

The Petrine Circle

Jewish Epistles, 2nd Generation Jewish Churches
and the Coming Fall of Jerusalem



Pauline Corpus and Corpus Apostolicum

3 weeks research

Research 1: Pauline Corpus, Corpus Apostolicum, and MTS process (July 30)

Research 2: Canonical Shape of Corpus Apostolicum: The Petrine Circle (August 6)

Research 3: Canonical Shape of each book: James, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 2 Peter-Jude
(August 13)

5 weeks

Book 1: Session 1: Mark, Peter and circle of letters (August 20)

Book 1: Session 2: James (August 27)

Book 1: Session 3: 1 Peter (September 24)

Book 1: Session 4: Hebrews (October 1)

Book 1: Session 5: 2 Peter and Jude (October 8)

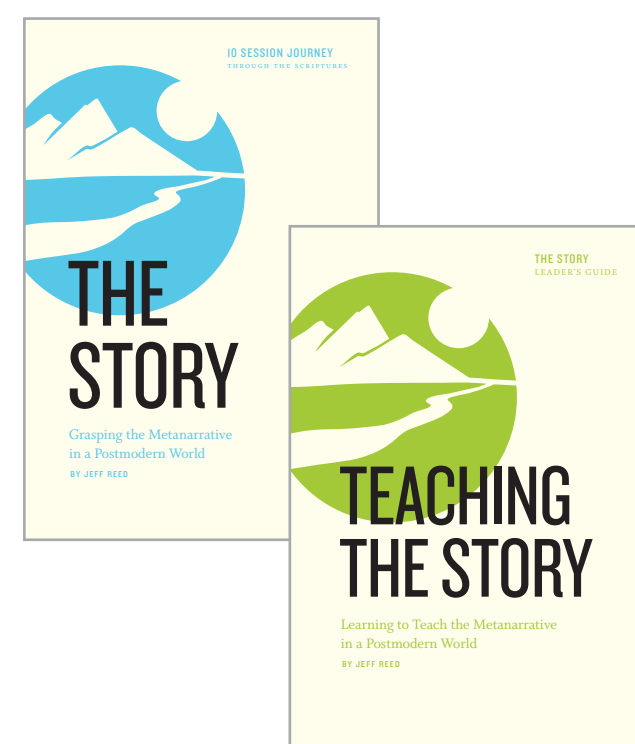
Pauline Corpus and Corpus Apostolicum

Issue: Canonical shape of Corpus Apostolicum (Jewish Epistles and Johannine Literature)

Questions:

1. Why does the canonical shape of these final letters—those around Peter’s and John’s writings—matter? Why not just take them as they appear in the various English Bibles and leave it at that?
2. Who were the common audiences of the Petrine Circle Collection of letters? What was their central common concern? Can you identify a common “canonical statement of intent that unifies the entire collection?
3. Why can we confidently conclude that the Jewish Epistles were a collection available to the Jewish churches before the fall of Jerusalem? What is the logic of a Petrine circle of apostolic leaders?
4. Why does this work on the shape of these Jewish epistles matter? How does it shape our interpretation of them and their use today? How does it shape our worldview? our next generation?

The New Perspective on Paul



The New Perspective on Paul

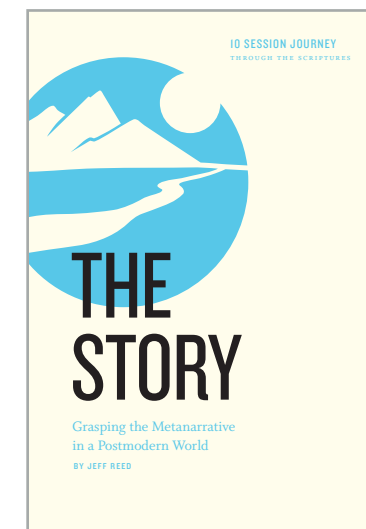


Mastering the Scriptures

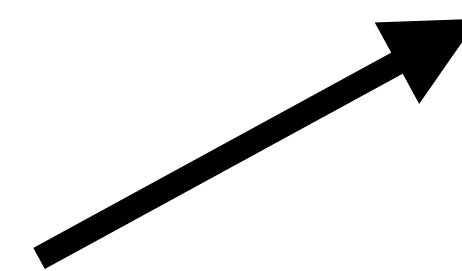
First Principles



The New Perspective on Paul



First Principles



Mastering the Scriptures



The Petrine Circle

The Petrine Circle

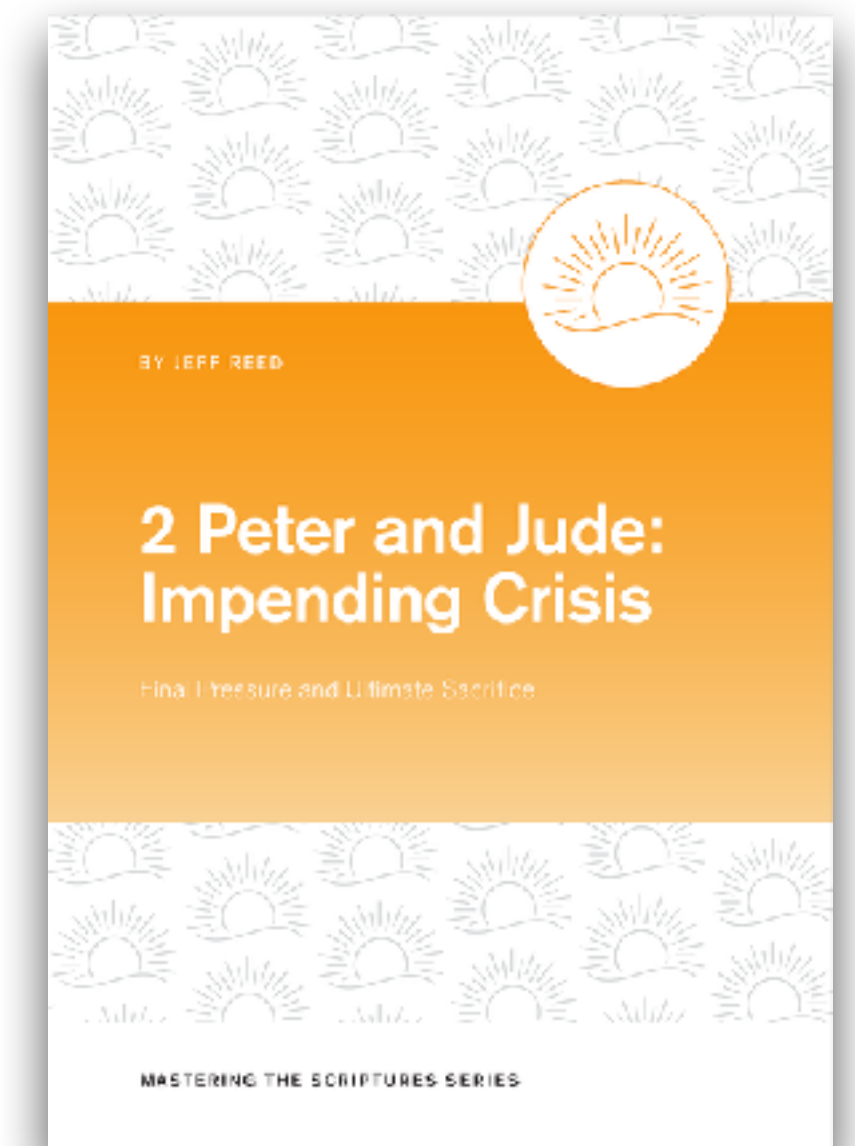
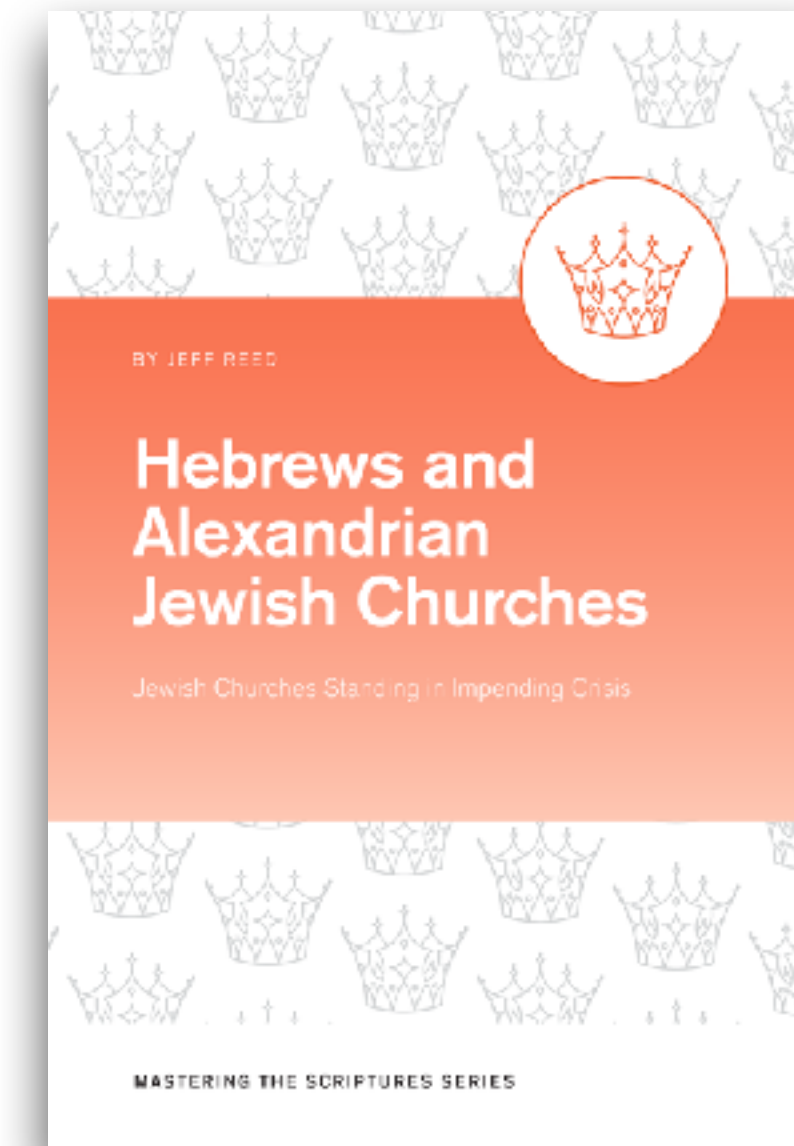
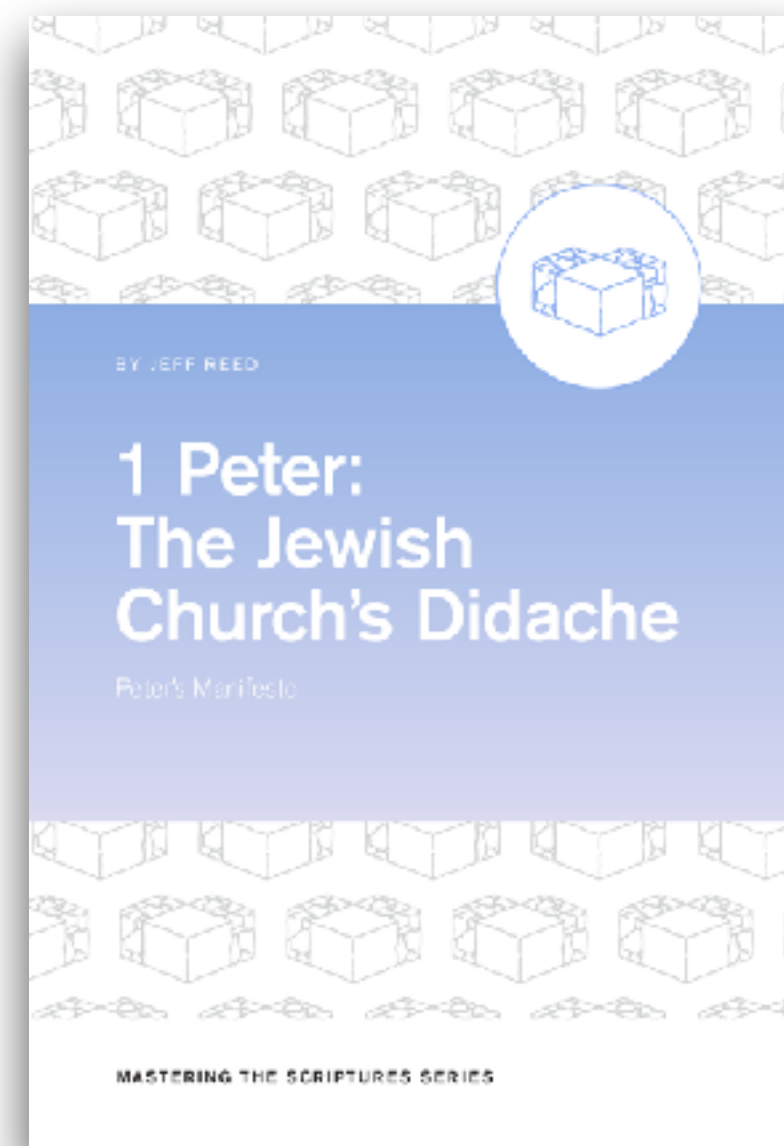
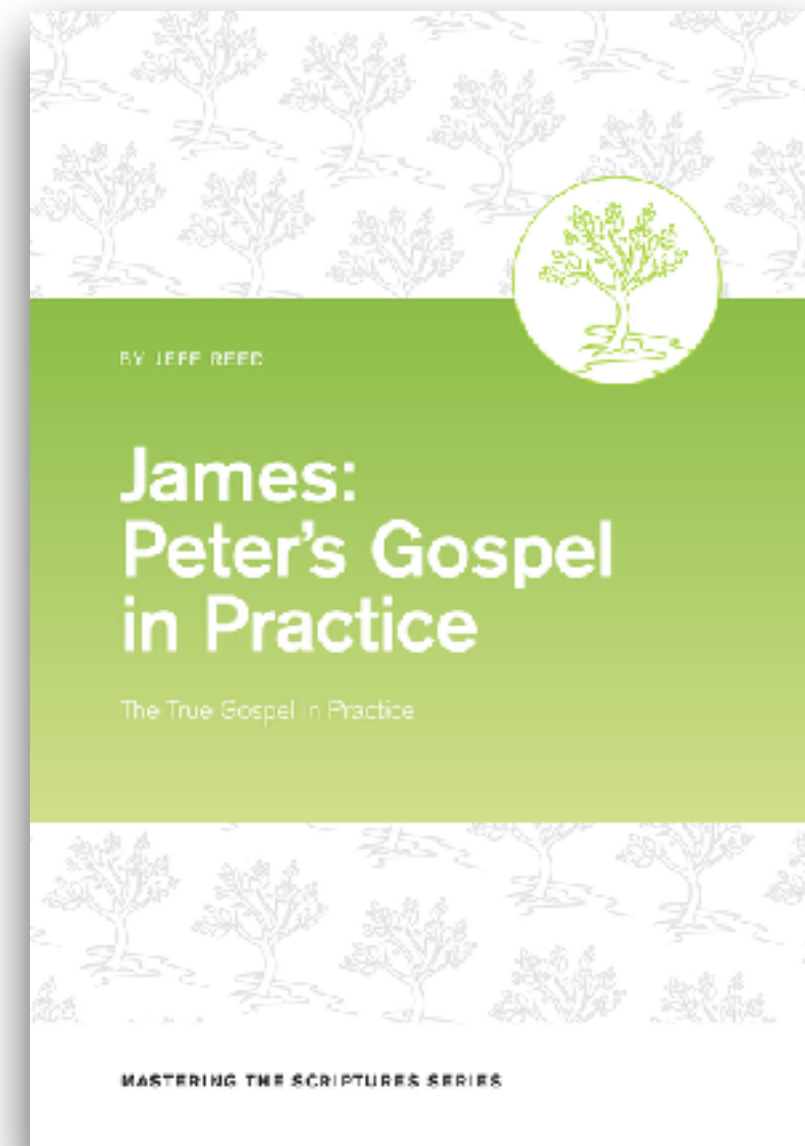
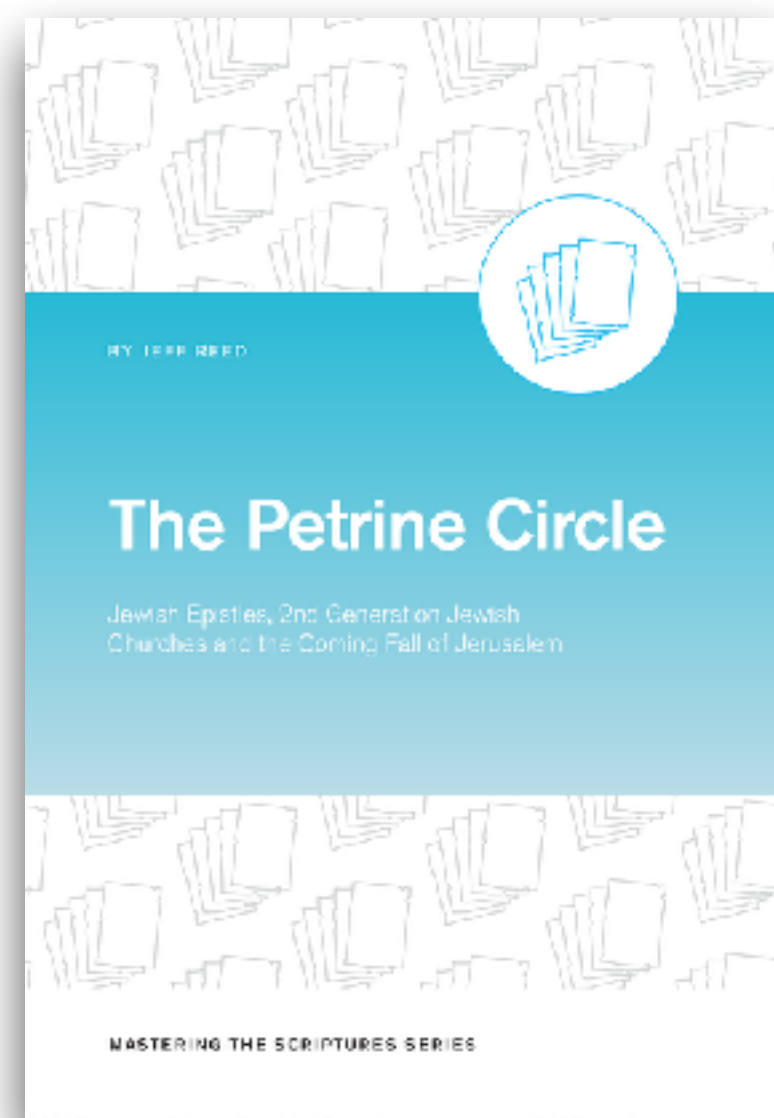
Jewish Epistles, 2nd Generation Jewish Churches, and the Coming Fall of Jerusalem

Johannine Literature

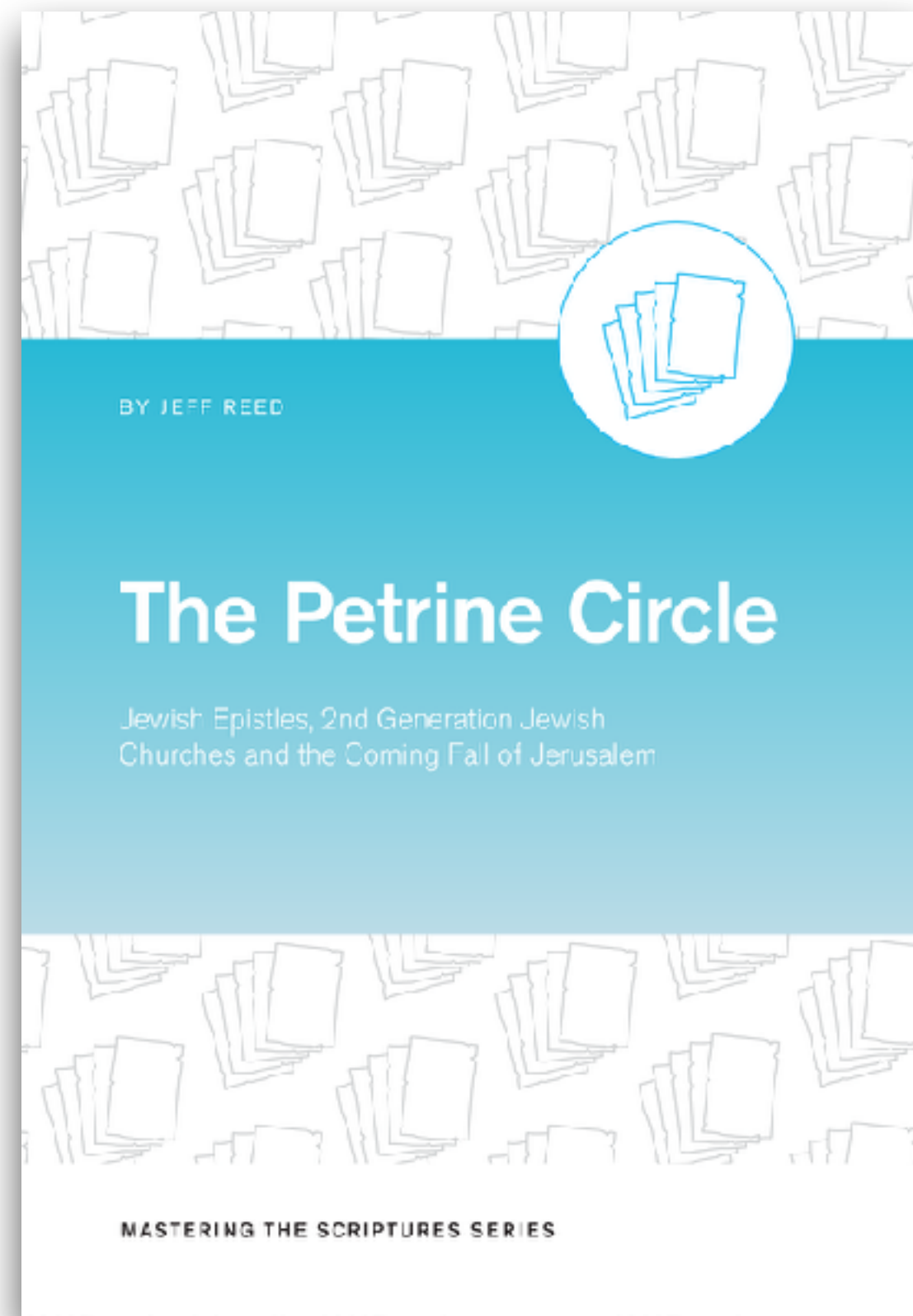
Future of 2nd Generation Gentile Aegean Churches and the Coming Global Battles



The Petrine Circle



The Petrine Circle



Book 1: The Petrine Circle

Session 1: Mark and Peter's 5 Sermons: The Circle's Core

Session 2: James: Peter's Gospel in Practice

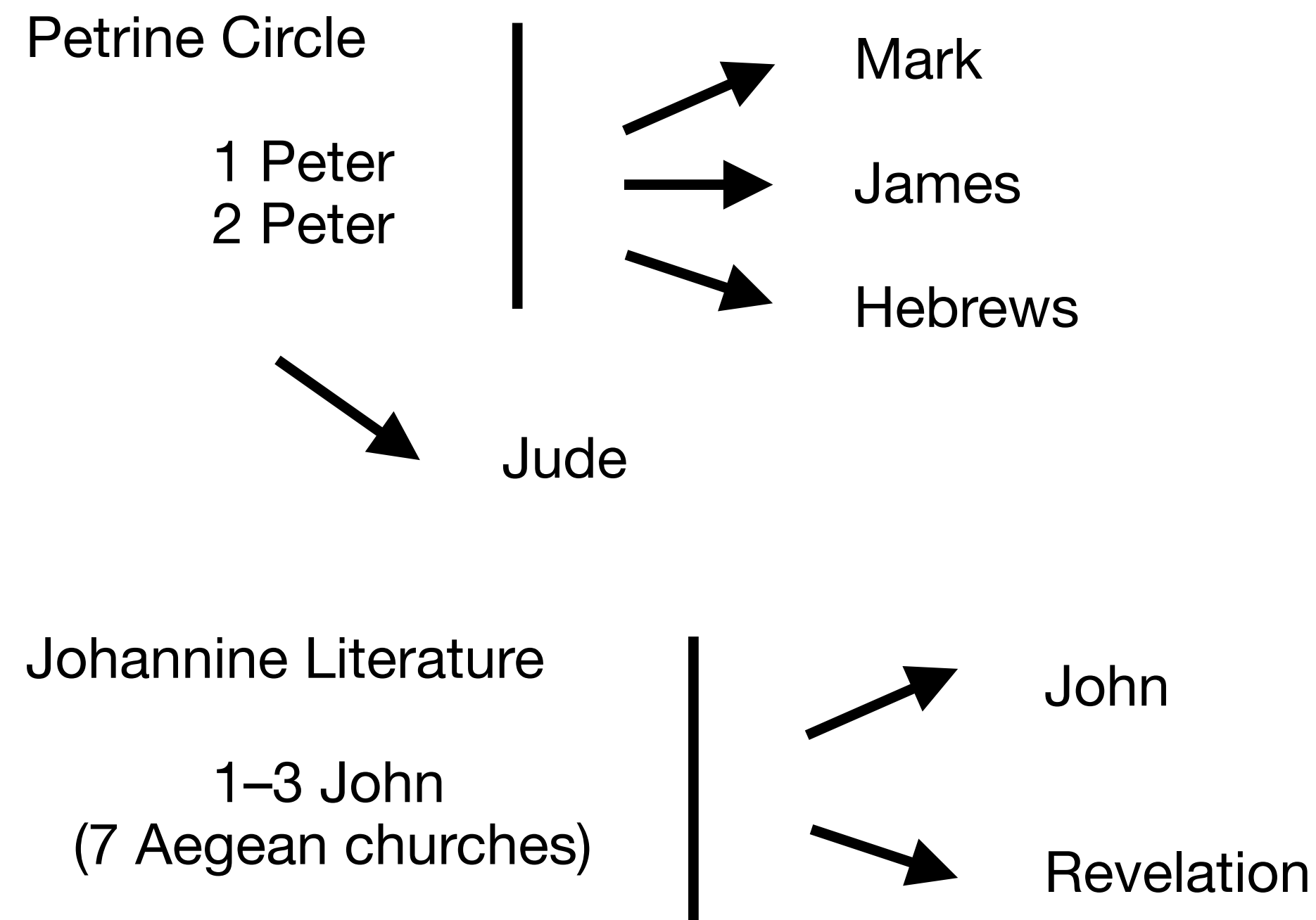
Session 3: 1 Peter: The Jewish Church's Didache

Session 4: Hebrews: Alexandrian Jewish Churches

Session 5: 2 Peter and Jude: Impending Crisis

The Petrine Circle

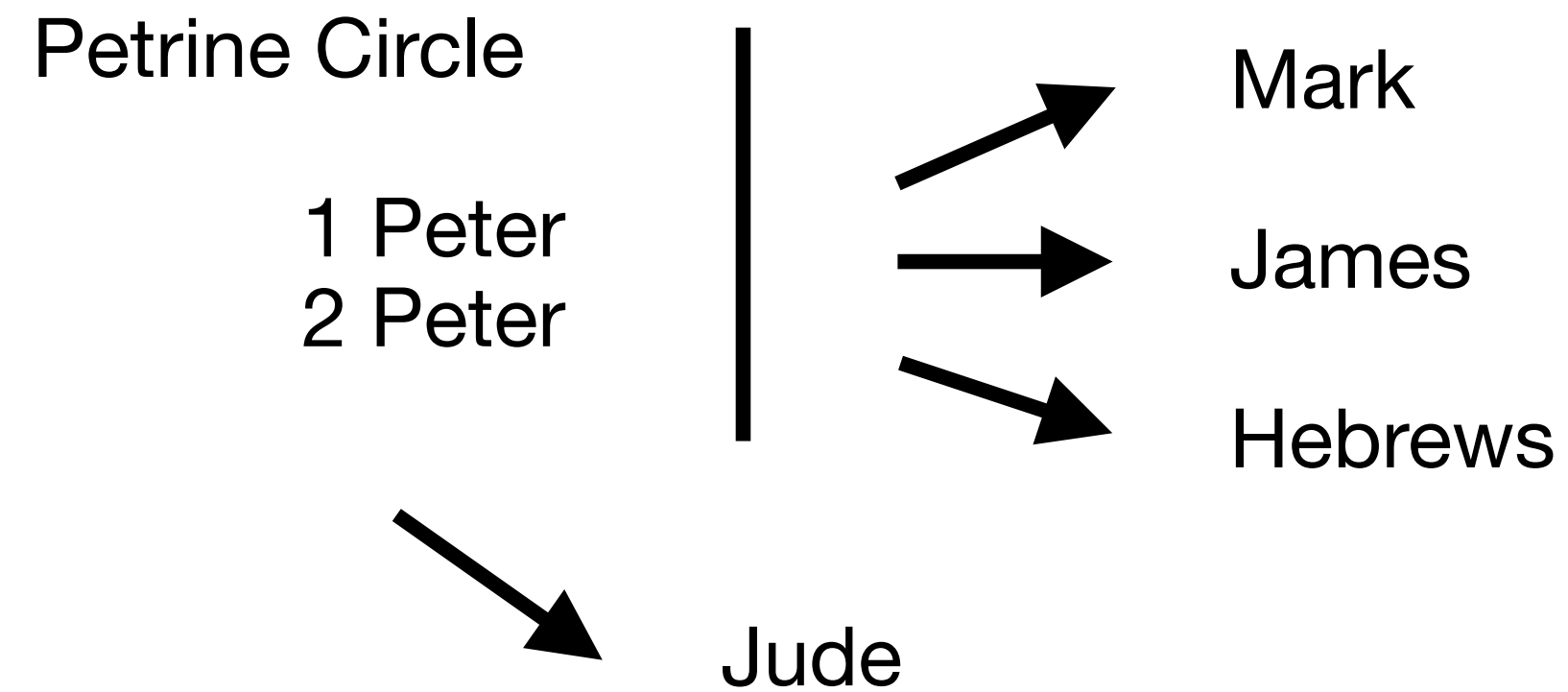
Situating



While it is logical to place these collections under one umbrella, *Corpus Apostolicum* (I am not accepting the 7-letter core originating in the 4th and 5th centuries), I am choosing to reclaim the term for the two sub-collections listed here, which will guide our entire MTS series.

I will deal with this choice to divide the Corpus Apostolicum into two canonical subsections: the Petrine Circle collection and the Johannine collection in the canonical part of this session.

The Petrine Circle

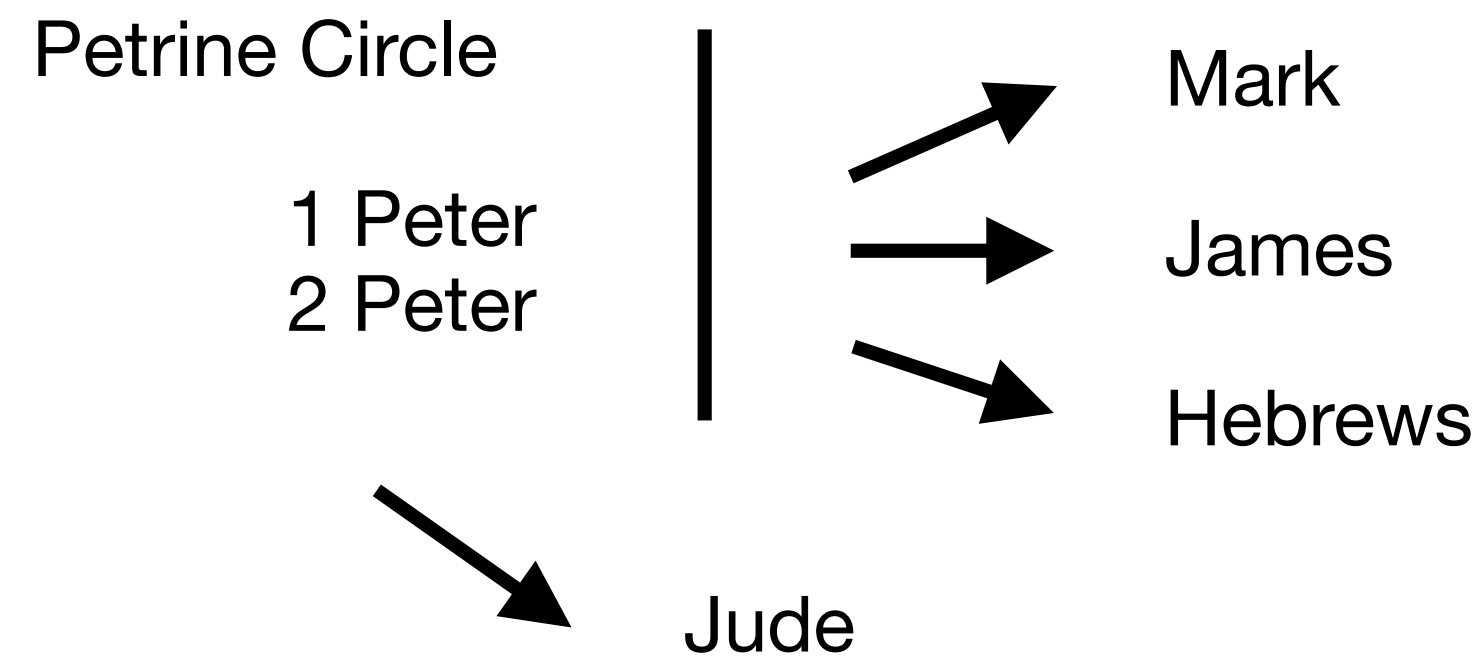


What does the term *Petrine Circle* come from?

1. It is part of the research of the last 20 years that focuses on the collection of letters written in the AD 60s by several associates of Peter.
2. It cannot be referred to as Petrine literature because it is not a body of literature by one author like John.
3. It is not a Petrine school because it does not attempt to attach the other letters to Peter himself as the author.
4. I chose *Petrine circle* because it best pictures a circle of close associates all writing with similar intent within the same decade.
5. I also chose it because I like it; it is catchy.
6. I chose *Corpus Apostolicum*, because we need a term from the research that helps us group the two sub-collections of Peter and John.

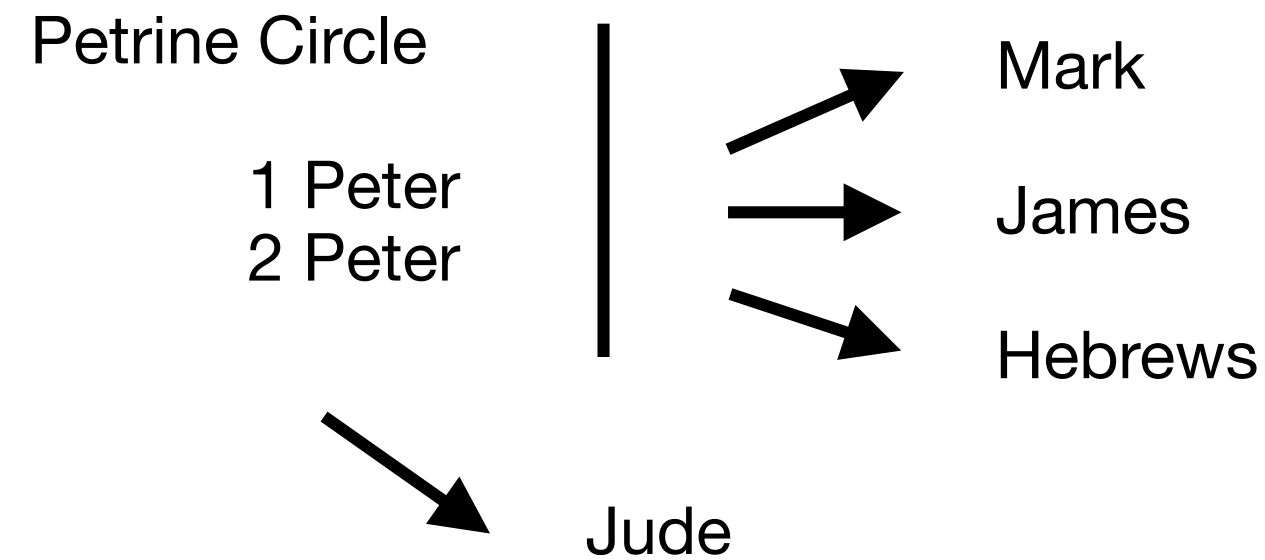
The Petrine Circle

What do I mean by *Petrine Circle collection*?



1. Just as Paul was considered the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter was the apostle to the Jews, thus establishing him as the circle's core.
2. In addition, Peter's gospel was the core of the early church's *gospel formulae*, as seen in his 5 sermons of Acts.
3. In addition, Peter's core gospel became the framework for Mark's gospel, the core of the synoptic gospels, written by Mark under Peter's hand, as Peter's "Timothy."
4. Peter and James were the core leaders in the Jerusalem church and central to the Jerusalem council decisions.
5. Peter and James, along with Barnabas, were in the conflict with Paul at Antioch in Galatians 2, again showing the closeness of this circle of associates.
6. Jude ties his letter to James in the introduction to his letter, and to Peter's second letter by intertextual evidence.

The Petrine Circle



Introductions to the collection: “paratextual frame”

1. Hebrews

Title: “The Letter to the Hebrews”

2. James

“James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.” 1:1

3. Peter

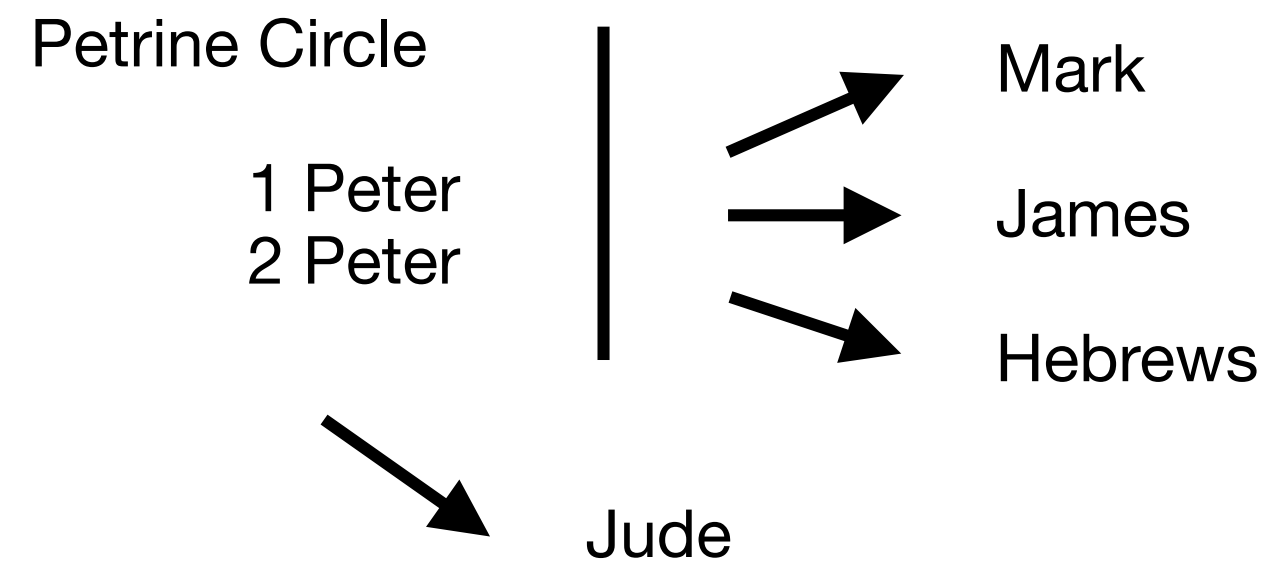
“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen.” 1 Pet. 1:1

“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of God and savior, Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. 1:1

4. Jude

“Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.” 1:1

The Petrine Circle



Common Concern in the Collection (paratextual evidence)

1. Hebrews

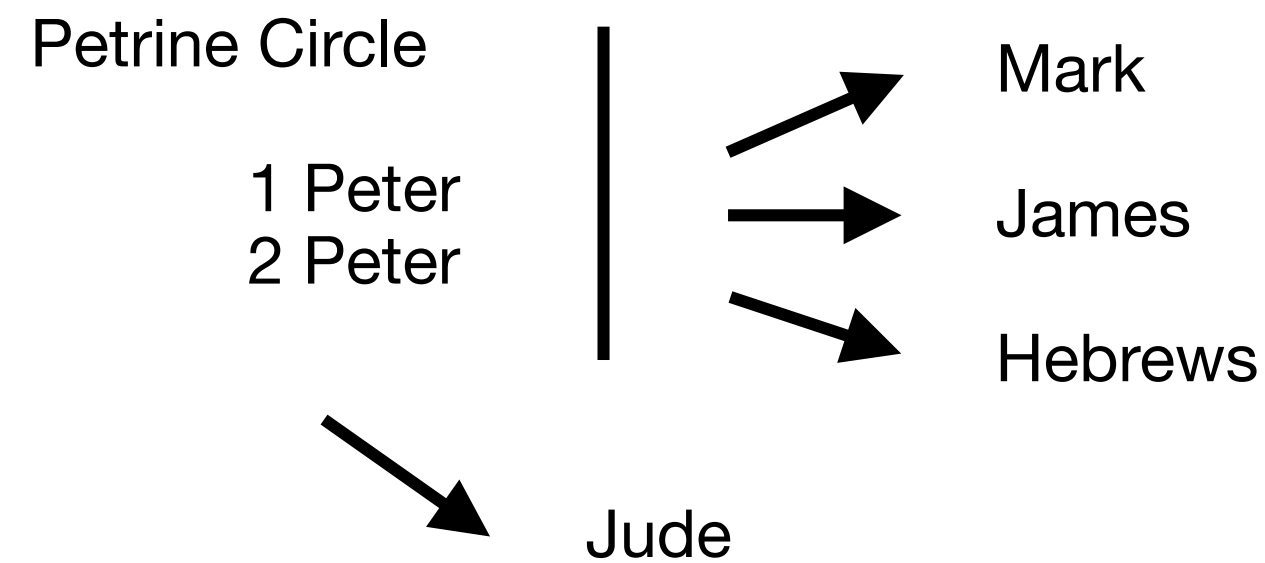
² Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.... ³ how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Hebrews 2:2, 3

²² I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free; and if he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you.” Hebrews 13:22–23

2. James

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, ²⁰ you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner’s soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. James 5:19–20

The Petrine Circle



Common Concern in the Collection (paratextual evidence)

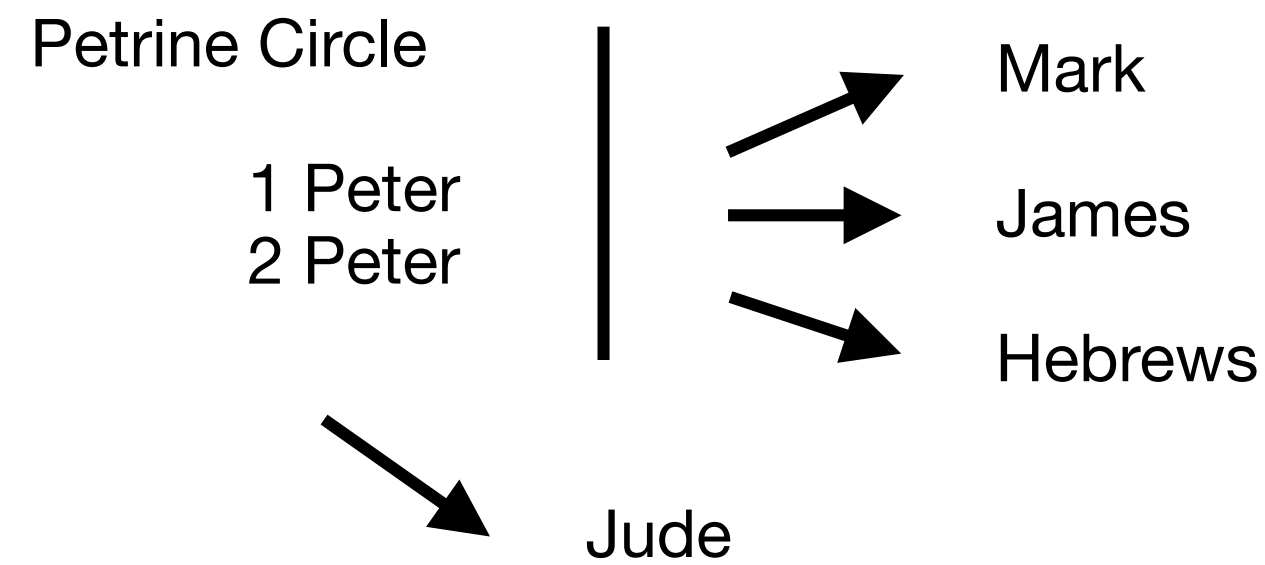
3. Peter

¹⁷ If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile.... 5:12 Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. 1 Peter 1:17; 5:12

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen. 1 Pet. 1:1

²¹ For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment.... 3:17 You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. 2 Peter 2:21; 3:17

The Petrine Circle



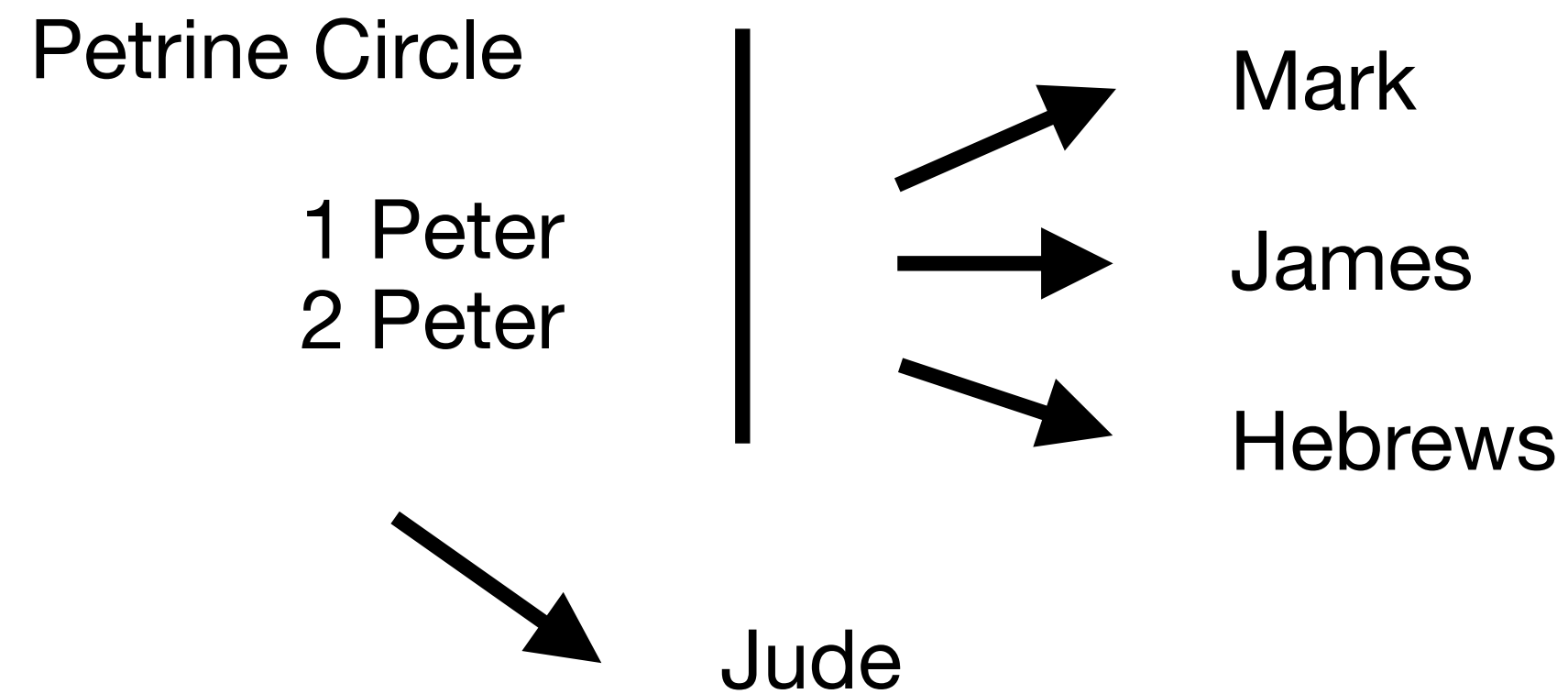
Common Concern in the Collection (paratextual evidence)

4. Jude

²² And have mercy on some who are wavering; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies. Jude 1:22–23

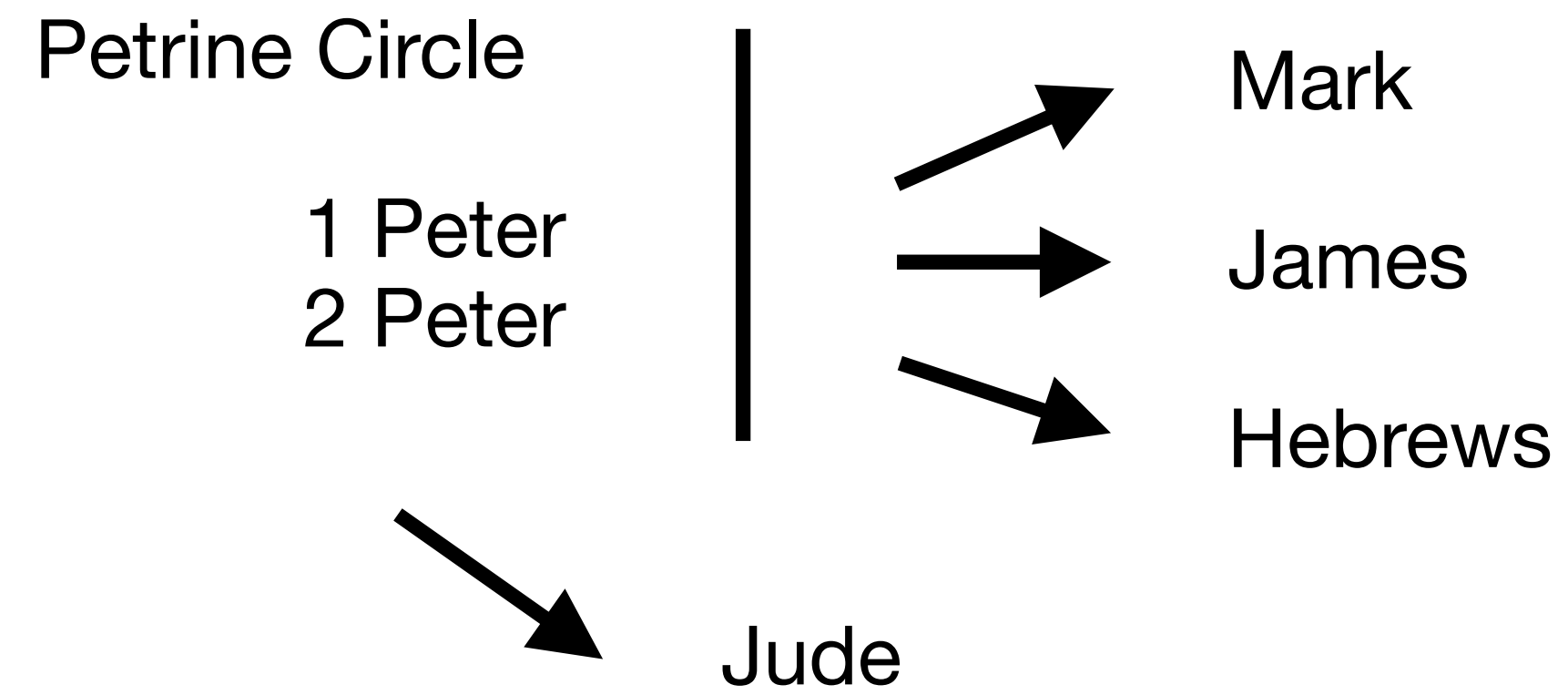
The Petrine Circle

Why should these letters be seen as a collection?



1. Clearly James and Peter had the same audience in mind; in James 1:1 and 1 Peter 1:1, they were writing to dispersed Jewish believers.
2. The Hebrews' title places it in the collection as to a Jewish audience, with several warnings against turning back to Judaism.
3. James' last two verses focus on the importance of bringing back those who are wandering from the faith.
4. Peter is concerned that those who are in exile stand firm, and he intensifies his concern in 2 Peter that the believers not lose their stability through false teachers and turn back from the faith.
5. Jude continues the concern for those who are wavering and calls for having mercy on them and snatching them out of the fire.

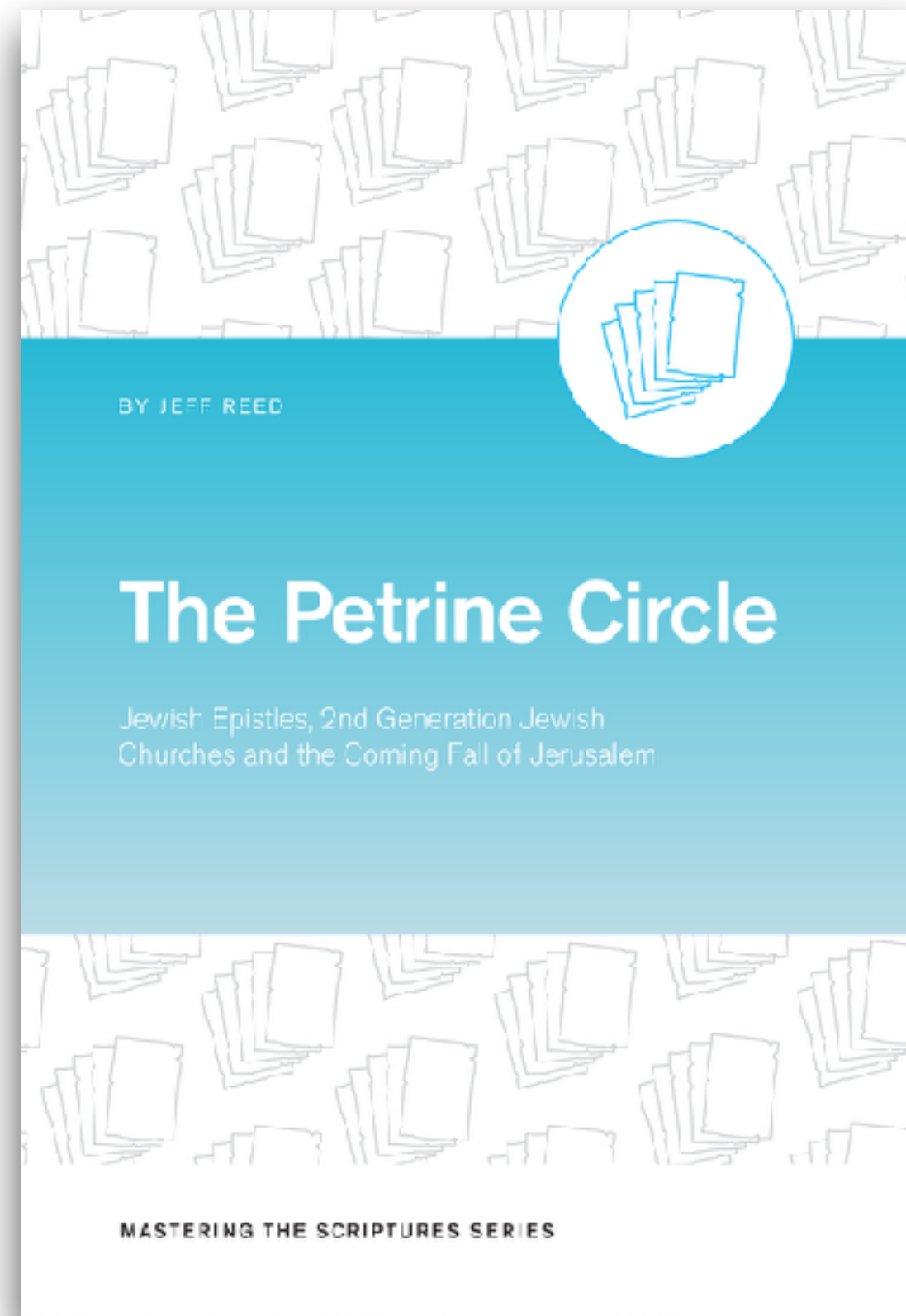
The Petrine Circle



Mark—a quote from *Mark* will be in the Consult the Scholar’s section of *The Petrine Circle* book.

Corpus Apostolicism

Collection Intent of the Jewish letters:



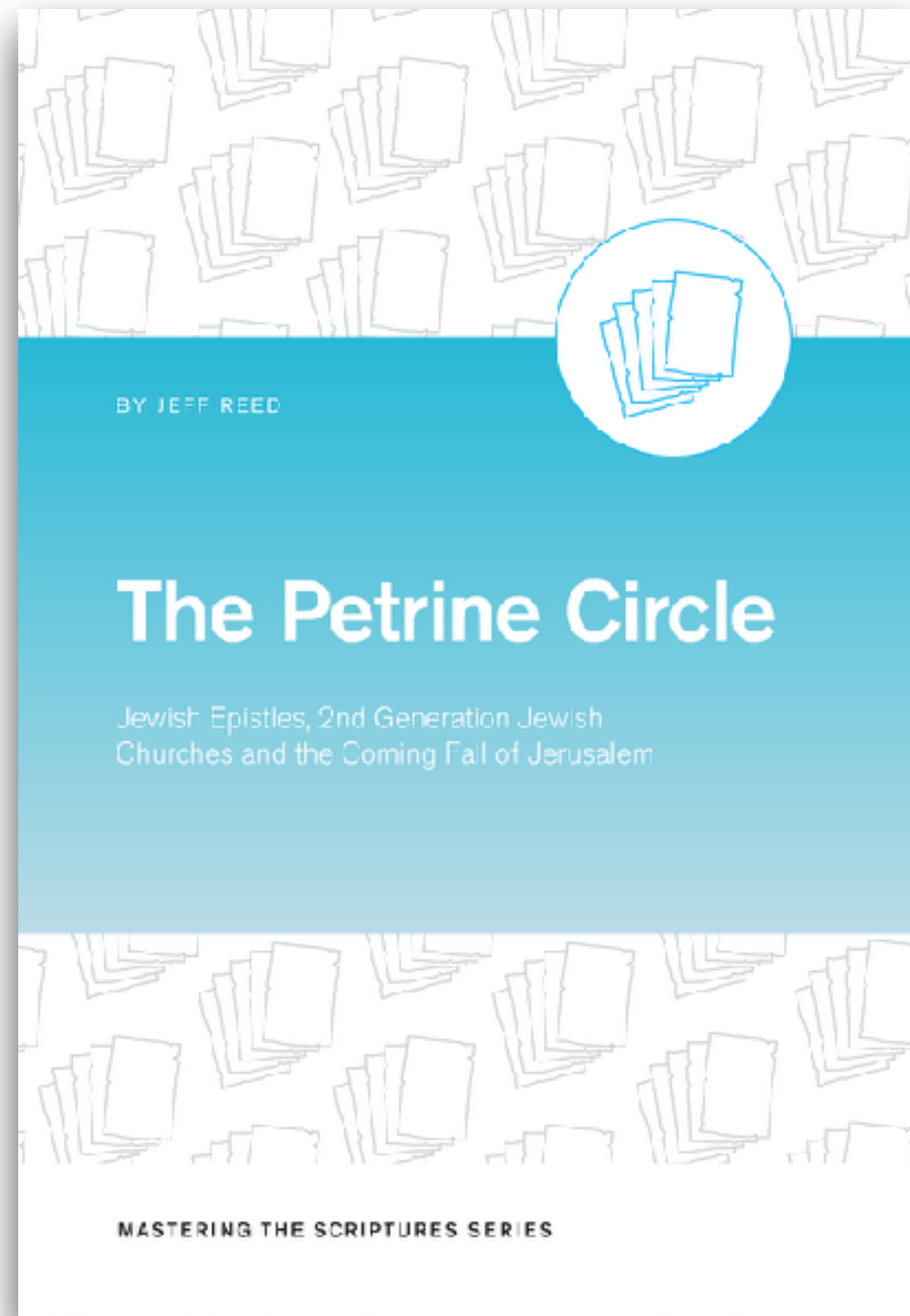
To encourage the Jewish churches, scattered throughout the Roman empire, to remain in their newfound faith—at a time when the nation of Israel is growing in their resistance to the emerging church and when many who believed are turning back to Judaism—through this collection of epistles written by leaders in the Petrine circle and to save as many as possible from turning back.

James: To exhort Jewish believers everywhere to remain in their new faith in Christ, replacing life under the Law with a new law—the law of liberty, where mercy and grace are the foundation—that they might cultivate a sincere, pure faith, in community, rather than letting a hypocritical pride dominate their lives, and eventually turning back to Judaism

1 Peter: To encourage Jewish believers who are in danger of returning to Judaism to hold fast to their new hope and to press on toward maturity, that they might inherit the blessings of the promise—future reward—instead of falling back into unbelief, as so often characterized their ancestors.

Corpus Apostolicism

Collection Intent of the Jewish letters:



2 Peter: To encourage Jewish believers who are in danger of returning to Judaism to hold fast to their new hope and to press on toward maturity, with a special focus on avoiding false prophets and holding to apostolic teaching.

Jude: To encourage Jewish believers who are in danger of returning to Judaism, warning them of harsh judgment on first generation apostates and predicting an impending crisis on this next generation of churches.

Hebrews: To encourage Jewish believers who are at high risk of returning to Judaism, defending their new faith through a thorough, fresh set of theological discourses through the Old Testament, book-ended by four serious warning passages.

Corpus Apostolicism

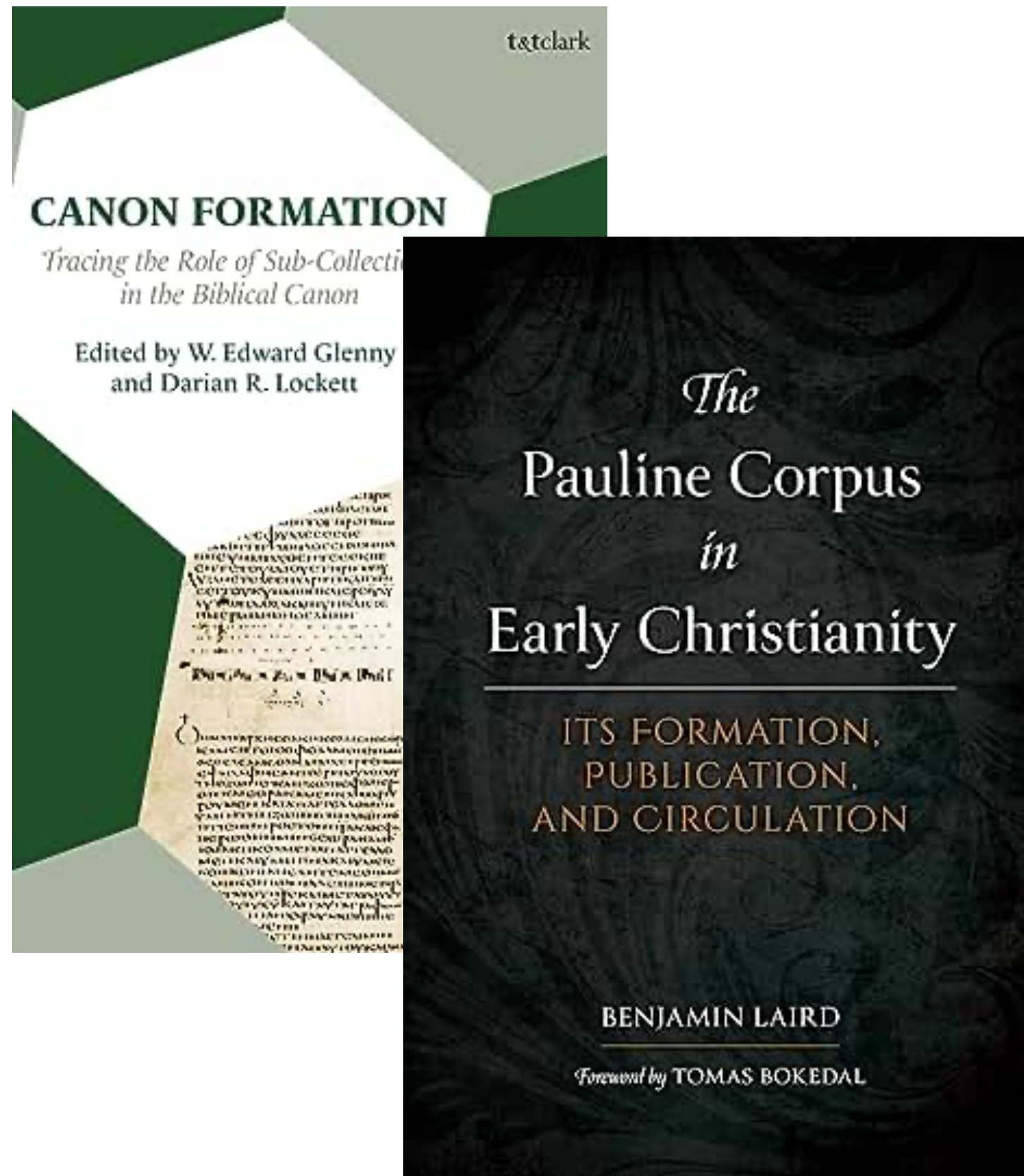
Now we will back up and look at the research behind Paul's 13-letter collection and the Petrine Circle collection.

First I will focus briefly on the formation of Paul's 13-letter collection by Paul, Luke, Mark and Timothy in the winter of AD 68, just before Paul's death in the spring.

Then we will look at the formation of the Petrine circle letters, most likely by the same team, shaped by Mark, with Paul's interaction on that shaping.

This is very exciting in light of the fact that it will develop great confidence that the Spirit both inspired and shaped these collections, not the institutional church with the focus on the 4th and 5th generation canonical debates and the abstracting of these letters as academic documents shaping Western academic debates today.

New Insight on Pauline Corpus



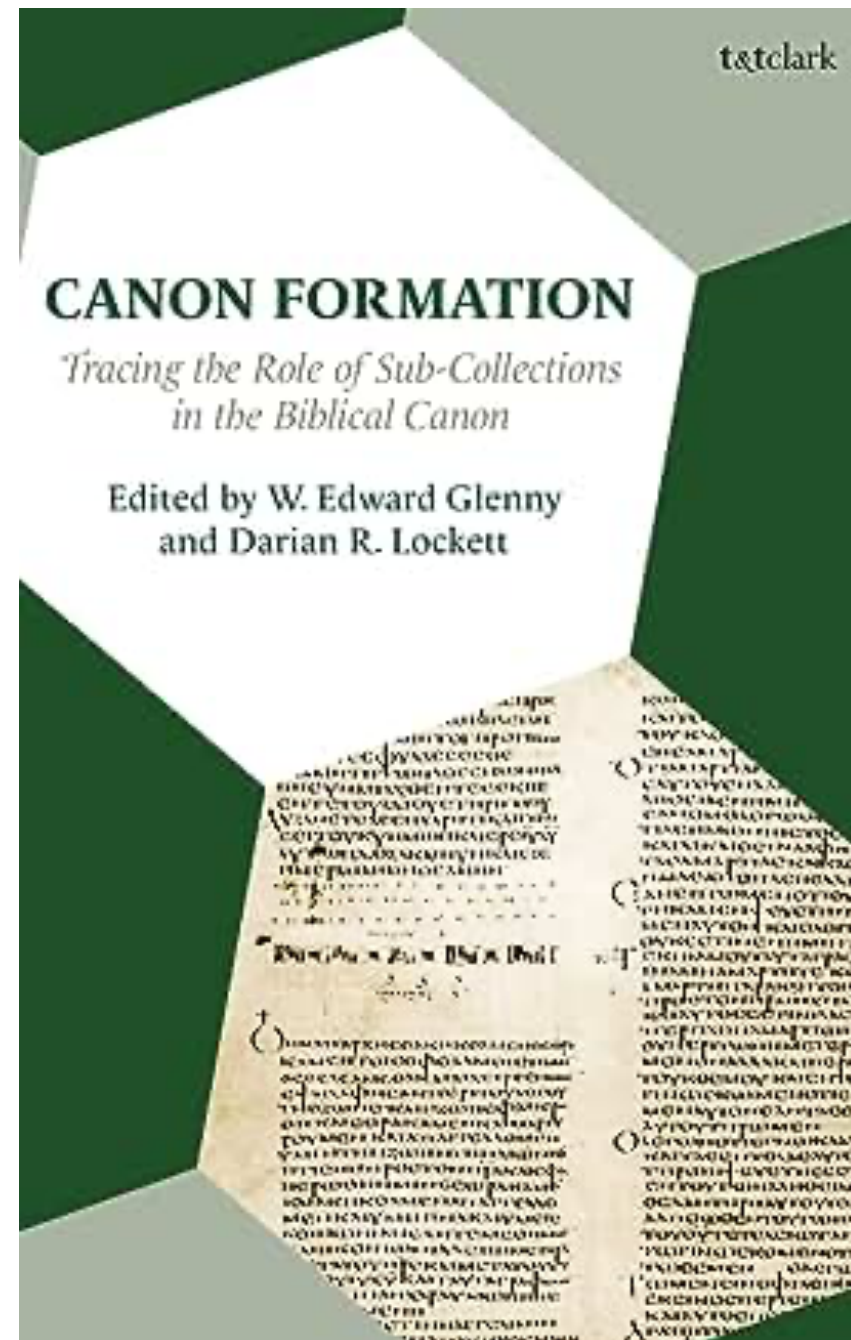
The first two books came out in 2022. (NT Wright was 2014, LTJ was 2021.)

They confirm the primacy and early availability of the Pauline corpus, as I have written and taught, but they give fresh insights.

In addition, we have to deal with the canonical shape of Peter's Letters, the Jewish Epistles, and the Johannine Literature.

First I will deal with the Pauline Corpus and then the shape of what I am calling *the Petrine Circle*.

New Insight on Pauline Corpus



Remember Paul's final instructions to Timothy

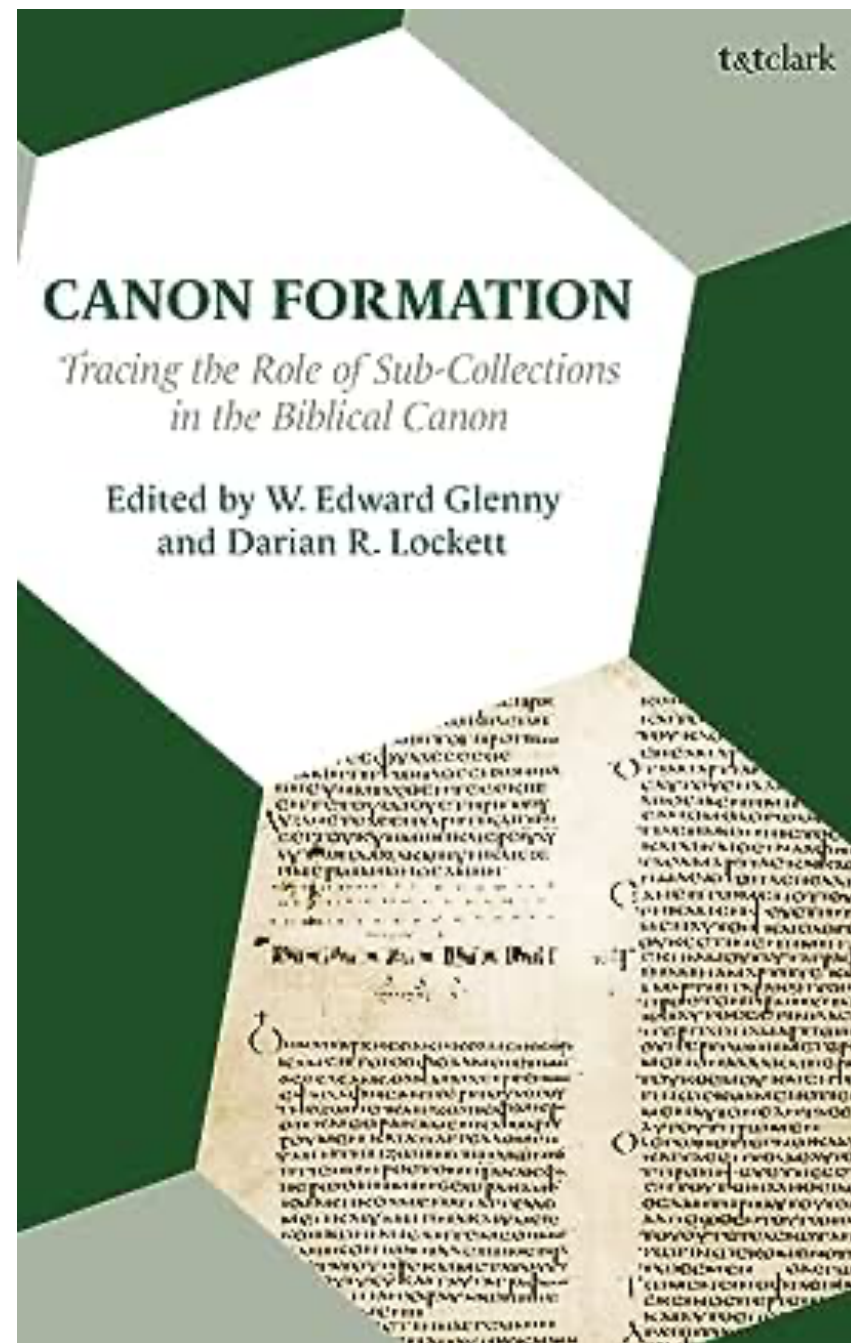
¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry. ¹² I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. (Greco–Roman “their own important letters”)

2 Timothy 4:11–13 NRSV

Look at this quote from *Canon Formation*, chapter 14, “The Pauline Corpus”:

“Nonetheless, all manuscripts are letter collections with at least thirteen (arguably fourteen) letters. The evidence is thorough and quite early. There is no extant evidence for any singular letters of Paul circulating independently.”

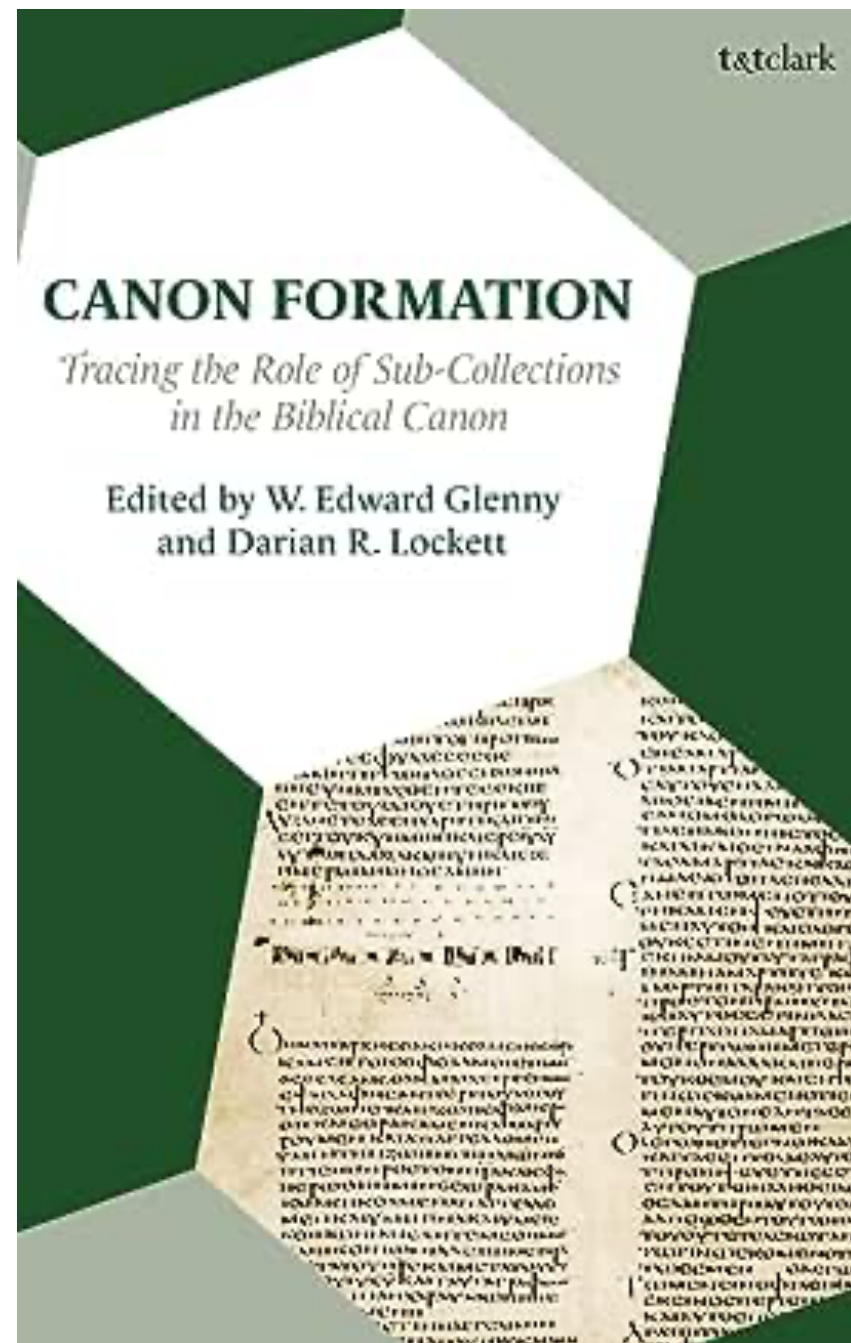
New Insight on Pauline Corpus



I cannot deal with it thoroughly here, but let me put together what I think happened.

1. Paul wants Timothy to bring Mark with him to join him and Luke. He especially wanted his books and parchments (important notebooks), most assuredly his letters.
2. Why would Paul want Mark, who is “useful to him” in his ministry, if he had just said his ministry was over.
3. I think he wanted to complete his collection, tie it in carefully with Luke’s Acts manuscripts, and give some coordination to Mark’s working with the Petrine circle of Jewish letters since Peter had just died 3–4 years earlier.
4. Though Paul probably did not write Hebrews, it appears in most of Paul’s early collections, meaning he must have at least had some shaping of it.

New Insight on Pauline Corpus

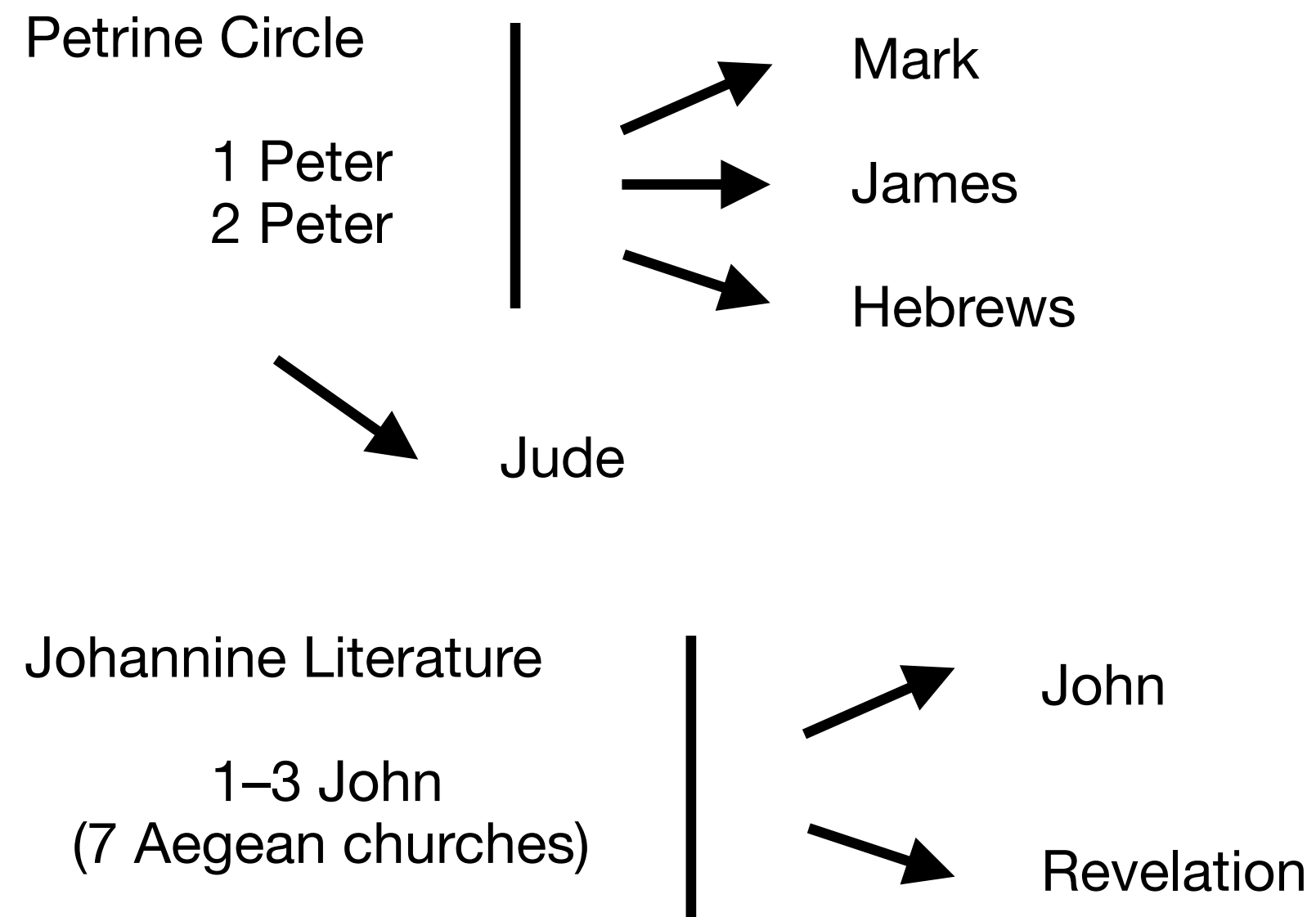


What I think happened. (cont.)

5. Remember, Paul told Timothy to guard the deposit of his teaching that he carefully entrusted to him, not Peter's or John's. He was preparing Timothy to do just that.
6. Peter was aware that Paul's collection was almost done before he died (2 Peter 3:16; "in all his letters").
7. So when Paul said to Timothy to "guard the teaching entrusted to him," he most likely was referring to his collection of 13 letters; and he was to see they were entrusted to Paul's churches.
8. That means, as we are focusing on fully understanding Paul's letters with church networks around the world, we are doing exactly what Paul asked; and Paul was carrying out Christ's teaching and design for His churches.

Corpus Apostolicum

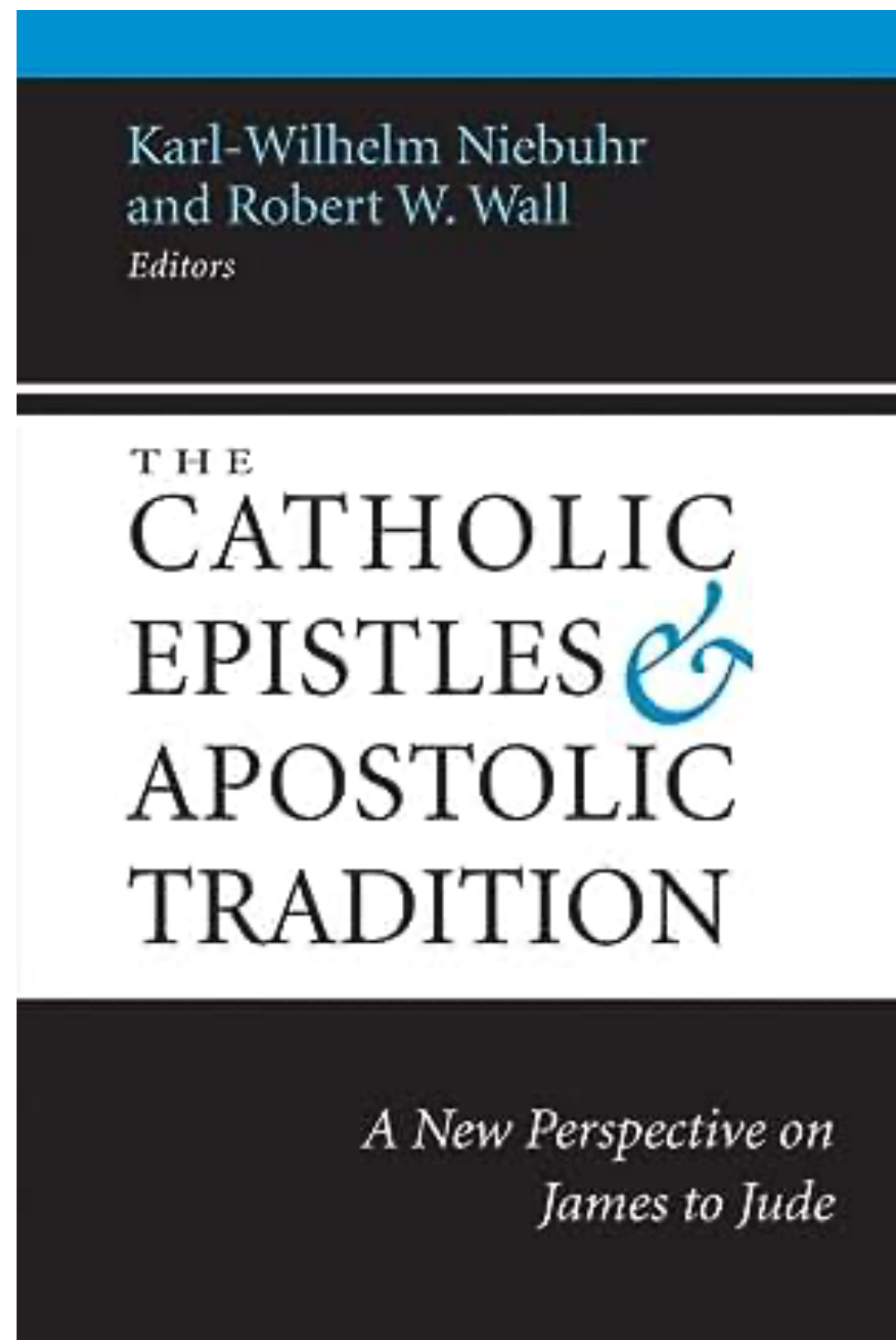
Situating



Now let's turn our attention back to the canonical issues of the Corpus Apostolicum and the Petrine Circle collection.

While it is logical to place these collections under one umbrella, *Corpus Apostolicum* (I am not accepting the 7-letter core originating in the 4th and 5th centuries), I am choosing to reclaim the term for the two sub-collections listed here, which will guide our entire MTS series.

Corpus Apostolicum



A New Perspective on James to Jude

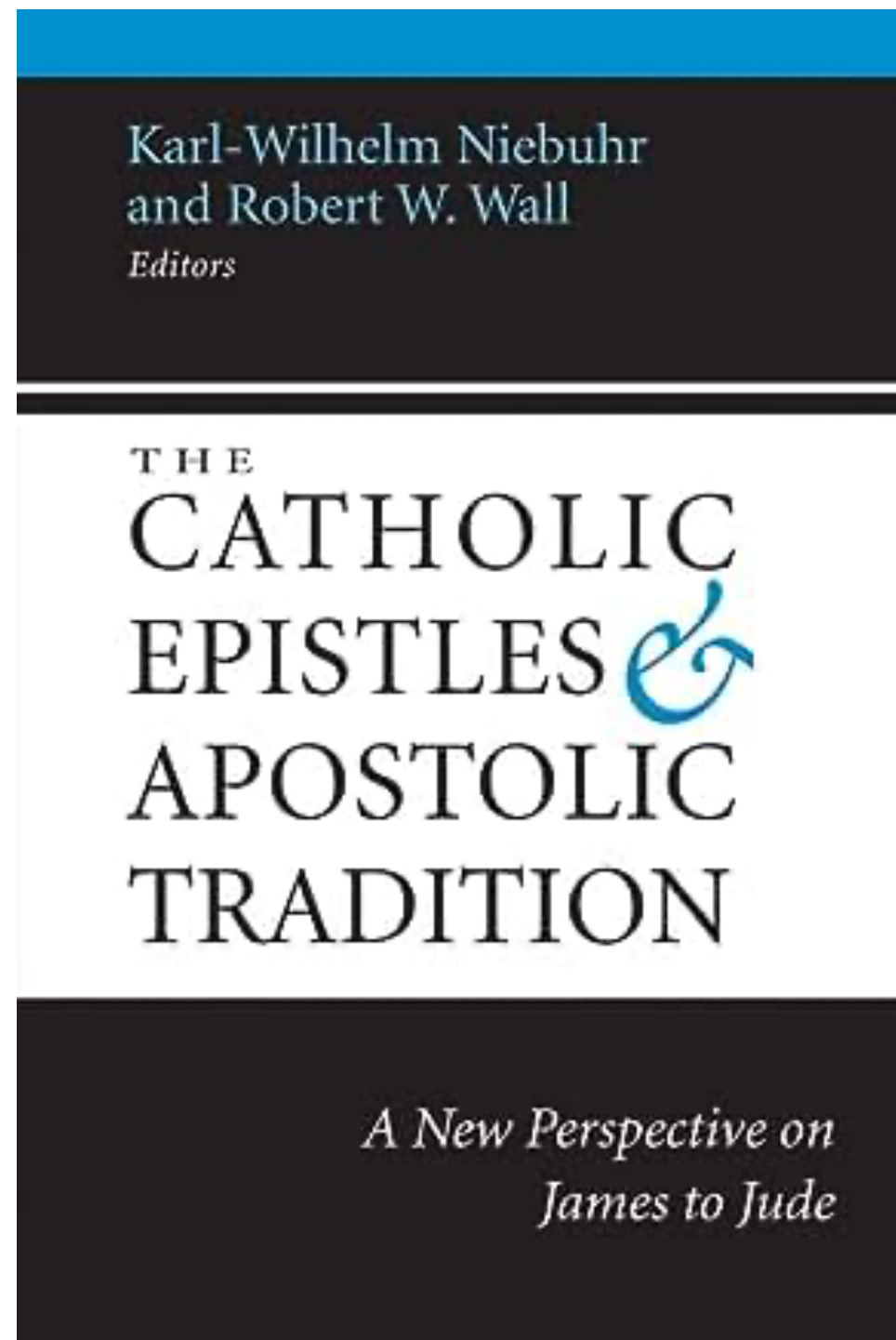
3 theological society seminars or research units:

2001: SNTS seminar: "The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition"

2003: Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense: "The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition"

2005: SBL seminar: "Methodological Reassessment of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude"

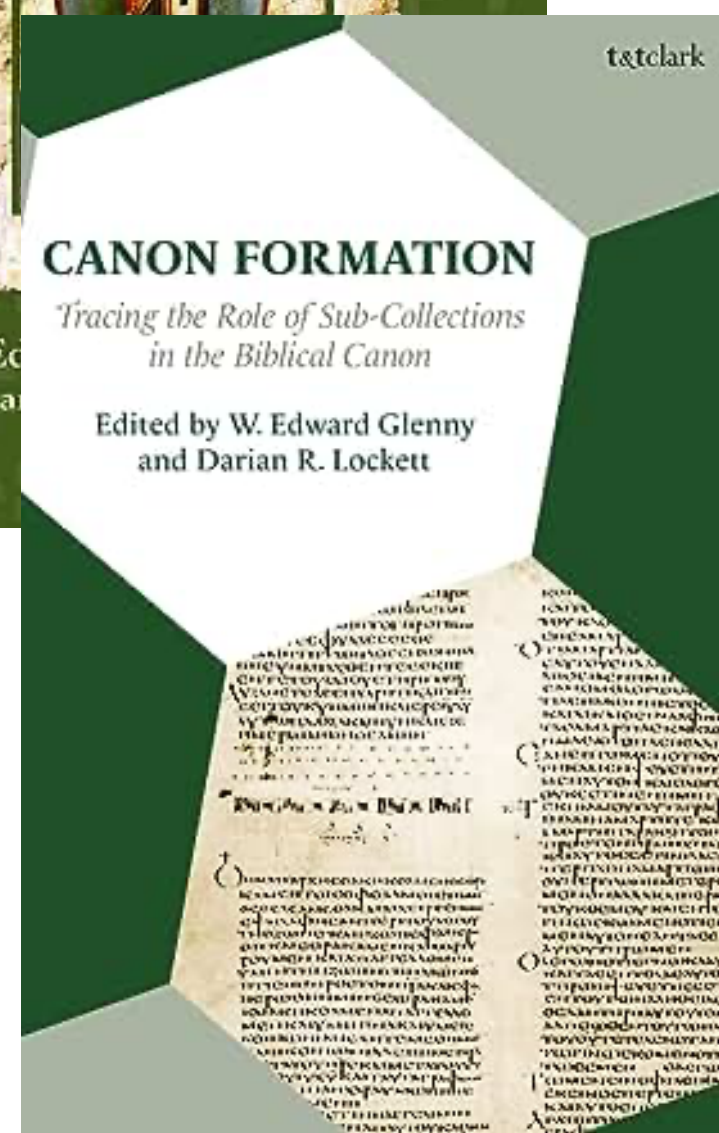
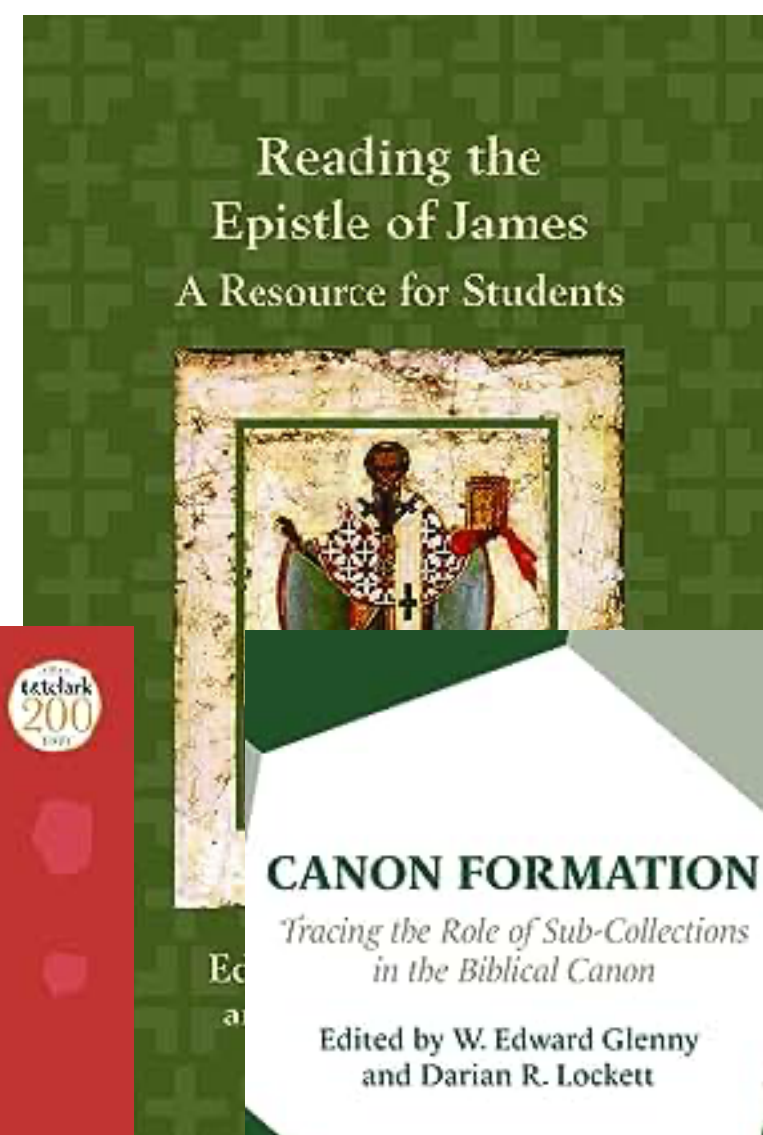
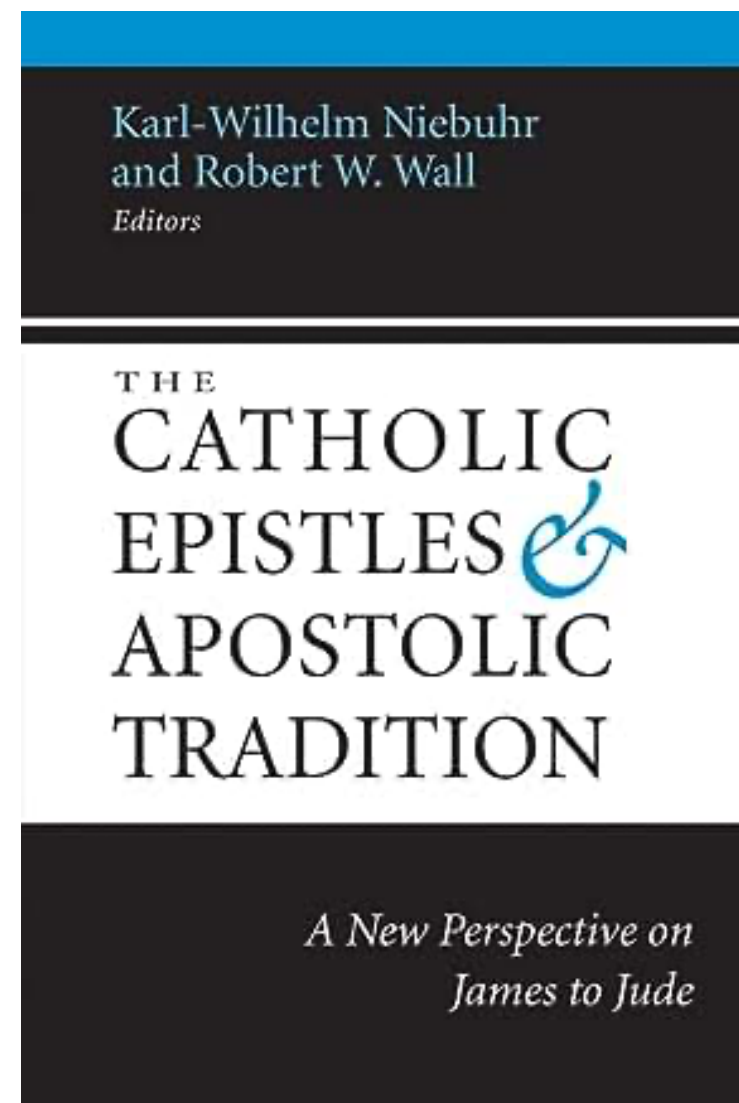
Corpus Apostolicum



Reasons for study groups:

1. The Corpus Apostolicum are writings in comparison to the Pauline Corpus and the Gospels.
2. They are almost completely in the shadow of Paul as far as the focus of Greco-Roman research on the new perspective on Paul.
3. Exciting insights from contemporary Greco-Roman research are giving new birth to new perspectives on Corpus Apostolicum letters, thus the term “a new perspective on James to Jude.”
4. A new perspective on James has made the most progress, giving an emerging fresh understanding of the entire collection.
5. A fresh theology is emerging as these letters are approached as a collection from linguistic research: paratextual evidence, catchwords, common traditions, framing devices, themes.
6. The problem of the relationship of Acts and Hebrews to the collection

Corpus Apostolicum



The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition: A New Perspective on James to Jude (Niebuhr, Wall): 16 papers

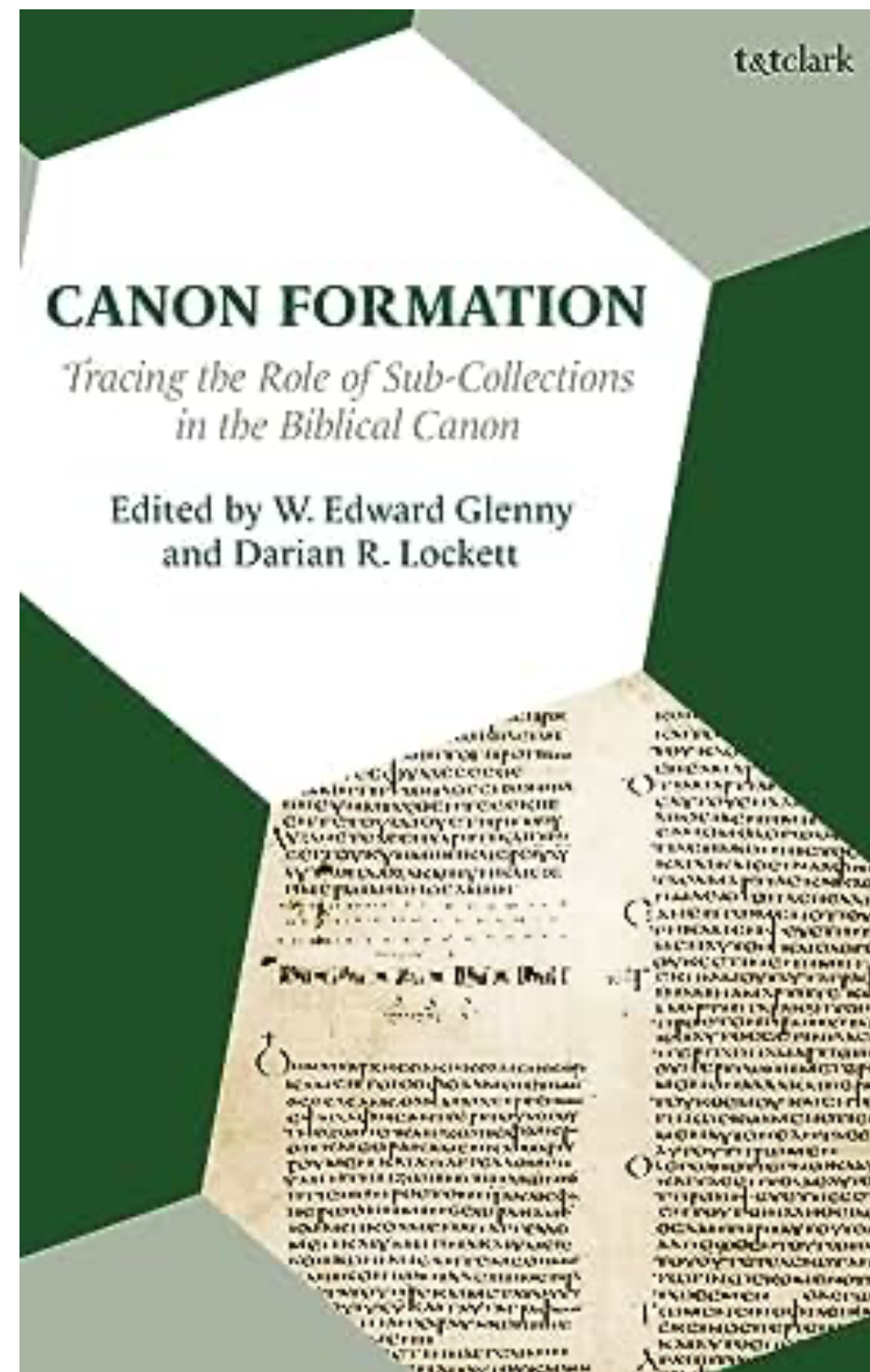
The Catholic Epistles: Critical Readings (Lockett): 30 papers

Reading the Epistle of James (Lockett): 16 papers

Canon Formation: Tracing the Role of Sub-Collections in the Biblical Canon (Glenny, Lockett): 16 papers

78 papers, 62 authors, 1,842 pages, collective bibliography of about 4,500 core books and articles, 25,000 to 30,000 referenced in footnotes (299 just on the place of Hebrews in the canon)

Canonical Process: Full Circle



This process, which began with Childs, has now come full circle with everyone taking the entire canon as received by Israel (OT canon) and the Church (NT canon), rather than just taking some of the “so-called” authentic books and just parts of some books.

Childs changed everything.

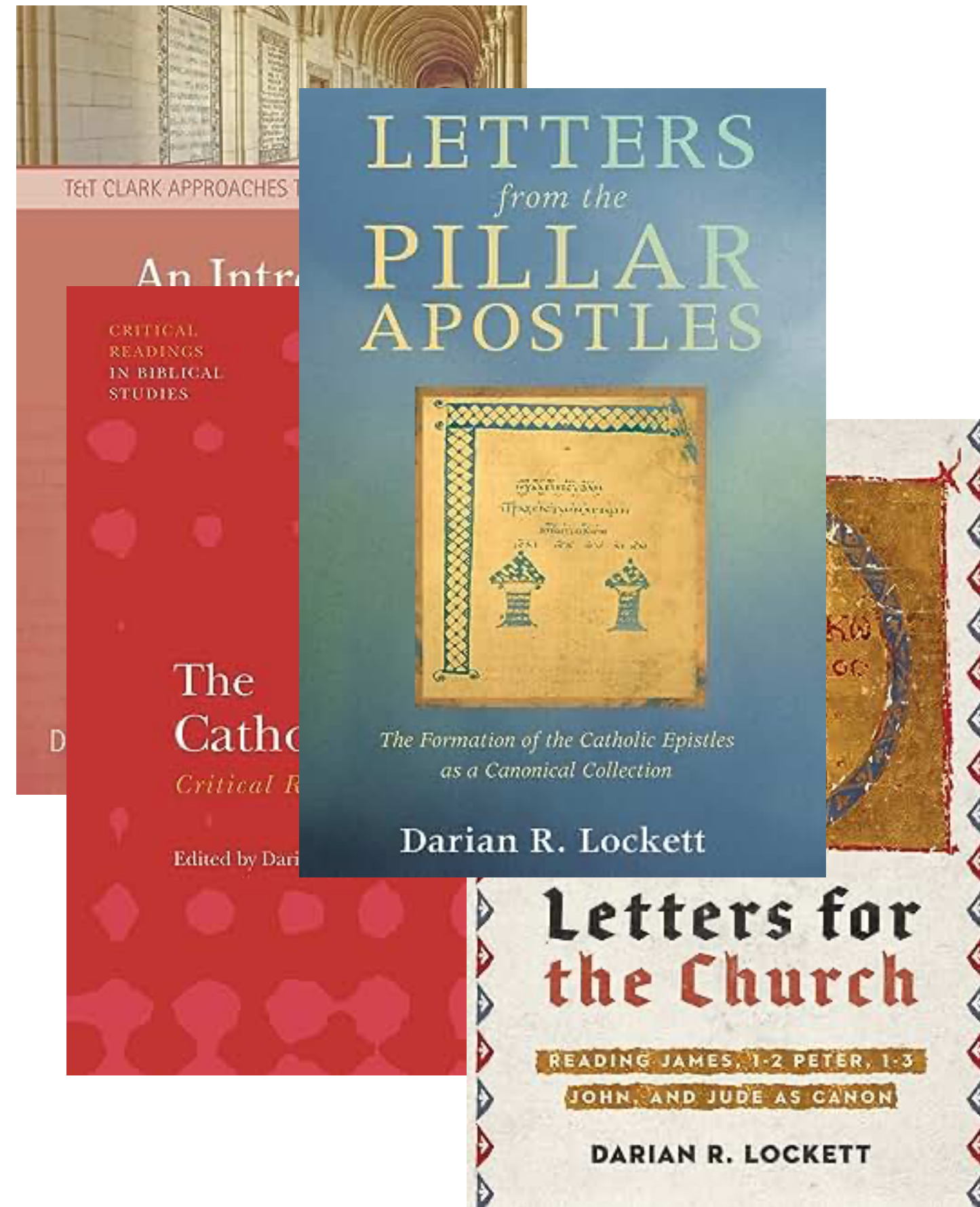
Now all of the Near Eastern research (OT) and the Greco-Roman research (NT) is applied by almost everyone to the entire canon, regardless of presuppositions, since the focus has turned to studying the two canons as received by the people of God.

In his *Canonical Paul* (2 volumes), Luke Timothy Johnson calls this a paradigm shift—from searching for the *historical Paul* (endless theories) to the *canonical Paul* (one entire collection)—enabling a theology of canonical collections to emerge (e.g. a theology of the Pauline corpus).

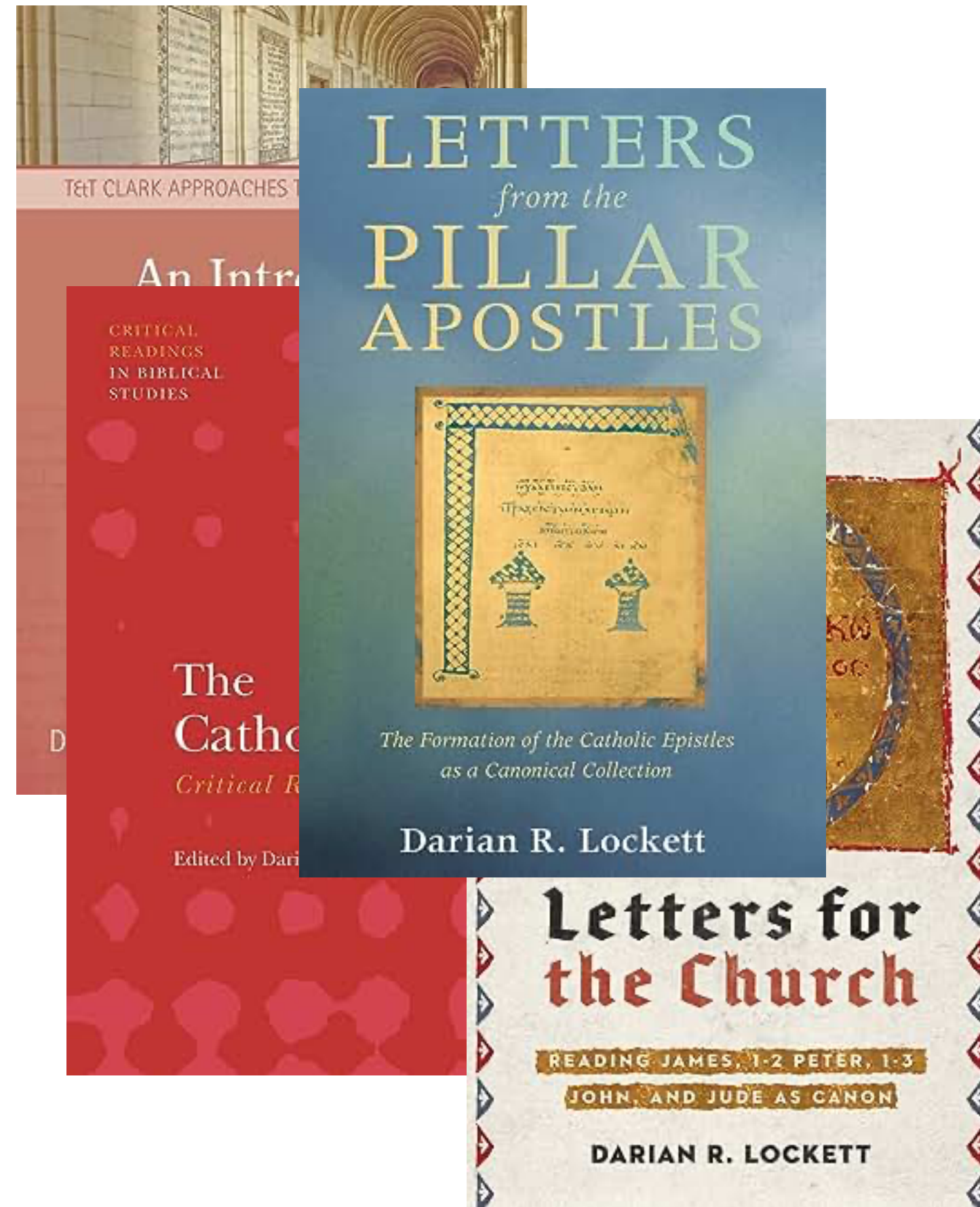
Corpus Apostolicum

The main theologian leading the findings of this high level research is Darian Lockett. His 4 main books include:

1. *An Introduction to the Catholic Epistles* by Darian Lockett (Bloomsbury/T&T Clarke, 2012).
2. *The Catholic Epistles: Critical Readings*, edited by Darian Lockett (Bloomsbury, 2021).
3. *Letters to the Churches: Reading James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John and Jude as Canon* by Darian Lockett (IVP, 2021).
4. *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection* by Darian Lockett (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017).



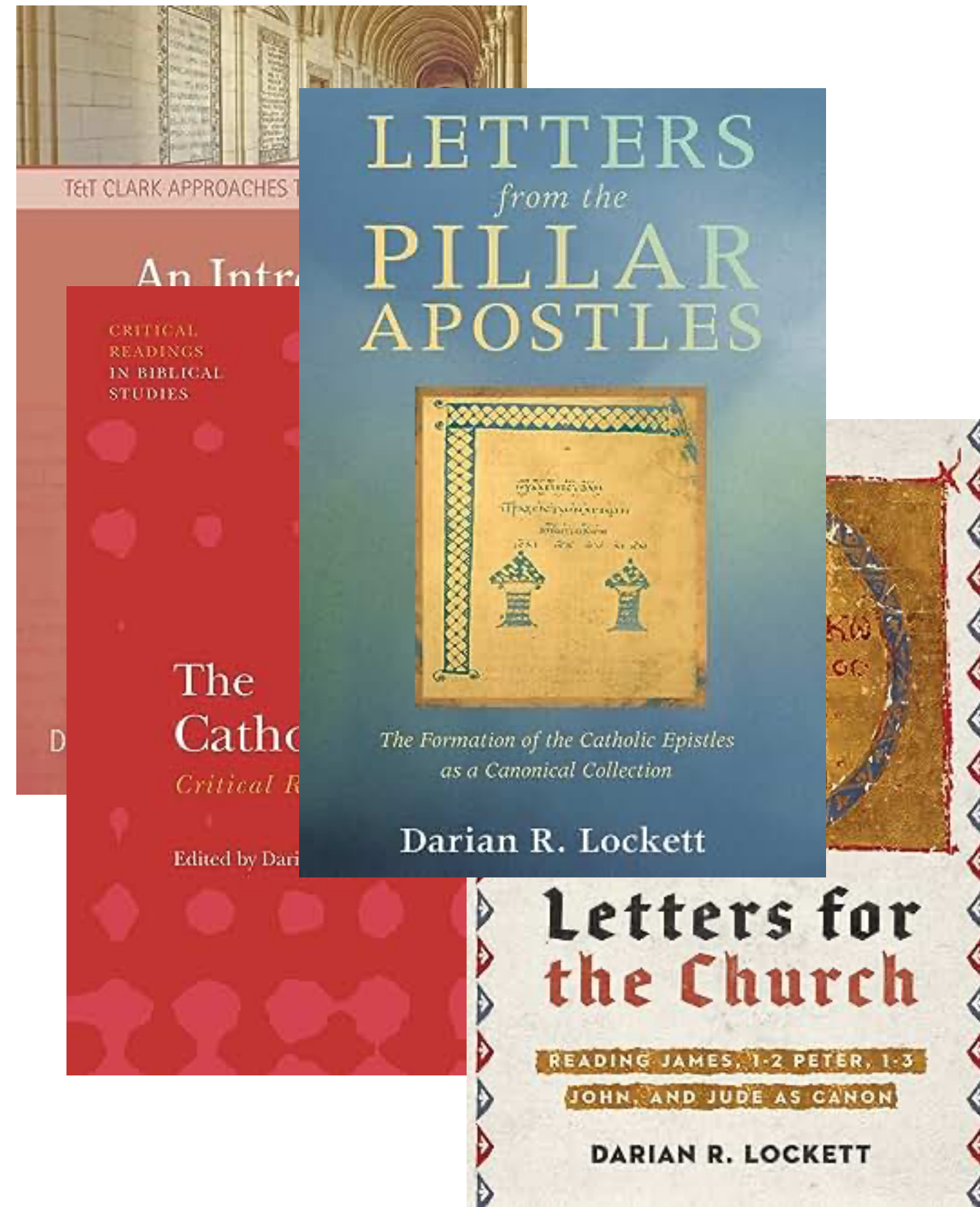
Corpus Apostolicum



Lockett—In the tradition of Child’s canonical process method of studying books of the canon as received by the church, not by past history—goes way too far in arguing that these 7 Catholic Epistle (CE) letters are one cohesive theology, rivaling Paul’s type of cohesive thought.

He calls the canonical CE a coherent collection: using paratextual evidence, catchwords, common traditions, framing devices, and common themes.

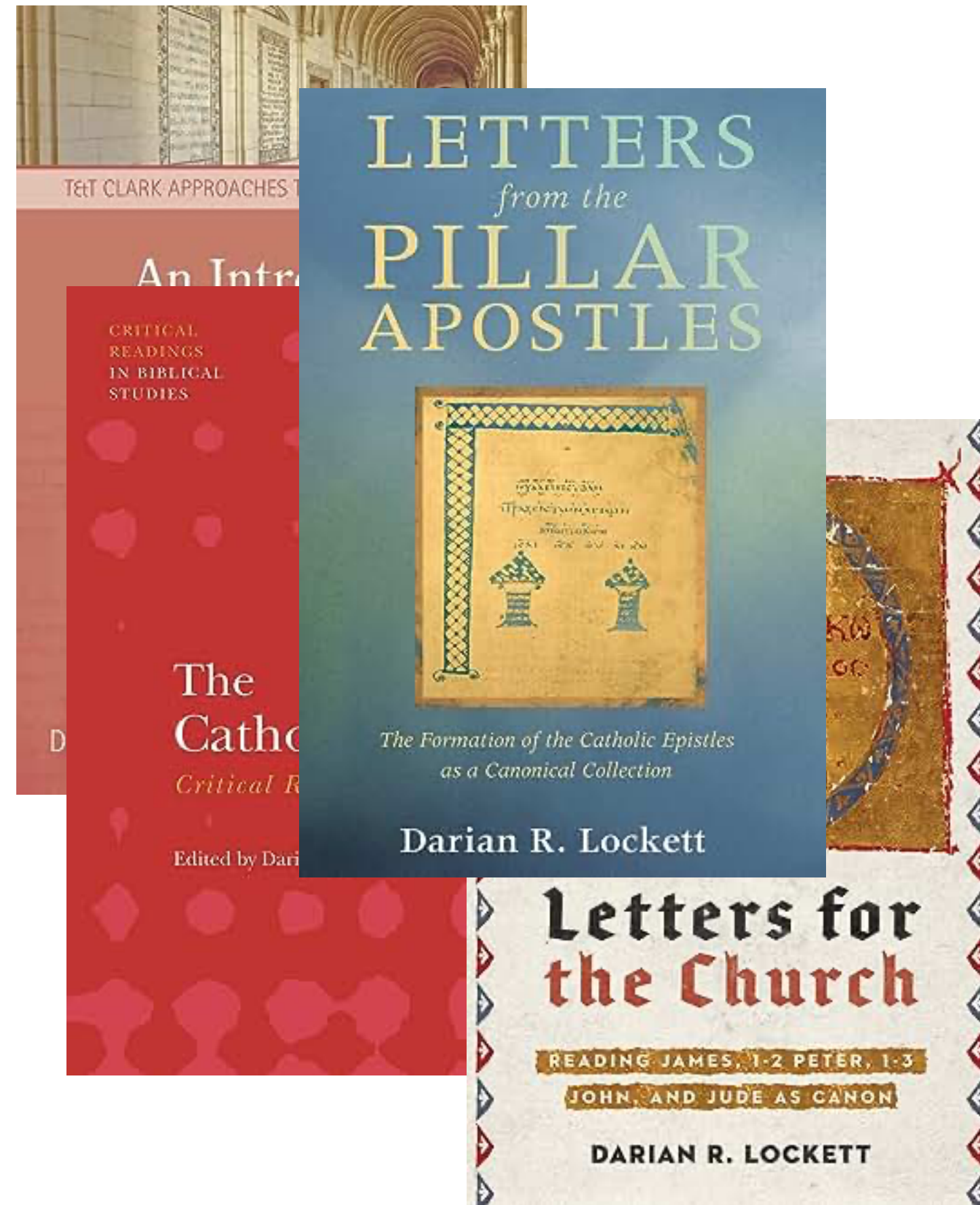
Corpus Apostolicum



“**Paratexts** include collection and arrangement of texts (within a larger, multi-text book role or codex); **titles** appearing at the beginning of, as running heads, or as subscripted to a text; reading aids (for example, **textual divisions**, *nomina sacra*, **author bios**, *hypothesis*, or *kephalaia*); and the presence of a **colophon**. Though such features do not originate from the initial moment of composition (namely, the first author did not produce these features), they are nonetheless hermeneutically significant as they indicate how texts were read and received by their earliest editors, compilers and transmitters.”

Pillar Apostles, p. 93

Corpus Apostolicum



Yes, there are common elements between the collections of Peter and his circle and John; and yes they are coherent as is the entire New Testament, but the two collections are fundamentally different:

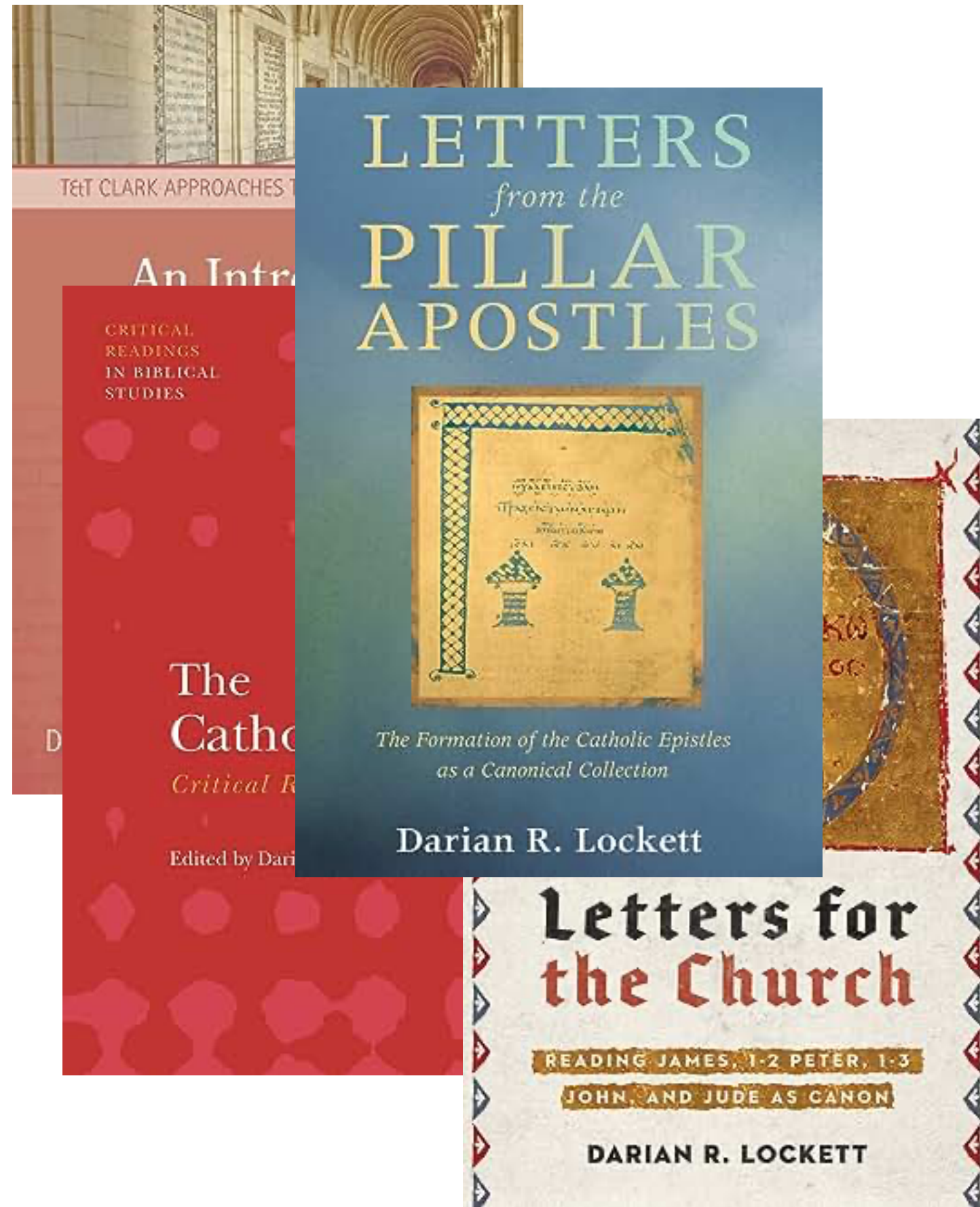
different audiences

different datings (John wrote his Gospel, letters and Revelation much later)

different genres, emphases, schemas, and topoi

Peter and his circle (James, Mark, and Jude) all wrote letters about the same time. And whether they were in a collection immediately (I think they were), they were all available to their Jewish churches immediately.

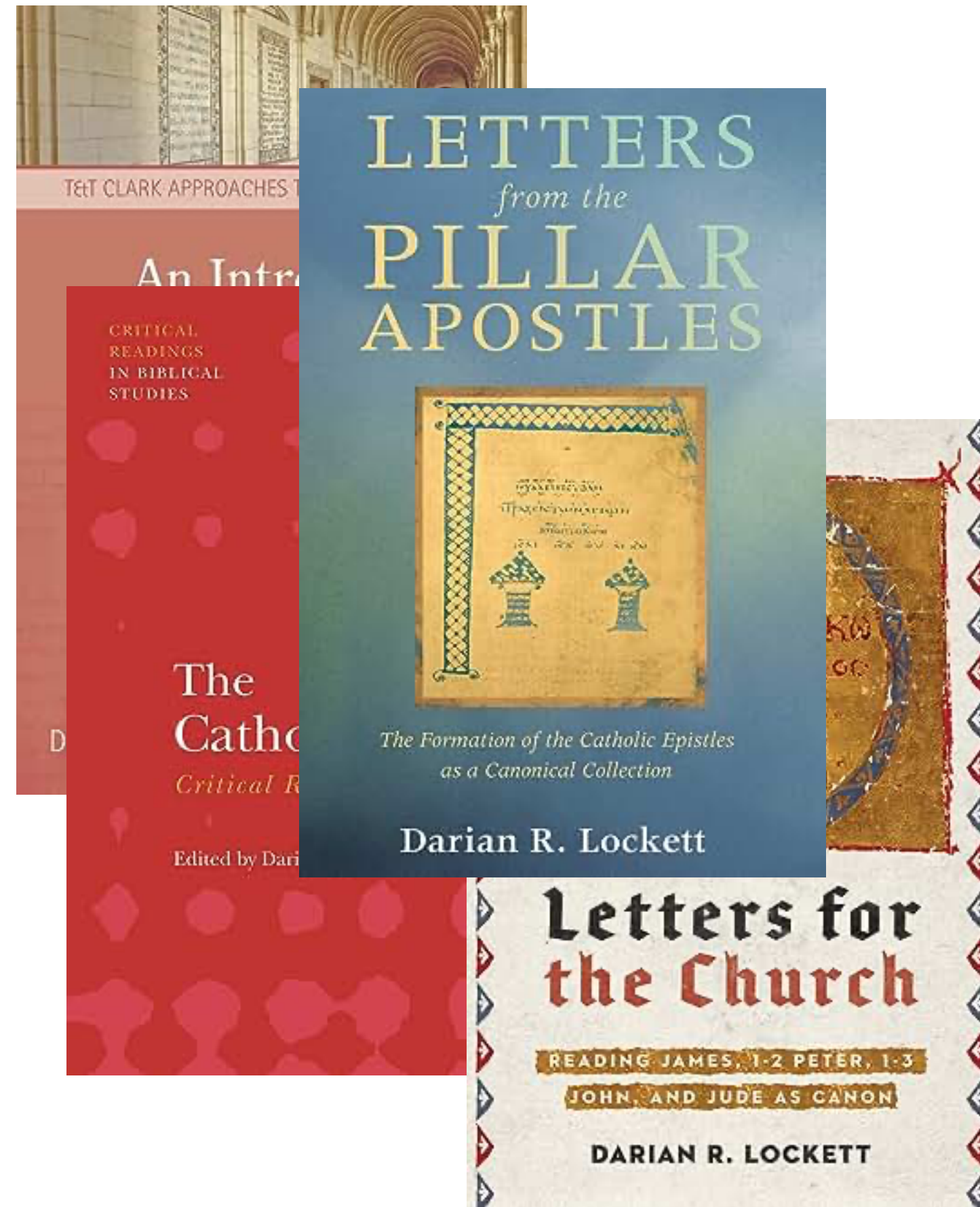
Corpus Apostolicum



Here is my reasoning:

1. As discussed previously, Peter was aware that Paul's collection was almost done before he died (2 Peter 3:16; "in all his letters").
2. Paul was clearly putting together his collection just before he was killed, together with Luke, Timothy, and Mark.
3. Paul wanted Timothy to bring Mark with him to join him and Luke. He especially wanted his books and parchments (important notebooks), most assuredly his letters.

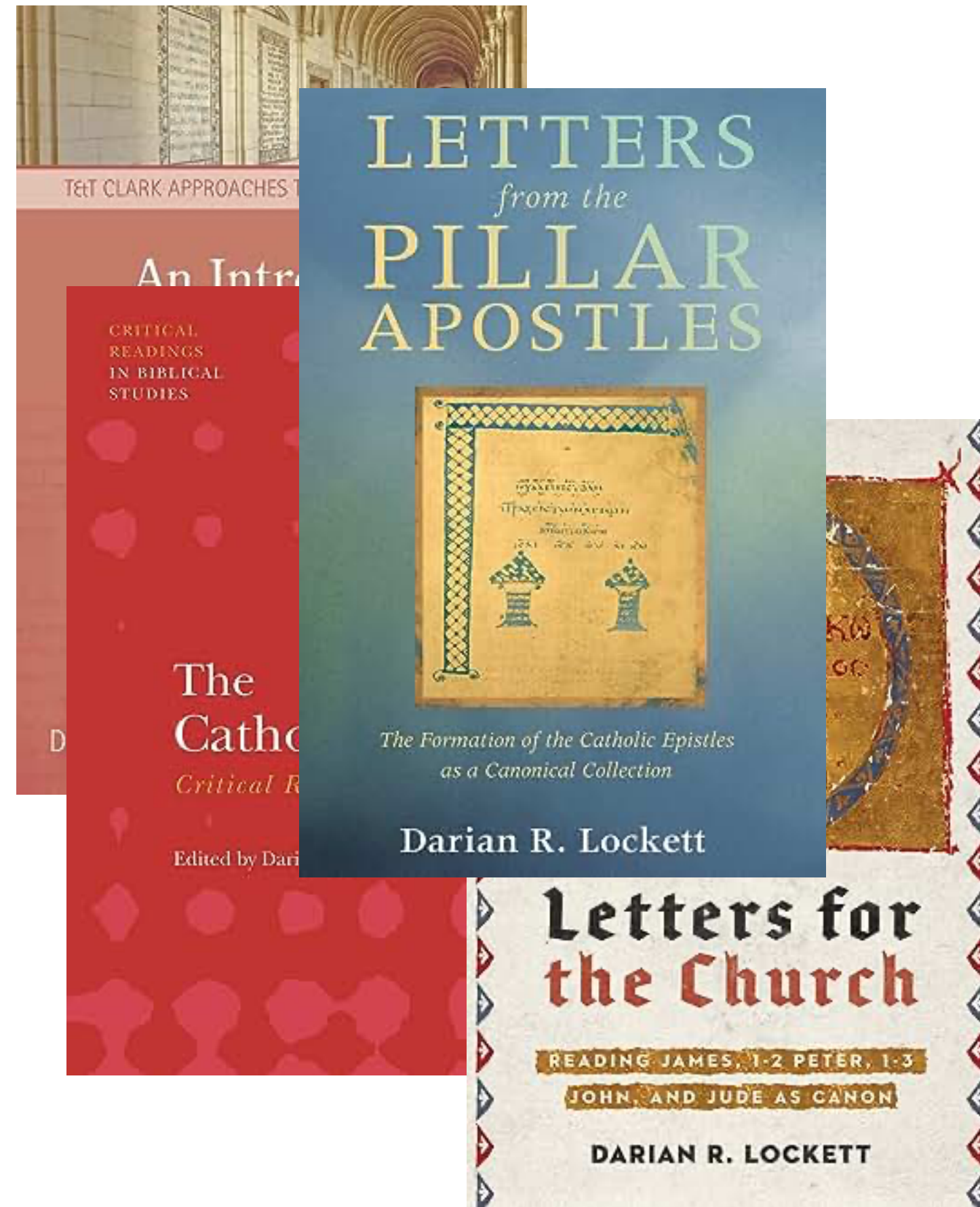
Corpus Apostolicum



Here is my reasoning:

4. Mark was key to the letters of the Petrine circle; he wrote Mark as Peter's close confidant; and James and Peter's letters assuredly needed to be in Paul's hands since they both had been killed (six and four years earlier, respectively).
5. It is almost inconceivable that in this environment, Mark would not be the remaining person to shape the collection of these Jewish letters, with Paul having influence.
6. Though we do not know how Hebrews fits, it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem to the same Jewish diaspora of churches and would have been in their hands at this time.

Corpus Apostolicum



Though Lockett's work is valuable, with all the Greco-Roman research putting the Petrine circle of letters in their historical context and focusing on their canonical shape: schema, literary design, and topoi,

much in the tradition of Child's canonical process of interpretation,

he becomes **totally lost** in creating a theology of the CE canonical collection, filled with the assumptions of the imaginary paratextual process with no real evidence, therefore, **missing the unique and beautiful sub-collections** of the Petrine circle letters and the Johannine collection.

Corpus Apostolicism

Conclusions in approaching these collections of literature

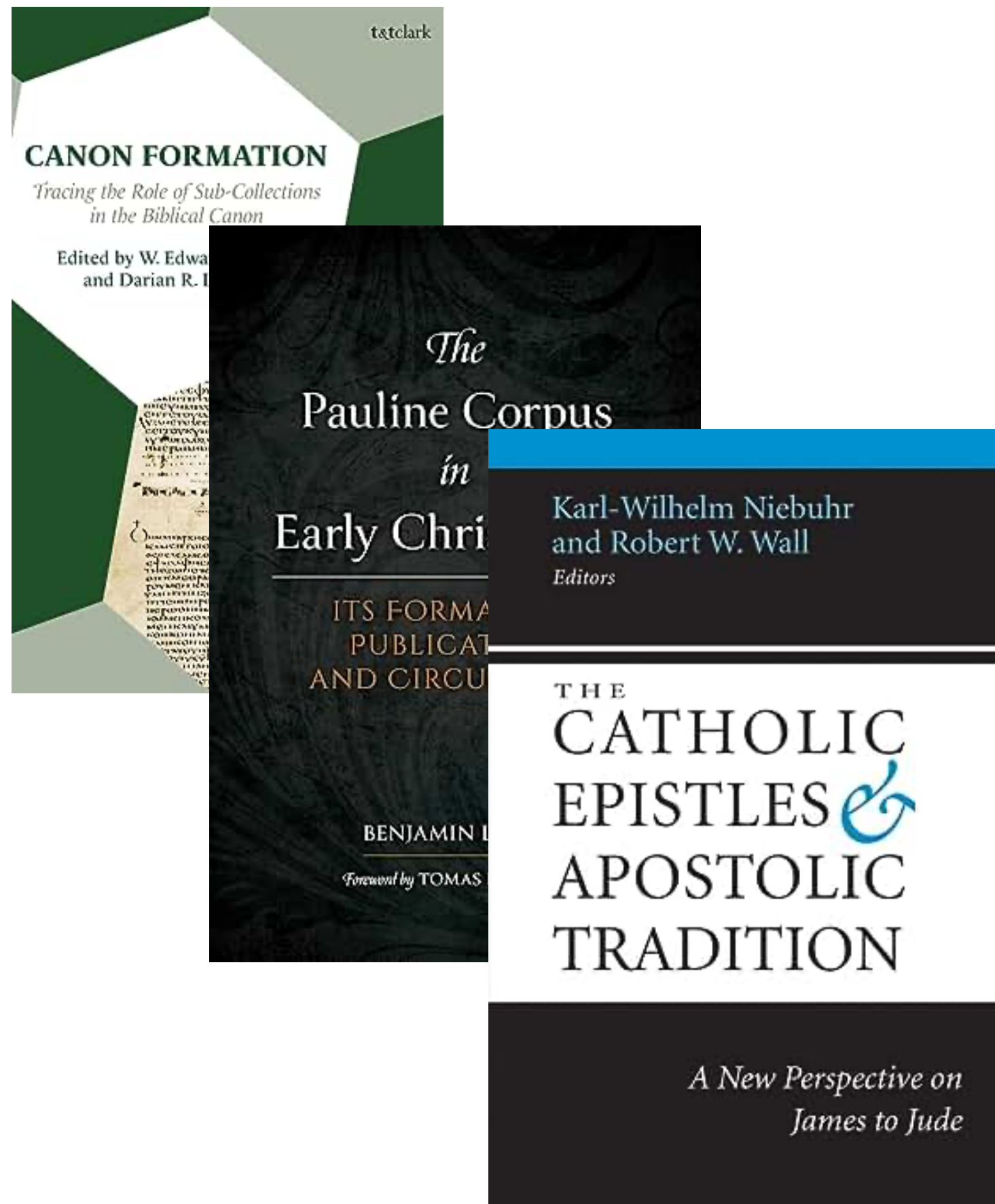
1. The two collections had fundamentally different audiences: Peter's circle collection was to scattered Jewish churches, of which many, if not most, were in danger of going back to Judaism. John's Gentile churches (Paul's core around Ephesus) were in danger of failing the test of remaining in the teaching and truly walking in it, in light of a new kind of false "anti-Christ type" teacher.
2. Peter's circle of letters were assembled the same time as Paul's 13-letter collection, probably the winter before Paul's death, with Mark, Timothy, and Luke. John's collection was written much later.
3. It is much better to let each collection stand alone, studying each book within its smaller collection, to let the collections shape themselves; that makes it easier to remember the ideas with similar sub-collections and literary framework. (Canonical Formation)
4. Once both sub-collections have been carefully studied, then general comparisons can be helpful, such as instruction to two different types of second generation church audiences.

Corpus Apostolicum

Conclusions in approaching these collections of literature

5. An illustration of what I mean is the sub-collections of Paul's Early, Middle, and Later Letters, with key literary frames in them, such as *household texts* and *the gathering* ("meaningful literary patterns," Porter).
6. So for the remainder of the New Testament Mastering the Scriptures (MTS) Series, we will study the Petrine collection first, then the Johannine collection, and we will co-opt the term *Corpus Apostolicum*—which since 4th and 5th centuries followed the 7-letter collection form: James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude—and instead use it as the term to cover both the Petrine Circle Collection and the Johannine Literature Collection.
7. The problem with the 7-letter collection leaves Hebrews and Revelation out to dry; in fact I wish I had made the MTS Gospels collection just Mark, Matthew, and Luke and treated John with John's writings, which I will deal with in MTS Book 1 of John's MTS collection.
8. I am not ready to deal with Hebrews at this point, but I will include it when I am clear where it fits best in this process. My thesis is it is someone like Matthew with a firm enough grasp on Paul to be "translating Paul" to the Jewish churches; Peter could not. (LTJ, Dunn, Young).

Corpus Apostolicum



We can gain a tremendous confidence out of this canonical research

1. Both Paul's 13-letter corpus and the Petrine circle collection were probably all brought together with Paul, Luke, Mark, and Timothy the winter of AD 68, 6 years after James martyrdom, four years after Peters', and a few months before Paul's death.
2. This brings great confidence that it was the Spirit who guided the Pauline Corpus and the Petrine Circle Collection and not the Eastern and Western canonical debates, which continue up to this day.
3. And it provides a "true perspective on Paul and Peter" that shapes our perspective on these letters as tools for establishing churches, not academic documents informing Western theological systems and their endless debates.

Corpus Apostolicum



3 weeks research

- Research 1: Pauline Corpus, Corpus Apostolicum, and MTS process (July 30)
- Research 2: Canonical Shape of Corpus Apostolicum: The Petrine Circle (August 6)
- Research 3: Canonical Shape of each book: James, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 2 Peter–Jude (August 13)

5 weeks

- Book 1: Session 1: Mark, Peter's 5 Sermons: The Circle's Core (August 20)
- Book 1: Session 2: James (August 27)
- Book 1: Session 3: 1 Peter (September 24)
- Book 1: Session 4: Hebrews (October 1)
- Book 1: Session 5: 2 Peter and Jude (October 8)

Pauline Corpus and Corpus Apostolicum

Issue: Importance of the Petrine Circle Collection of letters for our churches today

Questions:

1. Why does the canonical shape of these final letters—those around Peter's and John's writings—matter for our churches today? Why not just take them as they appear in the various English Bibles and leave it at that?
2. Why is it important for our church networks to master these letters just as we mastered Paul's 13-letter corpus? Why is it especially important for establishing our second generation churches?
3. In what way does knowing these collections were formed by the first generation leaders themselves increase our confidence in these letters being inspired and shaped by the Holy Spirit and intended for transforming our growing church networks today?
4. What are some of your initial expectations of specific contributions these letters will make in your own lives and churches today, regardless of your current historical and cultural situation?