

Kalina Wojciechowska / Mariusz Rosik

A Structural Commentary on the So-Called *Antilegomena*

Volume 1: The Letter of James:
Wisdom that Comes from Above



Eastern and Central European Voices

Studies in Theology and Religion

Edited by

Rajmund Pietkiewicz and Krzysztof Pilarczyk

In co-operation with

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Cyril Hišem (Slovakia), Mirosław Kiwka (Poland),

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Sławomir Stasiak (Poland), Jose M. Vegas (Russia)

Volume 3.1

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The Letter of James: Wisdom that Comes from Above

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

The book was financed from the subsidy granted by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data available online: <https://dnb.de>.

© 2021 by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Theaterstraße 13, 37073 Göttingen, Germany, an imprint of the Brill-Group (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands; Brill USA Inc., Boston MA, USA; Brill Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore; Brill Deutschland GmbH, Paderborn, Germany; Brill Österreich GmbH, Vienna, Austria)
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Hotei, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau, Verlag Antike and V&R unipress.

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Cover design: SchwabScantechnik, Göttingen
Publishing reviews: Prof. Marek Jerzy Uglorz (Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw) and Prof. Mirosław Wróbel (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin)
Translation: Magdalena Konopko, Wrocław
Indexes: Anna Kryza, Wrocław
Typesetting: le-tex publishing services, Leipzig

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 2749–6279

ISBN 978–3–647–57330–4

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	7
Bibliographic abbreviations.....	7
Apocrypha.....	7
Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran Caves Scrolls).....	8
Ancient Writings	8
Grammar abbreviations and others	9
 Preface	 11
 1. Introduction.....	 19
1.1 Textual Evidence and Canonicity.....	19
1.2 Authorship	27
1.3 Dating	41
1.4 Vocabulary, style, structure	45
1.5 Genre	57
1.6 Sender and addressees	76
 2. The Structural Commentary	 99
2.1 Wisdom comes from above (James 1:5–8.16–18)	99
2.2 Wisdom is pure (James 1:12–15.21a.27)	108
2.3 Wisdom is irenic/peace-loving/aiming at peace (James 1:19–20, 4:1–3).....	122
2.4 Wisdom is humble/compassionate (James 1:21b, 4:7–10.16, 5:10–11)	136
2.5 Wisdom is obedient (to the law) (James 1:22–25, 2:10–12).....	153
2.6 Wisdom is full of mercy (James 2:13–17.20.26, 5:4–6.19–20).....	166
2.7 Wisdom is full of good fruits (James 1:2–4, 2:18.21–25, 3:1–12.18, 4:17, 5:7–8.13–18)	185
2.8 Wisdom is impartial (James 1:9–11, 2:1–9, 4:4–6.13–15, 5:1–3)	231
2.9 Wisdom is unhypocritical (James 1:26, 2:19, 3:14–16, 4:11–12, 5:9.12).....	261
2.10 Conclusion (James 3:13).....	279
 3. Summary.....	 285

Bibliography	287
Biblical texts.....	287
Apocryphal literature	288
Ancient Christian writers.....	289
Other ancient writers	290
Dictionaries, synopses and concordances	291
Commentaries.....	292
Studies	293
Indexes	299
Index of persons	299
Index of references.....	304
Bible	304
Apocrypha and Dead Sea Scrolls.....	326
Others.....	329

Abbreviations

Bibliographic abbreviations

CBQ	“Catholic Biblical Quarterly”
JBL	“Journal of Biblical Literature”
JETS	“Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society”
JSNTSup	“Journal for the Study of the New Testament (Supplement Series)”
JTS	“Journal of Theological Studies”
NTS	“New Testament Studies”
PL	Patrologia Latina
THKNT	Theologische Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	“Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche”

Apocrypha

1 En	Book of Enoch/1 Enoch
2 En	Second Book of Enoch/2 Enoch/Slavonic Enoch
2	Bar Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch/2 Baruch
GHeb	Gospel of the Hebrews
GTh	Gospel of Thomas/Coptic Gospel of Thomas
Jub	Book of Jubilees
PssSol	Psalms of Solomon
TAb	Testament of Abraham
TAsh	Testament of Asher
TBenj	Testament of Benjamin
TDan	Testament of Dan
TGad	Testament of Gad
TIss	Testament of Issachar
TJud	Testament of Judah
TJob	Testament of Job
TLevi	Testament of Levi
TNaph	Testament of Naphtali
TSim	Testament of Simeon

Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran Caves Scrolls)

- 1Q27 *Book of Mysteries*
- 1QH^a *Hodayot/Thanksgiving Hymns*
- 1QS *Community Rule*
- 4Q184 *Wiles of the Wicked Woman*
- 4Q185 *4Q Sapiential Work*
- 4Q298 *Words of Sage Man*
- 4Q299 *Book of Mysteries A*
- 4Q300 *Book of Mysteries B*
- 4Q301 *Book of Mysteries C*
- 4Q412 *Sapiential-Didactic A*
- 4Q415 *Instructions A*
- 4Q416 *Instructions B*
- 4Q417 *Instructions C*
- 4Q418 *Instructions D*
- 4Q420 *Ways of Righteousness A*
- 4Q421 *Ways of Righteousness B*
- 4Q423 *Instructions G*
- 4Q424 *4Q Sapiential Work (= 4Q185)*
- 4Q425 *Sapiential-Didactic Work*
- 4Q470 *Fragment Mentioning Zedekiah*
- 4Q525 *Blessed*

Ancient Writings

- 1Clem. *First Epistle by Clement of Rome*
- Ant. *Antiquitates Iudaicae (Antiquities of the Jews)* by Titus Flavius Josephus
- Bell. Iud. *De bello Iudaico (The Jewish War)* by Titus Flavius Josephus
- HE *Historia ecclesiastica (Church History)* by Eusebius of Caesarea
- Pan. *Panarion/Adversus Haereses (Refutation of All Heresies)* by Epiphanius of Salamis
- Pol. Phil. *Epistle to the Philippians* by Polycarp of Smyrna
- Rec. *The Recognitions* by Pseudo-Clement
- Smyr. *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* by Ignatius of Antioch

Grammar abbreviations and others

ACI	accusativus cum infinitivo
acc.	accusativus
act.	activum
aor.	aoristus
con.	coniunctivus
fut.	futurum
gen.	genetivus
imp.	imperativus
ind.	indicativus
masc.	masculinum
med.	medium
nom.	nominativus
part.	participium
pass.	passivum
perf.	perfectum
pl.	pluralis
praes.	praesens
sg.	singularis
voc.	vocativus

Preface

The Letter of James counts among the most enigmatic and ambiguous texts of not only the New Testament but of early Christian literature in general.¹ It is not known by whom and when it was written though the prescript mentions the author's name – James. It is not known to which community or communities it was addressed although the twelve tribes who are in the diaspora are mentioned as the recipients in the address. Its ancient reception was quite equivocal. Some scholars, such as Origen, considered it to be an important and undoubtedly normative (and canonical) text; others, for example Eusebius of Caesarea, shared the doubts of many of their contemporaries and ranked it among *antilegomena*. Even Saint Jerome took an equivocal position. The Letter of James may on the one hand beguile readers with its unique lexis and elegant Hellenistic style; on the other hand, one may be repelled by its lack of coherence, excessive didacticism and scarcity of theological motifs, in particular Christological ones.

A real 'black legend' developed around the letter in the sixteenth century, when its apostolicity was questioned by Martin Luther who called it an 'epistle of straw' due to its lack of evangelical character – namely, that "it does not once mention the Passion, the resurrection, or the Spirit of Christ. He [James] names Christ several times; however, he teaches nothing about him, but only speaks of general faith in God".² Humanists (Erasmus of Rotterdam) as well as representatives of the Roman Catholic Church (Thomas Cajetan) discussed the canonicity of the letter. At the same time, however, both Catholic and evangelical traditions have been in agreement that the letter belongs to deuterocanonical writings, though they used to understand the term a bit differently and were guided by different classification criteria.

Since the time of Reformation, the Letter of James has been mainly associated with the phrase 'faith and works', contrasted with the Pauline principle of 'faith alone'. As a result, the epistle has hardly ever been approached as an autonomous text and was mainly commented on in reference to St. Paul's theology. The alleged opposition between James and Paul has been explained in many ways: it was sometimes seen as the sign of controversy between the apostles or at times as the sign of misunderstanding of Paul's idea by James himself or by the communities to

1 M.A. Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James. The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, the Law of Freedom*, Leiden–Boston–Köln 2001, p. 1.

2 M. Luther, *Prefaces to the Books of the Bible, Preface to the Epistles of Saint James and Saint Jude 1545* (1522), http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther_f8.htm [accessed: 11.03.2019].

which James addressed his letter. There have also emerged hypotheses negating any connection or influence of Paul upon James or James upon Paul and these have been based on a slightly different vision of the beginnings and unity of Christianity in the first century than the traditional, idealised one and on the revision of the widely accepted dating of the Letter of James to the late first century. This in turn generated questions concerning other relations and dependencies – inter alia between James and Matthew, James and Luke, or James and the Q source. What is more and more often accentuated at present is certain convergence of themes, images, ideas and theological approaches, especially eschatological ones, appearing in both the synoptic Gospels and in James as well as in James and in Corpus Paulinum, thanks to which the Letter of James gains greater autonomy. A similar viewpoint has also been adopted by the authors of this commentary.

Controversies regarding the authorship, the date of composition of the letter, its addressees and, when compared to other biblical writings, similarities and differences on lexical, semantic and theological levels generated debates concerning its literary genre, coherence of the text, the above-mentioned associations with other texts as well as intertextual strategies. The classic works which should be named here are the monographs by James B. Adamson,³ William R. Backer,⁴ Richard Bauckham,⁵ Peter H. Davids,⁶ John H. Elliott,⁷ Patrick Hartin,⁸ Martin Hengel,⁹ Martin Klein,¹⁰ Matthias Konradt,¹¹ Martina Ludwig,¹² John Painter,¹³ Todd C.

3 J.B. Adamson, *James, the Man and his Message*, Grand Rapids 1989.

4 W.R. Backer, *Personal Speech. Ethics in the Epistle of James*, Tübingen 1995.

5 R. Bauckham, *James*, New York 1999.

6 P.H. Davids, *James and Jesus*, [in:] *Jesus Tradition outside the Gospels*, ed. D. Wenham, Sheffield 1985 p. 63–84.

7 J.H. Elliott, *The Epistle of James in Rhetorical and Social Scientific Perspective: Holiness-Wholeness and Patterns of Replication*, “Biblical Theology Bulletin” 23 (1993).

8 P.J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (JSNTSup 47), Sheffield 1991.

9 M. Hengel, *Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik*, [in:] *Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. O. Betz, G.F. Hawthorne, Grand Rapids 1987 p. 248–278.

10 M. Klein, *Ein vollkommenes Werk: vollkommenheit, Gesetz und Gericht als theologische Themen des Jakobusbriefes*, Stuttgart 1995.

11 M. Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief: Eine Studie zu seiner soteriologischen und ethischen Konzeption* (Studien zum Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 22), Göttingen 1998.

12 M. Ludwig, *Wort als Gesetz: Eine Untersuchung zum Verständnis von ‘Wort’ und ‘Gesetz’ in israelitisch-frühjüdischen und neutestamentlichen Schriften: Gleichzeitig ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Jakobusbriefes*, Frankfurt 1994.

13 J. Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition*, Columbia 2004 (first edition – Colombia 1997).

Penner,¹⁴ Duane Watson,¹⁵ or commentaries by Hubert Frankemöller,¹⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson,¹⁷ Scot McKnight,¹⁸ Sophie Laws,¹⁹ Ralph P. Martin,²⁰ Douglas J. Moo,²¹ Robert Wall.²² In the twentieth century, these discussions concurred with the development of methods used in biblical text analysis, but it should be noted that, although the NT exegesis has at its disposal a wide range of methods, including interdisciplinary approaches which refer to postmodernism,²³ yet hardly ever have other methods apart from historical criticism and socio-historical or comparative approaches been used in the case of the Letter of James or the Catholic epistles in general (maybe except for the letters of John, usually analysed within the context of the whole Johannine tradition).²⁴ With time, very slowly, other approaches and patterns started to be used in the analysis of James, derived mainly from contemporary literary studies and rhetoric, understood both as rhetoric based on classical ancient patterns and rhetoric drawing upon form criticism and reconstruction of the author's situation and the primary, historical addressees of the text (rhetoric based on appreciation of competences and situation of every real recipient of the text was rarely used).²⁵ The situation changed in 2005, when the Society of Biblical Literature organised the annual meeting on Methodological Reassessments of the Letters of James, Peter and Jude devoted to the reception of contemporary exegetical and hermeneutical methods in the analysis of these texts. It resulted in the publication of a collection called *Reading James with New Eyes* in

14 T.C. Penner, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology: Re-reading an Ancient Christian Letter* (JSNTSup 121), Sheffield 1996; *The Epistle of James in Current Research*, "Currents in Research" 7 (1999).

15 D. Watson, *James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes and Argumentation*, NTS 39 (1993).

16 H. Frankemöller, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 17/1–2), Würzburg 1994.

17 L.T. Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York 1995.

18 S. McKnight, *The Letter of James* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids 2010.

19 S. Laws, *The Epistle of James*, San Francisco 1980.

20 R.P. Martin, *James* (World Biblical Commentary 48), Waco 1988.

21 D.J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, Grand Rapids 2000.

22 R. Wall, *Community of Wise: The Letter of James* (New Testament in Context), Valley Forge 1997.

23 See *Preface*, [in:] *The Postmodern Bible Reader*, ed. D. Jobling, T. Pippin, R. Schleifer, Oxford-Malden 2001, p. VIII, where the methods were systematised in seven groups: Reader-Response Criticism, Structuralist and Narratological Criticism, Poststructuralism Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, Feminist and Womanist Criticism, Ideological Criticism; there is, at the same time, a possibility of mixing the methods, approaches and paradigms.

24 J.S. Kloppenborg, R.L. Webb, *Reading James with New Eyes: an Introduction*, [in:] *Reading James with New Eyes*, ed. J.S. Kloppenborg, R.L. Webb, New York 2007, p. 2–3.

25 D.S. Cunningham, *Rhetoric*, [in:] *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. A.K.M. Adam, St. Louis 2000, p. 224.

which both the topics traditionally present in papers on the Letter of James and new issues were presented in new light and from a new perspective (e.g. postcolonial, socio-rhetorical, communicative). Thus, since the first decade of the twenty-first century, one could observe greater dynamism and variety in the methodological approach to the Letter of James.

The invigoration can also be seen in the approach to the structure of the text. Almost throughout the whole of the twentieth century (from the twenties to the eighties), the most common vision of the structure of James was the theory of Martin Dibelius²⁶ who considered the letter to be a collection of randomly arranged parenetic sentences and aphorisms, too loosely interrelated to create any conceptual coherence, not to mention any linear progress of thought. There were of course attempts at proving at least partial cohesion consisting in e.g. collecting the aphorisms in thematic groups (see James Hardy Ropes²⁷), but no connection between the topics was found, at least when the text was read linearly. This is the reason why an opinion which could often be found in traditional commentaries on James was that the aphorisms or their collections are arranged in the letter in the *staccato* form. This was, as has already been mentioned, one of the factors discouraging the reflection on the Letter of James.

The revival and development of research on the coherence and structure of James was brought about by the commentary of Peter H. Davids²⁸ in 1982, in which the author abandoned the classic linear approach to the reading of the letter and showed that the introductions in chapter one (James 1:2–11 and 1:12–27), having a tripartite parallel structure (ABC i A'B'C') based on the discussed topics, organise in the same tripartite way also the main body of the letter (James 2:1–5:6), but the order of the recapitulated topics is opposite (CBA); thus the sequence of topics in the introductions and in the main body of the letter creates a specific asymmetrical chiasm. The issue of the structure was discussed even more frequently in the following years and this in turn had a positive influence on the autonomy and the broadening of the possibilities of interpretation of the Letter of James. It was more and more often seen as an organised and coherent text, even though the organisation and coherence are not linear. As George H. Guthrie points out, the structural approach involves two elements: it is first of all based on thorough, detailed text analysis, very often on several levels, which helps the reader to recognise structures invisible at first glance and escaping the reader's notice when the text is read linearly. Secondly

26 M. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament¹¹), Göttingen 1964 (based on the 1921 edition).

27 J.H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*, Edinburgh 1916.

28 P.H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), Grand Rapids 1982.

– the identification of the structure (or structures) has an impact on further exegesis and hermeneutics of the text.²⁹ It can be clearly seen in the works of Mark E. Taylor³⁰ (the structure based on Hebrew rhetoric), Timothy B. Cargal³¹ (the structure based on inverted parallelisms) or IngeborgMongstad-Kvammen³² (the structure drawing upon the thematic index in chapter one). Particularly the last work, in which the Norwegian biblical scholar examines James 1:2–27 in a motivic and semantic way and then, in the main body of the letter, looks for references to the meticulously catalogued topics, has become one of the inspirations for the authors of this commentary.

The second inspiration, even though it might seem far from biblical studies, is closely linked to the question of form and identification of the leading theme/motif. It is a musical piece called *Nocturnal after John Dowland opus 70* by Benjamin Britten (1913–1976), written in 1963 for the guitarist Julian Bream (b. 1933), one of the pioneer performers of the songs of the English lutenist John Dowland (1563–1626). In his composition Britten uses in a fanciful way the motif of the song *Come, heavy sleep* – he does not present it at the beginning of the piece but at the end, after eight ‘sleepless’ variations, and even then, he does not repeat the whole theme but shortens it, thus adding subtlety to the finale. A similar structure can be observed in the Letter of James. The author starts the text with ‘variations’ which might be really difficult to connect. It is only in 3:17 where the topic is defined and indexed – it turns out that James’ deliberations refer to wisdom, its features and attributes. The variation form is continued in the remaining part of the letter. One can discern here certain structural analogies: wisdom and its characteristics function in James in the same way as the theme of Dowland’s song in Britten’s piece, though this time not at the end of the composition but in the middle of it.

Thus, the index of features and attributes of wisdom from James 3:17 is the organising principle of this structural commentary. The main part of the work (the commentary itself) comprises ten passages, diverse in terms of volume but organised and entitled according to the catalogue provided by James:

- index of features and attributes of wisdom (James 3:17);
- wisdom comes from above (James 1:5–8.16–18);
- wisdom is pure (James 1:12–15, 21a.27);

29 G.H. Guthrie, *New Testament Exegesis of Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles*, [in:] *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. S.E. Porter, Boston–Leiden 2002, p. 592.

30 M.E. Taylor, *Recent Scholarship on the Structure of James*, “Currents in Biblical Research” 3 (2004), no 1, p. 86–116.

31 T.B. Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora. Discursive Structure and Purpose in the Epistle of James* (Society of Biblical Literature. Dissertation Series), Atlanta 1993.

32 I. Mongstad-Kvammen, *Toward a Postcolonial Reading of the Epistle of James. James 2,1–13 in its Roman Imperial Context*, London–Boston 2013.

- wisdom is irenic/peace-loving/aiming at peace (James 1:19–20, 4:1–3);
- wisdom is humble/compassionate (James 1:21b, 4:7–10.16, 5:10–11);
- wisdom is obedient [to the law] (James 1:22–25, 2:10–12);
- wisdom is full of mercy (James 2:13–17.20.26, 5:4–6.19–20);
- wisdom is full of good fruits (James 1:2–4, 2:18.21–25, 3:1–12.18, 4:17, 5:7–8.13–18);
- wisdom is impartial (James 1:9–11, 2:1–9, 4:4–6.13–15, 5:1–3);
- wisdom is unhyprocritical (James 1:26, 2:19, 3:14–16, 4:11–12, 5:9.12);
- summary (James 3:13).

The matching of the passages and the features is based on the semantic criterion, which sometimes overlaps with the lexical one. The authors are fully aware of the fact that such organisation of the text is intrinsically subjective and arbitrary and, consequently, can easily be questioned. However, as Mark E. Taylor³³ points out, this is a characteristic feature of every structural approach, particularly in those cases where the forms, structures or modules are not visible or recognisable at first glance.

As has already been said, the employment of a particular textual (macro-) structure defines further exegesis and hermeneutics. If wisdom and its attributes have been recognised as the main theme of the Letter of James, then the subsequent levels of the text, including microstructures visible in individual fragments, should be read in accordance with the sapiential principle. And indeed, all the listed passages show binarity typical of sapiential literature, where the demeanour of a person endowed with the gift of wisdom is contrasted with the demeanour of a person devoid of the gift. Certainly, not every feature has been directly expounded, some of them have to be reconstructed by the recipient through the negation of what has already been explained by the author of the letter. Most fragments have a clear structure, sometimes even concentric. In most of them one can find references to the story of salvation divided into the past, the present and the future. Each commentary presenting a particular feature or attribute of wisdom is preceded by an explanation of philological nature, which takes into account the lexical ambiguity characteristic of James. Different meanings of the same word have been marked by a slash (e.g. soul/life). Lexical ambiguity is perfectly compatible with James' hermeneutics of integrity, which makes it possible to read the letter in a dialectic way (e.g. both faith and works; both body and soul; both internal and external aspects; listening and contemplating and understanding and doing combined) rather than in an alternative way (e.g. either faith or works; either body or soul etc.). The intention has been to present integrity as one of the main messages of the letter, revealed at

33 M.E. Taylor, G.H. Guthrie, *The Structure of James*, CBQ 68 (2000), p. 701.

different levels of the text. It is, above all, stressed in the passage 3:13 which sums up the Letter of James: inherent wisdom that comes from God becomes manifest in the demeanour and conduct compliant with the Divine will, expressed in the integrated great commandment to love God and your neighbour.

The decision to analyse the structure of the Letter of James and to organise the commentary on its basis has been made not only for exegetic reasons, although they have proven to be dominating, but has also been motivated by the ecumenical character of this work. It is probably the first attempt at providing a concerted insight into the Letter of James from both Lutheran and Catholic perspective in the history of Polish biblical studies. Focusing on text structure has allowed for a departure from strictly confessional approach which could result in the adoption of polemical, apologetic or confrontational positions rather than working out a common, concerted stance. This does not mean that the commentary is totally devoid of confessional elements. However, they have not been introduced in the main body of the text but in the footnotes.

As has already been mentioned, the authors wished to emphasise the distinctiveness and autonomy of the Letter of James. Thus, they assumed the convergence of ideas, topics and phrases appearing in James and in other New Testament texts and abandoned the inquiry into their mutual relations and dependencies. The main focus of the study of intertextual strategies was on references to Old Testament literature and to intertestamental literature, mainly sapiential but not only. The similarities observed in the texts are presented in the form of charts in the introduction.

The introductory part of this commentary is quite traditional and conventional. It concentrates on textual evidence, canonicity and hypotheses concerning the author and the dating of the text. Due to the character of the work, much attention is paid to the presentation of style and vocabulary as well as the review of the different attitudes to the structure of the Letter of James. Extensive overview of generic issues aims not only at showing the erudition of the author who reaches for genres representing both Jewish and Hellenistic literature, but, first of all, at presenting the letter as a text which fits perfectly well into the genre of sapiential literature and particularly into one of its characteristic forms – a circular letter to the diaspora. The discussion concerning the author and the addressees of the letter is of less traditional nature since it uses a model commonly used in literary theory, which takes into account different transmission, reception and communication levels. It turns out that in combination with the generic convention and pseudonymity of the text it is possible to distinguish as many as four levels of communication. This helps to look more broadly at the recipients of the letter, not only at the original ones but also at those particular individuals who, in accordance with contemporary literary theories, actively participate in the creation of the meaning of the letter. Reaching for the rhetorical model typical of communication theory, the authors

of the commentary wish to practically implement the latest methodologies in the study of the Letter of James but not only.

The commentary on the Letter of James is the first one in a series of commentaries on the five *antilegomena* enumerated by Eusebius of Caesarea in his Church History: “Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognised by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name” (*HE* III 25:3). All the commentaries are ecumenical in nature. They present the common position of the authors, reached mainly due to the structural approach to the texts. The authors hope that the structural perspective and ecumenical reflection on the writings which used to be the subject of a dispute between Catholics and Protestants will contribute to the surge of interest in those controversial and, simultaneously, least known or analysed letters of the New Testament and to a better understanding of them.

1. Introduction

1.1 Textual Evidence and Canonicity

The earliest papyrus manuscripts of the Letter of James – P²⁰ and P²³ – date to the middle or late third century, P¹⁰⁰ probably comes from the late third or early fourth century. They only contain portions of the text (P²⁰ – James 2:19–3:9 on one sheet with *nomina sacra* written mainly in abbreviated forms; P²³ – James 1:10–12.15–18 with abbreviated *nomina sacra*; P¹⁰⁰ – James 3:13–4:4, 4:9–5:1). P⁵⁴ that dates to the fifth or sixth century (James 2:16–18.22–26, 3:2–4) and P⁷⁴ from the seventh century (James 1:1–6.8–19.21–23.25, 1:27–2:3.5–15.18–22, 2:25–3:2.5–6.10–12.14, 3:17–4:8.11–14, 5:1–3.7–9.12–14.19–20) are also fragmentary. The whole text has been preserved in the Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Alexandrinus and the Vaticanus. In Codex (Palimpsest) Ephraemi Rescriptus, the whole chapter 3 and the beginning of chapter 4 (James 1–2, 4:2–5:20) are missing. Among important ancient translations, the old Latin manuscript from Corbie (Codex Corbeiensis) should be mentioned, which is almost identical with the version known from the Codex Vaticanus,¹ but it contains an interesting identification of James as the son of Zebedee.²

Since the transcripts are comparatively late, the text of the epistle of James is thought to be quite stable and homogeneous. It should be noted that no Western version of the text has been preserved, what is explained by late introduction and reception of James in the West, at least in the shape which is known today.³ The hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the absence of James in the Muratorian Canon (c. 180), in *Adversus Marcionem* by Tertullian (second/third century), or in the *Mommsen List* (c. 350). There is no indication that Papias (first/second century) knew the Letter of James, though he “uses testimonies from the first Epistle of John and from that of Peter likewise” (*HE* III 39:17).⁴ The same refers to the contemporary of Papias, Polycarp of Smyrna, who in his epistle to the Philippians “has made use of certain testimonies drawn from the First Epistle of Peter” (*HE* IV 14:9) and, as it turns out, from the First Epistle of John. In the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea enumerated James among *antilegomena* and even questioned its authenticity: “James [...] is said to be the author of the first of the so-called catholic epistles. But it is

1 D.G. McCartney, *James* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids 2009, p. 39.

2 See below – chap. 1.6.

3 P.H. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, p. 59.

4 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm> [accessed: 18.06.2019].

to be observed that it is disputed [ιστέον δὲ ὡς νοθεύεται]; at least, not many of the ancients have mentioned it” (*HE* II 23:25); “Among the disputed writings [ἀντιλεγομένων], which are nevertheless recognised by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name” (*HE* III 25:3). It seems that Clement of Alexandria (second/third century) in his lost *Hypotyposes*, quoted by Eusebius, also counted the Letter of James among the writings which were not commonly accepted: “He has given in the *Hypotyposes* abridged accounts of all canonical Scripture, not omitting the disputed books, – I refer to Jude and the other Catholic epistles, and Barnabas and the so-called Apocalypse of Peter” (*HE* VI 14:1). It is not absolutely certain, however, whether the collection labelled here as ‘Catholic epistles’ included all the seven writings.⁵ Cassiodorus (fifth/sixth century) in *De Institutione Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum* 8 (PL 70:1120) wrote that, while Clement’s Greek commentaries contained references to James, their Latin translations did not mention the letter.⁶ It is believed that the first of Church Fathers in the East who openly advocated James as an Apostolic letter and quoted it as the Scripture was Origen (second/third century).⁷ He was also the first one to apply the term ‘Catholic’ to the collection of seven letters: James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John and Jude. Earlier the term was occasionally used in reference to 1 John, sometimes to 1 Pet and the Epistle of Barnabas,⁸ and this was where the doubts concerning the meaning of the term in *HE* VI 14:1 came from. One of the first commentaries on James was written by Didymus the Blind, a student of Origen, in the fourth century. About 350, Cyril of Jerusalem linked, in a way typical of the Christian East, the Catholic letters with Acts and stated that James along with other Catholic letters should be seen as a complement to the message of the Acts, “and the seal of all, and the last [work] of the disciples’ are ‘the fourteen epistles of Paul’” (*Catechesis* 4:36).⁹ The first among Western fathers who directly quoted James as the Scripture was Hilary of Poitiers (the fourth century): “[...] in the Father there is no change nor turning, because He has said through the prophet, ‘I am the Lord your God, and I am not changed’, and the apostle James [writes], ‘With Whom there is no change’”

5 D.R. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection*, Eugene 2017, p. 74; cf. below.

6 D.J. Moo, *The Letter*, p. 35.

7 See below.

8 D. Nienhuis, R.W. Wall, *Reading the Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude as Scripture: The Shaping of a Canonical Collection*, Grand Rapids 2013, p. 23.

9 Ibid., p. 24.

(*De Trinitate* IV 8)¹⁰ cf. James 1:17. The canonicity of James was confirmed by the Council of Laodicea (363–364), the Easter Letter of Athanasius (367), and then by the councils of Hippo (393) and of Carthage (397 and 419). This was not a coincidence that since the fourth century in the West the term ‘canonical letters’ (*epistulae canonicae*) started to be applied in reference to the seven general epistles and it replaced the term ‘Catholic letters’. This eliminated all doubts concerning the canonicity of those writings. The term was used, inter alia, by Augustine (fourth/fifth century) or Cassiodorus.¹¹ Jerome, it seems, had some second thoughts as to the provenance of James when in 392 r. in his work *On Illustrious Men* (2:2) he wrote: “James, who is called the brother of the Lord, [...] wrote a single epistle, which is reckoned among the seven Catholic Epistles and even this is claimed by some to have been published by some one else under his name, and gradually, as time went on, to have gained authority” (*De viris illustribus* 2:2).¹² But in the letter from Bethlehem from 394 (*Epistula* 53:9), he enumerated the twenty-seven writings of NT in the traditional Western order and did not mention any further debates.

Despite the bumpy road to canonicity, it might be assumed that the content of the letter – maybe in a noncanonical version – had been known and quoted since the first or the second century, and it inspired early Christian writers such as Clement I or Hermas, or, what is more probable, there existed a common source and tradition for James, the First Epistle of Clement and *The Shepherd* by Hermas, since in all three texts one can find very similar ideas, phrases and untypical but very characteristic lexis and phraseology. It is well known, however, that quotations and allusions may function in a particular community as fixed phrases, idioms or sayings and only later be rooted in the language of the community and be reflected in the texts created by it. It is then difficult to point out the source of such publicised excerpts and their original contexts.¹³ So it is in this case. Attention is most often drawn to the use of a very rare expression διψυχος (verbatim: possessing two souls) in all the three works. The references to the example of Abraham (*1 Clem.* 10 and James 2:21–23, cf. Rom 4:1–6, Gal 3:6, Heb 11:17–19) or Rahab – *1 Clem.* 12:1 (“Through faith and hospitality Rahab the harlot was saved”)¹⁴ and James 2:25 (por. Heb 11:31) can be seen as a universal Christian topos, but it is difficult to explain

10 Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/330204.htm> [accessed: 18.06.2019].

11 D. Nienhuis, R.W. Wall, *Reading the Epistles*, p. 24.

12 In: D.C. Allison, *James: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, New York–London–New Delhi–Sydney 2013, p. 18.

13 M. Głowiński, *Mowa: cytaty i aluzje*, [in:] M. Głowiński, *Narracje literackie i nieliterackie*, Kraków 1997, p. 281.

14 All quotations from: Clement of Rome, *First Epistle*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-hoole.html> [accessed: 19.06.2019].

in this way further parallels which appear e.g. in *1 Clem.* 23:1¹⁵ (“The Father whose mercies are over all things [...] with gentleness and kindness bestoweth his favour upon them that come unto him with a pure mind”) and James 1:5, *1 Clem.* 23:4 (“Take, for example, the vine: first it sheddeth its leaves, then cometh the bud, then the leaf, then the flower, after that the unripe grape, then the ripe grape”) and James 3:12, *1 Clem.* 30:2 and James 4:6 (a characteristic reference to Prov 3:34 in a version different from the LXX: “for God, he saith, resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”); *1 Clem.* 38:2 (“Let the wise show his wisdom, not in words, but in good deeds”) and James 3:13. Even more similarities can be noted between James and *The Shepherd* by Hermas:

The Second Commandment 27:2–3

First of all, speak evil of no man, neither take pleasure in listening to a slanderer. Otherwise thou that hearest too shalt be responsible for the sin of him that speaketh the evil, if thou believest the slander, which thou hearest; for in believing it thou thyself also wilt have a grudge against thy brother. So then shalt thou be responsible for the sin of him that speaketh the evil. Slander is evil; it is a restless demon, never at peace, but always having its home among factions. Refrain from it therefore, and thou shalt have success at all times with all men¹⁶

and James 4:11;

The Eighth Commandment 38:2 (“For if thou be temperate as to what is good, so as not to do it, thou committest a great sin”) and James 4:17;

The Eighth Commandment 38:10

to minister to widows, to visit the orphans and the needy, [...], to be hospitable, [...] to be tranquil, to show yourself more submissive than all men, to reverence the aged, to practice righteousness, to observe brotherly feeling, to endure injury, to be long-suffering, [...] not to oppress debtors and indigent persons [...]

and James 1:27, 1:7;

The Ninth Commandment 39:1–6

Remove from thyself a doubtful mind and doubt not at all whether to ask of God, saying within thyself, ‘How can I ask thing of the Lord and receive it, seeing that I have committed

15 Only the most characteristic and equivalent examples have been cited.

16 All quotations from: *The Shepherd of Hermas*, trans. J.B. Lightfoot <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html> [accessed: 19.06.2019].

so many sins against Him?’ Reason not thus, but turn to the Lord with thy whole heart, and ask of Him nothing wavering, and thou shalt know His exceeding compassion, that He will surely not abandon thee, but will fulfill the petition of thy soul. For God is not as men who bear a grudge, but Himself is without malice and hath compassion on His creatures. [...] and ask of the Lord, and thou shalt receive all things, and shalt lack nothing of all thy petitions, if thou ask of the Lord nothing wavering. But if thou waver in thy heart, thou shalt surely receive none of thy petitions. For they that waver towards God, these are the doubtful-minded, and they never obtain any of their petitions. But they that are complete in the faith make all their petitions trusting in the Lord, and they receive, because they ask without wavering, nothing doubting;

and James 1:5–6;

The Eleventh Commandment 43:8 (“In the first place, he that hath the [divine] Spirit, which is from above, is gentle and tranquil and humble-minded, and abstaineth from all wickedness and vain desire of this present world”) and James 3:17;

The Twelfth Commandment 45:2 (“[...] Ye must, therefore, abstain from the evil desires, that so abstaining ye may live unto God”) and James 4:7;

The Second Similitude 51:5 (“[...] because the poor man is rich in intercession [and confession], and his intercession hath great power with God [...]”) and James 2:5.

It seems that Irenaeus (second century) alluded to James (or to its sources) as well.¹⁷ *Adversus Haereses* 4:16.2 (“[...] Abraham himself, without circumcision and without observance of Sabbaths, believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God [...]”)¹⁸ is supposed to refer to James 2:23, and *Adversus Haereses* 5:1 [1]

([...] having become imitators of His works as well as doers of His words, we may have communion with Him, receiving increase from the perfect One, and from Him who is prior to all creation, [...] having been formed after His likeness, [...] and made the first-fruits of creation [...])

17 D.G. Dunbar, *The Biblical Canon*, [in:] *Hermeneutics, authority and Canon*, ed. D.A. Carson, J.D. Woodbridge, Grand Rapids 1986, p. 337.

18 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/irenaeus.html> [accessed: 19.06.2019].

to James 1:18.22.¹⁹ This intertextual quality, with different points of reference, different architexts and derivatives will be characteristic of any further reflection on James.

It might be interesting to note the attitude of the Syriac Church in which James was not enumerated among canonical books up to the fifth century and the appearance of Peshitta.²⁰ *The Doctrine of Addai* (fourth/fifth century), a little earlier than Peshitta, indicates a much reduced canon of the NT when it gives recommendations concerning books to be used by Syriac Christians:

But the Law and the Prophets and the Gospel, which ye read every day before the people, and the Epistles of Paul, which Simon Peter sent us from the city of Rome, and the Acts of the twelve Apostles, which John, the son of Zebedee, sent us from Ephesus, these books read ye in the Churches of Christ, and with these read not any others, as there is not any other in which the truth that ye hold is written, except these books, which retain you in the faith to which ye have been called.²¹

In another place also *Diatessaron* by Tatian is added.²² On the other hand, *The Two Ways*, the oldest part of the *Didache*, like James, refers to Old Testament teaching and Jesus' sermon on the mount. In III 2–3.5–6, forbidden sins to be avoided are listed, and in III 8–9 one can find the praise of conduct approved also in James: patience, mercy, kindness, peace, charity, justice and meekness. III 10, very similar to James 1:2.12 ("Accept whatever happens to you as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass"), should also be mentioned here.²³ Then *Didache* V–VI contains a catalogue of behaviour and attitudes which are 'the way of death' and among them one can find qualities condemned also in James:

[...] false witness, hypocrisy, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking [...] persecutors of the good [...] from whom meekness and endurance are far, loving vanities, pursuing revenge, not pitying a poor man, not labouring for the afflicted [...] turning away from him who is in want, afflicting him who is distressed, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor [...].

19 R.M. Grant, *The Formation of the New Testament*, New York 1965, p. 155.

20 D.C. Allison, *James*, p. 18.

21 *The Doctrine of Addai*, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/fathers/addai_2_text.html [accessed: 20.06.2019].

22 W. Witakowski, *Nauka apostoła Addaja: wstęp, przekład z języka syryjskiego, komentarz*, STV 22/2 (1984), p. 204.

23 *Didache*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html> [accessed: 20.06.2019].

Maybe, as in the case of *1 Clem.* and *The Shepherd* by Hermas, these are *loci communes* for both James and the *Didache*, but it is also possible that the author of *The Two Ways* refers here to an earlier version of James.

Between the fifth and the sixteenth centuries neither the Western Church nor the Churches of the East questioned the canonicity of James, although the letter was not as frequently commented on as other writings of the NT. Occasional controversies concerned mainly the authorship of the letter, attributed (although not quite definitively) to James the Just, brother of the Lord, frequently identified with James the Less, and less frequently with James, son of Zebedee.²⁴ The Divine inspiration of James was discussed at times, especially among the Nestorians; doubts were also raised by the Syriac (Jacobite) bishop Gregory bar Hebraeus (thirteenth century).

James' authorship was questioned in the sixteenth century by Erasmus of Rotterdam who expressed his doubts in *Annotationes in epistolam Jacobi* in 1516.²⁵ Erasmus wrote: "For neither does it [James] seem to bear anywhere that apostolic majesty and dignity, nor the large number of Hebraisms one would expect from James, who was bishop of Jerusalem."²⁶ Martin Luther, who invoked the ancient tradition and early Christian uncertainty, remained undoubtedly under the influence of Erasmus. However, for Luther, a greater problem than the uncertain authorship proved to be the content of the letter which he confronted with the assumptions of hermeneutics based on the theology of Paul the apostle and the criterion of apostolicity. In Luther's opinion, James does not stand up to scrutiny. First of all, because 'he wants to guard against those who relied on faith without works, and is unequal to the task [in spirit, thought, and words, and rends the Scriptures and thereby resists Paul and all Scripture].'²⁷ The message of James is different from

24 See below – chap. 1.6.

25 B.M. Metzger, *The Canon of New Testament: Its Origin, Development and Significance*, Oxford 1987, p. X.

26 In: W.H. Wachob, *The Voice of Jesus in the Social Rhetoric of James*, Cambridge 2000, p. 32.

27 M. Luther, *Prefaces to the Books of the Bible – 1522–1545*, http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther_f8.htm [accessed: 20.06.2019]. It seems, however, that Luther's understanding of faith, which means laying hold of God's justice and of Christ can be reconciled with the statement made by the author of James that 'faith without works is dead'. In the sermon *On Good Works* from 1519. Luther wrote that the first of all good works is faith defined as personal experience of God which involves opening to the works of God who is always the agent; man is the beneficiary of the Divine activity. In other words – God in the Holy Spirit opens a man to Himself and God in Jesus Christ creates new relations between Himself and man. If faith is understood in this way, then man can get to know God, experience Him and make Him the reference point for the whole surrounding reality. What happens then is the renewal of the image of God, the renewal of man's personal image and restoration of relations with other people. Such faith manifests itself in works which cannot be understood as human merits but as the result of the Divine activity in man.