until his second advent, when it will reach its fullness. It is associated with the “already, not yet” movement, which is popular among the Pentecostals and Charismatics, contributing to their belief in signs and miracles. This should not be confused with Amillennialism or the other basic views.

The Structure of Revelation

The structure of Revelation is daunting if approached through the prism of the various hermeneutical systems. The book itself is fairly straight forward, setting aside the cyclical tendencies and formulas. The first step is to gain a grasp of the structure of the book itself as it occurs in and as Scripture. But even at this point, one scholar has pointed out at least nine different approaches to establish the structure of the Book!²⁶¹ There are two issues of note:

First, it must be noted that the scenes portrayed in this book often alternate between heaven and earth. This may give rise to a cyclical or concurrent interpretation of the various visions.

Second, at certain points in Revelation, it appears that the climax is reached, and final judgment occurs—then events continue to proceed once again. This seems to necessitate the various views in making such points transitions for a cyclical approach with events occurring simultaneously and concurrently.

²⁶⁰ Joel R. Beeke, *Op. cit.*, p. 10. Very similar to William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, p. 23.

²⁶¹ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 970–977.

There are two approaches to the structure of Revelation, which are simple, often used, and given in the following: first, taking Rev. 1:19 as the key, “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter...” one has a rather simple, three-fold structure, roughly corresponding to the past, present and future: (1) “...the things which thou hast seen...” Rev. 1:1–20. (2) “...the things which are...” Rev. chapters 2–3. (3) “...the things which shall be hereafter...” Rev. 4:1–22:21. This is a common futurist approach.

Second, the bulk of this book is contained in four main visions, which encompass its teaching. This brief overview may lend itself to the futurist, historicist or eclectic approach.

Prologue	(1:1–8)
The revelation of Jesus Christ to John. His glory and commission.	
I. The First Vision	(1:9–3:22)
The messages to the Seven Churches.	
II. The Second Vision	(4:1–16:21)
The heavenly scene, the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, the Seven Signs and the Seven Vials.	
III. The Third Vision	(17:1–21:8)
The destruction of Babylon, defeat of the Beast, binding of Satan, the Millennium, the final rebellion, defeat of the devil, Great White Throne judgment, the re-creation of the universe.	
IV. The Fourth Vision	(21:9–22:5)
The New Jerusalem, worship of God and eternal joy. All things made new.	
Epilogue	(22:6–21)
The final revelation and benediction, and closing prayer.	

Once the structure of Revelation is grasped, then the hermeneutical principles may seek to settle the interpretive issues for consistency, cyclical or otherwise.

Two simple, three-fold outlines are possible to reveal the essence of the book:²⁶²

Prologue	(1:1–8)
I. The Vision of Grace	(1:9–3:22)
II. The Vision of Government	(4:1–19:10)
III. The Vision of Glory	(19:11–22:5)
Epilogue	(22:6–21)

A second outline which emphasizes the Christocentric focus of Revelation:²⁶³

I. The First Movement: The Enthronement of Christ in Heaven	(1:1–5:14)
II. The Second Movement: The Enthronement of Christ on Earth	(6:1–20:15)
III. The Third Movement: The Enthronement of Christ in the New Creation	(21:1–22:21)

Outline of Revelation

The following outline is an analysis of the structure of Revelation with little or no hermeneutical intrusion.

Prologue	(1:1–8)
A. The Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ	(1:1a)
B. The Prophetic Perspective	(1:1b)
C. The Nature of this Revelation—through Signs	(1:1c)
D. The Human Recipient of the Signs or Visions	(1:1d–2)
E. A Benediction to the Reader, Hearer and Keeper	(1:3)
F. The Salutation	(1:4)
G. The Christocentric Dedication: Past, Present and Future	(1:5–8)
I. The First Vision	(1:9–3:22)
A. The Vision of the Glorified Christ Symbolically Represented	(1:9–20)
1. The status and location of John, and his ecstatic state	(1:9–10a)
2. Christ's Glorified and Symbolic Appearance: the Commission of John	(1:10b–16)
3. The reaction of John overcome by this vision	(1:17a)
4. The Repeated commission	(1:17b–20)

²⁶² W. Graham Scroggie, *Op. cit.*, pp. 376–377.

²⁶³ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Op. cit.*, p. 342.

B. The Messages to the Seven Churches	(2:1–3:22)
1. The Church at Ephesus	(2:1–7)
2. The Church at Smyrna	(2:8–11)
3. The Church at Pergamos	(2:12–17)
4. The Church at Thyatira	(2:18–29)
5. The Church at Sardis	(3:1–6)
6. The Church at Philadelphia	(3:7–13)
7. The Church at Laodecia	(3:14–22)
II. The Second Vision	(4:1–16:21)
A. The heavenly Scene and Vision	(4:1–5:14)
1. John's ecstatic transport into heaven	(4:1–2a)
2. A Symbolic Representation of God	(4:2b–3)
3. The Twenty-four Elders seated around the throne	(4:4)
4. A symbolic representation of the Spirit of God	(4:5)
5. Symbolic representation of the Seraphim	(4:6–8a)
6. The universal worship of God and glory to His infallible, eternal purpose	(4:8b–11)
7. The sealed scroll given to the Lion Who is the Little Lamb and only One worthy to open the scroll	(5:1–14)
B. The Seven Seals	(6:1–8:5)
1. First Seal: White horse rider	(6:1–2)
2. Second Seal: Red horse rider	(6:3–4)
3. Third Seal: Black horse rider	(6:5–6)
4. Fourth Seal: Pale horse rider	(6:7–8)
5. Fifth Seal: Cry of the martyrs	(6:9–11)
6. Sixth Seal: signs in heaven, terror on earth	(6:12–17)
7. A Parenthesis: The sealing of the 144,000 of Israel	(7:1–17)
8. Seventh Seal: Silence in heaven; prayers of the saints; earth trembles	(8:1–5)
C. The Seven Trumpets	(8:6–11:19)
1. First Trumpet: Hail, fire, blood; one third of trees and grass destroyed	(8:6–7)
2. Second Trumpet: Sea becomes blood; one third of sea creatures perish	(8:8–9)
3. Third Trumpet: Star named Wormwood falls from heaven; many die	(8:10–11)
4. Fourth Trumpet: Heavens darkened	(8:12)
5. Pronouncement of woe to the earth for the remaining trumpet judgments	(8:13)

6. Fifth Trumpet: Bottomless Pit opened; demonic locusts emerge and plague the earth (9:1–12)
7. Sixth Trumpet: Four angels loosed; a terrible symbolic army kills one third of men. Those left remain unrepentant (9:13–21)
8. A Parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets (10:1–11:19)
 - a. The opened scroll; contents forbidden to John (10:1–4)
 - b. The end of time declared (10:5–6)
 - c. The seventh trumpet anticipated (10:7)
 - d. The little scroll eaten; sweetness turns bitter (10:8–10)
 - e. John commanded to prophesy again (10:11)
 - f. Temple of God measured by John (11:1–2)
 - g. The Two Witnesses and judgment (11:3–7)
 - h. Two witnesses killed, resurrected and ascend to heaven (11:8–14)
9. The Seventh Trumpet: A display of Divine power and glory given to the Lord and to His Christ (11:15–19)
- D. The Signs (12:1–16:21)
 1. The woman clothed with the sun, pregnant and in labor (12:1–2)
 2. The red dragon, symbolic of the devil (12:3–4)
 3. The man–child, symbolic for Christ, hidden by God with his mother (12:5–6)
 4. Michael the archangel fights with the devil and his demons. These are defeated and cast to the earth (12:7–9)
 5. The dragon pursues and persecutes the woman, but God preserves her (12:10–17)
 6. The Beast out of the sea; given great power by the dragon and is worshipped on earth (13:1–10)
 7. The Beast from the earth empowered by the dragon. Had his mark, 666, placed upon his devotees (13:11–18)
 8. The Lamb on Mt. Zion worshipped by the symbolic 144,000 (14:1–5)
 9. A Parenthesis: An angel proclaims the gospel, declares the fall of Babylon, and warns against receiving the mark of the beast (14:6–11)
 10. Pronouncement of blessing upon those who die in the Lord (14:12–13)

11. The harvest of the earth by an angel in the wrath of God	(14:14–20)
E. The Seven Vials	(15:1–16:21)
1. The heavenly scene both anticipating the final seven plagues, yet filled with praises to God	(15:1–8)
2. First Vial and Plague: a grievous ulceration	(16:1–2)
3. Second Vial and Plague: sea turned to blood	(16:3)
4. Third Vial and Plague: all fresh water sources turned to blood. The Lord is praised for His justice	(16:4–7)
5. Fourth Vial and Plague: scorching heat of the sun intensified	(16:8–9)
6. Fifth Vial and Plague: a penetrating, intense darkness	(16:10–11)
7. Sixth Vial and Plague: Demonic frogs with supernatural powers who gather the forces of men together to battle	(16:12–16)
8. Seventh Vial and Plague: Divine judgment upon unrepentant sinners	(16:17–21)
III. The Third Vision	(17:1–21:8)
A. The Destruction of Babylon the Great Whore	(17:1–18:24)
1. Babylon's religious monopoly	(17:1–6)
2. Babylon's personal mystery	(17:7–13)
3. Babylon's political monarchy	(17:14–18)
4. Babylon's economic mastery	(18:1–19)
5. Babylon's final destiny	(18:20–24)
B. The Rejoicing of the Saints in Heaven	(19:1–6)
1. Praising God for His righteous judgment	(19:1–2)
2. Praising God for His sovereign justice	(19:4–6)
C. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb	(19:7–10)
D. The Final Battle: Armageddon	(19:11–21)
1. The Lord Jesus described by title and power	(19:12–16)
2. The angelic declaration of anticipated victory	(19:17–18)
3. The beast and false prophet defeated and cast into the lake of fire	(19:19–21)
E. The Millennium	(20:1–6)
1. Satan bound for a thousand years	(20:1–3)
2. The first resurrection: Saints reign with Christ for a thousand years	(20:4–6)
F. The Final Battle: Satan defeated and cast into the lake of fire	(20:7–10)
G. The Great White Throne: Final Judgment	(20:11–15)
H. The New Heavens and New Earth	(21:1–8)

1. The new heaven and new earth	(21:1)
2. The New Jerusalem visualized	(21:2–8)
IV. The Fourth Vision	(21:9–22:5)
A. The City of God: The New Jerusalem:	(21:9–27)
Its dimensions and description symbolized	
B. Description of the Eternal State	(22:1–5)
Epilogue	(22:6–21)
A. The Veracity of the Visions	(22:6–9)
B. The Final Benedictions	(22:10–15)
C. The Final and Gracious Invitation	(22:16–21)

Notes & Observations

1. (1:1). The revelation of Jesus Christ. Here the mysteries of the Old Testament are opened symbolically by our Lord in his glory. The terminology “shortly come to pass” must be considered in God’s timetable, not ours. Note the word “signified” [ἐσήμανεν, fr. σημαίνω]. It derives from “sign” [σημεῖον] which prepares for the symbolic nature of the book. What is symbolic and what is literal is crucial in the interpretation of Revelation.
2. (1:3). This book begins and ends with blessings (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). There are blessings in life and even in death. There is no place or state where the true believer is not blessed—and such blessings are in accord with one’s faithfulness.
3. (1:4). We are faced at the very beginning of this prophecy with the supra-temporal nature of God. He is immutable, and thus his Word is utterly trustworthy.
4. (1:5). Our Lord is presented here in his glory and power, but there is always a remembrance of his redemptive work through which we have been reconciled to God.
5. (1:6). No need for an earthly priest—such is the complete and full redemption which is in Christ Jesus! We are rather made priests and even kings unto our God!
6. (1:7). The second Advent of our Lord will cause great grief and humiliation to sinful mankind. The disdain for gospel truth will then be silenced; grief will ensue for those who

murdered the Savior and Redeemer. No salvation with the Second Advent—only justice and judgment.

7. (1:8). The glorious reality of our Lord's Deity will shine forth in unquestionable power and silence sinful mankind.
8. (1:9ff). The first vision (1:9–3:22). John was exiled on Patmos and evidently left in seclusion. This provided the context and circumstances for his visions. Enforced isolation may prove to be God's opportunity for a glorious communication!
9. (1:11). The Lord speaks to the churches, not to individual believers on this occasion. Are we prepared for Divine communication while assembled with our church? Does God indeed speak through preaching?
10. (1:11–17). A symbolic vision of the Lord Jesus in all his glory and power. The result? John fell at his feet as though dead. The awesomeness of God's presence.
11. (1:18). Our Lord holds the keys of hell and death. We can neither perish nor die without his permission.
12. (1:19). Many consider this to be the key to understanding this Revelation.
13. (2:1–3:14). The angels were the messengers or pastors of these churches, and responsible for their behavior and faithfulness—what an awesome responsibility!
14. (2:3). Have we lost our first love? We may have progressed in knowledge, giving, self-sacrifice—but still be bereft of that first love we had as new believers when our hearts were fervent.
15. (2:10). God may ordain great trials for us, but his grace is sufficient to sustain us through the very worst, even death itself!
16. (2:14–16). How tragic when sin enters the church! Unregenerate, unbridled human nature is prone to sin—and mere religion is powerless against it. The worst of sins are masked by external religion.

17. (2:20–23). We may expect awful consequences if and when we do not live in obedience to God’s truth. Women in church leadership is unscriptural (1 Tim. 2:9–15).

Note: 1 Tim. 2:12 is emph. in word–order [διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἄνδρος], dividing teaching and usurping authority over the man, and it cannot mean not teaching men, but not teaching at all: “But to teach, a woman, I do not allow, nor to usurp authority over the man...”

Can we expect God’s blessing if we are disobedient? Many of the cults were started or are led by women.

18. (3:1ff). Many churches are dead. They may have the outward semblance of life, but their religion is only outward, external—but devoid of true, spiritual life. Rites, rituals, ceremonies and activities may be but the noise of spiritual death.
19. (3:10). Those who bold that these churches are symbolic of the “Church Age,” believe that the church at Philadelphia represents the faithful church in the last days, and so shall be kept from the “hour of temptation,” i.e., shall escape the Great Tribulation—the basis for the Pre-Tribulation rapture of the church.
20. (3:14–20). The Laodecian church is apostate, the final stage before the rapture. The “falling away” [ἡ ἀποστασία] of 2 Thess. 2:3. Thus, there will never be another great revival or spiritual awakening. Such thinking limits God, who has and may bring revival in the very worst of times.
21. (3:20). An evangelistic text only by application. This is not The Lord standing at the heart’s door seeking entrance, but the Lord seeking entrance and fellowship in an apostate church. Care must ever be taken to distinguish between interpretation and application!
22. (4:1–3). The second vision (4:1–16:21). 4:1–5:14 is a vision of heaven. God sits enthroned in sovereign splendor and glory.
23. (4:4ff). Who are the four and twenty elders? Some say Israel and the church, represented by twelve each.

24. (4:5). The Holy Spirit may be represented by the number seven, if it is the number which represents perfection.
25. (4:6–9). These creatures with six wings may represent the Seraphim (Isa. 6:1–4).
26. (4:10–11). God is glorified in the fulfillment of his eternal purpose. This universe and every one and everything in it exists for the good pleasure of God—an awesome truth!
27. (5:1). The book was a scroll [βίβλος] sealed with seals which only one who was authorized could break and thus open the scroll.
28. (5:2–6). The Lion of the Tribe of Judah appears as a little lamb [ἀρνίον]. The term is diminutive. Note that our Lord is usually marked out in connection with his redemptive work, “as it had been slain.” This is a glorious truth which ought to be meditated upon by every redeemed soul! (Rev. 1:5–6).
29. (5:8). This is noteworthy. “...the prayers of the saints...” Our prayers will remain effectual if they are prayed according to God’s will (1 Jn. 4:6; 5:14; Rev. 8:3, 4).
30. (5:11–14). The first great hymn of praise was to God (4:10–11). The second is to the Father and to Christ the Son.
31. (6:2). The white horse Rider is the Lord Jesus conquering his enemies and executing judgment on the earth.
32. (6:3–4). The Red horse Rider brings war and devastation. God is sovereign over war. Men hate God and his government (Psa. 2:1ff). They hate one another. Man’s innate rebellion against authority is insatiable.
33. (6:5–6). The black horse Rider brings famine. Men are forced to see that the Most High rules. Alleged natural disasters throughout this book fulfill the will of God in judgment.
34. (6:7–8). The pale horse Rider symbolizes death. Hell follows death. Death comes from war, famine and the rage of wild animals. Nothing happens apart from God in either blessing or judgment.

35. (6:9–11). The Fifth Seal. The voices of the martyrs cry out for vengeance. These must wait patiently for their number to be fulfilled.
36. (6:12–17). The Sixth Seal: The day of the wrath of the little Lamb. The Lord exercises his sovereign power over heaven and earth. Men recognize but do not repent; they are filled with utmost terror, but they do not believe. Such is the power of unbelief!
37. (7:1–17). A Parenthesis: The sealing of the 144,000. The universal praise of God and the Lamb.
38. (8:1–5). The Seventh Seal: Four angels with the seven trumpets introduced. The prayers of the saints and their effect.
39. (8:6–13). The first four angels sound their trumpets. Natural disasters revealed to be the judgment of God.
40. (9:1–12). The fifth trumpet and the plague of demonic locusts under the headship of Satan. These are empowered to plague men.
41. (9:13–21). The sixth trumpet. Four gruesome demonic creatures empowered to savagely kill a third of mankind. But none of these horrible judgments could cause men to repent. Such is the obstinacy of unbelief!
42. (10:1–6). Two angels. The first declares words which remain unwritten. The second declares that time would cease.
43. (10:11). John commanded to write again [the second time?]. Dispensational Premillennialists view this as a cycle of prophecy retracing the Tribulation in chapters 12–19.
44. (11:1–12). The two witnesses: prophesying, killed, resurrected and ascended into heaven. Their identity is unknown. Some say they are Enoch and Elijah, as all are appointed to die, and these two did not; but this is mere speculation.
45. (11:13–19). A great convulsion of the earth, a manifestation of absolute Divine power. United praises unto God and the Lamb.

46. (12:1–17). The woman, the child and the dragon. From the Middle Ages, the Romanists teach this is the Virgin Mary. Others hold it is the “Messianic Community” of ideal Israel. Still others claim this is the “church.” The child and dragon are self-interpreting.
47. (13:1–15). The Beast out of the sea is said to represent the persecuting power of human government. The beast out of the earth is said to be false religion deriving from the secular powers. Later called the false prophet.
48. (13:16–18). The number 666 is, by the preterists, referring to the Emperor Nero. The people of the beast have control of the economic society.
49. (14:1–5). A vision of hope and joy in contrast to the last chapter. Some believe that the number 144,000 is symbolic for the total of all the elect. Their virginity is said to symbolize their separation from pagan idolatry.
50. (14:6–13). Three angels warn of approaching judgment. The message is to understand the sovereignty of God in contrast to the empty claims of the beast. A blessing is pronounced upon those who did not receive the mark of the beast.
51. (14:14–20). A picture of the final, universal judgment as reaping the earth and the crushing winepress. Dispensational Premillennialists see the measure [roughly 185 miles] as extending as a river of blood along the eastern Israelitish border from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea.
52. (15:1–8). The wrath of God is set to fall upon the earth through the seven angels with the seven last plagues.
53. (16:1–12). The first six angels pour out the vials of God’s wrath upon the earth. This judgment is just. The “Kings of the East” may refer to the Islamic hordes [?].
54. (16:13–21). Three demonic frogs come from the dragon to gather the armies together for the great, final battle of Armageddon. The seventh vial is poured out, and the armies are utterly destroyed by awesome acts of God.
55. (17:1–18). Babylon the Great, the Harlot, is introduced. This is either ecclesiastical and political Rome or literally Babylon

itself, i.e., either a Western or Middle Eastern prophetic and symbolic paradigm.

56. (18:1–19). The fall of Babylon the Great and the sore lament of the nations.
57. (18:20–24). An angel proclaims the fall of Babylon. A millstone is thrown into the sea to mark the suddenness and completeness of her destruction.
58. (19:1–7). The saints rejoice at the utter destruction of Babylon, and join in praise to God.
59. (19:8–9). The marriage supper of the Lamb.
60. (19:11–21). The Lord as the White Horse Rider. The final battle and defeat of the beast and false prophet. These are cast into the lake of fire.
61. (20:1–6). The millennium. Considered literal by Premillennialists; long in duration by Postmillennialists, who view it as consonant with Church History; symbolic and presently being fulfilled, as viewed by the Amillennialists. Thought: if the population of the earth has been all but destroyed previously, then who are “the nations”? Another argument for a cyclical approach.
62. (20:7–10). The great and final battle. Armies gathered together by Gog and Magog. Utterly defeated. The devil cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet are.
63. (20:11–15). The Great White Throne judgment of the dead, raised once again to stand under final, eternal judgment in the lake of fire. This judgment is absolutely just—these are judged according to their works.
64. (21:1). The re-creation of the universe (Cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 12).
65. (21:2–22:5). A vision and symbolic description of the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem.
66. (22:6–16). Final counsels and affirmation by Jesus, the Lord of Glory.
67. (22:17–21). The final invitation, and the prayer of John.

FINIS

We took up this research and writing project some ten years ago to help fill a blank in biblical studies. For years we have read and profited greatly from such works as W. Graham Scroggie's *Know Your Bible*, a treasured, abbreviated volume. Other works of this nature include J. Sidlow Baxter's *Explore the Book*, John Phillips' *Exploring the Scriptures*, and several conservative Bible Handbooks.

Linguistic works in both Hebrew and Greek have aided greatly when preciseness has been needed.

Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias have been of much help. The *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* has proven to be the best for short articles. The massive work by McClintock and Strong, the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* in twelve volumes has been most helpful in its thoroughness, though at times outdated.

The various New Testament Introductions have often left us with little which was practical and fitted for the pulpit. Some of the more technical works, though necessary for research, are tainted with radical criticism or have left questions unanswered because of their scholarly and intellectual approach, which avoided precise conclusions. Several, however, have proven very helpful.

Biblical commentaries range from the critical—those which deal with the original languages—to the very practical. Each has its place in one's library. Always welcomed are those which give some practical application of Scripture for the Bible student, busy pastor or Bible teacher.

Theological works, including volumes of biblical, historical and systematic theologies have prove their worth in sharpening the mind and leading to further study.

A Bible Survey occupies a certain place, giving some essential information and often providing an outline or

analysis, some simple and easy to memorize or for use in preaching, and others for personal study. Good sound preaching should always contain some sound and introductory teaching as well as practical preaching and application.

The author throughout this project has always had about fifty volumes stacked about him for reference and examination, in addition to access to our seminary library and the libraries of friends. This has been both educational and edifying—and the desire to learn and progress has not diminished. May what has been learned be passed on to preachers and their people for the education and edification of all.

This work is ended and this writer hopes that it will prove both informative and practical for those who need and can profit from such a work.

May the labor and time invested prove helpful and provide a basis upon which to build and improve. The writer has learned much and intends to help others do the same. He sends this forth with the prayer that others might become true students of Scripture.

—W. R. Downing

August, 2020

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- Ryrie, Charles C., *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1959. 384 pp.
- Stevens, George B., *The Theology of the New Testament*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 1931. 617 pp.
- Thielman, Frank, *Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005. 798 pp.
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- _____, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969. 414 pp.
- Freeman, James M., *Manners and Customs of The Bible*. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972. 515 pp.
- Thomson, William M., *The Land and The Book*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966. 718 pp.
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- Barnes, T. D., *Early Christianity and the Roman Empire*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1984. misc. pp.
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- Brown, Charles Ewing, *The Apostolic Church*. Anderson, IN: The Warner Press, 1947. 283 pp.
- Bruce, F. F., *New Testament History*. New York: Doubleday, 1980. 462 pp.
- Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. New York: Putnam's Sons, n.d. 2 Vols.
- Farrar, F. W., *The Early Days of Christianity*. London: Cassell and Company, 1909. 664 pp.²⁸¹
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- Goguel, Maurice., *The Primitive Church*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964. 610 pp.
- Gwatkin, Henry M., *Early Church History to 313 AD*. London: Macmillan, 1912. 2 Vols.
- Hyson, Joseph B., *The New Testament and Early Christianity*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 458 pp.
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- Lietzmann, Hans. *A History of the Early Church*. New York: The World Publishing Co., 1953. 4 Vols.
- McGiffert, A. C., *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951. 679 pp.
- Mosheim, John Von Lawrence, *Commentaries on the History of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. New York: S. Converse, 1851. 2 Vols.
- Musurillo, Herbert, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972. 379 pp.
- Neander, Augustus, *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles*. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851. 531 pp.

²⁸¹ Farrar usually supplies good historical information.

- Ramsay, William M., *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893. 494 pp.
- Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962. Vol. I.²⁸²
- Sordi, Martha, *The Christians and the Roman Empire*. Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1986. 215 pp.
- Spence-Jones, H. D. M., *The Early Christians in Rome*. New York: John Lane Co., 1911. 409 pp.
- Streeter, B. H., *The Primitive Church*. New York: Macmillan, 1929. 323 pp.
- Waite, Charles B., *History of the Christian Church to the Year 200*. Chicago: C. V. Waite & Co., 1900. 556 pp.
- Whiston, William, Transl., *The Complete Works of Josephus*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1967. 770 pp.²⁸³
- Yamanuchi, Edwin M., *New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980. 180 pp.

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- Barker, William P. *Who's Who in Church History*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1969. 319 pp.
- Brauer, Jerald C. *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971. 887 pp.
- Cross, F. L. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- Douglas, J. D. *The Concise Dictionary of the Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989. 419 pp.
- _____, Gen. Ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974. 1074 pp.
- _____, Gen. Ed., *The New Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. 896 pp.

²⁸² Always worthwhile and usually very informative and easy to read.

²⁸³ Josephus is a source book for some First Century information.

- Dowley, Tim, Gen. Ed. *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977. 656 pp.
- Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. 611 pp.²⁸⁴
- _____, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990. 983 pp.
- Livingstone, E. A., Ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 570 pp.
- McDonald, William J., Ed.-in-Chief, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967. 18 Vols.
- Wace, Henry, and Piercy, William C., *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994. 1028 pp.
- Walford, Adrian, Transl., *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. 2 Vols.

Commentaries on the Entire Bible

Note: Some of these may not be listed under the given Biblical Books in this bibliography, but many have been consulted.

- Barnes, Albert, *Notes and the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprint of 1847 ed. 14 Vols.
- Calvin, John, *Commentaries on the Holy Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948. 22 Vols.²⁸⁵
- Carroll, B. H., *Interpretation of the English Bible*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1943. 17 Vols. [also in a 6 Vol. Edition].²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ A great source book for valuable information.

²⁸⁵ Calvin was the outstanding commentator and expositor of the Reformation.

²⁸⁶ Carroll's work is unique, a running commentary filled with practical anecdotes and preaching material.

- Dockery, David S., Gen. Ed., *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991. 38 + Vols.²⁸⁷
- Gaebelein, Frank E., Gen. Ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979. 12 Vols.²⁸⁸
- _____, *The Genevan Series* of Old and New Testament Commentaries published by the Banner of Truth.²⁸⁹
- Gill, John, Dr. *Gill's Commentary on the Holy Scripture*. Atlanta: Turner Lassetter, n.d., 6 Vols.²⁹⁰
- Guthrie, Donald, Gen. Ed., *The New Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976. 1310 pp.²⁹¹
- Hawker, Robert, *The Poor Man's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*. Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, reprint of 1815 ed. 6 Vols.
- Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d. 6 Vols.
- Hubbard, David A., and Barker, Glenn W., Gen. Eds., *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, v.d. 53 Vols.²⁹²
- Jamieson, Robert, Fausset, A. R., and Brown, David, *A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967. 6 Vols.

²⁸⁷ A conservative Southern Baptist commentary, always useful.

²⁸⁸ A sound, conservative commentary.

²⁸⁹ This series is outstanding for the republication of many of the Puritans and older classical commentaries.

²⁹⁰ Dr. Gill, a Baptist and student of the original languages—old, but worth consulting.

²⁹¹ The best, conservative one-volume commentary.

²⁹² This series is unequal. Some authors are strongly evangelical; others are somewhat liberal. Each volume should be chosen with care.

Lange, John Peter, Ed., *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960. 12 Vols.

Nicoll, W. Robertson, Ed., *The Expositor's Bible*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956. 6 Vols.²⁹³

Poole, Matthew, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*. London: The Banner of Truth, 1962. 3 Vols.

Spence, H. D. M., and Excell, Joseph E., Eds., *The Pulpit Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961. 24 Vols.²⁹⁴

Trapp, John, *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*. Eureka, CA: Tanski Publications, 1997. 5 Vols.²⁹⁵

Commentaries on the New Testament

Alford, Henry, *The Greek Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968. 4 Vols.

_____, *Baker's Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, v.d. 13+ Vols.

Bruce, F. F., Gen. Ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954—. 16 Vols.²⁹⁶

Carson, D. A., Gen. Ed., *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Leicester, Eng: Apollos. 1992—. ²⁹⁷

²⁹³ An unequal series. Some volumes are outstanding [e.g., Blakie on 1 Samuel]; others are tainted with radical criticism. Approaches the Scriptures as a series of essays on various passages of chapters.

²⁹⁴ One of the standard works. Contains a verse-by-verse commentary in addition to general and more specific sermon outlines and illustrations. As with any composite work, it varies in orthodoxy and value with the given author.

²⁹⁵ Trapp was one of Spurgeon's favorite commentators.

²⁹⁶ A generally conservative commentary and useful for research.

²⁹⁷ The Pillar New Testament Commentary series currently has 17 vols.

- Chadwick, Henry, Gen. Ed., *Black's New Testament Commentary*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1968. 11 Vols.
- Hendriksen, William, and Kistemaker, Simon, *The New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975—. 13 Vols.²⁹⁸
- Hovey, Alvah, Gen. Ed., *An American Commentary on the New Testament*. Valley Forge, PA: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1886. 7 Vols.²⁹⁹
- Lenski, R. C. H., *The Interpretation of the New Testament*. Minneapolis: The Augsburg Publishing House, 1961. 12 Vols.³⁰⁰
- Marshall, I. Howard, and Gasque, W. Ward, Eds., *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978. 11 Vols.³⁰¹
- Meyer, H. A. W., *The New Testament Commentary*. Winona Lake, IN: Alpha Publications, 1979. 11 Vols.
- Nicoll, W. Robertson, Gen. Ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961. 5 Vols.
- Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930. 7 Vols.³⁰²
- Tasker, R. V. G., Gen. Ed., *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959. 20 Vols.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Reformed and conservative. Easy to read.

²⁹⁹ The best of Baptist scholarship in the late 1800s. Still useful.

³⁰⁰ Lenski's use of the Greek is practical. Easy-to-read and often profound.

³⁰¹ Very technical. Of use for Greek students.

³⁰² This is a very practical work for those not well-versed in NT Greek. Always worth consulting.

³⁰³ Brief, readable commentaries.

Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965. 4 Vols.

Wilson, Geoffrey B., *New Testament Commentaries*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, v.d. 10 Vols.³⁰⁴

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Hebrews

Alllen, David L., *Hebrews (NAC)*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 2010. 671 pp.

Brown, John, *Hebrews*. London: Banner of Truth, reprint of 1862 ed. 740 pp.

Bruce, F. F., *Hebrews (NICNT)*. Minneapolis, MN: James & Klock Christian Publishing Company, 1977. 1988. 518 pp.

Dickson, David, *Short Explanation of Hebrews*. Cambridge, 1649, and London, 1839.

Ellingworth, Paul, *The Epistle to the Hebrews (NIGTC)*. Carlisle, PA: Eerdmans, Paternoster Press, 1993. 764 pp.

Fergusson, James, and Dickson, David, *The Epistles of Paul and Hebrews*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978. 582 pp.

Gouge, William, *Commentary on Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1980. 1148 pp.

Griffith–Thomas, W. H., *Hebrews: a Devotional Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970. 186 pp.³⁰⁵

Guthrie, Donald, *Hebrews (TNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002 reprint. 281 pp.

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³⁰⁵ Griffith–Thomas is always practical and wrote for preachers.

- Haldane, James Alexander, *Notes on Exposition of Hebrews*. London: Nisbet, 1860.³⁰⁶
- Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977. 623 pp.
- Kistemaker, Simon J., *Hebrews (NTC)*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984. 464 pp.
- Lane, William, *Hebrews (WBC)*. Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1991. 2 Vols.
- Newell, William R., *Hebrews Verse by Verse*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1947, 494 pp.
- O'Brian, Peter T., *The Letter to the Hebrews (PNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010. 596 pp.
- Owen, John, *An Exposition of Hebrews*. Evansville, IN: Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1960. 4 Vols.³⁰⁷
- Pink, Arthur W., *Exposition of Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970. 1307 pp.
- Rushdoony, Rousas J., *Hebrews, James & Jude*. Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2001. 238 pp.
- Saphir, Adolph, *Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1983 reprint. 910 pp.
- Vos, Geerhardus, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1975. 124 pp.
- Wescott, Brooke Foss, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965. 504 pp.

³⁰⁶ This commentary recently printed (2002) by the Particular Baptist Press, Springfield, Mo. James A. Haldane was the brother of Robert Haldane, who wrote the classic commentary on Romans. Both were Baptists.

³⁰⁷ John Owen's work was originally in 8 vols. Exhaustive. A practical blend of commentary and theology.

James

- Adam, A. K. M., *James (BHGNT)*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013. 122 pp.
- Adamson, James, *The Epistle of James (NICNT)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976. 227 pp.
- Boomberg, Craig L., and Kamell, Mariam J., *James (ZECNT)*. Zondervan Publishing House, 2008. 280 pp.
- Davids, Peter H., *James (NIGTC)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982.
- Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1992. 348 pp.
- Johnstone, Robert, *James*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977. 444 pp.
- Laws, Sophie, *The Epistle of James (BNTC)*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1980. 273 pp.
- Martin, Ralph, *James (WBC)*. Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1988. 222 pp.
- Mayor, Joseph B., *Epistle of James*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, reprint of 1913 ed. 621 pp.
- Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James (PNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans & Apollos, 2000. 271 pp.
- _____, *James (TNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002 reprint. 191 pp.
- Phillips, John, *Exploring Hebrews*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1988. 204 pp.
- Robertson, A. T., *Studies in the Epistle of James*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1915. 271 pp.
- Rushdoony, Rousas J., *Hebrews, James & Jude*. Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2001. 238 pp.

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- Bigg, Charles, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude (ICC)*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd. 1987 ed., 353 pp.
- Brown, John, *Expository Discourses on 1 Peter*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975. 2 Vols.

- Clark, Gordon H., *News Heavens, New Earth: A Commentary on First and Second Peter*. Jefferson, Maryland: Trinity Foundation, 1993. 271 pp.
- Davids, Peter H., *1 Peter (NICNT)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.
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- Grudem, Wayne, *1 Peter (TNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988. 289 pp.
- Johnstone, Robert, *The First Epistle of Peter*. Minneapolis, MN: The James Family Christian Publishers, 1978. 417.
- Kelley, J. N. D., *The Epistles of Peter and Jude (BNTC)*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1969. 416 pp.
- Leighton, Robert (1613–1684), *Commentary upon 1 Peter*. Religious Tract Society. 2 Vols.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey, *1 Peter (WBC)*. Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1988. 337 pp.
- Nisbet, Alexander, *1 & 2 Peter*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, reprint of 1658 ed., 300 pp.
- Schriener, Thomas R., *1, 2 Peter, Jude (NAC)*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group. 2003. 512 pp.

2 Peter

- Adams, Thomas, *Commentary upon the 2nd Epistle of Peter*. London, 1633. Included in *Nichol's Commentaries*. London: Nisbet, 1862.
- Bauckham, Richard J., *2 Peter & Jude (WBC)*. Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983. 357 pp.
- Bigg, Charles, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude (ICC)*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd. 1987 ed., 353 pp.
- Brown, John, *Parting Counsels: An Exposition of 2 Peter*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975. 2 Vols.
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- Griffith–Thomas, W. H., *The Apostle Peter*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1984 reprint. 304 pp.
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- Mayor, J. B., *The Epistles of Jude & II Peter*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965. 239 pp.³⁰⁸
- Nisbet, Alexander, *1 & 2 Peter*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, reprint of 1658 ed., 300 pp.
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- Brooke, A. E., *The Johannine Epistles (ICC)*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994 reprint. 242 pp.
- Brown, Raymond E., *The Epistles of John (AB)*. New York: Doubleday, 1982. 812 pp.
- Candlish, Robert, and Pink, Arthur W., *Exposition of 1 John*. Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1971. 457 pp.
- Clark, Gordon H., *First John*. Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1992. 198 pp.
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- Findlay, J. J., *Fellowship in Life Eternal*. Minneapolis: James & Klock Christian Publishing Co., reprint of 1909 ed. 431 pp.

³⁰⁸ Mayor at times indulged in radical biblical criticism.

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- Kruse, Colin G., *The Letters of John (PNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans & Apollos, 2000. 255 pp.
- Lawson, Stephen J., *Absolutely Sure*. Sisters, OR: Multinoma Publishers, 1999. 190 pp.
- Lias, John J., *An Exposition of the First Epistle of John*. Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Publishers, 1982 reprint. 424 pp.
- Marshall, I. Howard, *Epistles of John (NICNT)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978. 274 pp.
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- Smalley, Stephen S., *1–3 John (WBC)*. Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1984. 386 pp.
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- Bauckham, Richard, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: The University Press, 1993. 169 pp.
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- Ladd, George Eldon, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972. 308 pp.
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- Morris, Leon, *Revelation (TNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002 reprint. 256 pp.
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- Patterson, Paige, *Revelation (NAC)*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Corp. 2016. 411 pp.
- Pentecost, J. Dwight, *Things to Come*. Findlay, OH: Durham Publishing Co., 1958. 633 pp.
- Ramsey, James, *Revelation 1–11*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, reprint of 1873 ed. 518 pp.

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Stott, John, *Revelation: The Triumph of Christ*. Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 64 pp.

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