

The Second Epistle of Peter and the Primacy of Jesus

I. Introduction

Within the context of this study, it is important to begin by considering the degree of connection there may be between 1 and 2 Peter. The differences in style, purpose, thought and syntax between the two texts are well documented.¹ While much scholarship notes some of the differences between the texts, Joel Green also notes how the two texts do share an eschatological lens and, in a sense, the dense theology and Christology of 1 Peter and the use of exemplar motifs within 2 Peter may mutually inform and complement one another,² especially if considered from a canonical viewpoint,³

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1. Since the work of Jerome, it has been suggested that the differences are down to the use of a different amanuensis in the composition of each letter. Richard J. Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary 50: Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 143-44. For more on the style and syntax of 2 Peter, see Thomas J. Kraus, *Sprache, Stil und historischer Ort des zweiten Petrusbriefes*, WUNT II, 136 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 27-31, 51-279.
 2. Joel B. Green, 'Narrating the Gospel in 1 and 2 Peter', *Int* 60, no. 3 (July 2006), 262-77, esp. 275.
 3. This term obviously draws upon the encouragement of Brevard Childs to view the Scriptures primarily as their 'final form' found within the Bible: Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*

but these factors also highlight the differences between the letters.⁴ In that sense, we can note some connections and relationship between the texts, while also noting their divergence, contrasting language, syntax and purpose, which create a degree of separation between the two epistles. In the end, Davids notes a variety of these differences, such as use of and interaction with the Old Testament and Hellenistic influences, but concludes that 1 and 2 Peter simply offer too small a data pool to affirm or deny any potential links between the texts.⁵ As a result, this study will look at 2 Peter as an epistle standing on its own, without drawing particular inferences from 1 Peter. As this study seeks to focus on methodological issues, it will be helpful to compare the methodological approach of the use of the OT and Jesus within 1 and 2 Peter as distinct entities, even if there are familial, authorial and canonical connections between the letters.

A. 2 Peter and the Question of Authorship

Another key issue to consider is the suggestion of a significant proportion of scholars that 2 Peter is both 'late' and 'pseudepigraphical'.⁶ Yet, Michael Kruger gives some significant and compelling arguments

(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1979). Brevard Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (London: Continuum, 1984).

4. There is, of course, the potential connection to 1 Peter within the words of 2 Pet. 3:2. See William J. Dalton, 'The Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6: Light from 2 Peter', *Bib* 60, no. 4 (1979), 547-55, 547. Further similarities can be found in 1 Pet. 4:2-4 and its list of prohibited behaviour resonates with 2 Peter's similar lists in 2 Pet. 2:12, 2:14 and 2:18; Dalton, '1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6', 551. As well as some striking parallels in the Noah narrative in 1 Pet. 3:19 and 4:6 which can be helpfully enlightened by studying the use of the Noah narrative within the books of 1 and 2 Peter: Dalton, '1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6', 552-55.
5. Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (Pillar New Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 129-30.
6. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*. H. Paulsen, *Der Zweite Petrusbrief und der Judasbrief* (KEK XII/2) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). Anton Vogtle, *Der Judasbrief / Der Zweite Petrusbrief* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener Verlag, 1994). Jonathan Knight, *2 Peter and Jude* (New Testament Guides) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 22ff. Allen, *Historical Character of Jesus*, 143. Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: Volume 2: A*

that question a simple affirmation of the scholarly view regarding 2 Peter as a case of pseudepigraphy, suggesting that many key questions regarding the letter's pseudepigraphal status still remain.⁷ Moreover, the work of Green provides another contemporary scholarly voice questioning a conclusion of pseudepigraphy within 2 Peter.⁸ What we might also note, in terms of social memory and mnemonic keying, is that the epistle's connection to Peter is clearly significant, as are the claims made towards 'seeing' and 'hearing' the events of 2 Peter 1:16-18. Consequently, while acknowledging a broad scholarly view of pseudepigraphy, this study maintains a large degree of scepticism towards adopting a simple affirmation of that conclusion, especially when studying the claims of 2 Peter 1:16-18 and their use as a source of authority for the construction of the epistle itself.⁹

Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 260-61.

7. Kruger notes several compelling points to consider within 2 Peter itself: Michael J. Kruger, 'The Authenticity of 2 Peter', *JETS* 42, no. 4 (1999), 645-71. In terms of canonicity, Kruger notes the inclusion of 2 Peter within the canon in the third-century works of Origen and the manuscript P72 (650-51). Kruger rightly questions whether the style and substance of 1 and 2 Peter is wide enough to necessitate a conclusion of pseudepigraphy, suggesting we simply do not have enough material within the Petrine epistles to categorise a 'Petrine style' (658-59). Moreover, Kruger correctly suggests that there does not seem within 2 Peter to be an attempt to press a certain doctrinal position like the Docetism of the Gospel of Peter, or the Gnosticism of the Gospel of Thomas (669-71).
8. Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 139-50. Specifically, we can note that 1 and 2 Peter simply provide too small a pool of data adequately to draw conclusions about authorship. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 149-50. In other words, 'the style and vocabulary of 2 Peter plus the differences between 1 and 2 Peter are not sufficient to reject the authenticity of 2 Peter. We simply do not possess a large enough corpus of Petrine literature to determine what Peter could or could not have written': Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 145. As a result, there is no reason within this study to doubt the authorial claims made within the letter of 2 Peter.
9. We might also note the importance of community formation, development and definition. See James C. Miller, 'The Sociological Category of "Collective Identity" and Its Implications for Understanding

B. The Connection between 2 Peter and Jude

One of the key connections scholars note within the New Testament is the striking similarity between aspects of 2 Peter and Jude.¹⁰ Carson notes the scholarly assumption that 2 Peter refers to, and draws upon, Jude and notes Jude's citations of non-canonical Second Temple literature seem to be largely removed within 2 Peter.¹¹ Another key factor to note is the way 2 Peter seems to lack traditional citations of the OT, relying heavily on allusions to key texts and stories from the OT.¹² Conversely, in the shorter letter of Jude there is a potential OT citation of Zechariah 3:2¹³ in verse 9 of Jude, as well as a potential preference for the MT rather than the LXX within parts of Jude.¹⁴ This makes Jude an intriguing text within this study due to the well documented similarities, but also the noticeable differences between the texts. The common scholarly view of 2 Peter as being both late and pseudepigraphal means that a majority of scholars suggest that Jude influences and impacts 2 Peter and not the other way around.¹⁵

Second Peter', in Robert L. Webb and Duane F. Watson (eds), *Reading Second Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of Second Peter* (London: T&T Clark, 2010). Moreover, as Davids notes, there is simply no categorical way of knowing authorship details of 2 Peter, and a variety of scholars conclude differently upon these matters. See Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 129-30. Yet, the work of Green in suggesting an authenticity to Petrine authorship for 2 Peter is compelling and, given that scholarly claims towards pseudepigraphy remain underwhelming and unconvincing, this study will concur with the view that Green puts forward: Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 145.

10. Paulsen, *Der Zweite Petrusbrief und der Judasbrief*, 97-100. Vinson *et al.*, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 225-26. For more on the connections between 2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter, see F. Lapham, *Peter: The Myth, the Man, and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition*, JSNT 239 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003).
11. D.A. Carson, 'Jude', in G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (eds), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1069. Carson, '2 Peter', 1047.
12. Carson, '2 Peter', 1047.
13. Carson, 'Jude', 1076.
14. *Ibid.*, 1069.
15. Vinson *et al.*, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, 271.

This is primarily due to the length of Jude in comparison to 2 Peter, with 2 Peter often seen as expanding upon the themes of Jude.¹⁶ Yet, for Jude to have been a source or influence for 2 Peter does not in turn necessitate a conclusion that 2 Peter is later and pseudepigraphal, as we shall see.

One key proponent for suggesting the priority of Jude is Gene Green.¹⁷ Green notes a series of literary connections between Jude and 2 Peter.¹⁸ Key to suggesting the priority of Jude is that much of Jude seems to appear within 2 Peter 2 to 3, but large parts of 2 Peter 1 and 3 do not seem to appear in any form within Jude.¹⁹ This is important for this study as the two main passages of study fall within 2 Peter 1:16-18 and 3:7-13, well outside the area which may have been influenced by Jude, and, thus, the connection between Jude and 2 Peter is less salient. As a result, any direct connection between the texts may be less *directly relevant* to this study. We also can note within 2 Peter a distinctly reduced interaction with Second Temple texts such as 1 Enoch and the Testament of Moses, which do appear

16. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 415-19. Nicholas R. Werse, 'Second Temple Jewish Literary Traditions in 2 Peter', *CBQ* 78, no. 1 (Jan 2016), 111-30, 113 n. 115.

17. Gene L. Green, 'Second Peter's Use of Jude: Imitatio and the Sociology of Early Christianity', in Robert L. Webb and Duane F. Watson (eds), *Reading Second Peter With New Eyes: Methodological Resassessments of the Letter of Second Peter* (London: T&T Clark, 2010). As noted above, Green also argues against a conclusion of pseudepigraphal authorship: Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 139-50. In turn, Jude in itself seems to have both an interest in Jesus, given the six mentions of, or references to Jesus within the short epistle: Allen, *Historical Character of Jesus*, 141.

18. Cf. 2 Pet. 2:1-3/Jude 4; 2 Pet. 2:4, 2:9/Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:6/Jude 7; 2 Pet. 2:10/Jude 7b-8; 2 Pet. 2:11/Jude 9; 2 Pet. 2:12/Jude 10; 2 Pet. 2:13/Jude 12a; 2 Pet. 2:15/Jude 11; 2 Pet. 2:17/Jude 12b-13; 2 Pet. 2:18/Jude 16; 2 Pet. 3:1-2/Jude 17; and 2 Pet. 3:3/Jude 19. Green, 'Use of Jude', 8. Paulsen, *Der Zweite Petrusbrief und der Judasbrief*, 131-58. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 136-43. It is important also to consider the *Sitz im Leben* of both texts, authors and audiences. A novel look at this study, suggesting that 2 Peter is a second-century text from which we can see a theological witness to second-century theology and debates, is found in: Jorg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der Zweite Brief des Petrus* (ThHK 15/II) (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015).

19. Green, 'Use of Jude', 8.

in Jude 14-15 and 8-9, respectively.²⁰ Additionally, 2 Peter seems to rework and reorder aspects of the OT exemplars found in Jude²¹ and many consider 2 Peter to be making a 'conscious attempt' to rework this material drawing upon the Judan material.²² This may lead to a conclusion that 2 Peter had Jude available, in some sense, as a source²³ and, thus, this may to an interesting comparison regarding 2 Peter's use of source materials.

On this point, it is interesting to note some of the ways in which 2 Peter draws upon Jude, especially Jude's use of the Old Testament. The clearest example of this is the mention of Balaam in Jude 11 and how that tradition is expanded and widened by 2 Peter.²⁴ Within 2 Peter we see added elements of the OT account drawn out in terms of Balaam being rebuked (Numbers 22:28, 22:30) and the talking donkey (Numbers 22:28), but also an extended theological discussion regarding Balaam's state of mind and a discussion about his lawlessness, wickedness and the dangers of Balaam's 'way'.²⁵ Here we see 2 Peter both drawing upon, but also expanding upon, the Judan source material. Another example is how 2 Peter seems to take Jude 6 and the mention of angels being judged and integrate this with the Noahic account of angel judgement in Genesis 6.²⁶ Within that discussion, 2 Peter then adds the exemplar Lot.²⁷ What is interesting, however, is 2 Peter's presentation of Lot, especially in relation

20. Ibid., 11.

21. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 142.

22. Green, 'Use of Jude', 11-12.

23. On the other hand, Mathews does offer a reasonable case for considering the priority of 2 Peter: Mark Dewayne Mathews, 'The Literary Relationship of 2 Peter and Jude: Does the Synoptic Tradition Resolve this Synoptic Problem?', *Neot* 44, no. 1 (2010), 47-66. Cf. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 142.

24. Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation, with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible Commentary 37C) (London: Doubleday, 1993), 210-11.

25. Ibid., 211-12.

26. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 331. Cf. David M. Allen, 'Genesis in James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude', in Maarten J.J. Menken and Steve Moyise (eds), *Genesis in the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 162-64.

27. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 137-38.

to the Genesis 19 account. Within the OT Lot seems to come across as relatively timid and does not appear to offer great resistance in the Genesis account.²⁸ Perhaps, at the most positive, Lot's concern for the angelical visitors may classify him as 'relatively righteous' within the Genesis account.²⁹ What is noteworthy here is that 2 Peter clearly feels able to take material from Jude and interpret, adapt and develop the material to suit his purposes.³⁰ Specifically, when using Jude as a source, 2 Peter seems willing to expand OT allusions and stories and interpret them accordingly, remove material altogether, and also reorder and restructure these OT exemplar narratives. The point to note here is that, if 2 Peter draws on Jude, then 2 Peter seems willing to use Jude's use of the OT and to edit and adapt for his own purposes. Specifically, we see the way in which 2 Peter draws upon OT 'judgement' narratives to highlight a particular point and so we can get a sense of how 2 Peter may use this source material. Consequently, we can see the book of Jude as a helpful 'source' for 2 Peter, but also a source which 2 Peter is willing to refine and reframe for a specific purpose. Similarly, we note that 2 Peter seems to find the transfiguration narrative and Jesus' teaching regarding the Parousia to be helpful in the development of the argument of the book of 2 Peter as a whole. Therefore, it is helpful to note this as we consider the ways in which 2 Peter draws upon Jesus and the usage of Jesus' teachings and events from Jesus' life within the letter to see whether 2 Peter uses Jesus in the same way as the letter of Jude seems to be used.

28. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 333-34.

29. Allen, 'Genesis', 163. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 229. Yet, we might note that Jewish texts such as Wisdom 10:6 and 19:17 view Lot in a more exemplary light, describing him as a 'righteous man': Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 229-30. Moreover, we find similar language in 1 Clement and Philo, with some suggesting that Abraham's prayer for God to save 'righteous people' being answered in the form of Lot. Ruth Anne Reese, *2 Peter and Jude* (The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 151-52.

30. Cf. Allen, 'Genesis', 162-63.