

THE EARLY READERSHIP OF THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

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There is a new appreciation of the Catholic Epistles as a canonical unit, and this article builds on and interacts with recent attempts to elucidate the hermeneutical significance of this epistolary collection.¹ My focus is the paratextual elements of the seven Epistles in early manuscripts, with the biblical paratext understood to include the order of the books, their assigned titles and internal divisions in the letters (e.g. paragraphs).² These elements provide a frame of reference for the text, and Larry Hurtado has urged the study of biblical manuscripts as ‘Christian artifacts’, arguing that they provide clues about the early history of interpretation (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of the books.³ This framework acts to present the biblical books to later readers in a particular canonical form and as a result provides interpretive prompts that guide the reception and proper use of the books. Along these lines, Karl-Wilhelm

1. See e.g. Darian R. Lockett, ‘Are the Catholic Epistles a Canonically Significant Collection? A *Status Quaestionis*’, *CBR* 14 (2015), pp. 62-80; *idem*, ‘“Necessary but Not Sufficient”: The Role of History in the Interpretation of James as Christian Scripture’, in Robbie F. Castleman, Darian R. Lockett and Stephen O. Presley (eds.), *Explorations in Interdisciplinary Reading: Theological, Exegetical, and Reception-Historical Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), pp. 69-90 (81-85).

2. For the literary theory behind this, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

3. Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); *idem*, ‘Early Christian Manuscripts as Artifacts’, in Craig A. Evans and Daniel Zacharias (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, 13; London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), pp. 66-81.

Niebuhr describes the paratextual traces left by earlier readers as implicit ‘reading instructions’ (*Leseanweisungen*) for later readers.⁴

Darian R. Lockett raises the issue of what status is to be given to the ordering of the biblical books in the New Testament canon,⁵ and the present article provides an opportunity to reassess exactly what that status should be, with the handling of the Catholic Epistles in the ‘canonical process’ used as a test case.⁶ I argue that the ordering of the books is a paratextual phenomenon that should not be put on the same level of authority as the text itself, for it is readers rather than authors who are responsible for it. The same applies to the book titles and the internal divisions. In the Greco-Roman world, the readership was only a little wider than scribal circles, and most Christians learned the Bible from hearing it read in a liturgical setting (cf. Col. 4.16; Rev. 1.3). It was this group of ancient literati who had a hand in shaping the canon, no doubt in line with the understanding of the believing community to which they belonged. In other words, authors generate the biblical text and are the *makers* of meaning,⁷ whereas later readers of Scripture, by putting books in a particular canonical order (or by assigning a fitting title to a book, or subdividing the text into units of thought), provide a paratextual frame for the text, reflecting their *understanding* of the meaning of the text. This frame is neither arbitrary nor infallible, for it

4. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, ‘Exegese im kanonischen Zusammenhang: Überlegungen zur theologischen Relevanz der Gestalt des neutestamentlichen Kanons’, in J.-M. Auwers and H.J. De Jonge (eds.), *The Biblical Canons* (BETL, 163; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 557-84 (575); cf. Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 103-107; Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon* (NTM, 34; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), pp. 115-17; and D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: British Library, 1986), who argues that discerning the meaning of a text involves the study of ‘the material evidence of reception’ (p. 19), on the basis that the physical form of a text reflects a particular reading of the text and also affects the ways it might be read by others.

5. Darian R. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), pp. 55, 101.

6. According to Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*, p. 51: ‘a proper construal of the canonical process necessitates holding together author, redactor, and compiler’.

7. This is the case irrespective of the precise compositional history of a work (e.g. the possibility of multiple authors, editions and stages of redaction).

preserves the perceptions or misperceptions of ancient readers generated in the process of reading.

The biblical author and later pious readers should not be turned into hermeneutical competitors, as appears to be done in the paradigm shift promoted by David Nienhuis and Robert Wall, who want to tie the meaning of the text to the point of canonization at the expense of the act of composition by an author.⁸ To their mind, ‘the canonical approach focuses its interest on that later process wherein individual texts were shaped together with others into a singular whole bearing a distinctive shape and contents’.⁹ They are right to find fault with earlier scholarship that lightly dismissed the historical organization of the biblical books in favour of a rearranged ‘scholar’s canon’ (e.g. when the Johannine letters are lifted from the Catholic Epistles and read alongside John’s Gospel as part of a larger collection of ‘Johannine Literature’),¹⁰ but my criticism of the position of Nienhuis and Wall is that they appear to have gone to the other extreme and put the hermeneutical insights enshrined in the canonical order above scrutiny and turned that way of ordering the books into an interpretive axiom. In my view, they exaggerate the providential nature of the judgments made by early Christians when they claim that ‘the canonical process is one of

8. David R. Nienhuis and Robert W. Wall, *Reading the Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude as Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 9-12. For a critique of Nienhuis and Wall, see Darian R. Lockett, ‘Not Whether; but What Kind of Canonical Approach: A Review Essay’, *JTI* 9 (2015), pp. 127-36, and for the reply by Wall and Nienhuis, see ‘On Reading Canonical Collections: A Response’, *JTI* 9 (2015), pp. 149-60.

9. Wall and Nienhuis, ‘On Reading Canonical Collections’, p. 151.

10. Wall and Nienhuis, ‘On Reading Canonical Collections’, pp. 150-51; David R. Nienhuis, “‘From the Beginning’: The Formation of an Apostolic Christian Identity in 2 Peter and 1–3 John”, in Katherine M. Hockey, Madison N. Pierce and Francis Watson (eds.), *Muted Voices of the New Testament: Readings in the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (LNTS, 565; London: T. & T. Clark, 2017), pp. 71-85 (71-72). Downplaying canonical arrangements is only one manifestation of a larger intellectual movement. See Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. viii: ‘The academic Bible was created by scholars [in the Eighteenth Century, and Johann David Michaelis in particular] who saw that the scriptural Bible, embedded as it was in confessional particularities, was inimical to the socio-political project from which Enlightenment universities draw their purpose and support.’

spiritual discernment led by the Holy Spirit',¹¹ for what they have in mind is not only the Spirit-enabled recognition of what books are Scripture (I concur with Nienhuis and Wall on that point), but the divine superintendence of the hermeneutical evaluations behind the actual ordering of the biblical books in the canon.

Canonically Motivated Pseudepigraphs?

In critically evaluating the biblical paratext, there is also no cause to confuse or merge the authors and subsequent readers,¹² for the distinction between a biblical book and the paratextual frame of that book is the difference between (authorial) text and (allographic) commentary on the text.¹³ Adjustments to the presentation of the text brought about by various paratextual elements have the effect of highlighting (or perhaps obscuring) certain inherent features of the book in question.¹⁴ In other words, the presupposition behind my study of the Catholic

11. Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, p. 12 (also p. 16: 'the indwelling Spirit forms a community's capacity to recognize which particular bits and what form are necessary in constructing a single biblical canon that is most effective in accomplishing its holy purposes'). Cf. Wall and Nienhuis, 'On Reading Canonical Collections', pp. 152-53: 'Individual texts ... are not "canonical" until the Spirit guides them to the place where they might play their appointed role within a collection of texts.'

12. Such as done in the literary-critical approach of Roger Chartier, in which the text of a novel (e.g. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*) is in danger of being swamped by a multitude of paratextual accretions (*The Author's Hand and the Printer's Mind* [trans. Lydia G. Cochrane; Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014]), or when the idea of the continually evolving text is turned into a virtue, for it is thought the fixity of texts dooms even classics (e.g. the novels of Jane Austen) to obsolescence in a rapidly-changing world. See James J. O'Donnell, *Avatars of the Word: From Papyrus to Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 41.

13. The distinction and the terms are derived from Gérard Genette, 'Introduction to the Paratext', *New Literary History* 22 (1991), pp. 261-72 (266); *idem*, *Paratexts*, pp. 8-9; cf. Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 106.

14. See the exploration of 'paratextual hermeneutics' provided by Eric W. Scherbenske, *Canonizing Paul: Ancient Editorial Practice and the Corpus Paulinum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 16: '[ancient] editors conveyed information by transmitting and altering the text, by selecting and arranging content, and by circumscribing the corpus with paratexts: an edition was the product of interpretation, and, in turn, sought to shape subsequent interpretation.'

Epistles is that the biblical paratext reflects the interpretive decisions of ancient readers. I will argue that the composing of the individual books that now make up the Catholic Epistles and the conjoining of the seven letters as a canonical collection are separate processes in both concept and execution.

In contrast to the position that I am presenting, David Trobisch and others have argued that 2 Peter is a ‘canonically motivated pseudepigraph’,¹⁵ and, if that were established as fact, it would mean that epistolary composition and the formation of a canonical collection are not separate processes but rather intersect.¹⁶ According to Trobisch, 2 Peter is intended to function, on analogy with 2 Timothy in the *Corpus Paulinum*, as a kind of last will and testament, anticipating the apostle’s death (note 2 Pet. 1.15: ‘after my departure’) and setting out what his readers must remember after he is gone (3.1). The author of 2 Peter appears to allude to the dominical prediction of how Peter would die (1.14; cf. Jn 21.18-19), the synoptic account of the transfiguration found in Mark’s Gospel (1.17-18; cf. the link with Mark in 1 Pet. 5.13), the prophetic books of the Old Testament (2.1; 3.2), the first letter of Peter (3.1), the letter of Jude (given an extensive overlap of material) and the (completed?) corpus of Pauline letters (3.15-16). None of these observations is new, but what Trobisch does with them is different, for, on the basis of these allusions, he understands the Petrine author to be using and approving the different units of ‘the Canonical Edition of the Christian Bible’, meaning that 2 Peter (along with Acts and 2 Timothy) is part of the editorial frame of the canonical collection that aims to ensure that Paul and Peter are viewed as apostles of equal standing and significance.¹⁷

15. The wording is that of David R. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles Collection and the Christian Canon* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), p. 14.

16. David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 86-96; cf. Denis Farkasfalvy, ‘The Ecclesial Setting of Pseudepigraphy in Second Peter and its Role in the Formation of the Canon’, *SecCent* 5 (1985), pp. 3-29.

17. Trobisch, *First Edition*, pp. 95-96. The supposed rivalry of Peter and Paul is the legacy of F.C. Baur and the Tübingen School, and this tradition of interpretation continues in David Trobisch, ‘The Book of Acts as a Narrative Commentary on the Letters of the New Testament: A Programmatic Essay’, in Andrew Gregory and C. Kavin Rowe (eds.), *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), pp. 119-27. Cf. Farkasfalvy,

In its present canonical location, 2 Peter does serve an important integrating function in the canon, but Trobisch has not proven that the letter was *written* with that function in mind, for all the books of the New Testament make use of the Old Testament in some way, and the letters of Paul also allude to dominical traditions.¹⁸ If there is a commendation of the writings of Paul as a known collection in 2 Pet. 3.15-16 ('all his letters'), in canonical terms, Paul, in his own letters, can be understood to reciprocate with his affirmation of Peter as a leading apostle and witness to Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 1.12-13; 9.5; 15.5, 11; Gal. 1.18 [RSV 'to visit Cephas']; 2.7, 8, 9), and his valorization by Paul would also act to commend writings attributed to Peter to Christian readers.¹⁹ In other words, the criteria used by Trobisch to argue that 2 Peter was written as a canon-orientated document are not specific enough to carry conviction.

David R. Nienhuis builds on the views of Trobisch,²⁰ and his own thesis is that 'James may have been written to perform a function in the East similar to the one that 2 Peter performed in the West',²¹ such that the letter is a second-century pseudepigraph 'composed with its placement within a literary collection in mind' and aimed at shaping the use of the Catholic Epistles,²² whose canonical role was to ensure 'a fully orthodox reception of the Pauline collection'.²³ In his reading of the corpus of seven letters, Nienhuis focuses on what he argues is the late addition of James as the 'frontispiece' of the collection, with this letter 'designed to introduce the other apostolic letters, in order to orient their subsequent reception'.²⁴ Nienhuis understands the position of the letter of James at the head of the Catholic Epistles, therefore, as a late move and sees the letter as written to be placed in that location of special

'Ecclesial Setting', p. 26: 'Second Peter manifests a conscious effort to strengthen the link between the Pauline and Petrine traditions.'

18. E.g. in 1 Cor. 11.25, Paul recalls the dominical tradition of the Lord's Supper ('This cup is the new covenant in my blood').

19. Marcus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Studies in Theological Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), p. 112.

20. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 12-19.

21. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 26-27.

22. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, p. 163.

23. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, p. 225.

24. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, p. 164; see also Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, pp. 17-39.

prominence and influence. In other words, according to Nienhuis, ‘Catholic Christians connected in some way with the traditions of “Jewish Christianity” wrote the letter in the hopes of creating a theologically coherent, fully apostolic letter collection ... [that would] facilitate a more vigorous defense against the distortions to which the Pauline message proved susceptible.’²⁵

By way of response to the thesis of Nienhuis, it is true that the letter of James is not clearly cited until Origen in the first half of the third century (e.g. his *Commentary on Romans*),²⁶ but pointing out the missing external evidence, being an argument from silence, cannot conclusively prove the letter’s late point of origin.²⁷ His other supporting arguments are that the reputed letter of James is dependent on Paul’s discussion of faith and works,²⁸ and that the letter conforms to the second-century traditions that provide a portrait of James the Just (*Jakobusbild*) as the exemplar and champion of the moral dimension of the law.²⁹ Nienhuis has mounted an impressive case for the late dating of the letter of James, and this is a precondition that must be met for the viability of his thesis that the pseudonymous author composed his letter with certain extant apostolic texts in mind and did so with the aim of shaping the reading of an emergent non-Pauline epistolary collection.

Most relevant to my present concerns, however, is whether an exegetical examination of the letter of James supports the thesis that it was written to head and influence the use of the corpus of Catholic Epistles. This is the focus of Nienhuis’s third and final chapter in *Not by Paul Alone*, and it is really here that his thesis stands or falls. Again, as in the case of Trobisch’s theory about 2 Peter, it comes down to an argument concerning the intertextual affinities of the letter. Nienhuis

25. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, p. 160.

26. See the references in Origen’s works provided by Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 55-60. For another review of the evidence and modest claims for some earlier allusions to James (in *1 Clement* and *Hermas*), see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 45-60, 84-100 (and for Nienhuis’s brief reponse, see *Not by Paul Alone*, p. 31).

27. See e.g. Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 112-13. The same point is made in regard to 2 Peter by Michael J. Kruger, ‘The Authenticity of 2 Peter’, *JETS* 42 (1999), pp. 645-71 (652).

28. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 113-18.

29. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 128-61.

stresses the links between James and 1 Peter on a lexical and syntactical level (e.g. Jas 1.1-4; cf. 1 Pet. 1.1, 6-9) and between James and 1 John in terms of general theme (e.g. Jas 2.14-17; cf. 1 Jn 3.16-18), with the aim of showing that the Jacobian author made an effort to demonstrate agreement with these apostolic works, even as he sought to direct the reception and use of the corpus as a whole. However, it is one thing to show that the contents of James suit its canonical location (Nienhuis succeeds in doing that), it is another to prove that it was *written* to be placed in such a position, for an alternate explanation (the one favoured by me) is that it was features such as those pointed out by Nienhuis that explain why later readers placed the letter where they did as one of the Catholic Epistles—not always at the head (see below). The canonical process is still open, especially regarding the order of the books, and it is at least theoretically possible that the order of the books in printed Bibles may change in the future (esp. Acts–Catholic Epistles as in the early Eastern canon).³⁰ As well, Nienhuis does not take sufficient account of the fact that the Greek manuscript tradition treats Acts and the Catholic Epistles as one canonical unit and these letters were not appended to the Pauline Corpus as their primary canonical conversation partner (see below).

Rather than viewing either 2 Peter or James as examples of an ‘authorial paratext’,³¹ which is what Trobisch and Nienhuis are doing, I argue that it is more accurate to see the ordering of Catholic Epistles as a *post-authorial* interpretive frame generated by readers as they sought to come to grips with the meaning of the books, and as a result they placed the letter of James and 2 Peter in what they thought were appropriate canonical settings as a guide to subsequent users who read these seven letters as Scripture.

30. Along those lines, David Trobisch argues that in modern printed editions of the New Testament, ‘[i]t seems especially important not to separate Acts from the General Letters’ (‘The New Testament in the Light of Book Publishing in Antiquity’, in John S. Kloppenborg and Judith H. Newman [eds.], *Editing the Bible: Assessing the Task Past and Present* [Atlanta: SBL, 2012], pp. 161-70 [169]).

31. For this literary term, see Genette, ‘Introduction to the Paratext’, p. 266.

The Catholic Epistles and Acts

The Vulgate determined the order of books in the Western Bible (Protestant and Catholic) and placed the book of Acts between the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles;³² however, in all Greek textual witnesses, Acts prefaces the Catholic Letters and these are treated as a fixed and coherent canonical unit (*Praxapostolos*).³³ In Vaticanus (B 03) and Alexandrinus (A 02) Acts stands between the four Gospels and the Catholic Epistles, with the Pauline Epistles subsequent to that, but in Sinaiticus (Ⲙ 01) the order is Gospels, Pauline Epistles, Acts and Catholic Epistles. Codex Bezae (D 05) is a fifth-century bilingual manuscript, with Greek text on the left-hand page and Latin on the right-hand page. It contains the four Gospels in the Western order followed by most of the Acts of the Apostles. The damaged codex has one folio (415 recto) with a Latin text of 3 Jn 11b-15 (between the Gospels and Acts),³⁴ but we cannot be certain what the original contents of the missing leaves between Mark and Acts were.³⁵ This settled pattern of conjoining Acts and the Catholic Epistles (almost always in that order) suggests that these letters are to be viewed ‘through the lens of Acts’.³⁶

32. See Samuel Berger, *Histoire de la Vulgate: Pendant les premiers siècles du moyen âge* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976), p. 339. For listings of alternative orders within the Latin tradition, see Berger, *Histoire de la Vulgate*, pp. 339-41. In the Muratorian Fragment (c. 200 CE), ‘the acts of all the apostles’ is discussed after Luke and John and before the Pauline Epistles. So too in Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.1-2), the order of discussion of the *homologoumena* (accepted or recognized writings) is: Gospels, Acts, Pauline Epistles, 1 John, 1 Peter and Revelation, namely he lists the letters of Paul after Acts.

33. See the listing provided in GNT⁴, 6*–18*; David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 283-86. In Codex Alexandrinus at the end of the letter of Jude the colophon treats Acts and the Catholic Epistles as a unit (πράξεις τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ καθολικαί) (folio 84 verso), found at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_1_d_viii_fs001r.

34. The book of Acts begins on the reverse side of the same leaf (415 verso). The bottom half of 415 recto contains the Latin explicit of 3 John (*Epistulae Iohannis III*) and the incipit of Acts (*Actus Apostolorum*); found at <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-NN-00002-00041/678>.

35. The possibilities are rehearsed by David C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and its Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 8-9.

36. Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, p. 53.

In line with this mode of presentation, Cyril of Jerusalem discusses the biblical books that are to be received: ‘the Acts of the Twelve Apostles; and in addition to these, the seven Catholic Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude; then, as a seal upon all of them, and the last work of the disciples, the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul’.³⁷ Likewise, Athanasius advocates the recognition of the ‘Acts of the Apostles and seven letters, called Catholic, by the Apostles, namely one by James; two by Peter, then three by John; and after these, one by Jude’,³⁸ and Jerome lists the canonical books in the order: Gospels, Paul’s Epistles, Acts, Catholic Epistles and Revelation.³⁹

The canon logic of the order of Acts–Catholic Epistles–Pauline Epistles (as found in Vaticanus and Alexandrinus) is that it reflects the presentation in Acts itself, in which Peter dominates chs. 1–12 and Paul’s story is the guiding thread of chs. 13–28. The conjoining of Acts and the Catholic Epistles draws attention to the fact that Acts features apostles other than Paul, especially Peter, who is the leading figure in the first half of the book. The positioning of the Catholic Epistles after Acts may imply that Acts promotes non-Pauline forms of Christianity,⁴⁰ and, according to Wall, this manuscript tradition indicates that ‘Acts found its significance as the context for understanding the non-Pauline apostolic witness’.⁴¹ The Muratorian Fragment (line 34) calls the book *acta omnium apostolorum* (‘the acts of *all* the apostles’).⁴² In the opening chapter of Acts, there is a gathering of the eleven disciples and the family of Jesus (his mother and brothers) in the ‘upper room’

37. *Catech.* 4.36; see *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem* (The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 61.1; trans. Leo P. McCauley and Anthony A. Stephenson; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), p. 137.

38. *Ep.* 39.18 (c. 367 CE). The Greek text is provided by Theodor Zahn, *Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons: Eine Ergänzung zu der Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1904), p. 88; see also Edmon Gallagher and John Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 123.

39. *Ep.* 53.8 (Migne PL 22.547).

40. On this, see Gregory Goswell, ‘The Place of the Book of Acts in Reading the NT’, *JETS* 59 (2016), pp. 67–82.

41. Robert W. Wall, ‘The Acts of the Apostles in Canonical Context’, *BTB* 18 (1988), pp. 16–24 (20).

42. The Latin text is provided by Zahn, *Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, p. 78; *idem*, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (2 vols.; Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1888–92), II.1, pp. 52–58 (52).

(1.12-14). Although James is not identified as the half-brother of Jesus in Acts (12.17; 15.13; 21.28; cf. Gal. 1.19) and Jude is not as such mentioned in Acts (cf. Mt. 13.55; Mk 6.3), it appears that all four authors of the Catholic Epistles join in united prayer and fellowship in Acts 1.

For all their individuality, the seven letters that make up the Catholic Epistles share a number of key themes, and in most cases, these themes can be found in the prefacing book of Acts.⁴³ Wall (and Nienhuis) wish to allow the canonical context to shape the interpretation of the Catholic Epistles, however they fail to give enough weight to the fact that the primary conversation partner of the Catholic Epistles is the book of Acts, which immediately precedes them in ancient canon lists and Greek Bibles. With regard to common themes, there is, for example, the eyewitness testimony of the apostles to the glorified and resurrected Jesus (1 Pet. 5.1; 2 Pet. 1.16-18; 1 Jn 1.1-3; cf. Acts 1.21-22; 2.32; 3.15; 4.33; 13.30),⁴⁴ the joyful endurance of trials (Jas 1.2-4; 1 Pet. 1.6-9; cf. Acts 5.41; 16.25); the apostolic tradition that embodies the truth about Jesus (2 Pet. 3.2; repeated references to ‘the truth’ in 1 Jn 1.6, 8; 2.4, 21; 3.18-19; Jude 3, 17; cf. Acts 1.15-26; 2.42; 20.26-31),⁴⁵ the danger posed by false prophets (2 Pet. 2.1; 1 Jn 4.1; cf. Acts 13.6-12), the love command (Jas 2.8; 1 Pet. 1.22; 2.17; 3.8; 2 Pet. 1.7; 1 Jn 2.7-11; 3.10-11, 14, 23; 4.7, 11; 5.1-2; 2 Jn 5-6; 3 Jn 6),⁴⁶ the community of goods (Jas 2.14-17; 3.17; 1 Pet. 3.13-17; 2 Pet. 2.3; 1 Jn 3.17-20; 2 Jn 10; cf. Acts 2.44-45; 4.32-37; 11.27-30), the practice of hospitality (1 Pet. 1.22; 4.9-11; 2 Jn 9-11; 3 Jn 5-8; cf. Acts 16.15), the observance of the law (James 2; 1 Jn 2.3-11; 3.22-24; 4.21; 5.2-3; cf. Acts 15.22-29; 21.24), the prospect of the Lord’s coming (Jas 5.7; 1 Pet. 5.4; 2 Pet. 3.1-13; 1 Jn 2.28; Jude 24-25; cf. Acts 1.11; 3.19-21) and finally the closing sections of three of the letters call for the rescue of those who have wandered from the faith (Jas 5.19-20; 1 Jn 5.16-17;

43. For what follows, see Robert W. Wall, ‘A Unifying Theology of the Catholic Epistles: A Canonical Approach’, in J. Schlosser (ed.), *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition* (BETL, 176; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), pp. 43-71. Wall does not, however, draw the links to Acts.

44. Cf. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*, pp. 181-82.

45. Carey C. Newman, ‘Jude 22, Apostolic Authority, and the Canonical Role of the Catholic Epistles’, *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 41 (2014), pp. 367-78 (370, 376).

46. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*, pp. 201-209.

Jude 22-23). The overall impression gained from the letters is of the harmony of the teaching of the half-brothers of Jesus (James/Jude) and the apostles (Peter/John), which is just what one would expect to find after the presentation of Acts. In that light, the appropriate method of interpretation is to allow neighbouring letters to inform the reading of the individual letters that make up the Catholic Epistles.

The Titles of the Catholic Epistles

The placing of books in a certain order is a post-authorial imposition on the text of Scripture, albeit an inescapable one when texts of diverse origin are collected together, for they have to be put in some order or other, but the inseparability of text and paratext does not mean that they are not distinct in origin and function. For example, there is no evidence that the biblical authors themselves supplied the titles that are attached to their compositions, and the similar formulation of the titles of the Catholic Epistles (each named after the sender) makes it likely that the titles were supplied when the books were brought together and circulated as an epistolary collection. The seven Epistles (James, 1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John and Jude) are grouped together under the title ‘Catholic Epistles’ (καθολικαί), with the epithet probably used in the sense of universal (e.g. the *inscriptio* ἐπιστολῆ Ἰακώβου καθολικῆ [‘the Catholic Letter of James’]).⁴⁷ This reflects the fact that (except for 2, 3 John), they are not addressed to any specific church or individual, and so the letters are named and differentiated from each other according to who *wrote* them. The limitation of the letters to seven is another way in which their universal scope and application is indicated to readers.⁴⁸ The same applies to the seven named churches to whom Paul addressed letters (with this numerical calculation excluding Hebrews) and the

47. For example, in Vaticanus, titles are applied to the Letter of James by means of superscript (Ἰακώβου ἐπιστολή), subscript (Ἰακώβου) and running title (Ἰακώβου). For details of the inscriptions and subscriptions of the seven letters in ancient manuscripts, see *NTG*²⁷, pp. 588, 598, 608, 615, 625, 627-28, 743-45; Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*, pp. 105-15.

48. First commented upon in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.23–25 (Migne PG 20.205); cf. Brevard S. Childs, *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 225.

seven churches of Revelation.⁴⁹ The lack of reference to any particular church in their titles, unlike the case for Pauline Epistles (e.g. Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους), also implies their universal application.⁵⁰

This understanding is supported by the breadth of the readership addressed (Jas 1.1: ‘To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion’; 1 Pet. 1.1: ‘To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia’ [both using διασπορά]), though the addressees of the two letters are not strictly without geographical limit, and in the case of 1 Peter, the recipients appear to be Gentile believers (see 1.14, 18; 4.3). The implication is that 2 Peter is written to the same wide readership as the first letter (3.1),⁵¹ and its recipients are addressed as ‘all those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ’ (1.1). James presents itself as an encyclical to Diaspora believers and that claim (according to Richard Bauckham) means resisting the tendency in some scholarly circles to posit a specific ‘community of James’.⁵² There is no record of James venturing beyond Jerusalem,⁵³ but he was the centre of a wider network of influence in the Diaspora (cf. Gal. 2.12: ‘certain men from James’). The provenance of the Johannine letters in the Jewish Diaspora (cf. Jn

49. The Muratorian Fragment explicitly relates Paul’s seven letters to the seven letters in Revelation saying: ‘the blessed apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor John, writes by name to only seven churches ... it is clearly recognized that there is one church spread throughout the whole extent of the earth, for John also in the Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, nevertheless speaks to all.’ See Muratorian Fragment, lines 48-50, 57-59 (translation provided by Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987], p. 307).

50. For a canonical history of the grouping, whose present shape is of Eastern origin, see Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 29-97 (76-79); cf. Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, pp. 44-48.

51. Cf. the argument of Robert W. Wall that 2 Peter was written to complement and extend the teaching found in 1 Peter; see ‘The Canonical Function of 2 Peter’, *BibInt* 9 (2001), pp. 64-81; cf. Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (THNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 234-39.

52. Bauckham, *James*, pp. 25-28.

53. Paul’s reference to ‘the brothers of the Lord’ as travelling missionaries probably does not include James (1 Cor. 9.5); see Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), pp. 57-60.

7.35; 12.20) and the Palestinian Jewish origin (and destination) of 2 Peter and Jude are also highly likely.⁵⁴

1 John addresses a church where a group has seceded (2.19), but the error of those who departed is not clearly profiled. The stress in the letter on keeping the ‘commandments’ (plural) supports the idea that it was written to a Jewish Christian audience (2.3-11; 3.22-24; 4.21; 5.2-3).⁵⁵ The secession is described as typical of ‘the last hour’ (2.18), so that it is relevant to all churches, both present and future. As well, 1 Jn 2.19 alludes to more than a local dispute, given the generalizing reference to ‘many antichrists’ (2.18) and ‘many false prophets’ (4.1; cf. 2 Jn 7: ‘many deceivers’). The metaphor ‘the elect lady and her children’ would seem to address a number of churches in the Elder’s circle of influence (2 Jn 1), so that 2 John also can be viewed as an encyclical.⁵⁶ Jude can also be understood as addressed to a geographically diffuse audience (v. 1: ‘To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ’). Indeed, the lack of specifics facilitates its (now) general application within the corpus of Catholic Epistles. In other words, all seven letters are directed to a wide audience.

The Order of the Catholic Epistles

With regard to the order of the Catholic Epistles, letters by the same author are kept together (e.g. 1 and 2 Peter) and, as in the case of the Pauline letters, are ordered according to length (from longest to shortest).⁵⁷ 2 Peter follows 1 Peter due to their relative lengths, but 2 Pet. 3.1 (‘This is now the second letter that I have written to you’) may refer to 1 Peter (or was understood as doing so), though there is not absolute certainty concerning its historical referent. In their common order, the

54. Judith M. Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 16-21; John A.T. Robinson, ‘The Destination and Purpose of the Johannine Epistles’, in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 126-38; Anders Gerdmar, *Rethinking the Judaism–Hellenism Dichotomy: A Historiographical Study of Second Peter and Jude* (ConBNT, 36; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001).

55. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 197-98.

56. John Painter, ‘The Johannine Epistles as Catholic Epistles’, in Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (eds.), *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), pp. 239-305 (249-50).

57. This is the order found in Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Vaticanus (cf. Niebuhr, ‘Exegese’, pp. 578-81).

letters attributed to James and Jude, the two half-brothers of Jesus, form an envelope (*inclusio*) around the apostolic letters of Peter and John.⁵⁸ As a result, in this corpus of seven books, the apostles of Christ (Peter/John) and the family of Jesus (James/Jude) form a chorus in testimony to him.

Placing the letters of Peter and John side-by-side asserts the compatibility of their witness, and this becomes a final canonical affirmation of the close association between Peter and ‘the beloved disciple’ (= John) such as plotted in the final chapters of John’s Gospel (13.21-30; 18.15-18; 20.1-10; 21.15-24). It also picks up the allusions to the partnership of Peter and John in gospel ministry in Jerusalem and in Palestine in Acts (3.1-11; 4.13, 19; 8.14-25; 9.32–11.18). With their Epistles juxtaposed, Peter and John continue to speak in unison, testifying to the solidarity of the Petrine and Johannine traditions,⁵⁹ and 2 Peter and 1 John are especially close in that they claim to embody the eye-witness testimony of Peter and John that addresses the issue of challenges by rival teachers and false prophets to the apostolic tradition (2 Pet. 1.16-19; 3.1-2; 1 Jn 1.1-4).⁶⁰ In other words, this canonical sequence is significant and hermeneutically productive.

Jude’s self-reference as the ‘brother of James’ (Jude 1) is an intracanonical link with the letter of James, and the relationship of the authors is reinforced by their common self-designation as ‘a servant of [God and of the Lord] Jesus Christ’ (Jas 1.1; Jude 1). The similarities between 2 Peter and the letter of Jude, whatever their genetic explanation,⁶¹ also help to unify the Catholic Epistles. On that basis, we

58. E.g. John Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John* (SP, 18; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), pp. 33-36.

59. Cf. Robert W. Wall, ‘Acts and James’, in Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (eds.), *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), pp. 127-52 (130-131): ‘if Peter and John are enjoined as partners in Acts, then we should expect to find their written traditions conjoined in an emergent Christian Bible, and their intracanonical relations envisaging the church’s perception of their theological coherence’.

60. Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, pp. 46, 161-62, 255-56; the links between 2 Peter and 1 John are explored by Nienhuis, ‘From the Beginning’, pp. 77-85.

61. See e.g. Terrance Callan, ‘Use of the Letter of Jude by the Second Letter of Peter’, *Bib* 85 (2004), pp. 42-64, who argues that 2 Pet. 2.1–3.3 has thoroughly reworked and freely paraphrased material from Jude 4-18. The scholarly consensus is that 2 Peter draws on Jude as a primary source, though note the thoughtful

might have expected Jude to follow straight after 2 Peter, but it was not allowed to intrude on the James–Peter–John sequence, which reflects the order of the three ‘pillars’ in Gal. 2.9. The celebrity and personal interaction of the three men in Acts (chs. 1–8, 11–12, 15, 21) was probably another factor.⁶² Robert Wall has argued that the decisive role played by James at the conference of Acts 15, in which James has the last say and his judgment is decisive (15.13–21), best explains the placement of the letter of James as the ‘frontispiece’ of the Catholic Epistles.⁶³ Though separated from 2 Peter, Jude is, in fact, well situated after the discussion about false teachers in the letters of John. As well, Jude draws on apocalypses (e.g. vv. 9, 14), and its theme of the challenges to faith ‘in the last time’ (e.g. vv. 18, 21) anticipates and helps to smooth the path for Revelation that follows it in the common ordering of the books (Revelation never abuts the letters of John).

In the list of orders provided by Metzger, several sequences of the Catholic Epistles place the letters attributed to apostles (Peter–John or John–Peter) before those presumed to be authored by the half-brothers of Jesus (James–Jude or Jude–James) (classified by Metzger as b, d, e and f).⁶⁴ The motivation for these arrangements may be to give a preferential position to the writings of apostles, as also is the case in the so-called Western order of the Four Gospels, wherein those according to Matthew and John, the apostles, are followed by those according to Luke and Mark, the companions of the apostles (e.g. codices Bezae, Washington [W 032] and P⁴⁵). As well, the primacy of Peter in the Western Church is reflected in four sequences (b, c, d and e).

The canonical location of the Johannine Epistles in the manuscript tradition as part of the *Praxapostolos* implies certain things about the

challenge mounted by F. Lapham, *Peter: The Myth, the Man and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition* (JSNTSup, 239; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp. 152–58.

62. Noted by Niebuhr, ‘Exegese’, pp. 571, 579.

63. Wall, ‘Unifying Theology’, pp. 44–55; *idem*, ‘The Priority of James’, in Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (eds.), *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), pp. 153–60; Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, pp. 49–52; cf. Gal. 2.9 where the ‘pillars’ (στῦλοι) are listed in the same order as their letters; see Dieter Lührmann, ‘Gal 2,9 und die katholischen Briefe: Bemerkungen zum Kanon und zur regula fidei’, *ZNW* 72 (1981), pp. 65–87 (71), and Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*, p. 86.

64. For the seven sequences listed by Metzger, see *The Canon of the New Testament*, pp. 299–300.

function of the three letters according to the early readers and scribes responsible for the canonical ordering of the books, one being that first and foremost they should be read in relation to the other (non-Johannine) letters among which they stand, rather than as components of a wider Johannine body of literature.⁶⁵ There is, in fact, no hard evidence to suggest that its different components were ever placed side-by-side in ancient manuscripts, except for the conjoining of the three letters.⁶⁶ As well, the canonical location of the Johannine letters does not favour the theory (whatever its other supports) that they were written to respond to heretical (proto-Gnostic?) misreadings of the Fourth Gospel by secessionists.⁶⁷ For those who framed the canon, the positioning of the Johannine letters among the Catholic Epistles shows that the relation of the Johannine Epistles to other non-Pauline letters was given priority as an index for interpretation over their connection with either John's Gospel or Revelation.

In fact, the *failure* to place works by the same author (or related authors) next to each other is a general feature of the ordering of the New Testament canon, for 'the fourfold gospel emphatically separates Luke from its historical-critical connection with Acts, John from the Johannine Epistles, Matthew from James, and perhaps Mark from Peter'.⁶⁸ In regard to James, the link between its contents and dominical traditions found in the Gospel of Matthew (notably in the Sermon on

65. Painter touches on this point; see 'The Johannine Epistles as Catholic Epistles', pp. 249, 295.

66. Charles E. Hill shows that various ancient Christian authors (e.g. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria) were aware of the five items that make up the Johannine corpus, but he then goes on to argue that there is textual confirmation that all the Johannine works were gathered into one codex, as evidenced by the late third-century majuscule manuscript 0232 (P. Antinoopolis 12), which contains 2 Jn 1-9 on both sides of a single codex leaf, with the recto and verso numbered 164 and 165; see *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 449-59. This argument, however, has been neutralized by Michael J. Kruger, who shows that the codex in question would not have had enough space to contain all the Johannine materials; see 'The Date and Content of P. Antinoopolis 12 (0232)', *NTS* 58 (2012), pp. 254-71.

67. Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, pp. 47, 157 (thinking of the theory of Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* [AB, 30; New York: Doubleday, 1982], pp. 69-115).

68. Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, p. 109.

the Mount) is not discounted by the canonical order,⁶⁹ but neither is it highlighted or seen as the key for interpreting James. One interpretive effect of 1 Peter following the letter of James in the majority canonical order, according to Richard Bauckham, is that Peter's address to Gentiles as 'exiles of the dispersion' (1.1; cf. Jas 1.1) implies that the Gentiles share in the blessings of the endtime people of God, who consist of believing Jews and believing Gentiles in the style of Paul's discussion in Romans 9–11, and, on that basis, Gentile readers 'are encouraged to find James' letter to the twelve tribes in the Diaspora also addressed to them by virtue of their grafting into the root of Israel (Rom. 11:17)'.⁷⁰ Likewise, the similarities between the juxtaposed letters of James and 1 Peter, most notably the common themes and similar ordering of the material in their opening chapters,⁷¹ carry the implication that both letters are now applicable and of use to Jewish and Gentile believers alike.

Nienhuis and Wall argue that the Catholic Epistles have the role of correcting an antinomian misreading of Pauline theology (esp. the argument against a false type of *sola fideism* in James 2), such that the Catholic Epistles function like the Pastoral Epistles in guiding the reading of the Pauline Corpus (cf. 2 Pet. 3.15-17, which condemns 'lawless men' who twist Paul's teaching).⁷² Their appraisal of the Catholic Epistles, so helpful at many points, is skewed by this hypothesis, for it is really only a manifestation of the scholarly tendency to allow the Pauline teaching on justification to set the agenda for interpreting Jas 2.14-26.⁷³ However, the discourse on faith and works is in

69. See e.g. Dale C. Allison, Jr, 'The Audience of James and the Sayings of Jesus', in Alicia J. Batten and John S. Kloppenborg (eds.), *James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Early Jesus Traditions* (LNTS, 478; London: T. & T. Clark, 2014), pp. 58-77.

70. Bauckham, *James*, p. 157. This is a better reading of the prescripts of James and 1 Peter than that provided by Nienhuis, who sees Peter's application of the term 'diaspora' as implying that empirical Israel is denied any ongoing significance, such that James' use of the same term is a deliberate correction of the views of Peter (*Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 169-74).

71. See e.g. Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, pp. 253-54.

72. Nienhuis and Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, pp. 52-68; cf. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone*, pp. 85-90; Robert W. Wall, 'A Canonical Approach to the Unity of Acts and Luke's Gospel', pp. 172-91 (174); *idem*, 'Unifying Theology', p. 48.

73. David R. Nienhuis, 'The Letter of James as a Canon-Conscious Pseudepigraph', in Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (eds.), *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), pp.

the context of the preceding exhortation to the impartial and merciful treatment of the poor (1.26–2.13),⁷⁴ and this understanding is supported by the way in which the text of James is divided in the ancient codices, for the only two points in the letter where divisions coincide in Vaticanus (earlier and later capitulation), Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus are before 1.26 and after 2.26, demarcating this extended section of text as a unit of meaning. Only Alexandrinus has a division at 2.1, but breaks in the text are much more frequent in Alexandrinus than in the other two Greek codices, and on that basis this codex is not useful in determining what were viewed by scribes as major partitions in the text of the Catholic Epistles. The unit as a whole addresses the issue of the neglect of the destitute (esp. 1.27; 2.2-3, 15-16) and the related need to avoid the compromise involved in client relationships with the wealthy patrons.⁷⁵

As part of the *Praxapostolos*, James is best read as picking up and elaborating the theme of the care of the needy already to be found in Acts (2.44-45; 4.32-37; 6.1-6; 9.36-43; 10.2-4), and according to the presentation in Acts, Paul is exemplary in caring for the poor (Acts 11.27-30 [cf. Gal. 2.10]; 24.17).⁷⁶ Paul is also law-abiding, as acknowledged by James himself when addressing Paul (21.24: ‘you yourself live in observance of the law’) and as also claimed by Paul when he asserts that he is loyal to his ancestral religion (24.16-21). This, in

183-200 (185-89); cf. the critique of Nienhuis and Wall by Peter H. Davids, ‘What Reading Is Truly Canonical? A Brief Response’, *JTI* 9 (2015), pp. 137-47 (145-47). For the view that the author is writing from within Paulinism, see Margaret M. Mitchell, ‘The Letter of James as a Document of Paulinism’, in Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg (eds.), *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James* (LNTS, 342; London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), pp. 75-98.

74. As Nienhuis and Wall recognize (*Reading the Epistles*, pp. 81-83). For the summative and transitional character of 1.26-27, see Mark Edward Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic Investigation into the Discourse Structure of James* (LNTS, 331; London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), pp. 51, 101; and for the thematic connection of 1.26-27 with what follows, see Timothy B. Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora: Discursive Structure and Purpose in the Epistle of James* (SBLDS, 144; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 93-136.

75. Alicia J. Batten, *Friendship and Benefaction in James* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity, 15; Dorset: Deo, 2010), pp. 122-44.

76. This last reference is the closest Luke comes to alluding to Paul’s collection for poor believers in Jerusalem (cf. Rom. 15.25-27).

effect, turns Paul into an exemplar of what James is teaching. Allowing the canonical context to shape the interpretation of the Catholic Epistles (as Nienhuis and Wall are intent on doing), it would be difficult to read the Jacobian author as aiming to address a perceived imbalance in Paul's teaching (or practice) or writing to correct those who have misread or misapplied Paul's teaching.

The polemical orientation of their reading of the intra-canonical relationship of James with other writings is also not compelling, for the reason that it is too narrowly focused on one particular heretical threat, to the exclusion of other potential distortions of the apostolic testimony. Carey C. Newman also reads the Catholic Epistles as a corrective to possible doctrinal distortions (not just antinomian misreadings of Paul), but he does not focus on James, viewing this as the collective role of the seven-letter collection.⁷⁷ Certainly, there is nothing to link the false teachers, scoffers, antichrists, false prophets and deceivers alluded to in the letters of Peter and John to this particular doctrinal deviation. 2 Peter appears to rebuke those who distort teaching by Paul about the delay of the Parousia (3.14-15), perhaps occasioned by opaque comments in his two letters to the Thessalonians,⁷⁸ and 1 John insists on the reality of the physical resurrection of Jesus (e.g. the claim to have seen and handled the risen Christ in 1 Jn 1.1; cf. Jn 20.24-29), presumably in response to heretical claims to the contrary.⁷⁹ The theory of Nienhuis and Wall makes a single passage in James (the discussion of faith and works) too determinative for the elucidation of the theological emphases of the Catholic Epistles that cover a wider range of topics. As well, the reading of Nienhuis and Wall underestimates the role played by Acts in relation to *both* corpora. In line with what Wall himself has written elsewhere, the canonical dynamics are different to what he and Nienhuis suggest, and a more nuanced summation of the manuscript evidence would be that interaction between the Pauline Corpus and Catholic Epistles is *mediated* by the book of Acts.⁸⁰ Lastly, it ignores the obvious point that the

77. Newman, 'Jude 22, Apostolic Authority', p. 376.

78. Farkasfalvy, 'Ecclesial Setting', p. 9.

79. Matthew D. Jensen, *Affirming the Resurrection of the Incarnate Christ: A Reading of 1 John* (SNTSMS, 153; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 60-65.

80. Wall, 'Acts and James', pp. 127-52 (130): 'Acts provides a distinctive and formative angle of vision into both Pauline and Catholic collections that follow';

existence of this canonical grouping suggests that readers recognized that these seven letters were related in significant ways and illuminated each other, and, therefore, it is the interplay between the writings of James, Peter, John and Jude that is foregrounded.⁸¹

Internal Divisions in the Catholic Epistles

Ancient Greek manuscripts of New Testament books were written in *scriptio continua*, but they were also provided by scribes with textual divisions, which represent an evaluation of the sense-units of the biblical passages.⁸² The oldest system of numbered chapters is that found in Vaticanus, a scheme going back to at least the fourth century, whose divisions for the Catholic Epistles are: James (9 chapters), 1 Peter (8), 2 Peter (none), 1 John (11), 2 John (none), 3 John (none) and Jude (2).⁸³ For example, many of the divisions in 1 John are triggered when the author addresses his readers as ‘(my) children’ (τεκνία, παῖδια) or ‘beloved’ (ἀγαπητοί) (2.1, 7, 18; 3.2, 18; 4.1, 7), with the address perhaps understood as signalling the introduction of a new topic or stage in the argument. A later alternate system of capitulation was applied in the codex to Acts and the Epistles, and this is usually dated sometime between the seventh and ninth century.⁸⁴ For the Catholic Epistles, these divisions are: James (5), 1 Peter (3), 2 Peter (2), 1 John (3), 2 John (2) and none for 3 John and Jude. This schema is indicated in the margins of the columns by Greek letters of larger size than those used in the earlier system of chapter numbering. In Vaticanus, a short horizontal line (*paragraphos*) is placed above the first letter of the first whole line of the new numbered chapter marking the close of the preceding chapter, and sometimes by a letter protruding into the left

idem, ‘The Unity of Acts and Luke’s Gospel’, p. 190 n. 23: ‘I take it that the principal role of the biblical Acts is to introduce and frame the two canonical collections of letters that follow.’

81. Cf. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*, p. 100.

82. For comments on the textual breaks in papyri as ‘readers’ aids’, see Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, pp. 177-85.

83. Codex Vaticanus found at: http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1209 pp. 1426-1444.

84. Stephen Pisano, ‘III. The Text of the New Testament’, in the Prolegomena volume to *Bibliorum sacrorum graecorum Codex Vaticanus B: Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999), pp. 27-41.

margin (*ekthesis*).⁸⁵ In Sinaiticus, paragraphs are usually marked by *ekthesis*.⁸⁶ The main types of markers used for the purposes of delimitation in Alexandrinus are enlarged letters, open spaces (often in the middle of a line) and *ekthesis*.⁸⁷

Papyrus 72 (third–fourth century) contains the text of 1 and 2 Peter and Jude, and in this manuscript the Petrine texts have marginal notes in defective Greek that are introduced by *περί* (‘concerning’).⁸⁸ These notes highlight what were presumably viewed by those responsible as key themes in the letters,⁸⁹ namely the importance of ethical behaviour and the danger of false teachers. By this means, the marginal notes help to connect the Petrine correspondence to paraenesis found in the preceding book of James. Papyrus 74 (seventh century) has the *Praxapostolos* in 124 fragments (with a single column, approximately 30–35 lines per column), with parts of all eight books extant, though the only substantial portions of the text are Acts and James.⁹⁰ It shows some paragraph breaks, usually marked by a high dot and a space of several letters.

85. For a fuller explanation of how the paragraphs are marked in the codices, see Wim de Bruin, ‘Interpreting Delimiters: The Complexity of Textual Delimitation in Four Major Septuagint Manuscripts’, in Marjo C.A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch (eds.), *Studies in Scriptural Unit Division* (Pericope: Scripture as Written and Read in Antiquity, 3; Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2002), pp. 66–89; Dirk Jongkind, *Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), pp. 95–97.

86. Found at <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=52>.

87. Found at http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_02. See also B.H. Cowper (ed.), *Codex Alexandrinus H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ Novum Testamentum Graece ex antiquissimo codice alexandrino a C.G. Woide* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1860), p. viii. Cf. James R. Edwards, ‘The Hermeneutical Significance of Chapter Divisions in Ancient Gospel Manuscripts’, *NTS* 56 (2010), pp. 413–26.

88. Found at http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_P72 and further images are found at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pap.Bodmer.VIII

89. For comments on the marginal notes, see David G. Horrell, ‘Themes of 1 Peter: Insights from the Earliest Manuscripts (the Crosby-Schøyen Codex ms 193 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex containing P⁷²)’, *NTS* 55 (2009), pp. 503–22; Tommy Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission* (ConBNT, 43; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006), pp. 46–47; *idem*, ‘Papyrus 72 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex’, *NTS* 51 (2005), pp. 137–54.

90. Found at http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_P74.

Conclusion

The assumption behind my study is that biblical books placed in apposition or put in the same canonical corpus are viewed as conversation partners, whose interaction takes priority over other possible intra-canonical linkages and, therefore, the bringing together of the Catholic Epistles suggests that early Christian readers recognized that these seven letters were related in significant ways and threw light on each other. This collection foregrounds the interplay between the writings of James, Peter, John and Jude and gives this hermeneutical precedence over other possible intra-textual relations (e.g. the thematic links between 1 John and John's Gospel) or canonical roles (e.g. reading James 2 as a corrective to a Pauline over-emphasis on faith). I have argued that this way of ordering the books, together with their titles and internal breaks, reflects the understanding and insights of ancient readers, and that there is no evidence that the letters of James or 2 Peter were written for any particular canonical slot or with a specific intra-canonical role in mind.