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ON THE EPISTLES  
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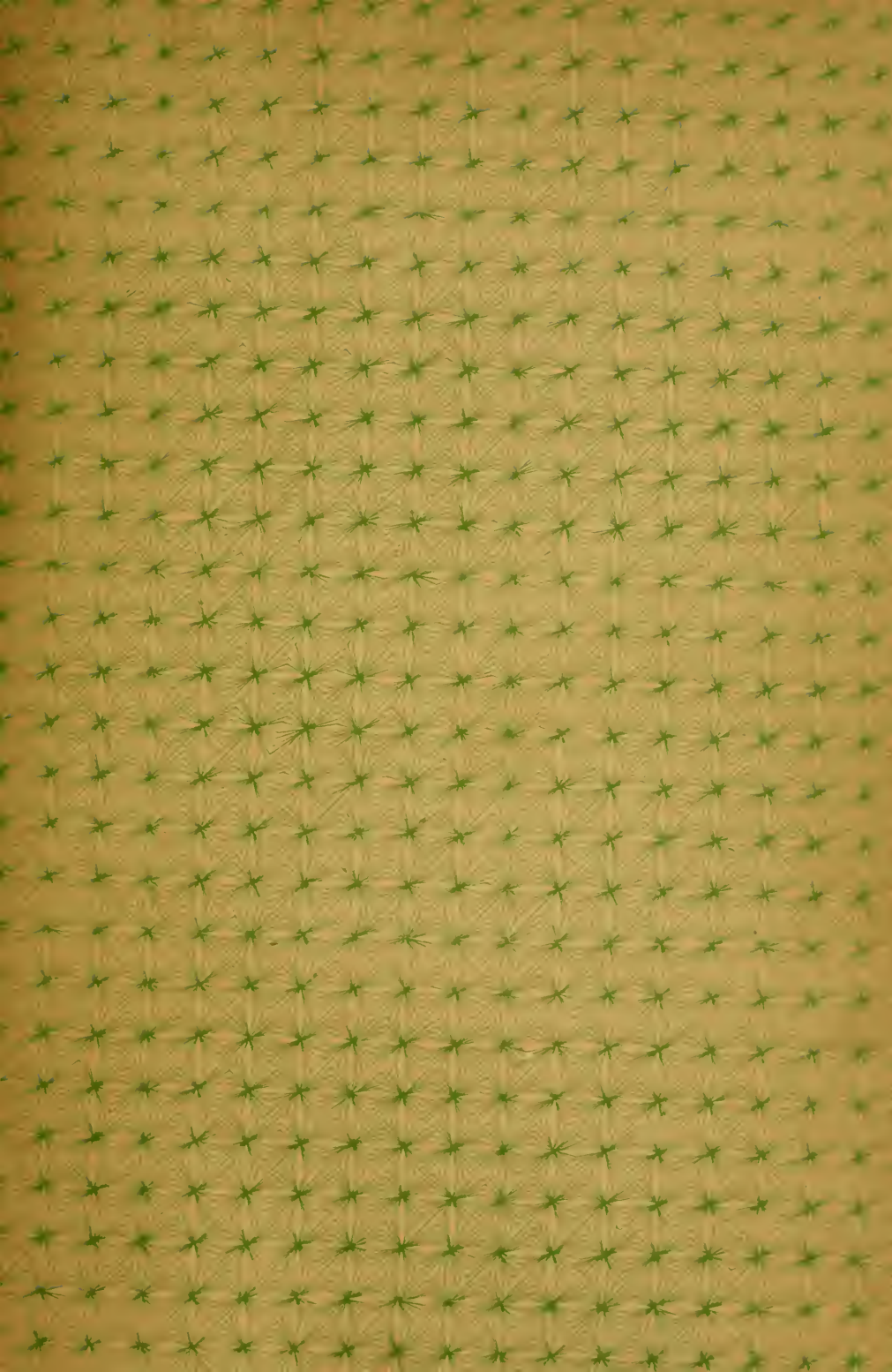
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AMERICAN COMMENTARY

ON THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

EDITED BY

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# COMMENTARY

ON THE

# EPISTLE OF JAMES.

BY

EDWIN T. WINKLER, D. D.

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

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## I. AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE.

THE title assumed by our author, "Servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 : 1), would of itself naturally suggest the conclusion that he was not an apostle, and hence that he must be identified neither with James the son of Zebedee, nor James the Little, the son of Alphæus—both of whom were upon the apostolic lists—but rather with the James whom the gospels and epistles designate as "the Lord's brother" (Matt. 13 : 55 ; Mark 6 : 3 ; Gal. 1 : 19), and who, as appears from the history (Acts 12 : 17 ; 15 : 13 ff. ; 21 : 18 seq.), and also from Paul's testimony (Gal. 2 : 9), had great influence in the mother-church at Jerusalem. James the Elder, the son of Zebedee, and the brother of John the Evangelist, fell a victim at an early period (about A. D. 42) to his impetuous zeal in propagating the gospel. (Acts 12 : 2.) Even sooner than he does James, the son of Alphæus, disappear from the evangelic history, having probably encountered a similar fate in regions remote from Palestine. James, the brother of the Lord, and the brother of Jude (Jude 1), lived, says Hegesippus, until the destruction of Jerusalem was near at hand ; and during that period (extending according to Josephus to the year A. D. 63), exercised pastoral authority in the metropolitan church of the Jewish Christians. The Jews recognized him as a righteous man, and tradition gives him the title of "the Just." To this eminent disciple every probability assigns the authorship of the Epistle—a conclusion in which the majority of interpreters are agreed.

Yet there is a pretty general unwillingness to accept the literal statement that this James was the brother of our Lord ; the deep-rooted prejudice in favor of the celibacy of the Virgin Mother being the main difficulty in the way.

Hence, some have insisted that James, the Lord's brother, was the same person as James the Little, the son of Alphæus. They argue that Alphæus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Cleophas ; that Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and the mother of James and Joses (Mark 15 : 40), was sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus ; that James was therefore the cousin of Jesus, and that merely that remoter relationship may be indicated by the title, "Brother of the Lord."

But these positions are not tenable. For, 1. The evidence is not entirely satisfactory that Alphæus and Cleophas are the same name. 2. It is highly improbable that two sisters should have each had the same name. 3. It is quite certain that Mary, the wife of Cleophas, was not the sister of Mary, the wife of Joseph. There were four women at the cross of Jesus, one of whom was "his mother's sister." (John 19 : 25.) She was not named by John, who here displays his characteristic modesty, for she was his own mother, Salome ; but this omission is supplied by the other evangelists. (Matt. 27 : 56 ; Mark 15 : 40.) 4. The employment of the title "brother" to indicate a cousin is contrary to usage. The more tender title for such a kinsman could only be used under special circumstances, but by no means as a common designation. 5. And finally, neither James,

nor any other of the brothers of Jesus, was ranked among the twelve. "The brothers of Jesus" were distinguished from the apostles, both during the early ministry of our Lord (Matt. 12 : 46), and after the resurrection, when for the first time they believed on him. (John 7 : 5 ; Acts 1 : 14.) The phraseology of Gal. 1 : 19 and 1 Cor. 15 : 7 does not contradict this conclusion—the former of these texts signifying "other of the apostles saw I not, but I saw James," and the latter that Christ appeared not only to James, but to all the apostles.

Other interpreters, however, who recognize James with his brothers and sisters as the members of Mary's immediate family (Matt. 12 : 46 ; Luke 8 : 19), maintain (after Origen) that these were not the children of Mary and Joseph, but the children of the latter by a previous marriage. But this conclusion is also without just grounds, and is plainly dictated by a low idea of the sacredness of the marriage relation, an idea wholly foreign to the inspired writers, and to the Hebrew people. As to the evangelists, they have no hesitation in representing Mary as the wife of Joseph, after the birth of our Lord. For, 1. Jesus is designated as Mary's "first born son," an expression which naturally, if not necessarily, implies that other children followed. 2. It is stated that Joseph "knew not his wife" until after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1 : 25), which proves that he did then assume the full conjugal relation. 3. There is nothing whatever to warrant the supposition that Joseph was a widower at the time when he married Mary, or that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were not Mary's children by Joseph. And in this connection it may be added, as Angus shrewdly observes, that if they were Joseph's elder children, Jesus would not have been the heir to David's throne. (Note on Matt. 13 : 55.) 4. We read of only one wife to Joseph ; and it is she who appears as the head of the family, in the circle of their children, the type of the household of the redeemed. (Matt. 12 : 50.) This common association suggests that Mary was their mother, a conclusion which Lightfoot would negative by the suggestion that our Lord's brethren, being always in the company, and under the direction of Mary, may be explained by the fact that Joseph was already dead. This is not, indeed, impossible ; and yet in John 6 : 42, Joseph seems referred to as then living : "Whose father and mother *we know*." 5. And finally, the main argument upon which Lightfoot relies, that had James been the son of Mary, Jesus would not have committed her to the care of John, does not avail if, as is quite conceivable, John was in a condition to take care of Mary, as James and the other brothers could not. But see Lightfoot on Galatians, Diss. II.

## II. CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS.

The characteristic qualities of James may to some extent be inferred from the Epistle. That he was a man of culture may be concluded from his easy and generally perspicuous Greek, which, however, is not without a tinge of Hebrew symbolism and sententiousness : and also from the form of the Epistle, which is arranged after the order of a Greek oration, and already affords a type of the modern sermon, having an exordium, a division into three heads which are separately considered, and finally a peroration by recapitulation. Especially do the allusions of James show a familiarity with the ethical books of his people, both the canonical and the apocryphal.

That James had a poetic sympathy with nature is apparent in the number of figures and local allusions which he employs, and which are racy of Palestine. Thus he speaks of the sea in phrases full of expression (1 : 6 ; 3 : 4) ; of the flowers (1 : 10) ; of the fig, the olive, and the vine (3 : 12) ; of the fresh and salt springs of his native country (3 : 11,

12); of the drought (5 : 17, 18) ; of the Simoom from the Arabian Desert (1 : 11); and of the early and the latter rains. In the changeful objects around him he discerned the types of spiritual and eternal realities.

Further, that our writer was pre-eminently, as he denominates himself, "a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ," appears from the entire tone of his Epistle. He commended faith, heavenly wisdom, and prayer; he urged docility, reticence, and self-control; he insisted upon fraternity, charity, and forgiveness; he proclaimed that a religion which had no restraining influence over the passions and no formative influence over the character and the conduct was utterly worthless in the sight of God. In the spirit, and in not a few of the expressions, of his Epistle, he displays a striking family likeness to that greater preacher who gave the world the sermon on the Mount. James also employs the didactic style, sentences sharply proverbial, and a variety of illustrations and examples, as the best appliances for interesting and instructing the popular mind. He dispensed "wisdom's dole at wisdom's gate." (Prov. 8 : 34.)

### III. DESTINATION OF THE EPISTLE.

The difficulty of deciding satisfactorily to what class of readers the Epistle was addressed, shows that it belongs to the archaic age of Christianity, when nice distinctions had not yet been established; when the Jews of the Dispersion (1 : 1) had not yet set themselves against the Lord and his anointed; when the Jewish Christians still recognized their place of worship, as a synagogue (rendered "assembly" in our Version, 2 : 2) and retained much of the old ritual service (1 : 27); and when believing Gentiles were regarded as having entered into fellowship *with Israel*, just as the proselytes had been recognized as Jews. The age was chaotic. The light shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. These peculiar circumstances explain the indeterminateness of the address. Those whom James had mainly in view were, beyond all question, Jewish Christians, who had been begotten through the word of truth (1 : 18); who had exercised faith in Christ (2 : 1, 14); and had been baptized into his name (2 : 7); and whose hope in persecution was fixed upon the coming of the Lord (5 : 7). But, in the address, James comprehended others also. With a love that followed his people in their estrangements, and with a prescient hope that many of them would be convicted of sin through their own violated law, and be brought to repentance and salvation, he addressed his Epistle to the Jews of the Dispersion, the twelve tribes whose nationality was now broken up. He appealed to the rich among them, who largely belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, and had control of the civil power which they employed against the poor Christians, and he urged them to the exercise of justice and humanity. He attacked the barren orthodoxy of the Pharisees, who supposed that their knowledge of God sufficed for salvation, and whose teachings were not without a pernicious influence upon the Christians themselves. And he corrected the false estimates of the worth of that mere ceremonial worship, which prevailed extensively among all classes. In short, the Epistle, as it had the character, had also the scope of a sermon.

Not only the salutation (1 : 1; comp. Matt. 15 : 24; 1 Peter 1 : 1), but also the similarity of the themes discussed, and even of the expressions used, show that the author of this Epistle had in view the same classes of persons to whom our Lord preached, and to whom the First Epistle of Peter was addressed. They also illustrate the character and condition of these persons, by presenting the themes most familiarly insisted upon by the earliest preachers of Christianity.

To the Sermon on the Mount, the allusions of James are distinct and frequent : Compare 1 : 2, on joy in trial, with Matt. 5 : 12; James 1 : 4, on Christian perfection, with Matt. 5 : 48; James 1 : 5; 5 : 15, on prayer, with Matt. 7 : 7-12; James 1 : 9; 4 : 11, on the exaltation of the lowly, with Matt. 5 : 3, 4; James 1 : 20, on the wrath of man, with Matt. 5 : 22; James 2 : 13, on judgment without mercy, with Matt. 6 : 14, 15; 5 : 7; James 2 : 14, on faith without works, with Matt. 7 : 21-23; James 3 : 17, 18, on peaceful and gentle wisdom, with Matt. 5 : 9; James 4 : 7, on friendship with the world, with Matt. 6 : 24; James 4 : 11, on censorious judgments, with Matt. 7 : 1-5; James 5 : 2, on perishing riches, with Matt. 6 : 19; James 5 : 10, on the endurance of the prophets, with Matt. 5 : 12; James 5 : 12, on swearing, with Matt. 5 : 33-37.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Peter as freely repeats the language and thought of James, as the latter quotes from the Sermon on the Mount. Compare 1 : 2, on joy in temptations, with 1 Peter 4 : 12, 13; James 1 : 11, on the withering grass and fading flowers, with 1 Peter 1 : 24; James 1 : 18, on spiritual birth, with 1 Peter 1 : 3, which supplements it; James 1 : 21, on amendment of life and growth in knowledge, with 1 Peter 2 : 1; James 2 : 7, on blaspheming the name of Christ, with 1 Peter 4 : 14, where this is instanced in the reproach of Christ's people; James 3 : 13, on commending the gospel by good conduct, with 1 Peter 2 : 12; James 4 : 1, on the lusts warring within, with 1 Peter 2 : 11; James 4 : 6, on God's dealings with the proud and the humble, with 1 Peter 5 : 5, 6; James 4 : 7, on submitting to God and resisting the devil, with 1 Peter 5 : 6-9; James 4 : 10, on humility and exaltation, with 1 Peter 5 : 6; and, finally, James 5 : 20, on hiding a multitude of sins, with 1 Peter 4 : 8, which explains the statement. In some of these instances of parallelism the two writers doubtless drew from the common source indicated above. On the relation of the two Epistles, Van Oosterzee remarks: "The twofold tendency of the Epistles of Peter, *consolation and exhortation*, is, in the Epistle of James, blended into one." "N. T. Theol.," § 31, 6.

#### IV. AIM OF THE EPISTLE.

The primary design of the Epistle was to encourage holy living amid the peculiar temptations and trials to which the Jewish Christians were exposed. Hence, whatever considerations were calculated to produce patient steadfastness, unworldliness, and mutual serviceableness were earnestly insisted upon; those offences which disturbed the purity and peace of the churches were sternly reprobated; and, in particular, the abuse of the doctrines of Divine Sovereignty as related to sin, and of salvation by faith, was emphatically condemned. On the other hand, the oppressors of Christians were denounced for their injustice, and were threatened with speedy retribution. The homiletical character of the Epistle allowed easily of such changes of address. The letter was sent to the care of no special church or group of churches. It is a catholic, or general, Epistle; it was intended to be multiplied and circulated as widely as possible, so that it might correct improprieties in the growing and poorly-supplied churches, and instruct the minds and consciences of individual believers.

#### V. TIME OF COMPOSITION.

From the style and contents of the Epistle, we may infer that it was the first of this class of New Testament writings—a place which it holds in the oldest manuscripts.

<sup>1</sup> Athanasius states that the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew was translated into Greek by James, the Bishop of Jerusalem. Tom. II., p. 102, Stanley's "Sermons and Essays," p. 291 n.

Compare Stanley's "Apostolic Age," p. 290. There are, however, but few indications to fix the date of composition. It was written, probably, but not certainly, when the disciples were already called Christians (2: 7, A. D. 43?), and hence, after the establishment of the Christian Church at Antioch. (Acts 11: 26.) The knowledge of the gospel was already widely extended. Various churches had now been established, with their elders and places of worship. (5: 14; 2: 2.) Troubles had begun to arise from the ambition of the teachers (3: 1), as well as from the oppressions of wealthy and powerful persecutors. (2: 6; 5: 1-6.) From this last circumstance it may be concluded that the Christian communities of those days consisted mostly of the laboring poor. The Epistle certainly belongs to the early Apostolic Age, and nothing in its contents contradicts the judgment of Neander, that its date precedes the time when separate Gentile churches were formed, before the relation of Jews and Gentiles in the Christian Church had been brought under discussion. Most modern interpreters and historians assign it to the year 45. So Alford. Nor is there any ground to question the prevailing opinion that this letter to the Tribes of the Dispersion was written at Jerusalem.

## VI. AUTHENTICITY.

The most important evidence of the authenticity of this Epistle is its reception into the Peshito, the venerable Syriac Version of the New Testament, which was made in the second century, and in a region lying beside Palestine. The Syrian, Ephrem, also quotes from it, ascribing it to James, the brother of the Lord. It is alluded to in that ancient Christian document, "The Shepherd," of Hermas, and is cited by Clement of Rome, Irenæus, Origen, and others of the early Christian writers. When the claims of the Epistle were considered at the Council of Nice, in the fourth century, all doubt as to its canonical authority was set at rest, and it was received as an inspired writing both by the Eastern and the Western churches. At the Reformation, the question as to its claims was revived by Erasmus, Luther, and others, and has, from time to time, been recalled by subsequent Christian writers. The main argument against the authenticity of the Epistle is, however, theological—the apparent contradiction between the doctrine of James and that of the Apostle Paul. But this difficulty clearly belongs to the department of interpretation, rather than that of historical evidence, and should be left for adjustment to the interpreter. An able contribution to the discussion has been made by Neander, who argues that there can be no discrepancy between the two writers, Paul and James; since, without having any reference to each other, they addressed different classes of people from different standpoints, using, however, the same familiar examples: and the great Expositor precisely indicates the position of this Epistle among the other and later writings of the New Testament, when he says of James, that "he received the new spirit under the old forms." How the doctrinal objections to the Epistle are to be met, will be most satisfactorily shown in the exposition of the texts in which these difficulties are found. The great body of interpreters agree in recognizing the authorship of James, and the integrity of the Epistle in its component parts.

The doubt entertained by many (like Eusebius), at first, in regard to the canonical character of the Epistle is explained, not only by the seeming opposition in doctrine between Paul and James—a circumstance to which reference has already been made—but by the fact that the Epistle was specially committed to the charge of Jewish Christians, who were separated to some extent from the other believers; and also that James, although a brother of the Lord, and a man of apostolic weight, was not an apostle. Yet,

as Huther shrewdly remarks, "These circumstances, while they interfered with the general reception of the Epistle at the first, add to the historic value of the ancient testimonies when it was accepted finally." The distinction between this Epistle and the spurious writings which claimed an apostolic origin is marked. The latter contain matters false and foolish—contrary either to the proprieties of providence, or to the truth of doctrine or history; the former is characterized by a self-evidencing truth, solemnity, and majesty beseeching a message from the King of kings. Among the writers of the New Testament, James held a place and displayed a character closely resembling those of John the Baptist among the heralds of the New Dispensation.

## VII. ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

*The Analysis* of this Epistle is rendered difficult by two circumstances. 1. The style is sententious and proverbial, resembling that of the Sermon on the Mount, to which the author makes frequent allusion. 2. The themes discussed are so related to each other that they here and there overlap the author's divisions; so that subjects, which have their own appropriate place in the argument, are sometimes resumed and sometimes anticipated. Yet the plan is, in its main outlines, regular and even rhetorical; having an Introduction, or Theme, with its Divisions, which are considered in their order, and a Practical Conclusion, in which the argument is recapitulated.

INTRODUCTION.—The persons addressed and the occasion of the Epistle. (1: 1-18.)

1. *Greeting.* To the Jews of the Dispersion, in especial those of them who had been converted to Christianity. (Ver. 1.)

2. *Occasion.* The trials and temptations of his readers, whom he exhorts to steadfast, patient, and prayerful endurance. (Ver. 2-18.)

1) *Exhortation to cheerful steadfastness under trials.* (Ver. 2-12.)

a. Amid conflicts and afflictions believers have reason to rejoice. (Ver. 2-4.)

b. Superiority to affliction may be secured by prayer. (Ver. 5-8.)

c. Another help to heroic steadfastness is a just estimate of the conditions of life, and also of the results of trials borne in a Christian spirit. (Ver. 9-12.)

2) *Exhortation to cheerful steadfastness under temptations to sin.* (Ver. 13-18.)

a. Argument from the nature of God. (Ver. 13.)

b. From the experiences of men under temptation. (Ver. 14, 15.)

c. From the divine dispensation. (Ver. 16-18.)

THEME AND DIVISION.—Characteristics of patient and godly sufferers. They must be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. (Ver. 19, 20.)

I. DIVISION.—Amid their trials and temptations, the godly should be swift to hear. This theme James develops by showing what is involved in the reception of the divine word, and by replying to the Antinomian objection to his proposition so far as the preceptive part of the word is concerned. (1: 21-2: 26.)

1. *The word must be received as the inner law.* (Ver. 21.)

2. *And as the rule of life.* (Ver. 22-25.)

3. *The speech must be regulated by it.* (Ver. 26.)

4. *And the social intercourse.* (1: 27-2: 13.)

a. In society the gospel enjoins a ritual service of charity. (Ver. 27.)

b. In the church it is the principle of fellowship. (2: 1-9.)

c. It sanctions all the precepts of the Second Table of the Law. (Ver. 10, 11.)

d. And enforces them by the decisions of the final judgment. (Ver. 12, 13.)

5. *Refutation of the objection that faith by itself suffices.* (Ver. 14-26.)

a. Saving faith is practical. (Ver. 14.)

b. Worthlessness of an inoperative faith (ver. 15-17) : to the needy (ver. 15, 16), to the professor of it. (Ver. 17.)

c. True faith must have works (ver. 18-26) : else there is no evidence of its existence (ver. 18) ; nor any strength and blessedness in the experience of professors. (Ver. 19). Confirmation from Abraham's example (ver. 20-24) ; and Rahab's. (Ver. 25, 26.)

II. DIVISION.—Amid trials and temptations, the godly should be slow to speak. Warning against sins of the tongue, and the collisions and offences to Christian charity and fellowship thence arising. (3 : 1-12.)

1. *Those transgressing in this particular will be severely judged.* (3 : 1, 2.)2. *Grounds of the judgment.* (Ver. 3-12.)

a. The wonderful power of the tongue. (Ver. 3-6.)

b. The power of man, Nature's lord, to rule it. (Ver. 7-12.)

III. DIVISION.—Amid trials and temptations, the godly should be slow to wrath, and also its kindred impulsive passions. (3 : 13 ; 4 : 17.)

1. *Gentleness and moderation of Christian wisdom depicted.* (3 : 13-18.)2. *Warning against the sway of the passions.* (4 : 1-17.)

a. Their evil consequences (ver. 1-3) : they engender strife (ver. 4 : 1), they are illusory (ver. 2), and they deprive prayer of its efficacy (ver. 3).

b. *Ungodliness of the passions* (ver. 4-6) : they involve enmity to God (ver. 4), and oppose his word (ver. 5, 6).

c. Means to overcome these desires. (Ver. 7-10.)

d. Warning against the presumption they inspire (ver. 11-17) : in men's estimates (ver. 11, 12), in their secular projects (ver. 13-17).

CONCLUSION.—Duties of the tempted and tried recapitulated and reinforced. (5 : 1-20.)

1. *Swiftness to hear.* (Ver. 1-11.) Let them heed the assurances of the word in regard to the speedy end of all their present complications : the future it forecasts for prosperous wickedness (ver. 1-6), and for afflicted piety (ver. 7-11).2. *Slowness to speak.* (Ver. 12-18.) Let them use the gift of the tongue piously, hence, not in swearing (ver. 10), but in prayer (ver. 13-18), which must be seasonable (ver. 13), intercessory (ver. 14-16), and trustful (ver. 16-18).3. *Slowness to wrath.* (Ver. 19, 20.) Let Christ's people, instead of contending with injurious men, seek to save them.

NOTE.—It would perhaps be esteemed a display of pedantry should the writer of this brief Commentary give a list of the numerous works consulted in its preparation. He needs only say that he has availed himself of the aid afforded by the best authorities, and has used all the diligence in coming to correct conclusions which a career of manifold occupation would allow. Yet he must be permitted to express his special obligations to the learned labors of Winer in the department of New Testament grammar, of Huther in interpretation, and of Lisco in analysis. He is also indebted to Bengel's fruitful hints, and Johnstone's and Plumptre's popular expositions, and, among historical works, to Neander's "Planting and Training of the Church," and to Stanley's "Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age." Only the necessarily contracted limits of the present work have prevented its author's drawing more largely from these rich stores. And he must add, in conclusion, that he has derived no little encouragement and aid from the scholarly criticisms and acute suggestions of Prof. Thomas J. Dill, of Howard College, who must, however, be held, in no respect, as responsible for the conclusions to which the author has arrived.



# THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

## CHAPTER I.

**J**AMES, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

1 James, a<sup>1</sup> servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, 2 greeting.

1 Gr. *bondservant*..... 2 Gr. *wisheth joy*.

### Ch. 1: 1-18. THE GREETING AND THE OCCASION OF THE EPISTLE.

**1. James**, the author of this Epistle, was not the son of Alphæus, but a full brother of the Lord, whose name occurs in the family list. (Matt. 13: 55, 56; Mark 6: 3.) Nor was he one of the twelve apostles; for he was not even a disciple at the time when the number of these "witnesses of the resurrection" was made up. (John 6: 70; 7: 5.) He did not possess the qualifications which the disciples regarded as necessary for the apostolic office (Acts 1: 21, 22), and therefore could not have been elected by them to the apostleship after our Lord's ascension. Nor have we any evidence that James was miraculously designated to that office, as Paul was. Further, James did not claim the dignity, as the apostles were wont to do. (Rom. 1: 1; 1 and 2 Cor. 1: 1; Gal. 1: 1; Titus 1: 1; 1 Peter 1: 1.) Nor, finally, did he perform the proper apostolic work: he was not *sent forth* to testify to the resurrection of Jesus, but remained at Jerusalem, where he was held in honor as the Lord's brother (Gal. 1: 19), and as an eminent saint, and where he presided over the church until A. D. 62 or 63, when he suffered martyrdom. See Introduction I.

**A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**—literally, a *bondsman*. Here the whole phrase indicates a person subject to the divine government, employed by God for the performance of his will, holding himself at the divine disposal, and devoted in particular to the extension of the gospel of Christ among men. The lowest service to God is honorable. The title was not official, but was applied not only to apostles (Acts 4: 29; Rom. 1: 1), but to preachers, teachers, and to the disciples in general. (Acts 2: 18; Eph. 6: 6.) All the Lord's people are servants, bearing his name, representing him in example, testimony, and advocacy, and doing his will. 'God and the Lord Jesus Christ' are mentioned together to indicate the harmony of both the dispensa-

tions of revealed religion—the Old, which recognized God as the sovereign of Israel; and the New, which acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church. (James 2: 1.) The reverence of James for both would conciliate the good will of those whom he addressed. (Acts 26: 6, 7.) It is observable that the name of Jesus Christ occurs but once again in this Epistle. (James 2: 1.) The omission suggests the modesty and discretion of the writer, who would not even seem to urge any claim to consideration on the score of his natural relationship to Jesus. (2 Cor. 5: 16; Mark 10: 43-45.) A union with Christ in service and spirit is the only relationship that abides.

**To the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad**—literally, "to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion." See John 7: 35. The Syriac Version adds, "among the Gentiles." Hackett: "The Jewish nation consisted of those who were descended from the twelve tribes, which fact justified the expression historically, though the twelve tribes had now lost their separate existence. Many of the Israelites who had been led away in the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivity never returned to Palestine. They settled among the Gentiles, engaged in various avocations, and maintained their national traditions and synagogue worship. These centres of religious truth and influence prepared the heathen for Christianity. And the Jews abroad were more accessible to the gospel than the communities in Palestine, which were set against Christianity by persecuting rulers, and were prejudiced by the imposing ritual service at Jerusalem. Hence the special efforts put forth by apostles and evangelists to win the tribes 'in the Dispersion.'" Yet our Epistle was not exclusively addressed to the Jews in foreign countries, or even to the Christians among them; for those in Palestine were also in dispersion, the old tribal limits having been broken in every direction. Probably

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

2 Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of

1 Or, trials.

the address was from the head of the church at Jerusalem to all the Jewish converts outside of the metropolis, especially to the members of the Church who had been scattered by persecution, and had fled to Judea, Samaria, Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch. Acts 8: 1; 11: 19; compare 1 Pet. 1: 1. Some of the dispersed spoke Greek only—hence they were called Hellenists (Acts 9: 29); others spoke the Aramean. Jahn "Arch." § 324. That the former were by far the larger class, may be inferred from the fact that James' letter to the dispersed Jews was written in Greek. Upon the extent of the Dispersion, see comment on James 4: 13. **Greeting**—*wishes joy*. A salutation common among the Greeks, and familiar to James also. See Acts 15: 23. The usual Hebrew salutation was "Peace." The term here adopted corresponds with the design of the Epistle, and prepared its readers for the call to "joy" in the next verse. The preacher brought to the tried and tempted a message of consolation and cheer, thus performing his pastoral work as "the minister of the circumcision." (Gal. 2 9.) He wrote to them in the language in common use among the remoter tribes in the Dispersion, thus fulfilling the promise that God's favor would follow his exiles. (Ezek. 11: 16.)

## 2-18. OCCASION OF THE EPISTLE.

The trials and temptations of the Jewish Christians, which called for exhortations to steadfast, prayerful, and patient endurance. Here two divisions occur: I. (2-12). Exhortation to cheerful steadfastness under persecutions and other outward trials; II. (13-18). Call to Christians to resist the temptations by which they were beset.

1) In the exhortation to patience under trials the following is the train of thought: 1 (ver. 2-4). Believers have reason to rejoice amid their manifold conflicts and afflictions; 2 (ver. 5-8). Superiority to affliction may be obtained by prayer, which endows the soul with a lofty and otherwise unattainable wisdom; 3 (ver. 9-12). Another help to heroic steadfastness in trial is a correct estimate of the external condition of life and also of the results of trials borne in a Christian spirit.

a. 2-4. Believers have reason to rejoice amid their manifold conflicts and afflictions.

2. **My brethren**—a favorite expression with James. It marks most of the paragraphs of the present Epistle, as ver. 19, 2: 1, 14; 3: 1; 4: 11; 5: 7, 9, 12, 19. Characteristically it was altered in the beginning of his address at the Jerusalem Conference. (Acts 15: 13.) The allusion was not to the common descent of the Jewish Christians, but to that new relation of sympathy and serviceableness which believers sustain to each other; all had alike a share in the welfare and administration of the Church. Comp. Baumgarten "Ap. Hist.," Acts 15: 23. Another reason, besides that given in ver 1, for writing the Epistle: it was sent by a servant of the Lord, and a brother in the Christian family. **When ye fall into divers (manifold) temptations**. Syriac: "Many and various trials." Here the occasion of writing the Epistle appears. The Jewish Christians were beset with various temptations, against whose depressing and seductive influence they needed to be warned. That the trials referred to were more than troubles and persecutions, is suggested by the use of a kindred word in ver. 13, where internal temptations are indicated. The term here, however, is intended to suggest the whole theme in the mind of the writer, while at the same time it is limited in its present application by "fall into," so as to be surrounded by (*περιπεριέσται*), as the traveler in the parable "fell among" thieves. (Luke 10: 30.) In classic Greek the verb applies to difficulties and contests. Accordingly the 'temptations' here introduce the whole subject, while yet they are, in some sort, a contrast to those indicated in ver. 13. They are rather the temptations that environ us than those that dwell within us. They are the trials arising from the conflicts, sufferings, and troubles encountered by believers in a sin-stricken and hostile world. Luke 8: 13 compared with Matt. 13: 21. Thus they are 'manifold,' embracing all the relations of life, in any of which the Christian may be tempted to apostasy or despair. Hence, they are of various forms and many kinds. (2 Cor. 6: 4 seq.; 11: 23 seq.) Besides the trials common to all men,

3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

4 your faith worketh <sup>1</sup>patience. And let <sup>1</sup>patience have *its* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

1 Or, *steadfastness*.

Christians are exposed by their principles and profession to others peculiar to themselves. **Count it all joy.** An allusion to the greeting of joy in ver. 1, which must have awakened surprise, and which accordingly James now proceeds to explain and justify. Joy is used metonymically for a cause or matter of rejoicing. 'All joy,' entire joy; the idea is akin to that of 2 Cor. 4: 17, where suffering is represented as belittled by its glorious results; here it is represented as quite done away. There is "a joy of battle" when there is an assurance of victory. The beneficial effects of each trouble, steadfastly endured, more than compensate for the immediate pain it inflicts. (Heb. 12: 11.) Under the gospel, trials change their character; they are an exercise of fortitude, a rich contribution to experience, a test of the consolations of the Spirit, a call to trust in God, and to pity and pardon toward men, and a preparation for heaven. Thus each trial becomes to the Christian mind the discipline of a Father's hand, and an occasion for joy and thanksgiving; it ceases to be affliction; it is all joy. See an illustration and list of the trials over which faith may triumph, 2 Cor. 11: 24-28.

3. **Knowing this** introduces the warrant, at least in part, of the previous exhortation. The inspired writers frequently appeal to the knowledge which Christians may derive either from experience or the gospel promises, as an argument for steadfastness. (1 Cor. 15: 58; Col. 3: 24; 4: 1; Heb. 10: 34, etc.) The participle is closely connected with the imperative of the previous verse, and shares its meaning: "you ought to know this." **That the trial of your faith—the proving of your faith.** Cremer: the verification of faith. The trying of faith not only indicates the testing of its quality, but also the happy results of that test (compare 1 Peter 1: 7, the only other passage in which the word occurs), for the writer proceeds on the supposition that the trial will be borne Christianly: a genuine faith exposed to the fires of affliction (Rom. 5: 3, 4) will be as furnace-proven gold. Thus gloomy night brings out the stars. Faith here does not signify the

doctrine of Christ, but that confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the centre of Christian character, and the necessary foundation of Christian conduct. **Worketh patience—or constancy;** the effect of the trial. (Rom. 5: 3.) The Syriac reads: "Maketh you possess patience." This virtue is earnestly commended by our Lord. (Matt. 10: 22; 24: 13.) It is closely connected with hope, both in the Septuagint and the New Testament. See 2 Thess. 3: 5; Rev. 3: 10; Rom. 15: 5, 13. Hope is the ground of constancy; hence, the words are used interchangeably. Here, however, James deals with patience only as it is a part of the Christian character. The tried believer not only endures in this or that instance, but he acquires the power of endurance, a manly robustness of spirit. (Luke 21: 19.) A personal conviction of the power of faith, a clear conscience, and a cheerful expectation impart constancy, and so prepare the tempted soul for new conflicts and new victories. Patience is too passive a term to express at once the voluntary and daily endurance of hardships and outrages for religion's sake, and also the steadfast maintenance of a pious course of life notwithstanding these difficulties; hence, the word is translated in Rom. 2: 7, "patient continuance." Such was the spirit of the disciples who, after having been scourged on account of their fidelity to Christ, "departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts 5: 40, 41; compare 1 Peter 4: 16; consult note on James 5: 8, De Wette. The thought is not pursued as in the parallel passage, 1 Peter 1: 7; instead of encouraging Christian hope as Peter does, James adds an admonition. (Ver. 4.)

4. **But let patience have her (a) perfect work.** The scope of the duty now under consideration; the constancy now to be displayed under affliction will have other occasions also for its exercise and must be maintained even to the end of life. (Neander's "Planting and Training of the Christian Church," B. vi. Ch. 3.) Thus must its work be perfected and its glorious career be accom-

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

5 But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not;

plished. (2 Tim. 4: 7.) Constancy is not simply a negative virtue, a mere submission and resignation under calamity, like an immovable rock amid the waves: it is inspired by hope (2 Thess. 3: 5), and is diligent in the performance of good works (Rom. 2: 7; 2 Cor. 12: 12), like a soldier familiar with hardships and perils, and pressing on to the conquest of new fields. **That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing**—*lacking in nothing*. Here again the effect on character is indicated. Bengel: "The perfect work is followed by the perfect man." See this illustrated in the case of the approved preacher (2 Tim. 1: 15), and in that of Abraham (James 2: 22), whose faith was made perfect by works. That (*to the end that*) indicates that this ennoblement of nature and enlargement of energy should be had in view, and diligently striven after by the Christian sufferer. 'Perfect and entire' are synonyms; both terms were applied to sacrifices, but there is nothing to show such a reference here; 'perfect' is properly what has attained its aim, 'entire' what is complete in all its parts. Suffering believers should seek to be perfect in the development of character, and entire in the discharge of the duties allotted to their several spheres in life. When this end should be attained they would be 'lacking in nothing' either as respects the moral nature or the conduct. In its proper signification, the word would be 'lagging behind,' *i. e.*—behind the aim set before Christians—a sharp contrast to 'perfect' which attains the goal. The Jews needed the exhortation, to prepare them for the approaching days of trial, but as a nation they did not steer toward the Christian ideal; hence they were left behind by other nations and stranded in history. That absolute perfection, however, is not attained by any in this life, James teaches, when he says that in many things we all offend. James 3: 2; compare 2: 13. Yet so much the greater the necessity of keeping the highest aim in view. (Heb. 6: 1; 2 Peter 1: 5-8.)

6. 5-8. The support of cheerful constancy is found in prayer, through which a wisdom unattainable by nature is secured.

5. Whence it is to be sought. "But" is in

the original, although it has been unfortunately left out in the beginning of this verse in the Common Version. James meets an objection or complaint which the reader might naturally urge: "You set before me an impossible aim; the work of moral perfection is too hard; cases occur which demand a superior judgment to distinguish between right and wrong. (Phil. 1: 10; Rom. 12: 2; Col. 4: 5.) To this practical difficulty, the text is a reply. **If any of you lack wisdom**—is *wanting in*, properly, is *left behind by*, more literally, *come short of*. Prayer is the necessary and efficient resort of those not in the condition referred to in ver. 4; of those who are consciously wanting in Christian wisdom; who are below the Christian ideal; whose feebleness in faith and constancy (ver. 3), and whose imperfection in character and conduct (ver. 4), are disclosed by the ordeal of trials. Among the Gentiles, wisdom was the favorite theme of philosophy and rhetoric. (1 Cor. 1: 17.) But no one imagined that the ideal man of philosophy could be found, or undertook to apply the stoical precepts to his own case. (Cicero "Tusc. Quests." 2: 22; Epictetus. "Disc." 2: 19, 24.) On the contrary a want of correspondence with the higher law was defended as "naturally and divinely justifiable." (Von Harless' "System of Christian Ethics," § 12.) Among the Jews wisdom was practical; it embraced what a man should know, what he should be, and what he should do. "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." Compare the praises of wisdom in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the book of Jesus Sirach. The wisdom enjoined by James must not be restricted to the circumstances of the present case. It is the cause of the perfect work (ver. 4), the solid foundation of Christian conduct: for it is "that spiritual discernment rooted in faith, living, urging to action in whatever relates to the life mission of Christians, as well in general as in particular crises; hence also in persecutions (ver. 2), which would otherwise be changed into inner temptations, instead of being the way to perfection." (Huther and Brückner.) **Let him ask of God**—by whom alone it can be given

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

6 and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the  
7 surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For

(Prov. 2: 6), and who has promised to bestow this supernatural gift (James 3: 15, 17) upon such as seek it by the prayer of faith. (Ver. 6; James 5: 13 seq.) When nature fails amid the sharp conflicts of life, help to the struggling, aspiring soul is afforded by a Power above nature—a power kindly accessible and efficient—the primal fountain of light and love. (1 John 5: 15.) A sense of spiritual poverty is a blessing when it leads the humbled soul to God; the more deeply the tree is rooted in the ground, the higher it lifts its top into the sunlight. **That giveth to all men liberally.** In the original ‘men’ does not occur, and it is not needed in the translation: ‘that giveth’ is a participle agreeing with ‘God.’ The sense of the passage would be expressed by a repetition, ‘the giving God that giveth,’ etc. He is the giving One. Prayer for the supply of our needs is encouraged by God’s cordiality in giving—by the temper and the policy of the King of heaven. “That giveth to all,” not only to those who ask aright (Bengel) or even ask at all; so great is his loving fatherly care! He giveth “simply” or “freely,” as the Syriac reads. The rendering of ἀπαλῶς by liberally is incorrect. The idea is that God’s gifts are not ostentatious, or interested, or embarrassed with conditions, exceptions, or counter demands, as the gifts of the rich (ver 10) were wont to be; but that they are granted from a pure desire to bless. (Matt. 6: 22; Rom. 12: 8.) **And upbraideth not.** This does not repeat the same thought in a negative form (Winer), but indicates a new feature in the mode of the divine giving, which does not offensively recall the benefits already given, or rebuke the applicant who asks for more. Not unfrequently the rich giver reproaches the poor for their folly, improvidence, and sloth, and so makes his gifts humiliating and detested. God, on the contrary, neither bargains with the suppliant, nor rails against him—he *gives*. **And it shall (will) be given him.** Another encouragement to the petitioner is afforded by the direct promise of a favorable response to his application. God has pleasure in giving to all; but he “is rich unto all that call upon him.” (Rom. 10: 12; Matt. 7: 7.) The clause is impersonal and the

principle it asserts is general (1 John 5: 14), the object for which prayer is made being put in the background; and yet no doubt there is a special reference here to the wisdom needed and implored by believers in trial. Compare Solomon’s prayer for wisdom, and the gracious answer. (1 Kings 3: 9-12; 2 Chron. 1: 10-12.)

6. From ver. 6-8 we have shown how wisdom is to be sought; what the character of acceptable prayer must be. **But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering—doubting.** The Greek word for ‘but’ (ἀλλ), like the German *aber*, is used in particular where an explanation is annexed, whether as an integral part of the sentence, or as a complete sentence, as here. (Winer.) It indicates that the thought is pursued, as also does the injunction, ‘Let him ask,’ which is repeated from ver. 5. Trust in God is indispensable to right and acceptable prayer; the ‘faith’ which, relying upon God’s power, good will, and faithfulness, assures itself of a gracious answer. James magnifies the office of faith here, as the condition of acceptance with God. Compare Mark 11: 24; Matt. 21: 21; Mark 11: 23; Rom. 4: 20. Nor does he contradict himself when, in the subsequent chapter, he vindicates its practical character. ‘Nothing doubting’ (*doubting not at all*) expresses the same idea as ‘in faith,’ but strengthens it by putting it in a negative form. Compare Rom. 4: 20: “(Abraham) staggered not (*wavered not*) at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.” See Matt. 21: 21. Doubt is the conflict of belief and unbelief, in which unbelief is gaining ground. Hermar: “Remove thy doubting, and thou needest not doubt in asking anything from God.” **For he that wavereth (doubteth) is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.** ‘For’ (γὰρ) may occur several times in succession with a change of reference; in such passages it often gives the ground of a series of separate thoughts, subordinate one to another. (Winer.) One dissuasive against doubting is derived from the character of the doubter, which has no stability, but is swayed by external circumstances: this is compared to a wave of the sea. There can be no peace or constancy, which

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways.

let not that man think <sup>1</sup>that he shall receive any 8 thing of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable 9 in all his ways. But let the brother of low degree

1 Or, that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, shall receive any thing of the Lord.

comes from wisdom, in a spirit inconstantly fluctuating here and there, now swelling with hope, now sinking into despondency, as fortune changes. (Isa. 57: 20, 21.) Only when the tempted soul cleaves firmly to God can it be tranquil, secure, and triumphant. Then faith, itself unmoved, moves mountains. (Matt. 21: 21.) The wind-tormented billow, aimlessly moving to and fro, is a lively picture of the unrest of a doubting soul. During the residence of Mary's family at Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee, James often beheld the natural phenomenon which he here refers to—that sheet of water being often disturbed by violent tempests, such as the one Bartlett describes in his “Footsteps of Our Lord and His Apostles.” First the cool breeze rushed down the ravines that lead to the lake, and began to ruffle its placid bosom. “As it grew darker, the breeze increased to a gale, the lake became a sheet of foam, and the white-headed breakers dashed proudly on the rugged beach; its gentle murmur was now changed into the wild and sorrowful sound of the whistling wind and the agitated waters. Afar off was dimly seen a little barque, struggling with the waves, and then lost sight of amidst the misty rack.” Comp. Matt. 8: 24. James had himself been a doubter (until after the resurrection of Jesus), and could therefore describe this class from his own experience. (Neander's “Planting,” etc., p. 326.) A similar expression is found in Heb. 13: 9: “Be not *carried about* with divers and strange doctrines.” In like manner Jude describes this class as “wandering stars” (ver. 13), and “clouds driven by the winds.” (ver. 12.)

7. Another reason for the warning of ver. 6—the prayers of the doubter will not be heard. **Let not that man think.** Thus the hope that God's favor may be secured by something merely external is denounced; see a similar expression in Matt. 3: 9—“Think not.” The expression, “that man,” breathes contempt. “Such a man as that shall have nothing given to him.” **That he shall (will) receive anything from the Lord**—that is, of the things prayed for. He may share with others in such benefits as the Lord, the giver

of all good, bestows and scatters with indiscriminating bounty (ver. 5); but he shall receive nothing in answer to prayer. Hence, the spiritual blessing of wisdom is unattainable by the doubter.

**8. A double-minded man (is) unstable in all his ways.** The verb ‘is’ (which is not in the Greek) should not occur in the translation; for both ‘double-minded man’ and ‘unstable in all his ways’ are in apposition to ‘that man,’ in ver. 7 (so in the Syriac), and explain why no blessing is imparted in such a case. The characteristics of the doubter have already been exhibited in a figure (ver. 6); he is now plainly described both as to his spirit and his conduct. ‘A double-minded man’—such, in character, is the doubter. He has, as it were, two souls contending with each other—the one turned to God, the other turned away from God, and hence to the world; he wishes to be the friend of God and the friend of the world at the same time, although the friendship of the world is enmity to God. (James 4: 4.) This was the cause of Solomon's defection. (1 Kings 11: 6.) He wavers between faith and unbelief. Hence, he is unprepared to receive the blessings he asks, or even to offer the kind of prayer upon which the gift is conditioned. Double-mindedness is neither the ground of the wavering (Wiesinger), nor its result (Lange), but its characteristic spirit. (Huther.) See note on James 4: 8. ‘Unstable in all his ways.’ The outer conduct will correspond with the internal discord. The double-minded man, yielding now to this inclination or motive, now to that, is fickle and unreliable in his undertakings and acts. (Ps. 91: 11; Jer. 16: 17; Prov. 3: 6.) As Jesus Sirach (2: 12) says: “He walks upon two roads.” This discord both in the inner and outer life prevents the reception of the heavenly gift of wisdom. Only a heart single and sincerely devoted to God may expect his spiritual blessings. (Matt. 6: 22.) Adams (on 2 Peter) quaintly describes such a person as an ill-broken horse having no pace, and a bat which has both wings and teeth, but is neither beast nor bird (p. 488). The adjective is applied by Hippocrates to fevers which observe no

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

10 glory in his high estate: and the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall

periods, and by Demosthenes to variable winds.

c. 9-12. Another help to heroic steadfastness in trials is a correct estimate of the external and spiritual conditions of men, and also of the results of trials endured in a Christian spirit.

The two extremes of Christian social life are here designated—that of the poor (ver. 9), and that of the rich. (ver. 10, 11.) The exhortation in ver. 12 is addressed to both. All classes are embraced by Christianity. (2: 11; 5: 13.)

9. (But) let the brother of low degree. 'But,' which the English Version omits, is important as showing that the writer brings into contrast the state of the lowly brother whom God exalts, with that of the waverer (ver. 8), for whom there is no hearing at the mercy seat. The title 'brother,' indicating the intimacy and tenderness of the Christian relation, is considerably applied to the poor, rather than to the rich. (ver. 10.) The 'low degree' refers to poverty; and this not only as imposing limitations and cares from which affluence is exempt, but as exposed to worldly reproach and carnal temptations, prejudicial to steadfastness. It indicates Christians who live at once in a state of poverty and a time of persecution. Huther makes the expression indicate the Christian in his entire lowly condition in the world, as one contemning riches, rejected by the world, inwardly troubled, and walking in humility before God; but this is to spiritualize the text, rather than to interpret it. That the poor *in spirit* have the kingdom of heaven is true (Matt. 5: 3), but that truth is not asserted here. **In that he is exalted—glory in his exaltation**—the Christian dignity now possessed and hereafter to be displayed. The elevated thought that the poor saint is now a son of God, and that he has an inheritance of glory, will prove a safeguard against despondency, and under trial and privation. Let him estimate his privileges at their true value, and he will find therein consolation, strength, and joy. The figure in this and the following verses is an *oxymoron*, where the

words or phrases are apparently contradictory; but, in fact, are congruous, because used in different senses. In Scripture, the *oxymoron* usually, if not always, displays in a lively manner the contrast between natural and spiritual conditions. So in 1 Cor. 7: 22. "The servant" (*bondsman*) called in the Lord, is the Lord's freeman, the freeman called, is Christ's bondsman." (Weisinger.) "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 10: 39.) This figure was more common anciently than it now is. In the spirit of James, Chrysostom says: "Scatter, that thou mayest not lose; keep not, that thou mayest keep; lay out, that thou mayest save; spend, that thou mayest gain." In verses 9, 10, the subject of the sentence indicates believers in their secular and civil state; the object indicates their spiritual condition.

10. But the rich in that he is made low—literally, *in his humiliation*. After 'rich,' *brother* is to be supplied, as it is expressed after 'poor' in the parallel member of the sentence. In such a connection, both the adjectives, 'poor' and 'rich' (ver. 9, 10), which answer the one to the other, must have the same noun, "brother," and to each of these nominatives the same verb, 'let (*him*) glory,' must serve. Any other construction would be strained and unnatural. Difficulties of interpretation must not be allowed to disturb the grammatical order, and pervert the plain meaning of the text: 'But let the rich brother glory in his humiliation.' The rich brother, in the Dispersion, was exposed to persecution as well as the poor brother. Although now favored of fortune, and abounding in worldly goods, he was in danger of losing his possessions, on account of his adherence to the gospel. And the rich brother in the church (compare 1 Tim. 6: 17-19) needed the resources of heavenly wisdom as well as others. The cause of his glorying was that riches had, in his estimation, ceased to have any substantial value. What gave him worldly distinction and splendor had lost its glory, having been eclipsed by the nobler blessings he possessed as a Christian; he had the same high dignity

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof

11 pass away. For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass; and the flower there-

as that imparted to his needy and now suffering brother—a glory independent of all secular conditions, superior to reproach (2 Sam. 6: 22) and to pain. (2 Cor. 12: 9.) He was humbled, yet exalted in recognizing the vanity of all earthly glory. **Because as the flower of the grass (a flower of grass) he shall (will) pass away.** This is the ground of appeal to the rich brother to rejoice in his humiliation. He has been released from dependence upon the earthly pomp and fortune, which, as a disciple of Christ, he must expect to lose. Soon he will cease to be distinguished from the poor of the believing company; as a rich brother he will 'pass away,' he will cease to be. As the flower which gives beauty to the grass soon withers, so in his case whatever decorates the earthly life will certainly disappear. 'Flower' does not here indicate the bud or shoot, as in Isa. 11: 1 (Septuagint), but the bloom itself. The figure, which is further developed in ver. 11, occurs also frequently in the Old Testament. It indicates the fortune of man in general. (Job 14: 1.) He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down. (Isa. 40: 6, 7; Ps. 103: 15; 1 Peter 1: 24.) But, what is especially observable, this comparison, which is used in the Old Testament to depress the pride of the ungodly, is here employed to sustain the courage of believers.

NOTE.—These verses (9, 10) show how unchristian is the union of Church and State, by which the arbitrary distinctions of earthly societies are sought to be perpetuated in the kingdom of God. For here it is intended that these accidents of wealth and rank shall disappear in the presence of a greater than earthly monarchs, and in the reception and enjoyment of prerogatives which the world cannot confer. (1 Cor. 16: 20; 1 Thess. 5: 26.) Here the rich and the poor meet together before the Lord—the Maker and the Redeemer of them all. In the fact that the poor man, rather than the rich, is called a brother, the genius of Apostolic Christianity finds expression. Says Quinet, in his "Roman Church and Modern Society," § IX: "In the ideal of the Christian Church, everything was done by the people: priests, deacons, bishops, became such by election, and, as it were, *sprang from the public conscience*. Now [among the Establishments] nothing in the Church is done by the people; never more

through them is the voice of God interrogated. This is what authorizes me to say that the spirit of modern institutions, in replacing everything upon this basis of the public conscience, of the sovereignty of the people, is incontestibly in its principle nearer the Christian ideal, than is at the present day the organization and institution of the Church." Compare a modern Pastoral with an Apostolic Epistle; in the former, the Church, meaning the clergy, is always magnified; in the latter, the Christian brotherhood; in the former, we vainly seek for such an address as that of Paul to the Corinthians: "All the brethren salute you"; or that which James despatched in the name of the apostles and elders *and brethren* unto the brethren in Antioch. (Acts 15: 23.) The subject is worthy of comment, since it shows how profound is the chasm which separates the hierarchical churches from those founded by Christ's apostles. The policy of the Vatican, in its contest for temporal sovereignty and secular possessions, has no warrant in the New Testament.

**11. For the sun is no sooner risen, etc.** In the original, the illustration in this verse is given in the form of an incident, a past event of familiar observation. The verbs are in the aorist, which indicates facts that have already taken place, and these verbs coming together, as they do here, express the rapid succession of the events. (Winer.) Literally, the text would read: "*For the sun rose with the burning wind, and withered the grass; and the flower thereof fell off, and the grace of the fashion of it perished: so also will the rich fade away in his ways.*" This mode of expression gives vivacity to the picture (Isa. 40: 7) in the original; yet it cannot be transplanted without awkwardness into English. 'The sun rose with the burning heat.' The reference appears to be to the simoom—in Palestine an east wind, which comes arid and scorching from the Arabian deserts. It is often referred to in the Old Testament. (Hos. 12: 1; 13: 15; Jer. 18: 17; Ezek. 17: 16; Job 7: 21.) (Winer's "Realwörterbuch.") Grimm's and Huther's objection to this reference that the sun is here said to wither, and not the heat, does not avail; for what is effected by the winds attending

falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

of fallet, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings.

12 Blessed is the man who endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I

the sunrise (Jonah 4: 8) may be referred to the sun itself; just as the ravages of an invading host are charged upon their leader. **So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.** The ways are a figure for the manner of life; here they represent the projects and undertakings, the pomps and pleasures belonging to a state of earthly prosperity. Whatever temporal possession, whatever favorable external circumstance adorns the earthly life, will be withered by persecution. 'Also' emphasises the resemblance to the figure. As the flower which glorifies the grass drops off, and the beauty of its external appearance (Ps. 104: 30; Luke 12: 56; Matt. 16: 3) perishes in the hot blast of the desert, so also does the rich man, in the season of calamity, lose whatever distinguishes him from his fellows; and such experiences those believers who were now thriving in their possessions, activities, and enterprises, must expect to endure. These reverses of fortune are tragical only in the case of the wealthy unbeliever, who, in losing his wealth, loses everything. (Ps. 49: 5-20; Luke 12: 16-21; 16: 19-26.)

12. Encouragement both to those who are in depressed circumstances, and to those who will be reduced to that condition by the persecutions of the enemies of the gospel. What they prize most highly, their choicest good, is not exposed to any contingency, and will not fade away. This assurance of blessing concludes one of the trains of thought introduced in ver. 2. **Blessed is the man that endureth temptation**—who amid the tribulations occasioned by his Christian profession adheres to the duties of piety. The texts recalls Ps. 1, and unfolds its deeper meanings; as in that Psalm, (ver. 1) so here, there is no 'is' in the original; the omission in both cases strengthens the ascription. There is no emphasis upon 'the man,' as if the person in view were distinguished from soft and effeminate professors, who easily give way in trial; the emphasis rather falls upon 'endureth.' It is one thing to bear the cross, another to endure under the burden, in the ways and

spirit indicated in ver. 3, 4, 9-11. Temptation refers to those various troubles and calamities, permitted by God for the purpose of testing the faith, piety, and virtue of his people. When temptations produce the intended effect, then they bring approval and reward. (Matt. 5: 11, 12.) **For when he is tried (approved) he shall receive the crown of life.** 'For' indicates the reason of the blessing. The believer who has patiently borne the ordeal of affliction, and who is 'approved' after due examination and trial of his case, will receive a glorious recompense of grace. It is not certain that either the contests of athletes, or the purification of metals by fire is here referred to, although both may be used in the way of illustration. The figure of reward is striking. 'The crown of life' is the same as "the crown"—i. e., "life," the second noun being equivalent to an appositive according to a common usage, as when we say, "The city of New York," meaning only "the city, New York." There may here also be no reference to the reward of victors in the Greek games; as among the Jews a crown or diadem in itself suggested royal power or eminent glory. (Ps. 21: 3; Wisl. of Sol. 5: 16, 17.) Life is the crown with which God's steadfast confessor will be adorned (Rev. 2: 10; 1 Peter 5: 4; 2 Tim. 4: 8)—that life which alone deserves the name, life spiritual from its beginning, and hereafter perfect, blissful, and eternal, and thus beyond the reach of human malice and temporal calamity; a blessing, to obtain which the persecuted Christian may joyfully consent to suffer and to die. **Which the Lord (he) hath promised to them that love him.** 'The Lord' is not in the original; read 'he,' referring not to Christ, but to God. The certainty of the reward is indicated by the fact that it is promised by the Sovereign of heaven. The divine engagements are unlike the promises of fickle fortune. (Ver. 10, 11.) Rewards are assured to those who endure trial from love to God, in contrast with the "double minded." (Ver. 8.) Love produces endurance; for those who love God appreciate the

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

am tempted <sup>1</sup> of God: for God <sup>2</sup> cannot be tempted with <sup>3</sup> evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but

1 Gr. from.....2 Or, is untried in evil.....3 Gr. evil things.

kindly wisdom that measures and controls the trials of life, and the blessed end to which these trials lead. Hence those who love the Lord, and those who endure temptation are the same. Compare Rom. 8: 28. In the theology of James, love is the essence of true faith; hence the repetition of this phrase. (James 2: 5.) Compare the whole passage with 2 Tim. 4: 8. "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing."

2) 13-18. *Exhortation to steadfast and patient endurance under temptation of sin.* It is natural to one swayed by temptation to vindicate himself by the plea of necessity, and to urge that circumstances, which God orders, have exercised an irresistible power over his intellect, his passions, or his will. James shows the futility of this plea by appealing to the nature of God (ver. 13)—to the experiences of men under temptation (ver. 14, 15)—and finally to the divine dispensations. (Ver. 16-18.)

a. Argument from the nature of God.

**13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of (from) God.** Here temptation is taken in the same sense as in the previous verses; but the attitude of the persons now considered is different from that of those previously addressed. Both classes are tempted to apostasy by the danger of death, of suffering, or of loss of goods. But the former endure temptation; the latter dally with it, and seek for grounds to justify them in yielding to its seductions or threatenings. Thus, what was a salutary trial in one case, becomes in the other case a motive and allurements to sin, through the unhallowed desires or criminal fears it has awakened. James indicates what apostates, in such a case, were wont to 'say'; 'I am tempted from God.' 'He it is who so orders these circumstances that I have no alternative but to give way.' This pretext was familiar, doubtless, to the Pharisees, who were fatalists (Josh. "Bell. Jud." 2: 8, 14), and was current among the Jewish people. "Wisd. of Jesus, son of Sirach," 15: 11-22. It is also the common resort of men every-

where to cast the blame of their sins upon providence. Hom. "Iliad" v. 86: "I am not in fault, but Jove and Fate." Plautus: "God drove me on." Perhaps the apostates perverted passages of the Old Testament, such as Exod. 9: 16. But on the contrary, as James had already insisted, God allows trial so as to make men better; the evil arising from it comes from another source; let no one trace it to him! **For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.** The first clause may signify either that God is untempted, or that he cannot be tempted; both amount to the same thing in this passage. The holiness of God disproves the pretext of the apostate; God is unversed in temptation, and even inaccessible to it. In his dealings, he acts according to his own nature, just as men do. Hence he has no experience of evils, cannot be contaminated with them, cannot be tempted by them. The conclusion follows that the origin of evil cannot be found in God. He cannot induce men to do what is wholly repugnant to his own nature and will.

NOTE.—In reference to the apparent contradiction of this text with other passages, it may be observed that where God is said to tempt men (Exod. 15: 25; Judg. 3: 1-4; 1 Cor. 10: 13), these passages signify that God tests men, not to allure to sin, but to give an opportunity of overcoming it, for which purpose he apportions the trial to the strength (1 Cor. 10: 13), and also gives the aid of his Holy Spirit (James 4: 6), the light of nature, the voice of conscience, and the warnings of his law. When blinding and hardening of heart are ascribed to God, the evil is the result of a trial abused. The work of temptation in its evil character is, already in the Book of Job, and more frequently in the New Testament, ascribed to Satan. (Matt. 4: 1; 1 Cor. 7: 5.) Yet not in such a sense that the blame of yielding to it may be shifted from ourselves. The idea that God is the Author of Sin, either through his decrees, or the circumstances in which he places us, or the desires and opportunities he gives us, or on account of his withholding restraining grace, is monstrous. All the expressions of his will, whether uttered in Scripture, or the system of

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by 15 his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is 16 fullgrown, bringeth forth death. Be not deceived,

*1 Or, tempted by his own lusts, being drawn away by it, and enticed.*

nature, or the general drift of his providence, proclaim that the wrong is harmful and unfit to be done. The free agency he bestows on men may indeed be perverted to wrongdoing; but it was bestowed as the necessary condition of virtue and piety; neither of which can exist without liberty of choice. Hence the existence of moral evil does not impugn either the benevolence or the holiness of God. He is not tempted with evil neither tempteth he any man. Seneca said (EP. 95): "The gods can neither suffer wrong nor inflict it." How much wiser this heathen was than some who profess to be Christians!

b. Argument from the experiences of men. Ver. 14-15.

14. The efficient cause of sin is found, not in God, but in the evil heart of man. (Matt. 13: 19.) **Every man**—or, *each one*, is here antithetic to 'no man,' in the previous verse. **His own** is also expressive, standing in opposition to "he." (Ver. 13.) Whatever the circumstances of the case may be, that which allures men to sin (as fish or game are enticed by a bait, 3: 7) is within us, not without. It is 'lust,' an evil concupiscence (Rom. 7: 7), an inordinate love for sensual delights and worldly advantages; a disposition, temper, and habit of soul indocile to the purity of Christian truth, and the power of Christian motive. No suggestion of evil can mislead us until we embrace it. The inspired writer makes his representation more spirited by personifying Lust, Sin, and Death. The idea of a harlot (introduced by the amatory figures derived from the arts of hunting and fishing), is distinctly brought forward in the verbs "conceived" and "brought forth." (Ver. 15.) As the fish or game is drawn out from its place of security, and is enticed into the snare or net, so by the harlot Lust the man is drawn to herself; that he is captured is implied in his being enticed. See 2 Peter 2: 14, 18, where the same word occurs in the Greek. 'Drawn away' implies movement; 'enticed' implies state. Compare Ps. 1: 1, where the successive stages of progress in sin are represented by walking, standing, and sitting.

NOTE.—The manner in which James describes the operations of man's free agency in its abuse, is almost paradoxical. The desire for the forbidden object—the gold which attracts the covetous, the beauty which attracts the sensual—is the man's own; yet no sooner is it encouraged, than it becomes alien and malignant to its possessor—a net to catch in the path of error, a hook that pierces the eager tongue through the bait of pleasure. The same idea is involved in the familiar word "habit"—first the man has the habit, and then the habit has the man.

15. **Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.** Then the transition from the sinful desire to the sinful act is described. The figure of ver. 14 is retained, and is pursued, so as to show the fruit proceeding from the meretricious enticement. When the evil inclination is not promptly suppressed, but, on the contrary, is cherished with pleasure (compare Gen. 3: 16), the will of the man is surrendered to it, and is impregnated by it. Sin follows the seduction as naturally as birth follows conception. The pampered sensuality which thus produces sin is itself sin, as in nature everything produces its own kind; yet the sin indicated here is external, whether apostasy or some other sort of sin. This natural history of temptation is related to show that temptation cannot come from God. As, both grammatically and rhetorically, Lust and Sin are feminine, neither of them should be represented by the neuter pronoun 'it.' The text would be more fitly rendered: 'Then Lust, having conceived, bringeth forth Sin.' **Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.** 'Sin' (in the first clause, without the article) indicates the general character of the fruit of lust, whatever its outward expression may be. James represents sin as something having its own life, and continually developing itself, and at length reaching maturity and exercising a supreme and destructive power over human nature. It was not to his purpose to draw any distinction here between the single finished deed—sin which incurs the sentence of death, and

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from

17 my beloved brethren. Every good<sup>1</sup> gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the

1 Or, giving.

the completed course of sinning, the impious and wicked life which receives the award of perdition. In any case, sin, when it has attained its full form and strength, is the mother of death. The soul that has yielded to temptation suffers the loss of that life which is alone worthy of the name, and also the inner misery arising from sin, having its beginning on earth, and after the death of the body, enduring and increasing forever. Evil gives birth to evil; the evil desire is followed by the evil act, and this by death spiritual and eternal. The idea is not that men are made mortal by sin; for here death is the opposite of that life which God has promised to them that love him (ver. 12): it is eternal death. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life." Rom. 6: 23; compare James 5: 20. That temptation leads to death proves that it cannot proceed from God who is the Author of life. Yet it deserves to be added, as showing the harmony of ver. 14, 15 with ver. 13, that this order of the Divine Government, which connects sorrow and death with sin, also illustrates the goodness of God. The odiousness of sin thus displayed may aid the guilty in the work of repentance and reformation, may restrain the tempted, confirm the virtuous in good principles and habits, and urge the philanthropic to more vigorous efforts for the restoration of the fallen and the well being of their race. Peabody: "Christianity the Religion of Nature," p. 104.

c. Argument from the Divine Dispensations. Ver. 16-18.

**16. Do not err, my beloved brethren.** James thus introduces an additional proof that God is not the author of evil. He has been arguing that God's nature excludes the possibility, now he appeals to the great facts of his administration. God is the Author of all good. He is the fount of the hopes that men cherish, and the blessings that they receive, not of the evils that they commit. 'Do not err.' The same formula occurs elsewhere after the denial of some false opinion, as in 1 Cor. 6: 9; 15: 33; Gal. 6: 7. It introduces an appeal to Christian consciousness and experience to

confirm the writer's statement. In all the other passages it is translated in the Common Version, "Be not deceived." The warning was important here, because no falsehood can be more mischievous and impious than that which James was opposing. To regard God as the author of sin would be a rejection of the whole system of Christian faith and morals. 'My beloved brethren' not only shows the importance of the subject discussed, but also the affection of the writer. In warning, he sought to conciliate; and he assumed the tone of persuasion because he loved. So fatal an error needed to be corrected in language of solemn tenderness. And in appealing to the fraternal relation which unites believers to each other, he at the same time reminded his readers of the filial relation which they all sustained to the Head of the Christian family. To entertain doubts in regard to the goodness of God, would quench the filial spirit of reverence, gratitude, and love. Errors in religion cannot but affect the character and conduct; and most prejudicial of all are those errors which depress our trust in God.

**17.** The third proof that God is not the author of sin is derived from his abounding and continuous beneficence. If all good comes from God, temptation to evil cannot. This verse is antithetic to ver. 14, 15. As from lust comes sin, and then death, the perfected fruit of sin, so, on the other hand, proceeds from God the good and the perfect. **Every good gift and every perfect gift—boon.** This phrase forms a perfect hexameter, and may be the fragment of an early church hymn. The substantives are different in the original, although from the same verb: the first is the act of giving, in which resides the moral quality 'good'; the second rather indicates the boon itself—it is a free gift, which is 'perfect' as suited to the needs of its recipient, whether they be physical or spiritual. (Rom. 5: 16.) We must suppose more than natural gifts to be here referred to—not only providential bounties, but gifts of the Spirit, righteousness, peace, and joy. God's good gifts are the opposite of lust-engendered sins; and God's perfect gifts the opposite of sin-engen-

above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, 18 neither shadow that is cast by turning. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

dered death. (ver. 14, 15.) Divine in its origin is every blessing we desire, hold, or expect—whatever tends to completeness and happiness, whatever tends to righteousness and piety. This principle is the redeeming feature in Matthew Arnold's system. He describes the Hebrew intuition of God as the conception of the Eternal that makes for righteousness, and as a revelation needed to breathe emotion into the laws of morality, and to make morality religion. ("Literature and Dogma," p. 87.) **Is from above**—that is, from heaven, like the new birth of the human soul. (John 3: 3, margin.) With the text compare Acts 14: 17; John 6: 32. **And cometh down from the Father of lights**—literally, *coming down*, a participle complementary to the preceding clause, and emphasizing the thought that God is the Author of our blessings. 'The Father of lights'—literally, of *the lights*—that is, the heavenly orbs. (Isa. 135: 7; Jer. 4: 23.) God is called their Father, because he has created and ever sustains them. The light they shed is therefore a reflection of his. Their glory and beneficence are at once a religious argument and a divine revelation. (Isa. 40: 26; Ps. 147: 4.) Whatever they symbolize and express must be in their cause. Hence, nothing dark or evil can issue from him. (1 John 1: 5.) **With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning** may be translated *with whom is no change or shadow from turning*. The reference is to the apparent revolutions of the heavenly bodies. They change their position, and they fall into obscurity and eclipse. There is nothing like this in God, whose transcendent glory is disturbed by no shadows (compare "Book of Wisdom" 7: 20; "Knapp's Theology," § 20), and whose nature, purposes, and dispositions are unchanging. He is entirely and unalterably good, and so transcends what is most admirable in creation. From such a being only good and perfect gifts can come. James recognized God as One who dwelt 'above' the trials and temptations of which he had been speaking, above the firmament whose blue depths are so oft beclouded, above the stars

whose glory is so oft bedimmed; and adored him as the unchanging Father of lights, and as our Father in heaven (ver. 18), whose mercy endureth forever.

18. This verse gives a more convincing proof of God's purity; it is found in those spiritual creations which render him a higher glory than the orbs of light. The importance of the thought is shown by the fact that it crowns the exordium, and is the foundation on which the whole succeeding argument is built. **Of his own will begat he us**. 'Begat' is an allusion, by contrast, to ver. 15, where the same word is used in the original. It signifies a birth which is not according to the order of nature—there the monstrous progeny of lust and sin, here virtuous souls supernaturally generated by God (2 Peter 1: 4), and having more glory than the stars; the same creative power kindles the lights of earth and the lights of heaven. Moral darkness cannot proceed from such a being. His nature is contrary to evil. This appears also from the motive which engages in the new creation—his own will. The Syriac gives: "He saw fit and begat." Compare Eph. 1: 5 James teaches that regeneration is not the result of chance or caprice or fate, but of the free, deliberate will of God. (John 1: 13; 1 Peter 1: 23. See also "the good pleasure of his will," Eph. 1: 5.) The writer has Jewish Christians especially in view, as the sequel shows, but the principle applies to all believers. **With the word of truth**. The argument is strengthened by this addition. The means employed in regeneration is the truth, the pure and blessed gospel, revealing God's nature and will and the way of salvation. (Eph. 1: 13.) **That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures**. The object of the work of creation was worthy of a holy God. He designed to produce a *higher style of creatures*, separated from the world, incorporated into his family, devoted to noble and immortal ends. According to the Jewish law, the first fruits, as the choice portion of the harvest, and as its symbol and pledge, were consecrated to God. (Num. 18: 12; Lev. 23: 10;

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

19 <sup>1</sup>Ye know *this*, my beloved brethren. But let

1 Or, *know ye*.

Deut. 26: 2.) So with the first begotten of a family. (Deut. 21: 17; Gen. 49: 3.) Here James is not considering the state of Christians in general, but that of the early disciples whom he addressed, and who had received the first fruits of the Spirit. (Rom. 8: 23.) They were 'a kind of first fruits' of the creation of God (the figure is modestly softened). All believers are his creatures in a special sense, as his workmanship (Eph. 2: 10) and his offspring. (1 John 3: 1, 2.) But the early believers were the chief and noblest part of the new creation, if not more holy and devoted than all the others, yet sanctifying them all. They were the earliest confessors and martyrs of the faith, and its only apostles. Like the peaks of the mountains, they first caught the light of the coming day that was to bless the whole world. The author of our Epistle was soon called to shed the sacred blood which should be the seed of the churches of the future. Those ancient saints were the first fruits of the gospel harvest. And as in Judea, the remaining harvest followed after the presentation of the first fruits, so should the salvation of believers ever extend more widely from this beginning. A powerful motive to them to endure in trial and temptation! In this text James renders a noble tribute to the gospel: it is the word of truth, and, as such, God's instrument of regeneration. Patterson: "Its divinity secures its truth, and both are satisfactorily proved by miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled; by the testimony of Christ and the martyrdom of the apostles; by the majesty of Scripture doctrine, and the purity of Scripture ethics; by the adaptation of both to the intellect, the conscience, and the heart, and by the practical effects which have followed in their train."

NOTE.—In this verse we think that the aorist would have been more appropriately translated by our perfect ("he *has begotten* us"), as has been done in the Common Version. (James 2: 5, 6; 5: 3, 5, 11.) Our perfect is a tense peculiarly appropriate in letters or speeches addressed by the living to the living in relation to matters within their common experience. For in the use of the perfect the

speaker regards the action or condition, though past, as included within a period of time still present; and this he is permitted to do, if that action or condition is *connected with the present*. It may be thus connected either by the present existence of the subject, as, "I *have been* young, but now am old," or by the present continuance of the result, as, "Milton *has written* as noble works in prose as in poetry"; or by the present continuance of some attending circumstance of time or place, as, "Many important discoveries *have been made* in the present century"; "Upon this continent a great civil war *has been fought*." It will be evident from these illustrations that the aorist will sometimes appear in Greek where our idiom more naturally employs the perfect. Nor is any violence done to the sense of the original by the change; for, as Winer observes, "It often depends upon the writer which of the two tenses he will use, as the difference between them is sometimes very slight." For this acute criticism upon a much-disputed point, we are indebted to Prof. T. J. Dill, of Howard College.

#### 19, 20. THEME AND DIVISION OF THE EPISTLE.

19. This verse and the next exhibit the main divisions of the Epistle, which specify the characteristics of a child of God under trials and amid temptations. They show wherein is to be exercised the steadfastness which James has been commending in the general introduction to the Epistle. In particular the exhortation "to hear" refers to the "word of truth" (ver. 18), and is resumed and explained. (1: 21-2: 26.) The injunction in regard to restraint in speech is unfolded in chapter 3: 1-12. That in regard to the temper and spirit is developed in chapter 3: 13-4: 17. And the threefold division is recalled, as we shall see, in chapter 5.

**Wherefore.** This word is not justified by the highest authorities, which give instead, *ye know* or *know ye*. The imperative is more suitable, as a form of address (compare chap. 1: 16), but does not accommodate itself to the demands of the sentence. It should read:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity

every man he swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore putting away all filthi-

*'Ye know it, my beloved brethren; but let every man, etc.* Let your elevation in God's esteem (ver. 18) lead to the study of the word and improvement in virtue. The begotten of a holy God must themselves be holy; and to **every man** (contrast to 'no man,' ver. 13) the means of spiritual discipline is the performance of the duties here indicated. **My beloved brethren.** A mode of address common among early believers. (1 Cor. 15: 58; 2 Peter 3: 14.) Christian fellowship is helpful to the attainment of the ideal of the Christian life. The lessons here inculcated recall those of the Jewish sages. (Prov. 13: 3; 14: 29; Eccl. 5: 2.) **Swift to hear**—the divine word is specially referred to; a ready reception of it and a cordial submission may well be indicated as the first duty of disciples. Fraternal counsel is implied. **Slow to speak** involves deliberation in judging as well as speaking in regard to life's trials, and in regard to the truth of God upon which human virtue and happiness depend. (Prov. 10: 19.) "Speak neither against God, nor improperly of God—but for God." There was great freedom of exhortation and teaching in the early Church; James warns his readers that this involved grave responsibility. (Neander, "Planting and Training," p. 356.) **Slow to wrath.** Wrath is not simply displeasure; but active, passionate anger, which may manifest itself either in impatience under God's dealing, or vindictiveness under injuries and reproaches from men, or disputatious bitterness in maintaining what may be regarded as the truth. Compare chap. 3: 13. 'Wrath' easily assumed in that day, as it does in ours, the guise of conscientiousness. Huther: "The warning points to Christians who used the gospel as the Pharisees did the Law, not for their sanctification, but for the satisfaction of their lust of condemning and contending." Compare chap. 3. The conduct of Christians in their assemblies is specially but not exclusively referred to.

20. This verse gives the ground of the warning, 'be slow to wrath.' As, in the original, the definite article is wanting in the two instances where it occurs in the English, the literal translation is: *For man's wrath worketh not God's righteousness. For the wrath*

**of man.** Wrath is a powerful passion, and works effectively in secular and political affairs; it is, however, alien to the Christian society, and to the kingdom of God. (1 Tim. 2: 8.) It is closely related, as the etymology shows, to the other impulsive passions, and is treated as their representative. (3: 13-4: 17.) **The righteousness of God** is that righteousness which pleases God, and which he requires. Compare Acts 4: 19; Gal. 6: 10. It is the opposite of the sin or iniquity which the unregenerate heart works. (Matt. 7: 23; James 2: 9.) Wrath cannot be pleasing to God; for there is no passionate violence in his nature; his law is love, and his cause is hindered by an intemperate zeal. The warning of our text was specially needed by the Jews, who had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10: 2), and who thought that they were serving God by violent outbursts against those whom they regarded as sinners and heretics. (John 16: 2.) A similar thought occurs in Eccl. 7: 9, "Be not hasty in thy spirit: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." Our text is more specific than Matt. 5: 22. No emphasis falls upon the word **man**, as if the inspired writer were here warning against a passion more intense and constant than that of the child, and more vehement and violent than that of the woman. The principle applies to all classes and cases. Luther: "Anger and punishment are not prohibited when God's command and the necessity of the case require; but *wrath* which springs from personal impulse and passion, and which is a brief madness." By a spirit so contrary to its own the cause of Religion cannot be promoted. On the contrary, only a temper serene under injury and submissive in affliction, as it is of divine origin, is fitted to receive and propagate the truth. See next verse.

I. DIVISION, 21-2: 26. THE GODLY IN TRIAL AND TEMPTATION MUST BE SWIFT TO HEAR.

1. *The word must be received as the inner law.* Ver. 21.

21. **Wherefore lay apart** (better, *putting off*, as a defiled garment) **all filthiness.** In this verse the exposition of the first division of the Epistle begins, the heed and honor to

of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

ness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the <sup>2</sup>implanted word, which is able to  
22 save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and  
23 not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if

1 Or, malice.....2 Or, inborn.

be accorded to the word. 'Wherefore' points back to the previous verse, and prepares for the injunction in regard to the manner of receiving the word. 'Filthiness' is the synonym of wickedness; the adjective is used in a similar figurative sense in Rev. 22: 11: "He that is filthy let him be filthy still." It represents sin as the defilement of human nature, and hence embraces, not only immorality, but wrath also. (Acts 15: 20; 1 Peter 3: 21.) **And superfluity of naughtiness**—that is, abundance or excess of maliciousness. The evil here condemned is that which is opposite to meekness, as the connection shows; it is the wickedness which finds expression and pleasure in injuries to others. (Eph. 4: 31. Col. 3: 8; Titus 3: 3.) It is the active hostility which disturbs Christian fellowship, and vitiates the inculcation of Christian truth. The evil which lurks within, and that which streams out into life, must be repressed and rejected, that there may be place and opportunity for the good to grow. (1 Peter 2: 1; Eph. 4: 22, 23.) **In meekness receive the engrafted** (better, *implanted*) **word.** 'Meekness' is a spirit, gentle and kindly under provocation. It is, specially, Christian love and forbearance in reference to others. (1 Peter 3: 15.) Those whom James addressed were not to hear the word that it might be used as a weapon of maliciousness, nor were they to indulge toward its unsparing teachers an angry stubbornness or impetuous opposition, which would effectually "bar the ear, the mind, the heart, the life against the truth." On the contrary, the word was to be received and taken to heart (Matt. 13: 23), working deliverance from sin inwardly. The expression is paradoxical. They had already received the word; they were to receive it again and again that their spiritual life might flourish. The word is the gospel, which is compared to seed. (1 Peter 1: 23; Luke 8: 4.) **Which is able to save your souls.** Here is the ground of the exhortation. Heed and honor the word as the agency which God employs to save you. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." (Rom. 1: 16; John 6: 63, 68.) It conveys

transcendent blessings to the *soul*. As those, therefore, who would enjoy the present supports and graces that it conveys, and the future blessedness that it pledges, you are required to submit your natures to its transforming influence. To give up our sins by a genuine repentance and to embrace the gospel with faith and docility is the only method by which the immortal soul can be saved; then the word becomes for us and in us "mighty through God."

2. *The word must be heeded as the rule of life.* Ver. 22-25.

22. That the word must be received as the rule of life is now shown in the paragraph. (Ver. 22-25.) Hence it must be not only obeyed (ver. 22-24), but pondered and persisted in. (Ver. 25.) **But be ye doers of the word.** 'But' connects this verse with the previous one, and guards the reader against the supposition that a mere recognition of the truth of the gospel suffices for salvation. It is not necessarily implied that those to whom the injunction was addressed had not obeyed at all. Johnstone: "The believer should always be becoming in larger measure what he is already in some measure, wise, holy, and happy." The doers of the word are the observers of the gospel, those who recognize it as prescribing a line of conduct, and who obey its prescriptions as their law. (Ver. 25.) "Truth is for life." **And not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.** The passage is an allusion to the "Sermon on the Mount." (Matt. 7: 24.) The same thought occurs in Rom. 2: 13. The use of this word 'hearers,' instead of 'readers,' refers us to an age when the gospel was known for the most part only through the communications of the living teacher. Those who satisfy themselves merely with an ineffective knowledge of the word, cheat or defraud themselves. The term rendered 'deceiving' meant originally, *drawing false conclusions*, but it came to suggest the idea of loss as well as of delusion. Compare the Septuagint, Gen. 31: 7, 41. God's people are not actors, to whom a solemn but empty role of profession has been assigned, but

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass;

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty,

any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a 24 mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he 25 was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the

1 Gr. *the face of his birth.*

factors sent out to traffic for him with heavenly graces and temporal things. (Adams, on 2 Peter p. 666.)

**23. For.** The statement made in verse 22 is now confirmed by a comparison. The mere hearer of the word is likened to one who idly beholds his image in a *mirror*. The mirrors used by the ancients were of polished metal. (Exod. 38: 8; Job 37: 18.) Usually the imperfect image they gave was employed to indicate our scanty knowledge of divine things, which we see as by means of a mirror "darkly," as in 1 Cor. 13: 12, although glass may be here meant, or talc. But here the fact that the mirror does give an image, otherwise unseen, is made to illustrate the principle under consideration. It exhibits to the beholder his natural face, literally, *the face of his birth*, the face he was born with. This is distinguished from the real man—the moral physiognomy—the true portrait of the soul. The word of God can alone exhibit the man as he is, and reveal to him the disorders and defilements of unregenerate nature. (1 Cor. 14: 24, 25.) And he who hears the word and is not a doer, simply *looks into* the mirror. That the observation is careless and hasty, although not indicated by the words, is implied in the figure and in the language of the next verse.

**24. For** introduces the explanation of the figure, which is given in the narrative form—"for he beheld himself and has gone away, and straightway he forgot what manner of man he was (in the mirror)." A common experience is represented (so also in ver. 11) as a single past event. The mere hearing of the word does not benefit the man any more than did his transient look into the mirror. (Matt. 7: 24, seq.) The haste and carelessness with which he has turned to other matters is indicated, not only by **straightway**, but by the repetition of the conjunctions. The result is forgetfulness. (2 Peter 1: 9.) The reflection of the mirror does not remove the stains and disorders it discloses; the revelations of the word are of no advantage unless they in-

duce a spiritual change. They show to a man his moral condition, his want of conformity to the requirements of God, and being forgotten they leave him unreformed and unblest.

**NOTE**—Our translators decided wisely when they declined to transfer the Greek idiom in this passage into our language; indeed we cannot but admire their judgment in the translation of the aorist in almost every instance where it occurs in our Epistle. In twelve instances, where it has reference to historical events (2: 21-25; 5: 17, 18), they render it as the exact equivalent, of the historical perfect of the Latins. Thirteen times they render it by our perfect tense, with the auxiliary "have"; here the reference is to events occurring in indefinite past time. Usually the habitual actions of the parties addressed, or else the dealings of God with his people. (2: 5, 6; 5: 3, 5, 11.) There is but one exception (5: 10), where the historical event should have been given in the narrative form, "the prophets who spoke." In nine instances the aorist has been translated by the present, the reference being made, with one exception, to general facts; the assertions are valid for all times, and therefore also for the present. Compare the fading flower (1: 11), the observer at the mirror (1: 24), the social customs. (2: 4, etc.) The text 4: 5 is exceptional; here the perfect would have been more appropriate. Prof. Dill, of Howard College, has carefully grouped and illustrated these passages; but his essay upon the subject is too elaborate for reproduction here.

**25.** Here the figure is retained; but, in contrast with the neglectful hearer, who receives no benefit from the word, the hearer to whom it imparts a blessing is described. The one looks, the other gazes; the one continues, the other goes away; the one forgets, the other observes and does. The beginning of this verse adopts the narrative form of ver. 24.

**Whoso looketh into** gives a stronger idea than beholding; it implies that the beholder bends towards the object he regards with

and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and

law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing. If any man<sup>1</sup> thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his

1 Or, seemeth to be.

earnest scrutiny. Compare Coleridge "Aid to Refl." Aph. 23 n. Peter uses the same word to express the interest of angels in the work of redemption, and in allusion also to the Cherubim stooping over the mercy seat. (1 Peter 1: 12.) **The perfect law of liberty.** The gospel, as containing the rule of Christian life—the truth which as received into the heart makes the believer free (John 8: 32.) from the bondage of ceremonies (Acts 15: 10), and from the despotism of the passions. The inspired writer doubtless has in view the most debasing and miserable of servitudes. (Jahn's "Archæology" § 172.) "The code of ethics which had been proclaimed by Christ, and of which the Sermon on the Mount remains as the great pattern and example." (Plumptre.) This new law was 'perfect' because it was spiritual. And it was a 'law of liberty' because it transformed the nature, brought it under the influence of elevating and commanding motives, and thus produced an unconstrained and joyful obedience to God. (Rom. 8: 2.) The sense of spiritual liberty is a holy impulse to serve God. Even under the Old Dispensation, those who entered into the deeper spirit of the law experienced its sweetness. (Ps. 19: 8-11.) In every age—

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside.

**And continueth therein.** This does not express the idea of James. 'Therein' should be stricken out. The idea is that the beholder continues looking into the law, so as to comprehend it and be prepared to carry out its prescriptions. The hearer must attend to and utilize the discoveries of the law, as one lingers at the mirror and attentively scrutinizes its reflections, so that the person may be improved and adorned. **He being not a forgetful hearer.** 'A forgetful hearer,' is, literally, *hearer of forgetfulness*, the genitive of the noun expressing quality, being used in the place of the adjective. Thus, in Luke 16: 8, "Steward of injustice" signifies "unjust steward." The same form of expression appears in chapter 2: 4, "judges of evil thoughts," for "evil-thinking judges." **But**

**a doer of the work.** 'The' should be omitted. 'A doer of work' is an emphatic expression, indicating the necessary effect of the law upon one who attends to it; then it cannot but awaken the pious activity. **This man** is also emphatic; certainly he, and only he, will enjoy the liberty and probity which the law enjoins and confers. **Shall be blessed in his deed.** There is doubtless here a reference to the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. 5: 3-11), which Jesus not only promised, but experienced. (John 4: 34.) The blessing connected with a life of pious conduct is real, and abiding; it goes out into a future that has no bounds. **In his deed** (or, *works*, the singular being used for the plural), not *by* it. Salvation by works is not implied, but the correspondence and inseparableness of obedience and salvation. [It would, I think, be more correct to translate the clause, "shall be blessed in his *doing*." The *doer* of Christian work finds a blessedness which he does not consciously seek, in *doing* this work. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20: 35.) In like manner every act of service to the Lord is in deepest harmony with the spiritual constitution of man, and brings into his soul true peace.—A. H.]

3. *The speech must be regulated by the word.*  
Ver. 26.

**26.** Having insisted upon the authority of the word as the rule of life, James proceeds to show that the speech must be regulated and guided by it. **If any man among you seem to be religious.** 'Among you' should be omitted. The meaning of *religious* can scarcely be expressed, except by a paraphrase. It relates not to the essence of religion, but to its external service; not to piety, but to worship (so in the Syriac)—a sense in which the adjective is still used in the unreformed countries of Europe. The member of a monastic order, whose life is largely devoted to acts of worship, is called a "religious." The text may be rendered: *If any one think himself to be a worshipper, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's worship is vain.* Johnstone

bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion 27 is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

1 Or, God and our Father.

translates religious by "observants of religious service," and religion by "religious service." 'Seem,' *imagine himself*, implies that the opinion is false. (Matt. 6: 7; 1 Cor. 3: 18.) Among the Jews, religion largely consisted in external services; and it was natural that one who diligently devoted himself to their performance should regard himself as peculiarly acceptable to God. To this Paul referred (Acts 26: 5), where the same word is used for 'religion' as in this verse. **And bridleth not his tongue**—does not hold his tongue in check. An apt figure, which James repeats (3: 2, 3), and which is common in the Greek poets. The importance of the subject leads him to discuss it more at large (3: 1-12), and again in the conclusion of his Epistle. (5: 12-18.) But the immediate reference here is not to the number and enormity of the sins of the tongue, but to the presumed religious use of that member. James is rebuking those whose zeal exhausts itself in intemperate speech for what they regard as the truth and cause of God, and who suppose that this is true religious service. **But deceiveth his own heart.** The condemnation already implied in the previous clause is now asserted. The term is more general and stronger than that in ver. 22. A licentious and intemperate tongue cannot perform even a sincere service to God. The thought is brought out more distinctly in the characterization of such service—it is 'vain,' it is not only fruitless, but unsubstantial. Compare 1: 20. Like James, the Jewish philosopher, Philo, condemned those who practiced a *ritual religion* (same word as in our text) instead of holiness.

4. *The social intercourse must be regulated by the word.* 1: 27-2: 13.

a. In society, the gospel enjoins a ritual service of charity.

27. Now, to the unacceptable religious service of the unbridled tongue (ver. 26) is opposed **pure religion** (worship) **and undefiled before God.** 'Pure' and 'undefiled' have kindred meanings which it is not easy to distinguish. Yet, from their connection with

the appositives, to visit the afflicted and to keep aloof from a polluting world, we agree with Bengel in referring the first to the inmost principle of religious service. self-forgetful and self-sacrificing love; and the second to our relations with the external world. The being whom we adore is a *Holy God*. He is the *Father* in whom the fatherless findeth mercy. (Ps. 68: 3.) And we serve him acceptably when we cultivate a spirit like his own. The general thought of the text has been finely expressed by Coleridge ("Aids to Ref. Aph.," 23): "The *outward service* of ancient religion, the rites, ceremonies, and ceremonial vestments of the old law, had morality for their substance. They were the letter, of which morality was the spirit; the enigma, of which morality was the meaning. But morality itself is the *service* and *cere-monial* of the Christian religion. The scheme of grace and truth that *became*, through Jesus Christ, the faith that looks down into the perfect law of liberty, has *light* for its garment; its very robe is righteousness." **Is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.** 'This,' preceding the (Greek) infinitives, gives emphasis. To exercise pitiful and helpful love to the needy is to render acceptable worship to God. 'To visit' (the species for the genus) is to seek out, in order to relieve, to care and provide for, as God visits his people. Luke 7: 19. Compare Matt. 25: 36, 43; Jer. 23: 2. 'Fatherless and widows' (hysynecdoche of part for the whole), stand for all the afflicted and uncared for whom it may be in our power to relieve. These two classes are the types of earth's sufferers. (Job 29: 12.) The church to which James belonged specially cared for them. (Acts 9: 39.) Paul demanded, in his Epistle to Timothy, that widows should not be neglected. (1 Tim. 5: 3, 9.) **And to keep himself (one's self) unspotted from the world.** 'And,' preceding this second infinitive clause, is not in the original. Its omission makes the sentence more impressive. The course commended is, to guard one's self from the world, so as not

## CHAPTER II.

MY brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 1 My brethren, <sup>1</sup>hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of per-

1 Or, do ye, in accepting persons, hold the faith . . . glory ?

to be contaminated by it. Compare Matt. 16: 12. The world is not only "the mass of unrenewed humanity," which is separated from God, and is under the control of Satan (1 John 5: 19), and subject to secular interests and carnal passions, but whatever circumstances and objects inflame the lusts of nature. Believers must come in contact with the world; but, unlike the Pharisees, who sought to guard hand or skirt from what was ceremonially unclean, they were commanded to guard their minds and hearts from its contaminating influence. What need there was of vigilance (1 Tim. 5: 22) and prayer (John 17: 15) against this danger, Tholuck has shown in his essay on "The Nature and Moral Influence of Heathenism." Translated by Prof. Emerson in "Biblical Repository" 1832, Nos. V., VI., VII. A more terrible indictment was never written, nor a more fearful warning. A similar injunction to that in the last clause of our text was given by James in the letter sent by the Jerusalem Conference to the Gentile churches. (Acts 15: 20-29.) What was needed was not the external ablutions punctiliously observed by so many, but the internal purity of which those rites were the sign. Clemens ("Hom." xi. 28) says: "The essential thing in worship is to be pure."

δ. In the Church the word is the principle of impartial and cordial fellowship. 2: 1-9.

1. In the last verse of the previous chapter, James states that the divine service of Christianity is charity. He now proceeds to consider the gospels as the principle of condescension and fraternity, a theme to which chapter 2: 1-9 is devoted. The theme is presented in the form of a warning against the odious social distinctions prevalent in the churches, distinctions based upon gifts of fortune only. **My brethren** appropriately and impressively introduces the admonition. Christ's disciples have an intimate and sacred bond of union in the common relationship they bear to the glorious Lord. **Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.**

For 'have not' read *hold not*. The emphatic form of the text would be better represented by: "Let it not be with respects of persons that ye hold." 'Respects of persons' are favorable estimates of others, based, not upon what is praiseworthy in them, but upon external appearances and relations, as beauty, power, and splendor of dress, wealth, etc. (Gal. 2: 6; Rom. 2: 11.) James uses the plural to condemn all the forms and instances in which this vice finds expression. Christianity permits no depreciation of the lowly, wretched, and poor; hence, true faith cannot be held in connection with unrighteous disdain for those who enjoy no external advantages. 'The faith of our Lord' (objective genitive) signifies the faith in our Lord. Such faith not only confers on its possessor, but also recognizes in other men, a glory far transcending all worldly honor. Hence, he who despises a human being because he is poor, or, in particular contemns a friend of Jesus because he is clothed in an humble and soiled garb, cannot be a true disciple of so great a Lord. He was no respecter of persons (Matt. 22: 16); but, on the contrary, even preferred the poor. 'The Lord of glory' (genitive of quality): 'the Lord,' which is not in the original, is repeated in our version to suit the structure of the sentence in English; better, *our glorious Lord*. He issued from and he returned to the eternal glory (John 17: 5), and he bestows glory upon his disciples. (Rom. 8: 18.) Before him wealth and rank are trifles, in comparison with character, and Christians also should so regard them. The Syriac makes the genitive qualify faith, "the faith of glory," or "the glorious faith."

2-4. In these verses is given an example of the unchristian partiality which called for the admonition in ver. 1, and an indication of the source of this conduct. The verbs used in the Greek (aorists in this and the subsequent verses, especially in ver. 4, where the aorist indicative is used) show that the incidents are regarded as having already taken place. A literal rendering into English would be awkward. Johnstone: "See what you

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

2 sons. For if there come into your <sup>1</sup>synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there 3 come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say

1 Or, assembly.

have done, and consider the state of the heart thus revealed." For assigns the reason for the admonition: a sinful partiality had been shown in an obsequiousness to the rich and distinguished and a heartless depreciation of the poor. **Unto your assembly**—literally, *into your synagogue*, the place where a Christian church assembled for divine worship. This would be the synagogue, if the community had become Christian. (Vitringa, "De Syn. Vet.," I., 3, 2.) In any event, the Jewish Christians would give the familiar name to the place where they resorted to worship (Epiph. "Heres," 30; Stanley, "Jewish Ch.," III., 517; Lightfoot, "On Phil." 150), and they would be apt to adopt the same internal arrangements. That the synagogue indicates the place, rather than the assembly, seems clear from the reference to seats in the next verse. Some of the seats were accounted more honorable than others. (ver. 3.) The synagogues were accessible to all; so were the Christian assemblies. (1 Cor. 14: 23.) Burder improperly represents the assembly as a court of judicature.

[Yet is it not better to understand the words, "your synagogue," in this place as meaning "your assembly," referring to the people who met for worship, rather than to the place where they met? See Thayer, "Lexicon of the N. T.," s. v. συναγωγή, z. a.; also Cremer, "Theol. Lex.," s. v., and compare Luke 12: 11; Acts 9: 12; 13: 43; 26: 11; and 2 Thess. 2: 1; Heb. 10: 25. Punchard says: "This is the only place in the New Testament where the Jewish word is used for a Christian congregation." "N. Test. Commentary," etc., Ed. by C. J. Ellicott, on this verse. But the compound word ἐπισυναγωγή in Heb. 10: 25 is perhaps best understood in the same way: "Not forsaking our own assembly."—A. H.]

**A man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel.** Literally, *a man gold-ringed, in shining apparel*. In that age rings were a more marked evidence of wealth and rank than they are now. They once distinguished

senators and knights, but were now in more general use. The rich men of the empire, some of them, wore a ring on every joint, or even had six rings to a finger. Gorgeous clothing was also in great request, striking effects in dress, which among us have been toned down by Protestant Christianity,—*"combinations of gold embroidery with Tyrian purple and crimson,"* and the like. The robe thrown in mockery upon our Lord was of this sort. (Luke 23: 11.) **A poor man in vile raiment.** A dress soiled and begrimed, such as the laborer is wont to wear—the opposite of the elegant and brilliant robes of the rich. The term here is the same as that in the Septuagint of Zech. 3: 3, 4, where the high priest is represented as clothed in squalid garments, instead of the splendid dress appropriate to his office. The specific idea is uncleanness. Compare 1: 21; Rev. 22: 11. There is no occasion for discussing the question whether the persons referred to here were members of the Church or Christian guests coming in from abroad, or casual, unconverted attendants upon the public service. James is not drawing any sharp distinction between such persons and the Church; but is denouncing a partiality based only upon externals, and expressing itself in a place of Christian worship. The men referred to might be either Christians (ver. 5) or persons seeking instruction in Christian doctrine, or drawn to the synagogue merely by curiosity. In any case, they all were entitled to courtesy—nothing more and nothing less.

**3. And ye have respect unto him**—literally, *look upon him*, implying favorable regard, as in Luke 1: 48; 9: 38; in this case with reverence and admiration. The splendid dress attracts the eye; the character of the man himself is wholly overlooked. The words describing the rich man's attire are the same as in ver. 2. **Sit thou here in a good place**—literally, *pleasantly*. The idea of convenience is prominent; but that of honor is not excluded. This is also implied in the

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my 4 footstool; <sup>1</sup>are ye not divided <sup>2</sup>in your own mind, and become judges with evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them

1 Or, do ye not make distinctions.....2 Or, among yourselves.

contrasts, 'sit' and 'stand,' 'here' and 'there,' 'in a good place' and 'under my footstool.' In the synagogues that part of the structure which pointed toward Jerusalem and where there was a chapel, with four columns, which contained the sacred parchments, was esteemed the most honorable place. The uppermost seats were those nearest the chapel. (Matt. 23: 6.) In the churches, the seats of honor would be those occupied by the elders of the church, and near to the Eucharistic table. These would also be most convenient to those who wished to enjoy or conduct the service. It is implied that those persons, whether deacons or other ushers, who took charge of this matter, acted by the authority and according to the will of the church. **Say unto him.** 'Unto him' should be omitted. **And say to the poor, stand thou there or sit (here) under my footstool.** The address shows utter indifference either to the comfort or the sensibility of the poor man. 'Either go yonder, where you can see and hear only by standing; or if you would come nearer, then sit on the floor.' Others had not only comfortable seats, but also *stools* to rest the feet upon. [The word 'here' after "sit" did not probably belong to the original text. It is omitted by Lach., Tisch., and Tregelles, after A B C.—A. H.]

**4. Are ye not then partial in yourselves?** Omit 'then.' This is not the point which the writer needs to urge. The partiality of feeling is proved already by the partiality in conduct. The verb retains the same signification as in 1: 6, and constantly elsewhere in the New Testament. Do you not *doubt* within yourselves? Do you not doubt your own faith and the honor it confers, when you make such distinctions? Do you not tamper with, and discredit the faith (ver. 1), which proclaims external splendor and riches as worthless in religion, while you yourselves magnify them by your servility? The question in the original is in the past tense, as relating to something which had already occurred. **And are become judges of evil**

**thoughts?** (Genitive of quality.) Evil-thinking judges, who are swayed by the perverse opinions which distinguish the votaries of the world from the followers of Christ. Whenever such distinctions prevail in a church, the mere creed has no validity. At heart its members prefer the transitory to the enduring, and their conduct is in conflict with their consciences and their religion. Plumptre: "In acting as they did, men made themselves judges between rich and poor and with 'base reasonings'; or, better, perhaps, what we call 'base calculations' gave a preference to the former. These evil thoughts are the cause of their partial and odious decisions."

**5.** James proceeds to show how perverse and unchristian was the conduct he reproved. On the one hand, to depreciate the poor was to contravene God's loving purposes toward them. (ver. 5.) On the other hand, to flatter the rich, as such, was to encourage the arrogant spirit which was now raging against Christians (ver. 6), and the dread Lord whose name they bore. (ver. 7.) First comes the urgent call **Hearken** (attend to this), **my beloved brethren.** (1: 16, 17.) The argument here as in the succeeding verses is put in the spirited form of a question.

**Hath not God chosen the poor of this world.** Better rendered, *Did not God choose the poor as to this world?* Compare 1 Cor. 1: 27. God did not choose all the poor, but the poor in preference to the rich. The church at Jerusalem was poor, and so in general were the early Christians. Our text indeed refers to those who are poor in the estimation of the world, but only those who are destitute of worldly substance are so esteemed. God's preferences create a presumption in favor of the poor, which Christians should recognize in estimating the relations and adjusting the civilities of life. It is not permitted us to condemn that class from which the heavenly King is wont to select his heralds and his heirs. (Luke 6: 20; Matt. 5: 3.) **Rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.**

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?  
7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

6 that love him? But ye have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves 7 drag you before the judgment-seats? Do not they blaspheme the honourable name by the which ye 8 are called? Howbeit if ye fulfil the royal law, ac-

1 Gr. which was called upon you.

Insert *to be* before 'rich.' The faith is not the wealth itself; but the sphere in which the wealth is enjoyed. Believers are rich through faith; by this principle they are related to an invisible world, and enjoy the blessings of the Spirit, righteousness, and peace, and joy. **Heirs of the kingdom.** In addition to incomparable blessings now, believers have glorious prospects. However poor as to the world, they are "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Rom. 8: 17; 1 Peter 1: 4. (Storr's "Diss. on Kingdom of Christ," § 8.) **Which he hath promised to them that love him.** To faith is given the riches of grace; to love the dignities of heaven. The divine kingdom, as promised to these trustful hearts, is that future and perfect order of things which will ensue when Christ solemnly returns from heaven; when the dead will be restored to life; when all the sorrows that oppress the present life will be removed, and all the powers hostile to God will be subdued. (Matt. 6: 10; 26: 29; Luke 13: 38; 2 Peter 1: 11.) (Grimm.) The allusion is to such assurances of our Lord as are recorded in Luke 6: 20; 12: 31, 32, "Blessed are ye poor for yours is the kingdom of God." "Fear not little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The poor to whom these promises are given are those who are endowed with faith and love, kindred sentiments, of which the second is the beautiful undergrowth of the first. External poverty is indeed not in itself a blessing; it becomes so "in as far only as the want of earthly treasures and earthly comforts leads us to seek a more enduring treasure and a more abiding consolation." (Forbes "Scrip. Parallelism," p. 169.)

6. **But ye**—in contrast with God, who honors the poor, and chooses them as the heirs of his kingdom. **Have despised the poor**—better, *but ye disgraced the poor*. The verb (in the aorist) refers to the case indicated in ver. 2, 3. Those whom James addressed had not only despised the poor in their hearts,

but had expressed their contempt by discriminating against them. 'The poor' (a masculine adjective-noun in the singular, with the article) stands for the whole class; Winer; Syriac, "the poor man." **Do not rich men oppress you?** Plumptre: "Lord it over you." Another argument against obsequiousness to the rich is derived from their notorious oppressions. In Judea the wealthy were, for the most part, Sadducees (Jos. "Ant.," 13, 10, 6), who, although they had little faith to contend for, were yet foremost in their persecutions of the early Christians. "The aristocracy of the priesthood" belonged to this sect. Compare Acts 4: 1, 6; 5: 17. Violence in enforcing the payment of debts is not here referred to, but the persecutions which were dictated by the love of rule and the pride of station. **And draw you before the judgment seats**—better, *and do not they drag you* (the same verb occurs Acts 21: 30) *into courts of justice*. The rich used violence towards the Christian poor, even in bringing them before the magistrates and invoking against them the authority of law. It was from that class that persecutions chiefly came; hence, those who belonged to it were entitled to no special consideration in the house of God. *They*, omitted in our version, is emphatic: Is it not they who drag you? So in the next verse.

7. **Do not they blaspheme that worthy name?**—*Is it not they that blaspheme the worthy name?* The rich do not only persecute the poor believers; they also revile the sacred name of Christ (1 Peter 4: 16), after whom the disciples were called. (Acts 11: 26.) First, doubtless, they were called Christ's people, then Christians, just as we were first called baptized people, then Baptists. ("Broadmead Records," pp. 15, 18.) **By the which ye are called?**—literally, *which was named upon you*, a Hebraism indicating that they belonged to him whose name they bore. Thus Israel bore God's name, in sign of allegiance to him. (Deut. 28: 10.) The Jewish persecutors denounced the claim of our Lord to be the Messiah whom the prophets had her-

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:  
 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

According to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the 10 law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the

alder, and they strove to constrain the disciples by threats and violence to imitate their example. (Acts 26: 11.) The name which inflamed the hostility of the Sadducean priests was a 'worthy name,' honored by all believers, and deserving honor from all men. It was the very hope and glory of Israel that was outraged by the maledictions of the powerful, and in the persons of Christ's persecuted people. Hence, in their partiality to the rich, the disciples not only acted foolishly, but made themselves guilty of infringement upon that reverence which they owed to the name of Christ. (Huther.) Stanley claims that all the early baptisms were in the name of the Lord Jesus, which implies the Trinity: the fuller formula came into use at a later period. Neander also holds that the name here referred to was not Christ, but Jesus. ("Planting and Training of the Church," p. 334.)

**8. If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture—yet if ye fulfil, or if indeed ye fulfil.** For James has in view a possible objection, that in depreciating the wealthy he was violating the law of love, which embraces them as well as the poor. In reply James commends the law, and magnifies it as a 'royal law,' an eminent command, having a royal supremacy over all others. (Rom. 13: 8-10; Gal. 5: 14.) The Syriac translator regarded the law as royal, because coming from the Heavenly King. (1 John 4: 21.) It is a sacred duty, enjoined under the Old Dispensation (Lev. 19: 18) and re-affirmed by our Lord (Matt. 22: 39), as the principle of all right conduct in human society. Compare Rom. 13: 9, 10; and, as the spirit of the divine kingdom, Mark 12: 34. 'Law' here signifies a single command. 'According to the Scripture' is merely "a form of citation." (Meyer.) Under the gospel this law is termed 'new,' from its prominence, its higher motive, its divine example, and its broader influence. (Farrar's "Life of Christ," 2: 295.) **Ye do well.** The words have a certain tone of ironical concession. The Jews accepted the law as a summary of the whole body of moral legislation in reference to the relations of man with man. They did not

dispute that it was of the greatest consequence and utility; that it was excellent and worthy of God, and that it had every claim to consideration from all men. Whether, however, they fulfilled it or not was questionable; and whether they had this or something else in view, in their flattering attentions to the rich, was also worthy of consideration. The language suggests something stronger than doubt in the writer's mind. **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.** This command is not only repeated by Christianity, but transfigured in it. Here love to others becomes the love of service and the spirit of sacrifice. "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 13: 34, 35.) Without love we are nothing. (1 Cor. 13: 1-3.) James indeed contents himself with repeating the law in the form in which it had been accepted by the Jewish people; but the influence of this command, as repeated in the gospel and commended by the example of its Author, has been unprecedented; it has changed the whole aspect of domestic and social life. The compassionate love which makes so many sacrifices and establishes so many institutions for the relief of the wants and woes of men was a virtue unknown to antiquity. See the fine sketch of Christian benevolence given by Uhlhorn. ("Conflict of Christianity," p. 191-205.)

**9.** An answer to the pretext of the objector in ver. 8. **But if ye have respect to persons—literally, if ye respect persons—ye commit sin.** Compare Matt. 7: 23; Acts 10: 35. The partiality you display, instead of honoring the law, breaks it. The very code to which you appeal designates you as the guilty transgressors of its requirements. The language is emphatic—it is *sin that ye commit*. **And are convinced (being convicted) of the law as transgressors.** Some think that the law here referred to is that in Lev. 19: 15, or Dent. 16: 19, which indeed has respect to judgments, but may be extended to include marks of honor in the public assembly. Others adduce the very law of love (ver. 8) as violated by respects of persons; all are not loved when some are depreciated. The latter reference is

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is be-  
11 come guilty of all. For he who said, Do not com-  
mit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou  
do not commit adultery, but killest, thou art be-  
12 come a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and

to be preferred. Those who respected persons violated the law as a whole, the law in its spirit. Yet the violation of a single precept would involve the transgressor in the guilt of rebellion against the heavenly Lawgiver. (Ver. 10.)

c. The gospel sanctions all the prescriptions of the Second Table of the Decalogue; those relating to our relative duties. Ver. 10, 11.

10. For occurs both in ver. 10, 11, which present the proof that partial discriminations are criminal. James lays down the principle that he who violates one of the commandments breaks all. A law proceeding from God, and claiming the heart of the creature, cannot be honored, unless it be wholly and sacredly observed. The same ethical paradox is found in the Rabbinical writings. Rabbi Johanan says: "He who does all things save one is guilty of all the rest." **Whosoever shall keep (*hath kept*) the whole law.** The moral law is primarily referred to; yet the principle would also embrace the Christian law, which the converted Jews acknowledge. **And yet offend (*hath offended*) in one point.** The sense is very well expressed by the noun, which is supplied in our version. Some, however, would prefer "commandment" instead of "point." **He is guilty of all**—better, *has become guilty*; he has sinned against all, and has become liable to a corresponding punishment. As in cases involving capital punishment one offence is fatal, so under the government of God the knowing and persistent violation of one precept suffices to condemn, making the observance of all other duties nugatory. When a servant of the Lord does only what he chooses, he follows, not the will of the Master, but his own. He has no reverence for the law, and no piety toward the Lawgiver; hence even his formal acts of obedience, arising from lower motives, are violations of the moral code. "It is probable enough," says Plumptre, "that the Pharisees, who misrepresented the teaching of James in the Church of Antioch, laid stress on these words as including circumcision and the ceremonial

law, as well as the precepts which were moral and eternal." (Acts 15: 1, 5, 24.)

NOTE.—The principle of our text needed to be asserted among the Jews, who were possessed by "an insatiable spirit of casuistry," and who were fond of debating the relative value of the precepts of the law. Compare Matt. 22: 34-40. Some regarded the law as to fringes and phylacteries as of first importance; others the command requiring that the name of God should be honored; others the requirement of ablution. The disciples of Hillel regarded certain positive precepts as of no importance. A variety of curious illustrations has been collected by Farrar. ("Life of Christ," pp. 238-241.) On the contrary, the object of the law is to test the spirit of obedience, and that spirit questions nothing that is demanded.

11. The principle of the foregoing verses is established by the specification of laws which, however diverse in character, rested on the authority of the one supreme Lawgiver. **He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.** These two commandments (Exod. 20: 13, 14) are specified because they are the first belonging to the second table of the moral law. The fifth commandment belongs to the first table, duty to parents being regarded as religious service by the Jews (Jos. "Ant.," B. 6: 6; comp. 1 Tim. 5: 4), as well as by the Greeks and Romans. (Taylor Lewis: "Platonic Theology," 87-94.) In the New Testament, the prohibition of adultery always precedes that of murder [Except probably in Mark 10: 19. See Revised Version.—A. H.], showing that this was then the traditional order. **Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.** The conclusion refers back to ver. 9. In religion the law is the will of the Lawgiver; hence he who violates the law in one particular violates it wholly. Huther: "James, indeed, could have argued also from the inner connection of all the commandments, or from the fact that the transgression of one commandment betrayed a defect of character which made the fulfilling of the rest of the law impossible;

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

but since he did not, such observations must not be arbitrarily thrust into his words."

d. The duties we owe to men are sanctioned by the final judgment. Ver. 12, 13.

**12. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.**

The gospel claims for the moral law the solemn sanctions of the judgment. (Ver. 12, 13.)

And the speech, as well as the conduct, must be subjected to this ordeal. (Matt. 12: 37.) The law is, as it were, the instrument through which the judgment passes. The imperatives here are in the present tense, indicating an action already begun, and to be continued; or, one that is permanent and frequently occurring. Hence this form is commonly employed in the measured and dispassionate language of laws and moral precepts. (Winer.) **The law of liberty.** A favorite phrase of James, compare 1: 25, indicating the preceptive will of God as the will of man, subdued by grace, cheerfully surrenders to it. Our Lord uses similar language. (John 8: 32.) So also does Paul (Rom. 8: 2, 15), though elsewhere he speaks of the law, when enforced upon the reluctant will, as gendering to bondage. (Gal. 4: 24.) To the renewed will the law is liberty, while at the same time it is the rule of life and the standard of judgment. And that grace in the heart which produces free-will obedience to God (1 Peter 2: 16) will awaken a pitying love toward the poor whom so many were wont to despise. (Ver 6)

**13. This passage shows the importance of the tender humanity recommended (1: 27), and discloses the vital spirit of the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment, etc.**—better, *The judgment will be without mercy to him that shewed no mercy.* The law of retribution here proclaimed is derived from our Lord's sermon (Matt. 7: 1, 2), "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again." Compare also Matt. 5: 25, 26; 6: 12-15; 18: 21-35. Mercy is a species of love; it is benignity toward the unfortunate, with the desire and effort to help them. (Matt. 9: 13.) With this gracious principle the law is

so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty. For judgment *is* without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment.

charged by the gospel; it flows from God to man, and from man to his fellows; and it will serve as a criterion of character in the day of final account. **And mercy rejoiceth against judgment.** Omit 'and.' Instead of 'rejoiceth' read 'glorieth.' The believer, although a sinner, has in his own loving heart the assurance that the condemning sentence of the law will not be inflicted upon him; but rather expects the rewards of grace, being confident that God will not condemn the imitators of his goodness.

Earthly power doth then show likest God's,  
When mercy seasons justice.

How many are the illustrations of this fine text! Our Lord's definition and commendation of mercy in the parable of the Good Samaritan; the necessity of forgiveness to acceptable prayer; the parable of the Unjust Debtor; the picture of the last judgment, with the merciful and the unmerciful divided from each other inexorably and forever! Mercy is the sign of the grace that makes the sinner safe, and thus it becomes the joyful consciousness of safety. Mercy and judgment are the great moral influences by which religion regulates the lives of men.

**5. Warning against the error that speculative faith, which does not heed the preceptive part of the word, suffices for salvation.** Ver. 14-26.

**14. Saving faith is practical.** This paragraph, extending to ver. 26, closes the first division of our Epistle. It is devoted to the refutation of the objection that faith by itself suffices for salvation. In the present verse James insists that saving faith must be practical. The writer has already indicated faith as the condition of salvation, in declaring that God begets men by the word of his truth (1: 18), and in enjoining them to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save the soul. But now he attacks the prevalent opinion that faith without works can save. The Jews regarded faith, when existing alone, as saving, and in this sense interpreted the famous passage of Habakkuk. (2: 4.) They used, as a morning and evening passport to the throne of grace, the text:

14 What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give

"Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6: 4); and with this proclamation of the Divine Unity, the dying gave their souls to God. To those who clung to the assurance that this sufficed for salvation, James addressed the argument of this passage. Compare 2: 19; Matt. 7: 21 seq. **What doth it profit my brethren**—literally, *What is the profit?* The assertion is stronger, as put into an interrogative form. **Though a man (any one) say he hath faith, and have not works.** No special emphasis should be laid upon the verb 'say,' as if the statement were a mere pretence. Yet neither should the sharpness of its meaning be disregarded. The persons in question, having no works to approve their faith, could profess it only by words. 'Faith' here does not occur in the Pauline sense of persuasion. The only faith which can exist in the case supposed is not a believing with the heart unto righteousness; it is not the reception of truth as the principle of a new life; it is a mere intellectual conviction, a speculative tenet, external to the affections and the conscience, and remote from the activities of life; a dead notion sepulchred in the brain. The works referred to are such as are the evidences of a living faith and the fulfillment of the law of liberty. **Can faith save him?** In the original the article precedes faith (*the* faith). Some suppose that the article here is equivalent to the demonstrative pronoun: can *that* faith (such a faith as that) save him. Others emphasize the pronoun him (such a man as he is). We think that a stress should be laid upon both the article and the pronoun; but especially upon the article. The faith here spoken of is certainly not the principle which receives with meekness the engrafted word. The salvation is that which the man expects in the future. (1 Thess. 5: 8.) James has in view not so much any present privileges and assurances, but rather a full and final deliverance from evil, the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. The severance of faith and works, which was maintained commonly among the Jewish people,

was exhibited in the spirited rebuke of Paul. (Rom. 2: 17-24.) Yet no inspired writer has more impressively insisted upon the necessary connection between faith and salvation. Compare John 3: 16.

b. Worthlessness of an inoperative faith—to the needy (ver. 15, 16); to the professor of religion. Ver. 17.

15. James now proceeds to adduce a case involving that most sacred obligation of Christians—the exercise of pitying love. (1: 27; 2: 13.) The case is that of a brother or sister in sore need. The case would indeed apply to all the descendants of the patriarchs, who formed one family; but it here directly applies to members of the Christian community, whose relationship was the more intimate, because it was spiritual and eternal. (Acts 10: 23; 11: 1; 1 Cor. 5: 11.) This circumstance made the example more impressive. **Be naked, and destitute of daily food.** The want of clothing, and of the nutriment to sustain life from day to day, indicates absolute destitution. Our Lord had already required, by the most solemn sanction, that such distresses should be relieved. (Matt. 25: 36-43.) That the Christians of Judea were many of them reduced to such extremities may be inferred from the collections made in their behalf by the Gentile churches (1 Cor. 16: 1; Rom. 15: 26), and from the earnest expostulation of 1 John 3: 17. It has been suggested that, probably at this time, the famine predicted by Agabus prevailed (Acts 11: 28-30), and that the Jewish converts, wrapped up in the pride of race and of orthodoxy, had resigned the care of their poor to the foreign Christians.

16. **Depart in peace.** An expression of kindly feeling, which would be an insult, if not accompanied by an act of charity and relief. It was then in familiar use. (Luke 7: 50; 8: 48; Acts 16: 36.) **Be ye warmed and filled—**get yourselves clad (Job 31: 20), and may you have food in abundance; or, more exactly, *warm yourselves, feed yourselves.* Sympathy is sweet, if one has nothing more to give to those who are starving and shivering; but

not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. <sup>1</sup> Yea, a man will say, thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will shew thee my faith.

19 Thou believest that <sup>2</sup> God is one; thou doest well: 20 the devils also believe, and shudder. But wilt

1 Or, *But some one will say.....* 2 Some ancient authorities read *there is one God.*

sympathy alone, from one who can give relief, is a mockery, as the style of the appeal is made to indicate. Generous words are a poor substitute for food and clothing; yet how widely this kind of charity still prevails! **Notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body**—those things necessary to its maintenance. **What doth it profit?** Either to those who are in want, or those who send them empty away, without a stick from the wood-pile, or a garment from the wardrobe, or a crust from the cupboard, to “warm and fill.”

17. **Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone**—better, *So also faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.* Here the illustration is applied—a barren assent to a dogma is as worthless as lip charity. This is also Paul’s teaching in Rom. 2: 13: “Not the hearers of the law are just before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified.” A Christian name without works of piety has as little substance and vitality in it as a Christian brotherhood without acts of charity. The works spoken of are not added to faith, but spring out of it, as shoots from a living germ. A faith without works is dead in itself; its very root is dead. It bears the same relation to the saving faith required by the gospel as a corpse does to a man. And as a lifeless body can do nothing, a faith without works can profit nothing—its unproductiveness suffices to show that it has no life or power.

c. Genuine faith must be connected with works, else there is no evidence of its existence (ver. 18), nor any strength and blessedness in the experience of professors (ver. 19). The principle confirmed by the example of Abraham (ver. 20-24); and Rahab. Ver. 25, 26.

18. **Yea a man may say**—rather, *but some one will say.* This objection may with certainty be anticipated (compare 1 Cor. 15: 35), from some one who judges between the two parties, James and his opponent, and who proposes to settle the disagreement by a com-

promise. The person here intervening neither represents the Gentile convert (Plumptre), nor the Jewish Christian whom James opposes (Huther), but some indifferent person, who regards both James and his opponents as one-sided, and who decides accordingly. A slight addition will make the meaning of the passage apparent: “but some one will say: that thou (James’ opponent) hast faith and I (James) have works.” The difference between you two is, that the one values the truth of Christianity, and the other its ethical system.

**Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.** The reply of James is, that without works faith cannot be proved to exist at all; for without works, it has no expression. You cannot show your faith, except by works of piety and philanthropy. On the contrary, the works I do, prove that I have faith, for without faith I could not do them. The difference between us is not merely controversial, but vital. This is expressed in a very spirited manner by James’ challenge. “Vainly do we glory in the gospel, unless we are also in love with virtue.” [Possibly the sense of this expression may be brought to light by a more literal translation of the best-supported text: “Show me thy faith without the works”—which real faith produces—“and I will show thee from my works the faith” which produces them.—A. H.]

19. **Thou believest that there is one God**—better, *that God is one.* This article of faith, common to Jews and Christians, and distinguishing revealed religion from the popular heathenism, is selected as representing an orthodox creed. **Thou doest well**—thou hast accepted the primary truth of religion. **The devils (demons) also believe (it) and tremble (shudder).** The demons, who are the angels and ministers of the devil (Matt. 9: 34; 12: 24), like their master, “abode not in the truth” (John 8: 44; 1 Tim. 4: 1), and were the pa-

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon

trons of idolatry. (1 Cor. 10: 20.) Yet they have never lost their belief that there is one God, although this transcendent truth produces no change in their character, and sheds no gleam of hope upon the darkness of their future destiny. They hate the infinitely perfect One, and await with terror the coming of that day when he will cast them into the lake of fire. (Matt. 8: 29.)

The sarcasm is terrible. A faith which is merely a matter of knowledge does not save, it does not even recognize God to be what he is, our highest good; it does not change the character; it does not give assurance of future salvation and blessedness, and through that assurance find present peace; it is the faith of demons, who, at the thought, shudder like Eliphaz (Job 4: 15.), when the condemning spirit passed before him. Monotheism chastises where it does not chasten the transgressor. "In his crimes, it is not the heavy irons of his prison, but the deep eye of his Judge, from which he shrinks; and in his repentance he weeps, not upon the lap of Nature, but at the feet of God." ("Westminster Review," 1852, p. 183.)

20. James now proceeds to prove the necessity of uniting works with faith, from the example of Abraham, the father of believers. (Ver. 20-24.) **Wilt thou know?** by proofs from scriptural examples, whose authority you acknowledge. The question expresses the assurance of triumph. **O vain man.** 'O' occurs in the New Testament only in addresses of adjuration and censure. (Matt. 17: 17; Luke 24: 25; Rom. 9: 20.) 'Vain,' corresponding to "Raca" in Matt. 5: 22, is the same as empty, indicating, not intellectual, but moral defect. The epithet, forbidden to revenge, is permitted in fraternal and official correction. (Matt. 23: 17, 19; Luke 24: 25; Gal. 3: 1, 3.) The possessor of the faith here referred to had no real worth, no spiritual riches. **That faith without works is dead.** Compare 2 Peter 1: 8. The last word varies in the manuscripts. In some the word is "dead," in others it is "idle"; in either case the meaning would be substantially the same: that which has no life, profits no one, and effects nothing. It is like capital

which lies idle, and brings no interest—dead capital. Only from love, and in work, does faith truly live. [Here too the article before 'works,' in the Greek text, may well be noticed: "that faith without the works"—that is, its works, or the works which it naturally produces, 'is idle.'—A. H.]

21. **Was not Abraham our father?** The example of Abraham was of high authority among the Jews, because he was their most illustrious progenitor, and enjoyed the special favor of God. Accordingly, James appeals to his case, to show that works must accompany faith as its fruits, and that without works a profession of faith is valueless. **Justified by works.** This statement seems to be contradictory to what James says in ver. 23, where Abraham's 'faith' is declared to have been imputed to him for righteousness, and also to Paul's argument upon the same text and example. (Rom. 3: 28, seq.) The prominence which one of these writers assigns to works and the other to faith, although they both were dealing with the same case, is to be explained by the different ends they had in view. Both of them taught that saving faith is operative (Gal. 5: 6; James 2: 18.); but Paul, arguing against formalists, who taught that meritorious works are the condition of salvation, insisted upon the necessity of faith; while James, arguing against Antinomians, who claimed that the profession of an orthodox faith suffices, insisted upon the necessity of a life of practical godliness. How deeply rooted was this Antinomianism among the Jews appears from the rabbinical discussion of the subject. Compare Lightfoot, "Comm. on Galatians," Note on "Faith of Abraham." The genius of interpreters and theologians has diligently addressed itself to the task of harmonizing these two writers; yet the difficulty is not less great in reconciling the statements, which *James himself* makes in the present paragraph, for he too declares that Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness, while yet he maintains that the patriarch was justified by works, and that the latter justification was in some way the fulfillment of the former imputation of right-

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abra-

22 the altar? <sup>1</sup>Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abra-

1 Or, *Seest thou . . . perfect.*

eousness which had occurred many years before. In the first case, Abraham believed God, and was accepted as righteous; in the second, he obeyed God and was approved as righteous. It is this last condition, in which operative faith receives the divine approval, to which James applies the term justification. The ancient believer was proved to be righteous by his conduct, and the divine declaration that he was righteous was thus established as true. This meaning of the verb, to *justify*, to declare or prove to be what one should be, or professes to be, appears in various passages of Scripture, as in Matt. 11: 19, "Wisdom is justified of her children"—is proved by their conduct to be true and divine. We learn in 1 Tim. 3: 16 that Christ was "justified in the Spirit," proved by his deeds and teachings to possess a divine nature. So Rom. 4: 3. Abraham had a faith which God accepted as righteousness; that he had a faith of this character was proved by the sacrifice of Isaac. **When he had offered his son Isaac upon the altar.** That the son was actually laid upon the altar showed that he was a victim devoted to certain death. (Gen. 22: 9.) Among the various "works" which sprung from Abraham's faith, this is specified, because it was the most conspicuous of them, and because it was specially honored and rewarded. (Gen. 22: 15-18.) How it pleased God appears from his renewal of the promise on this account to Isaac, and through him to his posterity, whom James was now addressing. (Gen. 26: 2-5.) The promise had already been given to Abraham as a believer (Gen. 12: 2, 3), but now it was solemnly renewed as a reward of his act of faith. The honor in which this act was held among the Jews appears from the eulogy of Jesus Sirach, 44: 20. The greatness of the sacrifice is also intimated here, in the addition, *his son*. On that wonderful occasion Abraham was justified by his work.

**22. Instead of seest thou how, etc.—thou seest that—faith wrought with his works.** Such is the conclusion to be drawn from the example of Abraham. The faith he had, instead of being a mere intellectual tenet, was an active principle, operating continuously

in the production of good works. His godly life had its root and support in faith. The two, faith and works, went together, the spiritual life within expressing itself in outward conformity with the revealed will of God. The Syriac Version, reads: "Seest thou that his faith aided his works?" **And by works was faith made perfect.** This signifies something more than that the works verified or confirmed the faith: they displayed its perfection; in them faith revealed its excellence and glory. The verb occurs in a similar sense in 2 Cor. 12: 9. "My strength is made perfect in weakness;" then it is exerted and is demonstrated in its genuineness and power. It is true, no doubt, as Luther observes, that faith in producing works becomes ever more fully what according to its nature and design it should be, and that, as the power of love increases and perfects itself through the practice of the works of love, so also faith grows and perfects itself through the performance of its appropriate works. But it may be questioned whether such an idea is even suggested by the previous verse, of which the present is simply the conclusion. What is implied there, however, that the faith existed prior to the works, is more distinctly intimated here.

**23. And the scripture was fulfilled.** 'The Scripture' signifies the passage or saying which is immediately quoted. The language, which is such as usually indicates the accomplishment of a prediction, cannot be taken literally; for the text quoted (Gen. 15: 6) was not a prophecy, but only a statement that Abraham had faith and was accepted by God as righteous. But neither the profession of the patriarch nor the approving sentence of God would have been justified, had not Abraham given an external manifestation to the vital principle and the high character with which he had been credited. Both of them were invisible, until they found expression in the practices of a pious life. The text was a prophecy, only as it promised a career of excellence; and in the works of Abraham the happy augury was fulfilled. The result of the trial showed why God assigned such

ham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified

ham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of

24 God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and

25 not only by faith. And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she

value to Abraham's faith; its heroic and supernatural energy therein appeared. **Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.** God graciously accepted and rewarded the patriarch's trust in him as righteousness. (Rom. 4: 3-5.) This is the Pauline idea of justification; James accepts the doctrine, but his phraseology is different in part and is less precise. (Ver. 24.) **And he was called the friend of God.** So certain and so high was the righteousness Abraham possessed, that he was also designated by the distinguished title of the friend of God. This title appears twice in our Version: in 2 Chron. 20: 7, where "thy friend" is literally "thy beloved," and in Isa. 41: 8. It was commonly applied to Abraham among the Jews, and appears in Philo. It is a common title of Abraham among the Arabs of the present day, who designate Hebron the city of Abraham by the name El Khalil, the Friend. That Abraham was a righteous man eminently was acknowledged by every one. We attain the same honor by imitating the example set by the Father of the Faithful. Jesus says "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15: 14.)

NOTE.—Dr. J. G. Rosenmueller adduces this passage as one of the proofs to show that the fulfillments of prophecy may take place in something which only resembles the literal and historical sense; but incorrectly. For, as in strictness there was no real prophecy in the divine acceptance of believing Abraham as righteous, the subsequent evidence that he was righteous cannot be regarded either as a real or as an accommodated fulfillment. The conduct of Abraham proved him to have such a character as the word of God has ascribed to him. The facts of the case *verified* the estimates of inspiration, and confirmed the oracle of divine approval. The verb 'fulfilled' does not change its meaning here, but is used metaphorically.

24. Then how should be omitted. **Ye see that by works a man is justified**—declared to be a righteous man. No doctrine of religion accepted, no profession of religion

made, can prove this. The performance of life's duties in the fear of God proclaims the genuineness of the disciple's professions and his possession of divine grace. **And not by faith only**—(Syriac) "faith alone." This indicates that faith justifies; yet to that state of justification which James is considering, and which embraces the beginning and the whole progress of the Christian experience, works are as necessary as faith. There must be faith, such as Abraham cherished, to establish the relation of intimacy with God; but, as time and opportunity summon the believer, there must be good works also, in order to approve his righteousness; and to him, as he was to Abraham, God is the friend and patron. 'Faith only' signifies faith by itself, having no influence or forth-putting. Neither does Paul command this sort of faith; but rather a faith that works by love and produces purity. Both Paul and James recognize faith as a principle, without which acceptable works cannot be performed and salvation cannot be attained. But the teaching of Paul upon the subject is deeper, and yet more sharply defined; and to this extent confirms the view of those who regard his epistle as later than that of James, who gives the practical view. The principle here stated by our author is the rule of the final judgment.

NOTE.—Neander and others hold that the fatalistic faith which James was denouncing was rather a perversion of Judaism than of Christianity, being identical with that described in Matt. 23: 15. Stanley indicates its two forms. 1. A blind reliance upon the privileges of the chosen race, like the Mohammedan belief that a death in battle is a passport to heaven. Compare Jer. 7: 4; 2 Macc. 12: 43-45; Eccles. 7: 4. Also James 1: 13; Jos. "Ant." 13: 5, 9. This presumptuous confidence was displayed in the last siege of Jerusalem. 2. A trust in their orthodox belief in the unity of God. (Ver. 19; Rom. 2: 17.) For later references, compare Stanley's "Apostolic Age," p. 301, n.

25. Likewise also—better, *and in like manner*. **Was not Rahab the harlot justifi-**

by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

received the messengers, and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

### CHAPTER III.

MY brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

1 Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, know-

**fied by works?** Rahab was a Gentile, delivered from destruction by a faith which induced her to run the risk of death, in the service of God's people. Hence, her example was memorable. (Heb. 11: 31.) She also belonged to that unhappy class to whom a new hope was imparted by Christ's gracious words in Matt. 21: 31, 32. If Abraham's faith might be regarded as something apart, to which none dared to aspire, then Rahab's might afford an encouraging example. The two represented the divisions of the human race, nationally as Jew and Gentile, socially as male and female. This woman, alien as she was to the blood of Abraham, and depraved as were the masses of the heathen world, was, like Abraham, 'justified by the works of faith.' **When she had received the messengers and sent them out another way.** The narrative style is best preserved by omitting 'had' before the verbs. She entertained the Jewish spies, and, when they were in danger, sent them away with urgent haste, as the verb implies. (Josh. 2: 15, 16.) They were let down by a window on the wall, and so departed by a *different way* from that by which they had entered her house. These acts approved Rahab's faith, and entitled her to the favor of the Israelites. Hence, her life was spared; she was thus formally excepted from the sentence pronounced upon the inhabitants of Jericho. (Jo. 1. 6: 25.) She was made a member of an eminent Jewish family (Matt. 1: 5), and thus became an ancestress of our Lord. Rahab was, doubtless, an inn-keeper—a class whose moral character in heathen lands was so infamous that its members were not allowed to enter the Christian churches, except on the condition of changing their occupation. The heathen tavern was a brothel. Compare "Apost. Constitutions," B. VIII., C. 32.

**26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.** Thus the argument is concluded by repeating the sentence of ver. 17, and adding

the figure of a body without the spirit. James describes man popularly as consisting of body and spirit. The latter is the breath of life communicated by the Creator. (Gen. 2: 7; 6: 17; R.v. 11: 11.) When this vital spirit is withdrawn, the man becomes a carcass. As worthless as this decaying, frail semblance of our humanity is faith apart from works. The individual members of the comparison are not to be connected, as if the body corresponded with faith and the spirit with works. The general thought is that an inoperative faith is as worthless as a lifeless carcass. [It may be worthy of notice that there is no article before the word "spirit" in the Greek original. Hence the clause might be translated, "As the body without spirit (or a *spirit*) is dead," etc.; and as the meaning of the expression is entirely satisfactory without adding the article in translation, it is perhaps safer to translate literally.—A. H.]

II. DIVISION.—THE GODLY IN TRIAL AND TEMPTATION SHOULD BE SLOW TO SPEAK. WARNING AGAINST SINS OF THE TONGUE. 3: 1-12.

1. *Those who transgress in this particular will be the more severely judged.* 1: 1, 2.

1. With this verse begins the second great division of the Epistle, relating to sins of speech, and the collisions and offences against Christian charity caused by an unbridled tongue. The godly, in trial and temptation, should be slow to speak. (3: 1-12.) **My brethren, be not many masters**—that is, teachers. The office of teacher was in such honor among the Jews that many, however ill qualified for its discharge, were eager to assume it. Hence, our Lord's injunction, Matt. 23: 8-10, and Paul's warning, Rom. 2: 17. The same self-pleasing vanity led many to undertake the work of exposition and instruction in the early churches. This vain ostentation of knowledge already had led to wrangling, and produced much disorder, as it did subsequently in the Church at Corinth.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so

2 ing that we shall receive heavier judgment. For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the

3 whole body also. Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths, that they may obey us, we turn

4 about their whole body also. Behold, the ships also,

1 Gr. greater.

(1 Cor. 14: 29.) The warning is not against teaching; but against the conceit which led the incompetent to set themselves up as teachers, and to swarm into the office. [Says Alford, showing the connection of this exhortation with what precedes it, "*Become not many teachers.*"] The more the idea prevailed that faith, without corresponding obedience, was all that is needful, the more men would eagerly press forward to teach.—A. H.] Wise is the old Jewish maxim, "Love the work of a teacher; but strive not after the honor." The warning is not against free, mutual exhortation (1 Cor. 11: 26-33), but against the abuse of this privilege by the forward and contentious. **Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.** By a sudden change of person James applies the warning to himself also. "Condemnation": literally, *judgment*, usually in the New Testament expresses an adverse decision or a sentence of punishment, as in 2: 13; John 12: 31; 1 Tim. 5: 24. The language of our text seems borrowed from our Lord's warning to the Scribes and Pharisees, the blind and hypocritical guides of the Jews. (Matt. 23: 14.) In such a case, the condemnation is greater than in that of those who do not undertake to teach, because their influence for evil is greater. (John 9: 41.) A solemn thought for those who undertake to teach and rule others, without concerning themselves as to the improvement of their own faulty character and evil lives!

**2. For in many things we offend all.** The text confirms the last clause of the foregoing verse. We all fail in duty—literally, *stumble*; and so become liable to condemnation; but there is special danger of transgression 'in word,' for the proper management of the tongue requires the highest wisdom. The reference in the first clause of the text is not to the transgressions of teachers or their errors of doctrine, but to the various moral defects belonging to all men. **If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.** Instead of 'any man,' read *any one*. 'Word' does not relate to teaching only, but to speech

in general; Syriac, *discourse*. 'A perfect man' is an adult (1 Cor. 14: 20; Heb. 5: 14), one who has attained the end of his development. As applied to a Christian it indicates one whose moral growth is complete (Heb. 12: 23), and whose trained and vigorous powers are in harmony with the will of God. The control of speech is the evidence that one has attained this standard of Christian manhood. That absolute perfection is not meant is shown by the first clause. **And able to bridle also the whole body.** Omit 'and.' He who controls the tongue has all the other members subject to his command. The desires of the evil heart, which lead to sin (Matt. 15: 19), are represented as pervading the members of the body, and dwelling in them (Rom. 7: 23); but he who has mastered the most reluctant of these organs has already performed the most difficult act of Christian virtue, and is now monarch of himself. In the verb to 'bridle' the metaphor of chapter 1: 26 is recalled.

**2. Reasons for the judgment denounced against the sins of the tongue.** 3: 3-12.

*a.* The wonderful power of the tongue. 3: 3-6.

*b.* The power of man, the lord of Nature, to control the tongue. 3: 7-12.

**3.** That the mastery of the tongue aids the mastery of the whole body is illustrated by a comparison: The case is like that in which we manage horses by bits in the mouth. **Behold** is to be rejected, but the particles which take its place (*but if*) are awkward in English. It would be best to render the whole verse, *When we put bits into the mouths of horses, that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body.* The use of the bit is at once the assertion and the means of mastery: it controls the mouth and the whole creature. As James is treating of the control of the tongue, the figure is happily selected. The moral lesson lies upon the surface of the text. He who has so great and easy a mastery over a brute creature, willful and powerful, should be able to govern himself.

**4. Behold** calls attention to the second

great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the

though they are so great, and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, 5 whither the impulse of the steersman willeth. So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold <sup>1</sup> how much wood is kindled by how 6 small a fire! And the tongue is <sup>2</sup> a fire: <sup>3</sup> the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which

1 Or, how great a forest.....2 Or, a fire, that world of iniquity; the tongue is among our members that which, &c.....3 Or, that world of iniquity, the tongue, is among our members that which, &c.

comparison, which to James must have been the more impressive, as connected with his personal recollections of stormy Galilee. The rudder governs the huge bulk of the ship, even when the vessel is driven by furious winds. The rudder is described as very little, the superlative strengthening the contrast. Like a ship in the tempest is man amid the temptations and trials of life. **Whithersoever the governor listeth**—literally, *whithersoever the desire of the helmsman willeth*. Such is the original, which is given in a condensed form in our version. Etymologically a 'governor' (*gubernator*) is a helmsman, the pilot, who stands at the rudder and guides the ship, and whose resolute will prevails against the violence of revolted nature.

5. Here the comparison is applied to the subject in hand. For **even so** read *so also*. The tongue is a little member of the body, as the rudder is but a small part of the ship. Yet it boasts great things; the idea is, not that the boasting is empty, and that great things are not performed by the tongue, a thought which would be inharmonious with the connection; but that it is so conscious of its power, as to be possessed by arrogant presumption. James here speaks of its boasting great things, rather than of its working great things, because the effects of its power are commonly deplorable, as he immediately proceeds to show. **Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!** Instead of 'matter,' *pile of materials, forest*, is to be preferred as the primary meaning of the word, and as making the figure much more striking and beautiful; so in the Syriac. It was a common figure among the classic writers. Stobæus says: "A little torch can burn the summit of Ida." Homer speaks of "a spark, scarce seen, which fires a boundless forest." And Virgil draws an animated picture of the desolation resulting from fire dropped by a careless shepherd, which at length reaches the tree-tops, "and wraps the forest in a robe of

flame." The same figure occurs in Eccles. 11: 32, and frequently in Philo. In its germ it is to be found in Prov. 16: 27. In a country abounding in olive plantations, like Judea, these forest fires were especially destructive; the fire described by Virgil ("Georg." 2: 302-314) originated among the wild olives. Here again James draws a figure from his own experience. And the tongue is a spark that may set families, churches, and societies on fire. [By a change of reading, which has much in its favor, and is adopted by Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alf. Mey., Westcott and Hort, and others, this clause must signify either: "How great a fire, how great a forest does it (viz., the tongue) kindle;" or, "how small a fire kindles how great a forest"—the word which takes the place of "little" before "fire," meaning ordinarily "how great," but sometimes "how small." I prefer the second interpretation: "How small a fire kindles how great a forest!" By omitting 'and' before the clause, Davidson translates: "Behold, how great a fire, how great a wood, does the tongue kindle! A fire, the world of unrighteousness, the tongue sets itself among our members," etc. This is the reading and punctuation of Tischendorf. But the 'and' (καί) is supported by the uncials  $\aleph$  A B C K L P against  $\aleph$ , and should, therefore, be retained.—A. H.]

6. Here the comparison, in the latter part of the foregoing verse is applied. And from the mighty destructive power of the tongue it may be concluded that he who understands how to bridle it has indeed attained a complete and noble manhood. (Ver. 2.) **And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.** Such a fire as I have described is the tongue, so insidious and so deadly. When surrendered to evil thoughts, desires, and purposes, it is a world of iniquity, in which every variety of evil finds a place, and exerts its destroying power. In the original, 'world' is emphatic—*that world or the world*. **So is the**

whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of <sup>1</sup>nature, and is set on fire by hell. For every <sup>2</sup>kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed and hath been tamed

1 Or, birth.....2 Gr. nature.

**tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body.** A better rendering would be: *So the tongue among our members is that which defileth*, etc., which, although not precisely literal, expresses nearly enough the sense of the original. [The latest editors omit the word meaning 'so,' as forming no part of the original text. With this omission, Alford translates thus: "The tongue is that one among our members which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature"; and Davidson thus: "The tongue sets itself among our members, both defiling the whole body, and setting on fire the wheel of life"; and Huther, in Meyer's Commentary, gives a German translation identical in sense with Davidson's.—A. H.] Words are not mere idle breath which go forth and are lost in empty air. The impure or wrathful utterance is infectious to the blood of the utterer—a moral leprosy, influencing all the members and defiling all the actions. **And setteth on fire the course of nature—better, the wheel or circle of life.** Life is represented as a wheel that is set in motion at our birth and rolls onward. The same figure occurs in Anacreon, "Ode 4."

For fast away our moments steal  
Like the swift chariot's rolling wheel;  
The rapid course is quickly done,  
And soon the race of life is run;  
Then, then alas! we droop, we die,  
And sunk in dissolution lie.

The inspired writer speaks, as it were, in accents broken by indignation, in representing the terrible mischiefs of the tongue. Now it is a world of iniquity, a fullness of unrighteousness; now the axle upon which the wheel of life revolves and by which it is set on fire. The Syriac translator in striving to smooth the sentence has destroyed much of its spirit. **And it is set on fire of hell**—literally, *being set on fire of Gehenna*. As the fiery tongues of Pentecost were from above, these tongues, burning with unhallowed fire, are kindled from below. And the participle (the present) indicates that the flame is being continually

communicated. The word Gehenna appears only in the Synoptic Gospels and here. It was the name of a valley to the west and south of Jerusalem, where children were burned alive by the idolatrous Jews in honor of Moloch, and is supposed from their piercing cries to have received its name, which signifies, "the valley of lamentation." After the horrid rites, once performed there, had been prohibited by Josiah (<sup>2</sup> Kings 23: 10), the place became a common, where all the filth of the city was deposited, and the dead bodies of animals were cast and consumed in flames that were kept continually burning. This horrible place was called the Gehenna of Fire, and was a symbol of hell, where the wicked will be punished forever. (Isa. 66: 24; Matt. 5: 22, 29; 10: 28; 18: 9; 23: 15, 33; Mark 9: 43-47; Luke 12: 5.) Hence, the idea of James in our text is that the evil tongue is inflamed by hell, is under the devil's control, is doing his work, and is preparing for his doom.

b. Man as the lord of nature has power to control the tongue. Ver. 7-12.

7. This and the following verse indicate the tameless power of the tongue which, to his disgrace, man, the lord of nature, fails to subdue. **For every kind** (literally, *nature*) **of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents (reptiles), and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind.** The enumeration is intended to embrace all creatures, those that walk, those that fly, those that crawl, those that swim. So in Gen. 9: 2. Their nature is inferior to man's nature, and does homage to it. He has made the domestic animals his servants, the wild animals his vassals. The horse draws his chariot; but when he wills the lion also submits to the yoke. The hound hunts for him; but if he demands, the cormorants will pursue the fish at his bidding, and the falcon strike his quarry in the air. He can call the timid fish and birds around him, and charm the serpent of its venom, and lure the scaly and savage leviathan from his deeps. History is full of instances in which man's nature has

8 But the tongue can no man tame; *it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

8 1 by 2 mankind; but the tongue can no man tame; 9 *it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison.* Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of 10 God: out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not 11 so to be. Doth the fountain send forth from the

1 Or, unto ..... 2 Gr. the human nature.

thus asserted its power over that of all other creatures. Cassian relates that the Apostle John kept a tame partridge as a pet—a circumstance too frequent to be worthy of mention, except that it associates our text with the history of the disciple whom Jesus loved.

#### 8. But the tongue can no man tame.

'But' introduces a contrast to the preceding verse. 'The tongue' referred to is not that of others, but one's own. Not even the glorious, powerful nature of man can repress its quick sallies and passionate outbursts. In the best it is but imperfectly tamed; in others it exercises an overmastering power. The tongue is personified as a wild creature. **It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.** 'It is' does not appear in the original; if left out, the close of the verse would be an exclamation expressive of moral indignation. Instead of 'unruly,' uncontrollable, the best authorities read 'restless,' the same word as in 1: 8. Heras says: "An evil spirit is calumny and a restless demon." 'Full of deadly poison' may be an echo of Psalm 140: 3, "Adders' poison is under their lips," which Paul quotes in Rom. 3: 13. "A word of evil from the old Serpent consigned our race to death, and, like Satan's tongue, are in a degree the tongues of all his children." And perhaps more destructive than the words of the wicked is the language of wrath, impurity, or impiety, uttered by those who claim to be the disciples of Jesus Christ. The verses immediately ensuing show that James had the case of such wayward and inconsistent brethren especially in view.

9. Notwithstanding the difficulty of controlling it, the misuse of the tongue is inconsistent with the Christian profession, and deeply criminal and malignant. **Therewith bless we God, even the Father.** The best authorities substitute "Lord" instead of 'God,' as in the Syriac; hence it would be better to read *our Lord and Father*. 'Therewith' indicates that the tongue is the means

and instrument we employ: it is repeated in the second clause to mark the contrast more distinctly. To 'bless God' is to celebrate his name and acts with praises (Ps. 145: 21), recognizing him as the sovereign and majestic Lord, and the loving and gracious Father. (Matt. 11: 25.) **Therewith curse we men which (who) are made after the similitude of God.** James associates himself with those whom he addresses, because the sin he is denouncing is the sin of human nature. Yet it is not the less to be reprobated. To wish evil to men who, although defiled by sin, are yet spared by God, and have not finished their probation, is to arrogate to ourselves the right of deciding their destiny. Besides, even the sinner retains the similitude of God. In his intellectual and moral qualities man represents God on earth, has the lordship of nature, and is capable of knowing, loving, and serving the great Creator. (Gen. 1: 26.) As God's noblest creature, and as our neighbor, he should receive from us, not hatred, but love. (Matt. 5: 44.) Even in man's fallen state "an indelible nobility remains." (Bengel.) If he is "the scandal," he is at the same time "the glory of the universe." (Pascal.) Hence he who curses man, sins against the Eternal and Blessed One, who made man, and who rules and loves him. To praise God and curse men with the same tongue is to maintain only the hollow semblance of piety. Thus James condemned the fierce intolerance of his own people, and not less that which, in succeeding centuries, has stained the records of Church history with tears and blood. The most bitter conflicts and crusades of tongue, pen, and sword have been waged on the Jesuitical pretext that they were prosecuted "for the greater glory of God." The frightful massacre of St. Bartholomew, when the streets of Paris ran blood, was celebrated by a *Te Deum* at Rome. A medal struck to commemorate the event bore the inscription: "Piety excited justice."

10. **Out of the same mouth.** The passage

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

12 same opening sweet water and bitter? can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? neither can salt water yield sweet.

repeats in brief what has just been said. The emphasis is on 'same.' In Hebrew, the word for blessing and cursing is the same; hence it is a question among translators whether the appeal of Job's wife to the afflicted patriarch is ironical, "Bless God and die"; or is a cry of indignation and despair, "Curse God and die." [The Revised Version translates Job 2: 9: "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die"—that is, *bid farewell to God, and die.*—A. H.] The tongue, as it were with one effort, can utter either a blessing or a curse, or both. But God has consecrated it to the kindly work of blessing. To use it both for cursing and blessing is to contravene the design of its Maker and the order of nature, and to pervert the precious and sacred gift of speech. The warning added is presented in the form of a general maxim. (Winer.)

11. The unnaturalness of the course reproached is illustrated by a figure. **Send forth at the same place**—literally, *spurt forth at the same orifice*. 'The place' is the opening in the rock, through which the spring water gushes. **Sweet water and bitter**—literally, *the sweet and the bitter*. 'Water' is understood. Palestine is a land abounding in springs (Deut. 8: 7), many of which, however, are impregnated with mineral substances, as salt and sulphur. The springs on the hill country of Judea, sloping toward the Dead Sea, are brackish, and so are many others: Plumptre: "Compare the sweetening of the spring which supplied the college of the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 2: 19), and the symbolic healing of the waters. (Ezek. 47: 9.)" The opening at the fountain corresponds to the mouth, and the stream to the tongue, or the flow of speech; the uniformity of nature's inarticulate language condemns the man from whose mouth comes blessing and cursing. His course has no analogue in nature.

12. Another local comparison shows the impossibility of reconciling these opposites. The same truth is taught in Matt. 7: 16, 17: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" The idea is that the product in every case must correspond to the cause or

kind from which it springs. Hence, the same source cannot produce opposites. **Can the fig tree bear olive berries? either a vine figs?** The vine and fig tree were common in every Oriental courtyard. (2 Kings 18: 31.) The olives abounded, and they gave its name to the height which, on the east, overlooked Jerusalem. These various gifts of Providence, for which the Jews were wont to praise God, are indicated as familiar instances to prove that nothing can produce aught that is contrary to its own nature. **So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.** The best authorities read, Neither can salt water (in the spring) yield fresh. [Alford: "Neither can salt water bring forth sweet"; Davidson: "Neither can salt water bear sweet"; Bible Union: "Neither can salt water yield fresh." I do not find any word signifying "fountain," "spring" in the text, which appears to have the best support. The Revised Version, it will be observed, reads, "Neither can salt water yield sweet," and this is probably the best rendering of the Greek.—A. H.] In this declaration something more is meant than the unnaturalness of the conjunction of blessing and cursing, which is indicated in the previous verse. The conjunction is impossible; blessing and cursing cannot issue from the same lips. Those who curse men cannot praise God. The blessing is hypocritical, and hence distasteful to him to whom it is rendered; it is flavored and "tainted with the bitterness of the cursing"; it is not praise at all. Johnstone: "An unrenowned heart is a deep well of bitterness, and salt water cannot yield fresh."

III. DIVISION, 3: 13-4: 17. THE GODLY UNDER TRIAL AND TEMPTATION SHOULD BE SLOW TO WRATH AND ITS KINDRED IMPULSIVE PASSIONS. Compare note on 4: 1.

1. *Gentleness and moderation of Christian wisdom depicted.* 3: 13-18.

13. In this verse begins the third general division of the Epistle, containing the development of the admonition of 1: 19, "Slow to wrath." The discussion extends to the conclusion of chapter 4. The first paragraph of the division (ver. 13-18) discriminates between

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? let him shew by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh

the false and the true wisdom. The false wisdom was the kind of which James' readers boasted, and which, they supposed, qualified them to be teachers in the house of God. (3: 1.) **Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you?** Literally, *Who is wise and knowing.* The direct question, with its immediate answer, gives vivacity to the discourse. There is a like construction in Ps. 34: 12-14. The synonyms "wise and knowing" occur also in Deut. 1: 13; 4: 6, Septuagint, where they indicate the qualifications of those who are competent to exercise authority. Compare also the description of the false teachers of Isa. 5: 20, 21, who were "wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight," who called "evil good and good evil"; who "put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." It would seem that James had this passage in his mind. (3: 1.) He addressed those who claimed to have the moral character and the intellectual accomplishments which qualified them to be teachers in the church, and indicated to them what outward tests must indicate these claims. **Let him shew out of a good conversation his works.** As 'conversation,' in the sense in which it occurs here, is obsolete, *conduct* should be substituted, as it should be in so many other passages. (Ps. 37: 14; Gal. 1: 13; 1 Peter 1: 15.) Let him show by good conduct his works, as the expressive manifestations of wisdom; so some. Others, with Neander, interpret 'works' as in apposition with "conduct"—"works performed in the gentleness expressive of wisdom." The **meekness of wisdom** is the gentleness characteristic of wisdom, and proceeding from it. According to this last interpretation, which we prefer, the text would read, *Let him show this, in his good conduct—his works in meekness of wisdom.* The works of this sort would be the sign required, instead of the conceited and contentious self-assertion in which these teachers abounded. He who has true wisdom is apt to say but little about himself, and is willing even to sacrifice his own pretensions in the interest of peace.

**14. But if ye have bitter envying and**

**strife in your hearts.** So different from the meekness of wisdom was the temper of those whom James addressed. 'Envy' may easily assume the name of religious zeal; it was indeed the temper of the Jews against the Gentile converts (Acts 13: 45), and would be more naturally cherished by one aspiring teacher against another. As the word in the original has also a good meaning (like the English word zeal which comes from it), **bitter** is introduced to indicate its true character here. 'Strife' may be rendered *factiousness, party-spirit*—a temper so injurious to Christian fellowship, and so troublesome to the early churches. It was the besetting sin of the Jews (Rom. 2: 8; 10: 3; Acts 7: 51), and it greatly disturbed the churches of Corinth (2 Cor. 12: 20), Galatia, (Gal. 5: 20), and Rome. (Phil. 1: 15.) It is the temper of hirelings (as the etymology of the word indicates) and of political candidates—not that becoming the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus. 'Heart' (singular in the Greek) is in contrast with the speech of teachers boasting of their wisdom. **Glory not, and lie not against the truth.** Glorying has reference to others over whom we esteem ourselves to have the advantage. Thus the Jews gloried over the Gentiles; pluming themselves over their superior religious privileges, while abusing them, and saying: "This people who have not the Law are cursed." And thus in their turn the Gentiles afterward gloried over the Jews. (Rom. 11: 18.) Both needed to know that in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availed anything, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature. Lying against the truth has reference to the doctrine which they themselves acknowledged, yet which they repudiated by their partialities and hostilities against their own brethren. It was no single truth they opposed, such as "the brotherhood of mankind in Christ," as in the claim (Rom. 3: 29), that God was the God of the Jews only; but they rejected the whole gospel of love, meekness, and long suffering, in making the Christian communion a theatre of envy and partisanship. This was a misrepresentation of the truth of God, and a hindrance to its advancement.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

down from above, but is earthly,<sup>1</sup> sensual, demoniacal. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that

1 Or, natural; or, animal.

15. In this and the next verse the character of false wisdom is indicated: **This wisdom descendeth not from above**—better, *This wisdom is not that which descendeth from above*. True wisdom is heavenly in its origin and spirit, and is won by prayer. (1: 5.) But the wisdom vaunted (ver. 14) has another character and another source. **But is earthly, sensual, devilish**. These three adjectives form a climax. Instead of coming 'from above,' it belongs to *earth*, as indeed we find its expressions everywhere in secular life, among the societies of unregenerate men. (Phil. 3: 19.) How different this from that heavenly wisdom displayed in the history of Jesus Christ! 'Sensual.' This is perhaps a good translation here; for no word which precisely answers the original exists in English. The term is rendered in Jude 19, as here, "sensual." In 1 Cor. 15: 44, and 2: 14, it is rendered, "natural." The Syriac paraphrases it, "from the devices of the soul." It applies to man as an animal, whose mental and emotional nature corresponds to and is apt to be engrossed by the interests and pleasures of the world. The subject is unfolded largely by Ellicott's "Destiny of the Creature," pp. 99-120, and is popularly, yet satisfactorily, set forth in President Hopkins' "Strength and Beauty," p. 176, seq. Perhaps our word, *carnal*, would most nearly express the true meaning. The wisdom referred to is carnal, as it harmonizes with the depraved desires and affections, and proceeds from them. It is carnal, as it arises in the impulses of a nature which has not yet received from the Spirit of God a higher life that apprehends God, communes with him, and lives under the influence of an unseen world. (1 Thess. 5: 23.) Conscience, unselfish philanthropy and faith lie beyond the sphere of carnal and secular wisdom. Further, this wisdom is 'devilish'—literally, *demoniacal*, like that of the unclean spirits, who took possession even of the bodies of men in those days. James alludes to the demons more than once (2: 19), for he himself had seen their unhappy victims. And now, in the bickerings,

the envies, the bitter conflicts, the egotistical boastings, the crafty intrigues, and the false doctrines of those who wished to be teachers, he detected the demons in their endeavor to take possession of the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul instances some of the doctrines of demons, by which the faith and harmony of the Gentile churches was assailed. (1 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

NOTE.—Cremer (p. 625) remarks that the three predicates—earthly, sensual, devilish—express a logical sequence and enhancement; earthly as the fit antithesis of 'from above;' because earthly, therefore sensual (1 Cor. 15: 48); therefore also destitute of the Spirit: and because destitute of the Spirit actually opposed thereto—that is, devilish.

16. **For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.**

A confirmation of the judgment pronounced against the false wisdom. It is condemned by its evil results. 'Envying and strife' may be rendered, as in ver. 14, *envy and party spirit*. The result of the indulgence of these unhallowed sentiments is a destruction of harmony, a society in disorder and uproar, a chaotic turbulence, which cannot come from God—for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. (1 Cor. 14: 33.) Parallel to our text is Prov. 26: 28, Septuagint, where the original for the word "ruin" is the same as that rendered by 'confusion' in our text. A flattering mouth worketh "ruin." There is a tone of contempt in the expression **every evil**, or **vile deed**. It indicates something base and shameful, as in John 3: 20, involving distress of conscience and scandal before the world. As all history proves, envy and partisanship have no respect to moral considerations. This spirit, now, alas! threatening the peace of our Republic, once wrought the ruin of the world.

17. The true wisdom is now described as to its spirit and expressions. What its character and value are is implied in the expression, **That is from above**. It is heavenly. (Prov. 2: 6.) "The Lord giveth wisdom." **Pure**. This is the eminent characteristic of heavenly wisdom; it is, first of all, chaste and

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without <sup>1</sup>variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace <sup>2</sup>for them that make peace.

1 Or, doubtfulness; or, partiality.....2 Or, by.

stainless, free from any kind of vice. (2 Cor. 7: 11; Titus 2: 5) in contrast with the wisdom that is sensual. (Ver. 15.) **Peaceable.** Peace follows after purity here, as in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5: 8, 9.) The wisdom that is free from vice and self-seeking ever tends to harmony and concord. The practical effect of this temper is shown in the next verse, which indicates that James had the Sermon on the Mount in mind. Compare Matt. 5: 9. Peace may well be valued by believers, as Christ's special gift (Col. 1: 20); as a spirit which composes earth's discords, while it allies earth with heaven. **Gentle,** or mild and forbearing (1 Tim. 3: 3); the corresponding noun is rendered "moderation" (Phil. 4: 5), "a readiness to waive all rigor and severity" (Conybeare); a willingness rather to suffer wrong than to provoke or perpetuate strife. Thus it is closely connected with 'peaceable.' **Easy to be entreated**—tractable, ready to yield, easily persuaded by advice and correction, perhaps also gaining its ends by persuasion. **Full of mercy and good fruits**—rich in the fruits of love, for love to man produces mercy (1: 27; 2: 13), and love to God is displayed in the manifold activities of a consecrated life. The good fruits are the contrast to every vile deed. (Ver. 16.) **Without partiality, and without hypocrisy** indicate the same qualities as the previous phrase, but couched in a negative form. The mercy of heavenly wisdom is not chilled by human respects, and its good fruits are not sacrificed to secular interests, and supplanted by pious semblances. Those whom James addressed were, many of them, partial in their dealings with men, and hypocritical in their conduct toward God. These various qualities here commended belong to the truly wise; hence, they are ascribed to wisdom itself.

18. Only where this heavenly wisdom is

can the results which Christians are appointed to accomplish be realized. **The fruit of righteousness,** not the fruit which is righteousness—a genitive of apposition (Huther)—but the fruit produced by righteousness. This fruit is regarded as containing in itself seed, which being planted produces a harvest of a similar kind. **Peace** is the condition upon which its successful cultivation depends. So that the gentle wisdom, which has just been described, is not only excellent in itself, but is necessary for the promotion of the cause of truth and virtue on earth. **Of them that make peace**—better, *by those who.* The peacemaker is the successful sower of the immortal seed. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Johnstone: "Love is the true spirit of the herald of the God of love." In regard to this portraiture of true wisdom, as compared with Paul's picture of love, 1 Cor. 13, Plumptre remarks: "Differing as the two teachers did, in many ways, in their modes of thought and language, one fastening on the more practical, the other on the more spiritual aspects of the truth, there was an essential agreement in their standard of the highest form of the Christian character. One teacher held out the right hand of fellowship to the other. (Gal. 2: 9.) Love is Wisdom, and Wisdom is love." This verse is in contrast with ver. 16, where the harvest sown by ambition and contention is indicated.

NOTE.—The peculiar form of the Greek implies not only that the work is performed by the persons referred to, but that the result is to be enjoyed by them. The dative implies possession. (Winer.) Angus, "Ann. Bib.": "Ambition and strife have their fruit (ver. 16); so the work of peace has righteousness for its fruit, 'sown' now, to be enjoyed forever." Compare Matt. 5: 9.

## CHAPTER IV.

FROM whence come wars and fightings among you? *come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

1 Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? *come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members?* Ye lust, and have

2. *Warning against the sway of the passions.*  
4: 1-17.

a. Evil consequences of the passions (ver. 1-3): They engender strife (ver. 1); they are illusive (ver. 2); and they deprive prayer of its efficacy. (Ver. 3.)

1. In this chapter, the earnest warnings against the indulgence of selfish and carnal desires are continued. There can be no peace in a nature or in a community where the passions are unbridled. **From whence come wars and fightings among you?** Omit 'from'; repeat 'whence' before 'fightings,' and read, *Whence come wars, whence fightings?* 'Wars' indicate a chronic state of disturbance, 'fightings,' the daily dissensions and quarrels; the two serve to indicate how deplorable was the condition of the churches addressed; they were like tumultuous battlefields. The language expresses the lively emotion of the writer. Notice the bold transition from 3: 18, and the question, 'Whence and whence?' **Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?** The negative interrogatory occurs as an answer in the affirmative. 'Hence' designates the thing meant as if with outstretched finger; then follows the indication in words. 'Lusts,' in the original, *pleasures*, used by metonymy for the desires they awaken. (Luke 8: 14.) These were the cause of the discords and strife prevailing in the churches ('among you'), and disturbing the peace of individual Christians. Their lusts were, as it were, encamped or arranged for battle in the members. They availed themselves of every sense and organ, as a vantage ground for carrying on the war against the soul (1 Peter 2: 11; Rom. 7: 23; 6: 12, 13), and against the peaceful fellowship and beneficent work of believers in the church relation. The Jews of this age were divided into bitter sects and relentless factions. The accounts given by Josephus of their vindictiveness and blood-thirstiness and rapacity toward each other seem well nigh incredible. Even the danger of the extinction of their nationality did not serve to reconcile them; but they continued to despoil and slaughter each other

even when the Roman battering rams were thundering at the gates of Jerusalem.

NOTE.—That the *passions* are included under this general division, which relates specifically to *wrath*, need awaken no surprise, for "wrath" (*ὀργή*) had a similar scope to that of our word passion. It originally indicated any passionate emotion (according to its root), any impulse, even that of love. Hence, it occurs in the phrase "to turn one's affections (*ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ*) toward any one." Compare Tholuck, "Sermon on Mount," Matt. 5: 21, 22. Historically and psychologically all the passions are vitally connected, especially those here referred to—vindictiveness and voluptuousness. Suetonius' "Lives of the Cæsars" illustrates this truth; also the story of John of Leyden, the excesses of the French Revolution, and so many other historic instances. A word in Latin corresponding to the Greek term (we refer to the word *ira*) is used by the Roman poets to signify *spirit*. Consult the origin, with its twofold meaning, of our word *orgies*, whose relationship indeed to *orgé* (wrath) can be seen at a glance. The classical reader will recall in this connection the orgies of the Bacchanalia—the frightful mysteries of license and murder, discovered and suppressed at Rome. Livy, "Hist." B. 39, §§ 8-19.

2. The sad consequences of these lusts are now depicted. (Ver. 2, 3.) **Ye lust and have not.** The progress of sin from desire to act is here depicted in a style similar to that employed in 1: 15. There, however, it is described as producing death in the transgressor; here as producing war in the church. How hostility to man arises from licentious or covetous desire is illustrated in the history of David, and Ahab. (2 Sam. 11: 1, 2; 1 Kings 21: 2-4.) The lust here is a desire for worldly goods and pleasures. In these respects many supposed that the people of God ought to have the advantage over others. Hence, they were offended by persecutions; they were obsequious to the wealthy, as persons whom God favored. The rich, instead of helping the poor, despised them; and, instead of exercis-

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that

3 not: ye kill, and <sup>1</sup>covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye 4 may spend it in your pleasures. Ye <sup>2</sup>adulteresses,

1 Gr. *are jealous*. . . . 2 That is, *who break your marriage vow to God*.

ing diligence in giving, employed diligence in gaining more. And the poor envied the rich, and reproached them as worldlings. Yet in neither case did the eager desire secure the possession of what it craved. **Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain.** 'Kill,' in the sense of intense and murderous hate, as in 1 John 3: 15. Plumptre, however, takes it literally, and supports the interpretation by the state of Jewish society, of which Barabbas, the bandit, was a type (Mark 15: 7; John 18: 39, 40), the four thousand men that were murderers (Acts 21: 38), and the bands of zealots and Sicarii who were prominent in the tumults of the final war with Rome. The objection to this view is that such atrocities could scarcely have been harbored in the churches to which James was writing, however rife they might be in Jewish society. But the desire which awakened hostility to others, however it might express itself in word or deed, failed of its end: "Ye kill and covet, and cannot obtain." Syriac: "It cometh not into your hand." **Ye fight and war.** This is the condition to which lust consigns its votaries; it disappoints them, and makes them mutual tormentors. **Yet ye have not, because ye ask not.** Omit 'yet.' The discontent that they had arose from their neglect of prayer. A contented and a happy lot is the gift of God. (Phil. 4: 6, 7.) Even for earthly goods we are encouraged to pray by the promises of God. Yet the prayer that prevails with God must be dictated by his Spirit. (Ver. 3.) He gives no audience to hatred, covetousness, and envy, when these passions even assume the guise of the virtues, and prostrate themselves before the mercy seat.

**3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.** Here James explains what he had just said. It was true that the forms of devotion were observed; but these wicked petitions were not entitled to the name of prayer. Hence they received no answer. **That ye may consume it upon** (Syriac, "pamper") **your lusts.** The fault was not

in the desire for temporal blessings, for relief and comfort in the present life; but in the end for which such blessings were sought—to pamper the appetites and passions. To consume (Mark 5: 26) is here used in a bad sense—to squander. Earthly blessings may be sought for our own good, or that of others; but not to satisfy what is lowest in our nature, and to strengthen what was against the soul. Monstrous as is the thought that the Holy One will minister to our lusts, the hope is cherished by many in every age. The Italian bandit offers prayer for success in his career of villainy, and so does the Cornish wrecker; and in the case of other inconsistent and rejected worshipers, the danger may be the greater, just because the anomaly is less flagrant. But the most singular of all the perversions of prayer was its use by so many mystical saints of the Middle Ages, to inflame their sensual imaginations with amorous raptures—a profanation of the divine love and beauty which still prevails in the common language of the convent. Baring Gould, "Origin and Development of Religion," I., 360-362. The language employed by the most eloquent of all the mystics ("Vie de St. Thérèse," XXIX., 2) we dare not quote, although it is cited with enthusiasm by Balme's "Protestantism and Catholicity," p. 427.

b. Ungodliness of the passions. Ver. 4-6. They involve enmity to God (ver. 4); and they condemn his word. Ver. 5, 6.

**4-6.** James has indicated the ungodly nature of these desires (ver. 4-6), in which the disorders of the early churches originated. Instead of **Ye adulterers and adulteresses**, the best authorities read, "Ye adulteresses." The word is used in the figurative meaning familiar to the Jews, indicating apostasy from God. (Ps. 73: 27; Isa. 57: 3 seq.; Ezek. 23: 27; Hosea 2: 2, 4. Matt. 12: 39; 16: 4; 2 Cor. 11: 2; Rev. 2: 4.) The use of the feminine is not to be explained by the fact that James was thinking of adulterous souls, whose unfaithfulness to God was like that of a wife to her husband; or that he intended to stigmatize them as effeminate

the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God. Or think ye that the scripture<sup>1</sup> speaketh in vain? <sup>2</sup>Doth the spirit which <sup>3</sup>he made to dwell in us long unto envying? But he giveth

1 Or, *saith in vain*.....2 Or, *The spirit which he made to dwell in us he yearneth for even unto jealous envy.* Or, *That spirit which he made to dwell in us yearneth for us even unto jealous envy*.....3 Some ancient authorities read *dwelleth in us*.

(women rather than men); but rather because he had in view the *churches*, whose love of the world dishonored God, and was a breach of the covenant they had made with him. [In supposing that James here addresses churches instead of individuals, the author agrees with several good commentators; but we fail to see any valid reason for the supposition. The preceding verses are evidently addressed to persons, rather than to churches as such, and if the reference here is to a turning away from God to the service of sinful passions, it is natural to suppose that the writer has in view men rather than ecclesiastical societies. That the feminine is used is due to the fact that Christians, whether men or women, are conceived of as the spouse of God.

—A. H.] **Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?**—better, *friendship with the world*. The world, with its seductive objects, its ungodly multitudes, and the principles by which its course is directed, is an empire revolted from God and under the control of his adversary. (1 John 2: 15; 5: 19.) Hence, devotion to it is incompatible with allegiance to God. (Matt. 6: 24; Luke 16: 13.) The idea of friendship with the world implies conformity with worldly examples, the pursuit of honor and riches as supremely desirable ends, and a prevailing and paramount desire for the favor of the world—a course incompatible with the discharge of the duties due to God. (James 1: 27; Rom. 12: 2.) The text is an allusion to Christ's declaration in Matt. 6: 24. The same doctrine also inculcates in Rom. 8: 7. **Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.** A conclusion drawn from the principle just asserted. He who is "*minged* to be" (compare Matt. 11: 19), or who "*desires* to be" a friend of the world ('will' here is something more than a mere auxiliary), and hence adopts a worldly policy, and cultivates worldly fervor and associations; '*becometh*' the enemy of God. The principle involves and necessitates antag-

onism to God's will; a heart set upon the world must be averse to religion. It was precisely this antagonism between the world and God's kingdom which drove the apostles from Jerusalem, and laid upon James the weighty responsibility of the Jerusalem pastorate. (Acts 12: 17.) Baumgarten's "Apos. Hist.," § 20. Instead of "*becometh*," Cremer translates, "takes the character or condition, comes forward, appears," p. 303. [There is no article before the word 'enemy' in the Greek, and there seems to be no good reason for inserting it in English. The meaning of James may be thus expressed: 'Whosoever therefore makes it his choice or pleasure to be a friend of the world, takes his position as an enemy of God.'—A. H.]

5. The spirit of the world is condemned by the express teachings of God in his word. (Ver. 5: 6.)

**Do ye think that the scripture saith (it) in vain**—speaks falsely or emptily. As this form of expression would seem to indicate a quotation, the words immediately succeeding have been diligently sought for in the Old Testament, but they cannot be found there. They are not in Scripture, nor, according to our view, did James intend to quote any other Scripture than that occurring in the next verse, "*God resisteth the proud, etc.*" (Prov. 3: 34.) This quotation is suspended until James in his prompt and spirited way mentions and answers an objection. The meaning will be made clear by repeating 'do you think' before the second clause of the verse, as introducing the opinion of a world-loving and self-excusing objector. **The spirit that dwelleth within us** (the better authorities read, *which he planted in us*) **lusteth to envy** (*enviously*). Do you say this, laying the charge of your worldly rivalries and animosities and discontents upon your Creator? Do you claim that an infirmity of nature, for which you are in no wise responsible, *constrains* you to feel and to live as the world does? The Holy Spirit is not intended here,

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

1 more grace. Wherefore *the scripture* saith, God

1 Gr. a greater grace.

and indeed is referred to nowhere in the Epistle, which deals almost exclusively with Christian ethics in contrast with Christian theology. Nor can the idea of "envious lusting," or longing, be properly associated with the Spirit of all grace. Such a connection is harsh, and without any Scriptural warrant. But there can be no objection to identifying the indwelling spirit with man's corrupt will (compare 3: 16), for which, however, the worldly-minded professor pleads that he is not responsible. The last clause of this verse and the first of the next are thrown in parenthetically. See a similar example in 4: 14, and note on that verse.

NOTE.—The only other admissible interpretation of this difficult passage is that which finds the Scriptural quotation already given in the previous verse cited here without being repeated: "Do ye think that the Scripture saith this in vain?" Those whom James addressed "knew" from the Scripture (ver. 4) that there was opposition between God and the world. God had put enmity between the seed of woman and the seed of the serpent from the time of the first temptation. (Gen. 3: 15.) And the entire inspired history is but a narration of the successive incidents of this ancient, irreconcilable conflict. Now it finds expression in the avowals of worshipers, Ps. 139: 21, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee?" Now it is proclaimed in the stern remonstrances of prophets. (2 Chron. 19: 2.) "Shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord." James may have had reference either to this pervasive doctrine of Scripture, or else to some special text such as those we have quoted. If, as is not unlikely, Matthew's Gospel, which was specially addressed to the Jews, was then in circulation among them, the reference may have been directly to our Lord's declaration recorded there. (Matt. 6: 24.) "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and

mammon." This last reference, which Benson favors, fits the connection easily. In the previous verse James had alluded to the antagonism between the world and God, as a truth of which his hearers had already been apprised. Then, upon the present supposition, he adds: Do you think that the Scripture saith this falsely? In opposition to the divine testimony, Do ye argue that the spirit of passionate envy, which disturbs your peace of mind and your church fellowship (ver. 1), has been implanted in you by God, and therefore cannot be contrary to his will? The error here advanced James had already confuted (1: 13-18) by showing that it is contradicted by human experience and by the divine perfections. Accordingly, he contents himself now with showing that the infirmity of spirit is no justification of envy and strife. He says: God has given you grace superior to the lusts of nature; he has made provision for your relief in spiritual conflict. You have but to humble yourselves before him, in order to be delivered from envy and vain glory toward your fellows. (Ver. 6.)

[De Wette supposes that the word spirit (*πνεῦμα*) here means the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of Christians and loves them even to envy—that is, loves them with such ardor as to be envious, *humanly* speaking, of any hold which the world has on their affections. He would translate the passage thus: *Or do ye suppose that the Scripture saith (this in ver. 4) in vain? Unto envy doth the Spirit which he caused to dwell in us love (us). But he giveth greater grace* (than if he did not thus love us). I should hesitate to pronounce this an impossible sense.—A. H.]

**6. But he giveth (the) more grace.**—Syriac, "Superior grace." Thus, almost in a word, does James crush the objection. Man's infirmity is no excuse for his transgressions, for God adapts his gifts of grace precisely to the needs of those who require and ask his succor. To those whose need is greatest the largest measure of grace is given. Thus the way is prepared for the quotation he has promised; the connection requires that **wherefore he saith** should be rendered *wherefore it (the*

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your hands, ye sinners*; and purify *your hearts, ye doubleminded*.

*Scripture*) saith, which introduces the suspended quotation. **God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.** The proud are those who seek for worldly advancement and mind high things (Rom. 12: 16), and who therefore shrink from the reproaches and sacrifices connected with fidelity to the gospel. But in thus seeking worldly gains and glories, under whatever pretext, they incur the loss of the divine favor. The humble are those who, whatever may be their earthly station, recognize their spiritual weakness and poverty, and condescend to men of low estate. They cheerfully assume the cross of Christ, and trustfully rely upon God for strength and wisdom. And to these the grace they need is given. We may judge that this text was a favorite one among the early believers from its being quoted by Peter as well as James. (1 Peter 5: 5.)

c. Means of overcoming the passions. Ver. 7-10.

**7-10.** The practical conclusion follows. The submission to God is all that is needed to relieve the infirmities of nature, and to give victory in the sorest spiritual conflicts. The appeal is not to the proud (ver. 6) only (Huther), but to all. Nor is the submission that of obedience only, but rather of dependence and trust. They who put themselves under God's care and government will find mercy and grace for every day of need. (But) **Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** [The word "but" should be inserted before "resist," according to the best editors and the earliest MSS. **8** A B.—A. H.] You need fear nothing from the enmity of the world, not even if it be impersonated in its prince. To resist God is ungrateful and rebellious folly; to oppose each other is to turn the Christian household into an arena of painful and inglorious strife. If you would show your manhood, arm yourselves against the devil, the author of all evil desires, especially of that presumption through which he himself fell, and to which he now tempts, in order that he may destroy you. If you must fight, if you aspire to glory, choose a foe man worthy of the steel; fight Satan, the malig-

nant enemy of God and man. There may be, as Plumptre suggests, an indirect reference here to the history of our Lord's temptation. As Christ was prepared by gifts of the Spirit for that dread encounter, so the tempted believer may be assured that God will impart all the grace he needs (ver. 6) for success in his spiritual conflicts. In this passage James gives an additional proof of the truth of the principle laid down in 1: 14. As God is not the Author of sin (1: 13), neither on the other hand can Satan betray into sin without the consent of the human will. Man's moral nature, when submissive to the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit, is unconquerable by all the arts and arms of hell. The right of direct appeal to God's word and his throne for grace and guidance (misnamed the right of private judgment) is clearly implied in the passage.

**8.** To the last admonition succeeds another, which also has a promise connected with it. **Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.** God's fellowship is sought by repentance, faith, and prayer. Drawing nigh to God indicates a trustful and habitual resort to God amid life's trials and temptations, and pledges divine help to those who thus approach him. The verb occurs in Hosea 12: 6, "Wait on" thy God continually. A similar lesson is given in 2 Chron. 15: 2; Isa. 57: 15; Zech. 1: 3. It is not the same as "walking with God," like Enoch (Gen. 5: 24), although he who draws nigh unto God will also walk with him, and show in character and life the effect of so high an association. **Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded.** This is added to show that something more than acts of devotion are necessary; the conduct must correspond to the profession. Nor did the ceremonial ablutions of the Pharisees suffice. Even the heathen Seneca knew that "no sea, no rivers can cleanse the right hand stained with crime and blood." The 'sinners' who were serving the lusts of the world (ver. 4) must cease to do evil and learn to do good. (Ps. 24: 4.) The **doubleminded** (1: 8; Syriac, "divided in mind"), who, while they wav-

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you.

ered, showed that their hearts rather belonged to the world than to God, must submit their hearts to the influence of a Divine Spirit, and cultivate unfeigned love for the brethren. (1 Peter 1: 22.) True piety is chastity of spirit; in its inner sanctuary God alone is shrined. The best comment on this passage is found in the Sermon on the Mount, where our Lord condemns the double-mindedness of the Pharisees. (Matt. 6: 19-34.) "They professed to have their hearts set on heaven, while yet they were engaged in laying up for themselves treasures on earth. But where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. (Ver. 19-21.) Their *eye* was not single in its aim, and therefore their spiritual vision was clouded and obscure. (Ver. 22, 23.) They attempted to reconcile the incompatible services of two opposite masters—God and Mammon. (Ver. 24.) They were cumbered and anxious about the things of this world, instead of seeking as their first and great concern the kingdom of God and his righteousness with the simple faith that all other things necessary would be added unto them." (Ver. 25-34.) (Forbes' "Scripture Parallelism," 217, 218.) [The brevity of the original is very spirited, viz.: "*Cleanse hands, sinners; purify hearts, double-minded*"; or supplying ye: "*Cleanse hands, ye sinners; purify hearts, ye double-minded*."—A. H.]

9. Repentance is the way of return to God. This sorrow for sin is described and emphasized by three words. **Be afflicted**—spoken primarily of bearing external trouble, here for the sense of distress, as in Rom. 7: 24: "O wretched man that I am." It is incorrectly referred by Grotius to bodily austerities, which in themselves have no religious value. **Mourn and weep.** These words are frequently found together, as in Neh. 8: 9; Mark 16: 10. The Jews rent their garments, and used sackcloth and ashes in sign of mourning; and tears express grief in all ages and among all peoples. Here, as in the texts to which allusion is made (Luke 6: 21, 25), the sign is employed for the thing signified. **Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.** Let the con-

sciousness of your eternal wretchedness eclipse the joys which life's seeming prosperities awaken, and thus work repentance and salvation. (2 Cor. 7: 10.) The external change from laughter to mourning is a figure for the change of feeling, as the last clause shows. **Heaviness**—dejection, such as is shown in casting down the eyes in shame. The worldly pleasures they had sought for and enjoyed should produce a sense of shame and deep distress before God. (Prov. 10: 23.) The passage recalls the figure of the Publican (Luke 18: 13), who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven"—not, indeed, to commend the attitude, but the penitential sorrow it expressed. In the second half of the verse is exhibited the parallelism of members, the well-known peculiarity of Hebrew poetry, which occurs also in the New Testament when the style rises to the elevation of rhythm. The parallelism is sometimes synonymous as here, and sometimes antithetic. (Winer.) The species of parallelism occurring here is also known as gradational; it is described by Forbes, "Symmetrical Structure of Scriptures," pp. 5-17.

10. Conclusion of the exhortation, based upon the assurance of ver. 6. **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.** This passage resembles, but is not parallel to 1 Peter 5: 6, which indeed is founded upon the same text (Prov. 3: 34), but applies it to submission under affliction. Here James enjoins self-humiliation in the presence of the omniscient and offended Lord. The son of Sirach says: "Those who fear the Lord will humble their souls before him." (2: 17.) **And he shall lift you up**—better, *and he will exalt you*. An allusion to our Lord's words in Matt. 23: 12; Luke 14: 11. Yet this contrast often occurs elsewhere, as Job 5: 11; Isa. 57: 15; Ezek. 21: 26. The promise relates as well to the present hidden, as to the future revealed, glory of the humble Christian. (Huther.) The humble sinner receives the divine favor, and enjoys the happiness arising from the divine fellowship. "The degraded worldling is 'lifted up' to a sphere of elevated thoughts and sublimer pursuits. The mourning penitent is 'lifted up' to the heights of a pure,

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

11 Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. One *only* is the lawgiver and judge, *even* he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?

celestial happiness. The slave of Satan is 'lifted up' to those heavenly places in which the King of Glory sits with his servants, and calls them friends." Patterson, "Expos." Compare Matt. 5: 3, 4.

d. James urges (ver. 11-17) a warning against the passions on account of the presumption they inspire in our estimates (ver. 11, 12), and in our projects in secular life. Ver. 13-17.

11. **Speak not evil one of another**—better, *Speak not against one another*. (So the Syriac.) This admonition is connected with the preceding by the principle that humility before God carries with it lowliness toward his children. The frequent returns of the writer to this subject show that he is dealing with "the ever-besetting sin of his time and people." The sin condemned is calumny, which magnifies the faults and depreciates the virtues and character of others. The unnaturalness of the sin is already indicated by the relationship that Christians bear to each other. They are **brethren**, the children of the same Father, and should take no part in Satan's work of backbiting. (Rev. 12: 10.) **He that speaketh evil of his brother** (the passage must be rendered, *speaketh against his brother*), **and (or) judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law**. Speaking and judging are nearly synonymous; but the speaking presupposes the judgment. Calumny against a brother is evil in its source before it flows out into speech. Calumny is a violation of the law of love, which it condemns as of no authority, or as not founded upon right. It is more particularly an express violation of the law of Christ, who forbids the unkind judgments that prevail in common life. (Matt. 7: 1.) **But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge**. The calumniator thus leaves the position which becomes him, as a subject of law. The law is promulgated, not that he may judge it, but that it may judge him. He is required to do it. But instead of rendering it a loyal obedience, he

makes himself a judge, and promulgates a law by which his neighbor is condemned or absolved—a criminal presumption, as James now proceeds to show. Perhaps it may even be found that the law of God permits what the censorious professor condemns, in which case his condemnation of a brother condemns the law which absolves him, and directly impugns the wisdom and holiness of the Heavenly Lawgiver.

12. **There is one lawgiver who is able to save and destroy**. Tischendorf adds the words, "and judge," after lawgiver; so also the Syriac [with  $\aleph$  A B P, Coptic, Æthiopic Versions.—A. H.] The text is more forcible in the original than in our Version; it may be rendered, *One is the lawgiver and judge, he who is able*, etc. (Rom. 14: 4.) The judgment which discriminates the characters and seals the destinies of men belongs only to him who has given the law. Compare 1 Cor. 4: 3-5. Besides a law is of no avail unless it have its sanctions; hence our sentence is idle, for we cannot execute it. The law has no efficacy unless administered by an Almighty and Eternal Judge (Matt. 10: 28), "who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." **Who art thou that judgest another?** The same rebuke in the same form is administered by Paul in Rom. 14: 4. Instead of *another* read *a neighbor* (so in the Syriac), without the personal pronoun, as Mark 12: 33; Rom. 13: 10. The insignificance of the man is shown by contrasting him with the One Lawgiver and Judge of all. The standards of right among men vary; they know little of the law, and less of the hearts of others, and they are themselves the transgressors of law. When such beings undertake "to judge of motives and character without tangible and most convincing evidence," and on this ground pronounce unfavorable judgments against each other, they arrogate to themselves a wisdom, holiness, and power to which they have not the shadow of a claim. [Davidson's translation of ver. 11 and 12 represents the Greek text, in so far as the definite article is con-

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

13 Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get again: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time,

cerned, correctly. "Speak not against one another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother or judgeth his (literally *the*) brother, speaketh against law and judgeth law; but if thou judgest law, thou art not a doer of law, but a judge. One is the lawgiver and judge, who is able to save and to destroy; but who art thou that judgest thy (literally *the*) neighbor?"—A. H.]

13. Now is shown the folly of the carnal desires and secular plans which lead us to forget our dependence upon God. (Ver. 13-17.) **Go to now, ye that say**—better, *Come now*, etc., awakening attention. Here the imperative is used as an interjection as in § 1 a call to *many*, to whom the discourse now turns. The persons whom James addresses are worldlings, whether unconverted members of the Christian community, or aliens who persecuted the brotherhood and blasphemed the name of Christ. (2: 7.) There is no reason to restrict the warning to either of these classes specifically. The writer addresses those who are the votaries of the world, and who will continue in its service notwithstanding his admonition. Hence his severity. Our Lord addressed the same class in the parable of the rich fool. (Luke 12: 16, seq.) The same tone of contemptuous indignation which appears in the parable (ver. 20) is here manifest. **To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.** Some manuscripts have "to-day and to-morrow." This reading, which, however, is probably incorrect, would indicate a two-days' journey. 'Such a city' indicates some definite city to which the traveler proposes to journey. Instead of 'continue there a year,' etc., read, *spend there a year*, etc. The language describes the spirit of "the strangers of the Dispersion" then and now; and also expresses the confidence with which those whom James had in view anticipated the future. The aim of these journeys and business adventures was to **get gain**, which worldly men regard as true success in life. They turn this scene of probation into a

market, as once the sacred precincts of the temple were invaded for the sale of oxen and sheep and doves. And the calculations of the future are made without any thought of God, or any apprehension of death. The repetition of the 'ands' well expresses their presumptuous confidence. A large class of Oriental merchants are peddlers, restlessly adventuring from city to city in pursuit of gain. See "Arabian Nights," passim, and Bush's "Illustrations" on James 4: 13. As for the Jews, they were widely distributed over the Roman Empire at the date of our Epistle. Strabo said: "Already a Jewish population has entered every city." The Jews occupied two of the five wards of the great commercial city of Alexandria. They had seven synagogues in Rome. They were in North Africa, and had penetrated to the banks of the Danube and to the remote coasts of Spain and Britain. And everywhere they were busily engaged in trade. Uhlhorn, "Conflict of Christianity," pp. 83, 84. Alzog ("Ecl. Hist.," § 29) indicates the commercial spirit as an active cause of the Jewish Dispersion from the great metropolitan centre of Alexandria, where the Macedonian conqueror had permitted a Jewish colony to settle.

14. This verse is a parenthesis, interrupting for a moment the progress of the discourse. The writers of the epistles employ parentheses to express sometimes a limitation, sometimes a corroboration, sometimes a reason or more precise explanation, as here. (Winer.) **Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.** Carnal security should be disturbed by the uncertainty of the future. (Prov. 27: 1.) "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Not careless presumption, but trust in a wise and merciful Providence, relieves the anxieties of life. (Matt. 6: 34.) Instead of 'whereas ye,' read *ye who*, which is the literal translation, and brings out the parenthetic character of the verse. **For what is your life? It is even a vapor** (literally, *for ye are a vapor*) **that appeareth for a little**

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

15 and then vanisheth away. <sup>1</sup>For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that. But now ye glory in your vauntings: 17 all such glorying is evil. To him therefore who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

1 Gr. *Instead of your saying.*

time and then vanisheth away. Even life is uncertain. No one can tell whether he will be alive on the morrow. The question means, Of what character is your life, implying its nothingness? Compare 1 Peter 2: 20. "What glory is it?" This suggestion of the vanity of life is confirmed by a familiar figure (Job 7: 1; Ps. 102: 3), to which the connection of the life with the breath gives a striking appropriateness. In cold air the breath becomes visible in the form of vapor which soon disappears. The correct reading, "*Ye are a vapor,*" gives peculiar strength to the figure. The warning is specially applicable in the case of the traveler (ver. 13), to whom the vehicle or vessel in which he sets forth may prove his coffin: and the refreshment on the way may work as poison, and prostrate him before he reaches his place of destination.

15. For that ye ought to say—literally, *instead of saying*. The previous verse shows the folly of such expressions as are given in ver. 13. Now James shows how we should speak in regard to the future. **If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that—**read, *we shall both live*, etc. Not only the doing, but also the living, as the condition of doing, depends upon the will of God. To the Lord there is nothing uncertain or uncontrollable in the future. And his people may therefore commit themselves trustfully to his guardianship, knowing that the wise, mighty, and loving Will which sways all times and seasons is enlisted in their behalf; and clinging to the divine assurance that all things shall work together for their good. The pious expression of our text became common among Christians. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1.4: 19): "I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will." And the formula still retains its place in the familiar speech of Christendom. When it is not uttered in connection with our purposes for the future, and it need not always be (compare 1 Cor. 16: 5), its spirit should always be retained—the sense of dependence upon God for life and for success in all its legitimate enterprises. (Luke 12: 29, 30.)

16. A contrast to the spirit and conduct just described and commended. **But now** indicates how the case really stands. **Ye rejoice in your boastings**—better, *Ye boast in your vainglory*—that is, in the impious and vain arrogance which trusts in the stability of earthly things. This is the sphere or state in which the boasting takes place. The plural form of the noun cannot be given without awkwardness in English. It indicates the various degrees of vainglory, and perhaps also may suggest the various occasions or modes in which it betrays itself. The persons referred to were animated by vainglory, which their presumptuous speech revealed. (Ver. 13; Prov. 27: 1.) **All such rejoicing is evil**—"all such boasting." Thus the condemnation, already implied in the contrast, finds expression. There is a boasting that is reasonable and good, like that of Paul in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3: 3), and in his cross (Gal. 6: 14); or even in the infirmities which afforded an occasion for the display of God's saving power. (2 Cor. 12: 9.) But the boastings of the vainglorious are unhalloved in their source, are false in their grounds, and are pernicious in their results. Wherefore, let him "that glorieth, glory in the Lord." (2 Cor. 10: 17.)

17. **Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.** The general law of conscience is here asserted; but in such a way as to emphasize the condemnatory sentence just uttered, and also to indicate that the principle has a special application here. The idea is that where the "becoming" in morals is known, the neglect of it is the actual doing of evil. In such a case positive guilt is incurred. (John 15: 22; Luke 12: 47, 48.) God will hold him gravely responsible who has held his truth captive in unrighteousness. (Rom. 1: 18.) Hence those who know the insecurity of life and the uncertainty of the future, and yet repudiate the facts of their condition, and their dependence upon God, in their far-reaching and presumptuous calculations, act inconsistently and unbecomingly: contradict their own con-

## CHAPTER V.

**G**O to now, *ye rich men*, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.  
 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

1 Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

victions; and sin the more grievously, because they sin against familiar knowledge. But the principle also enforces all the moral lessons upon which the writer has been insisting, and thus prepares his readers for the recapitulation of the subjects discussed, and the concluding of the Epistle. Alford: "Therefore we see in this example the truth of the general axiom," etc.

**CONCLUSION.**—Duties of the tempted and tried recapitulated and reinforced. 5: 1-20.

1. 1-11. *Swift to hear the revelations of the word; in regard to prosperous wickedness* (ver. 1-6); and *afflicted piety*. Ver. 7-11.

1. Here the conclusion of the Epistle begins, recapitulating and enforcing the duties of the tempted and tried. In the first section (ver. 1-11) the writer exhibits the end of those complications which disturbed the trust of the early believers in the providence of God, and made them slow to receive the assurances of the word. He indicates, therefore, the future of prosperous wickedness (ver. 1-6), and of afflicted piety. (Ver. 7-11.) Yet there is no break in the discourse: having shown that worldly greed is impious and evil, he now considers its present workings and its final result. **Go to now.** This phrase, which is now obsolete, should read *come now*. It is a call to attention, indicating that something important and urgent is to be said. Here it introduces a prophetic denunciation. **Ye rich men.** In the original, we have the nominative with the article, which is allowable in calling and commanding. The persons addressed are persons without the Christian pale. They are not only persons possessed of wealth, but also idolatrous of it, as the connection shows. (Luke 6: 24.) They have secured that which their hearts chiefly value, and which they deem the source of happiness and the great aim of life. And they abuse it. (Ver. 4-6.) **Weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you**—literally, *weep, wailing for your miseries that are coming*. This is not a call to repentance, like 4: 9, but an animated proclamation of judgment. The

implication is that the persons addressed would pursue their evil course, and reap the destructive consequences. However prosperous they seem, they must soon weep and wail, for their reverses and ruin are near at hand. And the sorrow should have no solace, because produced by a divine judgment. (Isa. 13: 6.) The miseries are those attendant upon the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19: 43, 44), and also upon the final judgment. The two events, of which the former was the symbol and the pledge of the latter, are grouped together by James. The cares and anxieties which wealth brings with it are left out of sight, as unworthy of attention in view of the threatening calamities.

2. The coming judgment is figuratively described. The wealth of the Orientals consisted mainly in coin and clothing. See Acts 20: 33. They trafficked in costly garments, or kept them for ostentation. (Ezra 2: 69; Neh. 7: 70.) Their riches were peculiarly insecure and perishable; they might even be "consumed before the moth." (Job 13: 28; Isa. 50: 9; 51: 8; Matt. 6: 19.) **Riches** is the general term, under which garments and coin (ver. 3) are the specifications. **Are corrupted.** The *decay* of the wealth is a figure to show that it had become worthless. The present tense indicates the certainty of the event predicted, and its near approach. Compare note on 5: 7. Wealth, with the curse of God upon it, is poverty and wretchedness. **Are moth-eaten**—literally, *are become moth-eaten*. In this state the rich stuffs would be well nigh worthless, if not altogether so. Compare Isa. 51: 8. "The moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool." The age in which the gospel was first preached to the poor was eminently an age of covetousness. The secret of happiness was supposed, even by the religious teachers of the Jewish people, to be discoverable in luxury and pleasure. (Matt. 23: 4; Luke 16: 14.) Hence they adopted any means, however unrighteous, to secure affluence. (Jos. "Ant." XIII. 3: 4, 5.) They needed the stern admonition of James the Just, that while they felicitated themselves in being

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

3 Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony <sup>1</sup> against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure 4 in the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers

1 Or, unto.

rich and increased in goods and having need of nothing, they were on the contrary wretched and destitute. Compare John's warning to the Church of Laodicea. (Rev. 3: 17.) The communism and self-sacrifices of the Pentecostal believers were a generous reaction and protest against the spirit of their people and their times. (Acts 2.)

3. Continuation of the denunciation of the judgments which will befall the rich. **Your gold and silver is cankered**—literally, *is rusted*. The expression is hyperbolic; for gold and silver never rust. James does not refer to the black tarnish which unused silver contracts, or the green discoloration of hoarded gold; but to the loss of value which occurs in other metals through rust. The rusted metals correspond to the moth-eaten garments: they are worthless. The wealth which you have regarded as a substantial possession, and from which you promise yourselves so much, will be destroyed. **And the rust of them shall be a witness against you**—literally, *to you*. According to our version the dative is that of advantage or disadvantage (*dativus commodi et incommodi*). The rendering to you implies that the rust that had gathered upon the unused treasures would testify to the hard-heartedness of their possessors. Compare the words of Horace, "Odes," B. 2, Ode 2. "There is no brightness to silver concealed in the avaricious earth, O Crispus Sallust, a foe to wealth unless *it shines by moderate use*." According to the latter rendering the melancholy ruins of fortune would betoken the destruction of those who foolishly relied upon them. **And shall eat your flesh as it were fire**. The judgment upon the riches extends also to their possessors. The 'flesh'—literally, *the fleshy parts*—is a figure for the wealthy who are designated by that part of the body which they were wont to pamper. This is represented as consumed by the rust, as the fleshy parts of Jezebel were consumed by the dogs. (2 Kings 9: 36.) The keen anguish of the punishment is indicated by the gnawing fire, which tortures while it consumes. The divine judgments are oftentimes described as a

devouring fire. (Ps. 21: 9; Isa. 10: 16, 17; 30: 27; Mark 9: 44; Amos 5: 6.) Destruction is usually implied; but the additional idea of torment clearly enters into it (Ezek. 15: 7), as here. Not only the destruction of that which the rich prized above all things will afflict them with a pain as keen as if fire devoured their flesh, but to this will be added remorse for wasted opportunities, for criminal pleasures, and for the guilt incurred in the acquisition of deceitful riches. **Ye have heaped treasure together for (in) the last days**. The vanity of the excessive pursuit of wealth by those whom James addressed was shown in the fact that the judgment they had incurred was just about to befall them. The inspired writers did not discriminate, in these warnings, between the last days of the Jewish polity (which were a type and prophecy of the final judgment), and the final judgment itself. They contented themselves in declaring the nearness of the "coming of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15: 51; 1 Thess. 4: 15; 1 John 2: 18); and in warning those to whom they spoke and wrote to be ready for it. This clause, as explained by what precedes, has a kindred meaning to that of Rom. 2: 5. "But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." These were the very days when the treasures amassed should bear their testimony, and call down the consuming sentence of God upon their guilty possessors. The covetous, who were laying up treasure even by fraud and oppression (ver. 4-6), ought rather to be making ready for the coming Judge. (Ver. 8; Luke 17: 26-30.) See note on 5: 7.

NOTE.—In ver. 3, 5, and 6, we have not changed the rendering in our Common Version of the aorist by the perfect, believing that an endeavor to preserve the precise character of the original in these instances would give an air of stiffness to the translation.

4. The ground of the judgment was the unrighteousness exercised in the acquisition and use of riches. (Ver. 4-6.) Here unrighteous-

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye

ness toward laborers is specified. An improved translation of the present verse would be: "*Behold the hire of the laborers who reaped your fields, which is fraudulently kept back by you, crieth out; and the cries of those that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts.*" **Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped your fields.** 'Behold,' indicates that something worthy of earnest attention is about to be spoken. The mode in which the wealth had been accumulated was iniquitous. The money due to the laborers who had gathered harvests for the wealthy was withheld—Syriac "wrongfully retained"—a wrong which the law did not tolerate even for a single night. (Lev. 19: 13.) Against such evil doers a woe was denounced (Jer. 22: 13), and a swift judgment predicted. Mal. 3: 5; compare Job 31: 38, 39. **Crieth out**—demanding vengeance as with a loud clamor. (Gen. 4: 10; Exod. 2: 23.) To condemn to hunger those whose labors supply us with bread is a crime that cries to heaven. For they are more than hirelings: they are God's wards. The bounteous Giver of the harvest assigns a due portion thereof to those who gather it. To wrong even the hireling of the fields is to break an ordinance of heaven. (Ps. 126: 5, 6.) In this age poverty was regarded as a crime and pity for the necessitous as a weakness. (Virgil, "Geor." ii. 499.) But Christianity came forth from the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, to dignify honest and useful labor, and to assert the right of the poor man to enjoy the fruits of his toil and satisfy the needs of his nature. A large number of the early Christians supported themselves by their daily labor. (1 Thess. 4: 11.) **And the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (hosts).** The almightiness of God to redress and avenge is indicated by the title "Lord of the (angelic) hosts." Compare Rev. 4: 8 with Isa. 6: 3. The Ruler of the armies of heaven has sovereign power over all the multitudes of earth among whom he represses the strong and saves the weak. (Rom. 9: 29.) The

hosts he gloriously rules are the stars and the angels. Ps. 24: 10; compare Deut. 4: 19; 1 Kings 22: 19. And he hears the cry of the oppressed on earth, who appeal to him for deliverance. (Gen. 18: 21; 19: 13; Exod. 2: 23; 3: 9; 2 Sam. 22: 7; 1 a. 18: 6; Isa. 5: 9.) James uses the Hebrew title of the supreme King of the Universe, as he is writing to Jews among whom this title was familiar; it occurs not less than twenty-three times in Malachi.

5. The rich were also unrighteous in the use they made of their riches, which they devoted not to the relief of the weary and poor laborers, but to the gratification of their own lusts. While those by whom their wealth was created suffered, they lived in voluptuousness and debauchery. **Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton**—Syriac, "revelled." Ye have lived in voluptuousness and in luxury. The picture of such a life had already been drawn by our Lord in the parable of the rich man. (Luke 16: 19.) They sought for nothing higher than earthly delights, unmindful of that wrath which was about to be "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (Rom. 1: 18.) The form of the verb (the gnomic aorist) indicates that this was the habit and character of their lives. **Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter**—better, *ye have pampered your hearts in a day of slaughter.* 'Your hearts' implies more than *yourselves*. Agreeably to the physiological views of antiquity, the heart and the stomach were closely connected; hence the idea of the pleasures of eating is here suggested. Compare Acts 14: 17. (Winer.) 'In a day of slaughter' is not equivalent to *for a day of slaughter*, as some suppose, but is parallel to "in the last days." Ver. 3. See Jer. 12: 3; 25: 34. While they were carelessly and greedily pampering their appetites and passions, the day of their judgment had already dawned. They were like oxen feasting on a day of butchery; like Belshazzar revelling, while an armed and bloodthirsty foe was at his palace gates. (Luke 21: 34.)

6 Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandmen waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

have killed the righteous *one*; he doth not resist you.

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, until the <sup>1</sup>coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until <sup>2</sup>it receive the early and latter rain.

1 Gr. *presence*.....2 Or. *he*.

**6. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you.** Another sin of the rich was that they shamefully perverted the influence they had, in oppressing and even murdering the righteous. The original is more spirited than our rendering. It is: *Ye have condemned, ye have killed the just man; he doth not resist you.* The rich are charged with doing what they caused the judges and executioners to do, as well as with the guilt of those iniquitous sentences which they themselves pronounced and inflicted. The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude to reject the Lord. (Matt. 27: 20.) And the same "rulers" (Acts 3: 17) and "princes" (1 Cor. 2: 8) who were guilty of the blood of the Lord were also foremost in the persecutions of his people. 'The just' (*man*) expresses the whole class, just as 'the poor' (*man*) does in 2: 6. The case of Jesus is not specifically referred to, because James is charging the wealthy and powerful with a crime which they were accustomed to commit. A parallel to this passage is found in Wisdom of Solomon 2: 10-20. It is an interesting circumstance that James himself was commonly known as "the Just," even among the Jews. Hegesippus thus describes his martyrdom: "The Scribes and Pharisees threw down the Just from the pinnacle of the temple, and said, 'Let us stone James the Just!' and they began to stone him; for he had not been killed by the fall, but turning round, knelt and said: 'I beseech thee, Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' But while they were thus stoning him, one of the fullers took the club with which he used to press the clothes and struck the head of the Just. Thus he suffered martyrdom." The legend, to which indeed little importance is to be given, serves nevertheless to illustrate the meaning of our text. 'He doth not resist you.' This circumstance emphasizes the unrighteousness and criminality of the rich, who are unmoved by the patient sufferings of their innocent victims. It also implies that, being allowed full scope of action

here, they might the more certainly expect to be called to account for their conduct hereafter. (Amos 2: 6, 7; 5: 12; 8: 4.) That a menace is involved in the expression appears from what immediately follows. The meekness of the just is "the dead calm before the earthquake."

**7. Suffering believers are cheered, and are exhorted to patient endurance.** (Ver. 7-11.) **Be patient therefore, brethren.** The 'brethren' are contrasted with the rich and powerful, and are assigned to the class of the just (ver. 6) whom these persecute. And they must vindicate their claim to this high association by exhibiting the long suffering which is a distinguishing characteristic of the just, when under persecution for righteousness' sake. **Unto (until) the coming of the Lord.** The return of Christ is pointed to as a day of retribution, when the good and the evil would, each of them, experience the destiny he had been preparing for. After Christ's coming, the just, now suffering on earth, would become blessed spirits in the better world. Like their Master, they would exchange the cross for the crown. The early Christians had no knowledge of the time of this coming, which yet they supposed to be nigh; and they could not distinguish between his coming to destroy Jerusalem, and his coming to judge the world. The former was the foreshadowing and the assurance of the latter. **Behold the husbandman waiteth, etc.** Instead of *and hath long patience for it*, read *being patient over it*; and instead of *until he receive*, read *until it receive*. It is the opinion of some interpreters that a drought prevailed during the very year when this Epistle was written. Compare Acts 11: 28. This circumstance would give special weight and aptness to the illustration. The same illustration occurs in Eccles. 6: 19. The husbandman after sowing is not hopeless or impatient, because some time must elapse before the harvest appears to reward his toil. And, like him, the Christian must keep himself in patience until the precious fruit of his toils for

God is matured and reaped. There were two heavy rainfalls in Palestine—one in autumn, the other in spring (Deut. 11: 14; Jer. 5: 24; Joel 2: 23), the rainy season extending from October until March. When these duly appeared, a good harvest might reasonably be expected. The "early rain" fell in the month of October; the "latter," in the month of March. By the first the soil was softened for husbandry; by the second, the swelling grain was fed.

NOTE.—"The coming of the Lord" specifically denotes the visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to raise the dead, to hold the final judgment, and to establish the kingdom of God solemnly and gloriously. (2 Thess. 1: 6, 7.) In general it indicates any particular interposition for the punishment of Messiah's enemies, or for the discipline or deliverance of his people. (Phil. 4: 5; Heb. 10: 25.) Hence the judgments about to befall the churches of Asia Minor were described as the personal visitations of Christ. (Rev. 2: 5, 16.) "*I will come quickly, and take away thy candlestick.*" (Rev. 2: 5.) "*I will come on thee quickly.*" It is clear enough that the early Christians could not distinguish between such occasional visitations of the Heavenly King and his final coming. Hence both were confounded in the question of the disciples. (Matt. 24: 3.) "Tell us when shall these things [the calamities of Jerusalem] be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Nor have we any reason to suppose that the disciples were afterwards apprised of the time fixed either for Christ's return to destroy the Jewish State, or to judge the world.

The Lord indeed taught his disciples that the two events were not simultaneous. In the account given by Matthew, we have the answer to the questions of the disciples in regard to both events. Mark and Luke give Christ's explanation of but one—the destruction of Jerusalem, which was to be preceded by signs and portents; the other should come like a thief in the night. See my article on "The Coming of Christ," in Ford's "Repository," March, 1879. Paul also distinguished between the Comings. He warned the Philippians that "the Lord was at hand." (Phil. 4: 5.) But he urged the Thessalonians not to be disturbed by the impression that the day of

Christ was at hand, declaring that the times were not yet ripe for our Lord's coming. These texts would be contradictory, unless different comings had been intended. All the disciples looked for the Lord's appearing (Col. 3: 4), yet Peter also, like Paul, warned his readers against expecting the speedy advent of Christ, reminding them that "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3: 8, 9.)

How, then, shall we explain those passages which imply that the day of Christ might at any moment break upon the world? In three respects the coming of Christ was near. 1. Christ comes at the day of death, when the destiny is forever decided. (2 Cor. 5: 8.) Those who are "absent from the body" are "*present with the Lord.*" This day is near to every one. 2. The overthrow of the Jewish polity was at hand when the epistles were written. This event was aptly described as a day of divine visitation; for it vindicated the honor of Christ, rolled away the reproach of his death, arrested the persecutions of his people, and gave them new proofs of his guardian care; for, warned by his prophecy (Matt. 24: 15-18), they had already betaken themselves to a safe retreat in Pella, beyond Jordan, when their enemies were falling beneath the Roman sword. 3. The general judgment was near as computed by the Dispensations of the eternal God (2 Peter 3: 8, 9), who measures the ages by his own existence, and to whom our ages are "as yesterday," and "as a watch in the night." (Ps. 90: 4.) It must also be observed that the prophets, like all speakers passionately assured of the future, use the figure of promptness or nearness to indicate certainty. Lowth, in his "Lectures on Hebrew Poetry" (§ 15, p. 162, Lond. Ed., 1835), calls attention to the frequency with which the prophets use the present tense to indicate what will certainly occur in the future, as in the prophetic narrative of Sennacherib's invasion of Palestine. Isa. 10: 28-32. Compare the burden of Babylon, Isa. 13: 6: "The day of the Lord is at hand." Also the punishment of Israel, Ezek. 7: 6: "The end is come," etc. So with the primeval curse, which was not immediately inflicted, nor is yet exhausted, Gen. 2: 17: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And so with the gospel promise of deliverance, John 5: 25: "The

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, brethren, for an example of suffer-

1 Gr., *presence*.

hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." In this way the certainty of the event was indicated, and the attention of men was fixed upon the prophecy. The same figure, the hypotyposis, is familiar in secular poetry and oratory.

8. The appeal, with the motive for heeding it, is renewed. Patience is encouraged by the nearness of the Lord's coming. (1 Peter 4: 7; Rom. 13: 11.) Storrs's "Diss. on Kingdom of Heaven," § 9. **Be ye also patient.** 'Also' refers to the husbandman, who is an example in patience to the believer. **Stablish** (or *strengthen*) **your hearts** by anticipating the Advent of Christ, when the injustice and violence of men will be redressed. Patience is the attribute—not, as is commonly supposed, of the weak, but of the strong (1 Thess. 3: 13, 1 Peter 5: 10); and Christian hope is the secret of Christian strength. Plumptre: "The promise of the Second Advent has been to believers in Christ what the promise of the First Advent was to Abraham and the patriarchs. They saw the far-off fulfillment, knowing not the times and the seasons, and it made them feel that they were 'pilgrims and strangers' (Heb. 11: 13), and so purified and strengthened them." And, so far as the case of those to whom James wrote was concerned, the coming of the Lord to redeem them from the persecutions inflicted upon them by a proud and dominant Judaism, was near at hand; although, as the event proved, the time of the general and final retribution was yet far distant. The early disciples were assured of the certainty of the Lord's coming, and were taught that it might be expected at any time. (2 Thess. 1: 4-8.) Thus they were encouraged patiently to wait for it. But they were also warned against undue excitement, or any presumption in regard to it. (2 Thess. 2: 1-4), and were admonished that God's appointed time might embrace centuries in its sweep. (2 Peter 3: 8.) Compare Angus. "Christ our Life," 323-333.

NOTE.—The frequent appeals enjoining patience and hope are thought by Bensen and

Stanley to indicate the year 42 as the date of the Epistle, a period when a train of calamities befell that vast Jewish population dwelling upon the plains of Babylonia (Stanley, "Essays and Sermons," p. 294), when, in the expressive language of Milman ("Hist. Jews," 2: 185): "The skirts of that tremendous tempest, which was slowly gathering over the native country and metropolis of the devoted people, first broke, and discharged their heavy clouds of ruin and desolation, one by one, over each of their remoter settlements."

9. Another admonition founded on the approach of the Judgment. **Judge not one against another**—that is, *Murmur not*. Those who suffer are wont to complain, and easily become fretful and captious toward their nearest and most loved associates. They groan because they suffer more than others who are, they think, more faulty than themselves, or because they do not receive from others due attention and sympathy. They easily imagine themselves the unhappy victims of inhumanity or injustice. And, as our Epistle shows, such complaints were not always without foundation. **Lest ye be condemned.** For if the complaint were groundless, the false judgment would be criminal; if it were just, the complainant would have usurped the prerogatives of the coming Judge—an office most unsuitable for a sinful man, who is soon to stand his own trial before the Searcher of hearts. Another thought is suggested by the use of the word **brethren**. Dinter: "Even he who has injured still remains thy brother, thy Father's son, the purchase of thy Redeemer—one to whom thou must wish good rather than evil." **Behold the judge standeth before the door**—that is, *at the door*. (Literally, *before the doors*.) This expression indicates the nearness of the judge, who might present himself at any moment. (Matt. 24: 33; Mark 13: 29.) *He* will best know and judge what awards to impart and to inflict. And the rule of his judgment will condemn the uncharitable (Matt. 7: 1), to whom he will assign the measure which they have meted out to others.

[In the *textus receptus* there is no article

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

ing and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed who endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful.

1 Or, *endurance*.

before the word 'judge,' but the authors of our Common Version inserted one, because the context leaves no room for doubt that James refers to the Supreme Judge. And a careful examination of the best MSS. shows that they have the article. This is true of  $\Sigma$  A B K L P, while no important uncial sustains the *textus receptus* in omitting the article. Let the work of textual criticism be encouraged, till the sources of knowledge have all been examined.—A. H.]

10. **Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken, etc.** The rendering is improved by omitting 'my,' which is not expressed in the original, and by changing 'have spoken' into *spoke*. **For an example of suffering affliction, and of patience**—better, *an example of affliction, and of patience*. 'An example' to cheer the heart, and an example to influence the conduct of suffering believers, was afforded by the history of the prophets of earlier times. (Matt. 5: 12.) The favor they had with God, and the dignity of the office they bore, did not exempt them from suffering; nor did their afflictions, however unmerited and extreme, induce them to surrender their trust in God, or renounce their sacred, but arduous mission. They relied on the grace of him who sent them, and they expected a final reward at his hands. 'The prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord,' who uttered their warnings, promises, and appeals by divine authority. (Jer. 20: 9; 44: 16; Dan. 9: 6.) They protested against the worship of idols, and against the prevalent vices of their people, as transgressions of the law of God, and, on this account, they were all of them persecuted, and some of them killed. (Matt. 23: 29, 30; Luke 13: 33, 34.) There were also prophets in the Christian churches (1 Cor. 12: 10; Eph. 2: 20; Rev. 22: 9), who were exposed to similar trials; but James could not have referred to these, inasmuch as his Epistle was written to them, as well as to other believers, all of whom he sought to inspire by the recollections of the heroic days of old. (Heb. 11:

35-38.) Yet there was a close relationship between the Old and the New Testament prophets; they both were instructed in the divine mysteries and purposes of grace, and communicated them to others. Hence, in the case of the Old Testament prophets, says Cremer (p. 569): "Their preaching was a predicting, a foretelling of the salvation yet to be accomplished: while, in the case of the New Testament prophets, it was a publication of the salvation already accomplished." Hence, in Eph. 3: 5; 2: 20, they are named side by side with apostles as the foundation of the Church. They were for the Church what the seers of old were for Israel, and needed the encouragement of their memorable example.

11. Nor was the case of the prophets peculiar in this respect. The entire class of triumphant sufferers to which they belonged is now honored and blest. (Matt. 24: 13.) **Behold, we count them happy which endure**—read, *who have endured*. We assure ourselves that God has not left the pious sufferers of the past unrewarded. (Matt. 5: 12.) Among these, *Job* (to whose history this is the only New Testament reference) was conspicuous. This patriarch, whom James recognizes as a real character, was a memorable example of patient endurance under troubles and unmerited reproaches. The story of *Job* was recited in the synagogue reading, and must have been generally known. It is referred to in Ezek. 14: 14-20. Paul quotes from the book (5: 13) in 1 Cor. 3: 19. What the Jews knew of their law and history was chiefly derived from oral instruction; hence, *hearing* is more frequently mentioned than reading. This was the case even with the rich and noble. (1 Kings 4: 3; 2 Kings 12: 11; Isa. 29: 18; Jer. 36: 4; Rev. 1: 3.) **And have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.** According to Tischendorf the reading should be: "Behold also the end of the Lord"—the happy result which the Lord brought forth from the affliction (genitive of cause); and see from this history 'that the Lord is very pitiful and

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any

of tender mercy.' No finer example could James present (save that of the First of Sufferers) than that of the patriarch whose story exhibits the extremes of prosperous integrity, terrible sufferings, persistent endurance, glorious deliverance, and eminent blessedness—a portentous yet transient thunder-cloud which passes away with a rainbow of peace and promise on its breast. The sufferings of his servant brought out into brighter relief the tender compassions of God. Believers might be assured from this history that God would not lay upon them more than they were able to bear, nor let them suffer longer than was necessary and beneficial to them.

Upon the history of this patriarch and the book that records it, Herder ("Hist. Heb. Poetry," Dial. 5, *ad finem*) eloquently remarks: "If he, the patient sufferer, was here the recorder of his own afflictions and triumphs, of his own wisdom, first victorious in conflict and then humbled in the dust, how blest has been his trials, how richly rewarded his pains! In a book full of imperishable thoughts, he still lives, gives utterance to the sorrows of his heart, and extends his triumph over centuries and continents. Not only, according to his wish, did he die in his nest, but a phoenix has sprung forth from his ashes, and from that odorous nest is diffused an incense which gives, and will forever give, reviving energy to the faint and strength to the powerless. He has drawn down the heavens to the earth, encamped their host invisibly around the bed of languishing, and made the afflictions of the sufferer a spectacle to angels; yea, has taught that God looks with watchful eye upon his creatures, and exposes them to the trial of their integrity for the maintenance of his own truth and the promotion of his own glory." (5: 11.)

A brilliant literary genius of England has confounded heaven itself with such a posthumous influence, regarding it as her noblest aim to live:

In thoughts sublime that pierce the world like stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge men's search  
To vaster issues. This is life to come,  
Which martyred men have made more glorious  
For us who strive to follow. May I reach  
That purest heaven, be to other souls

The cup of strength in some great agony,  
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,  
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,  
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
And in diffusion ever more intense,—  
So shall I join the choir invisible  
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

—GEORGE ELIOT.

All these high aspirations religion encourages, but it gives them a scope and a preciousness of which the gifted sceptic had no knowledge: it crowns them with the revelation of a personal God, and the assurance of a personal immortality.

2: 5; 12-18. *Slowness to speak.* Religious use of the tongue, not in swearing (ver. 12); but in prayer and song (ver. 13-18); in seasonable worship (ver. 13); intercessory worship (ver. 14-16); trustful worship. Ver. 16-18.

12. As the previous verses of this chapter (1-11) recapitulated and enforced the duties of tried believers, as demanded by reverence for the divine word (they must be swift to hear), James now recalls the second theme of the Epistle (slow to speak), giving warnings and directions in regard to the pious use of the tongue. (Ver. 12-18.) The tongue, he observes, in the first place, must not be employed in swearing. (Ver. 12.) There must be no irreverence in its most sacred act, the utterance of the name of God in an appeal to his throne.

**Above all things, my brethren, swear not.** This warning is to be laid to heart as the most important of all. It reproduces our Lord's injunction. (Matt. 5: 33-37.) That solemn judicial oaths are not prohibited to Christians is evident from our Lord's answer to Caiaphas, when put on oath in the usual form (Matt. 26: 63, 64); and from Paul's use, in his inspired writings, of expressions which are of the nature of an oath. (Rom. 1: 9; 2 Cor. 1: 23; Gal. 1: 20; Phil. 1: 8.) It is also evident from the fact that swearing in the name of God was not only permitted under the Old Dispensation (Deut. 6: 13; 10: 20; Ps. 63: 11), but was even predicted by the prophets as a sign of the future conversion of the world to God. (Isa. 65: 16; Jer. 12: 16; 23: 7, 8.) It is the careless and the familiar use of oaths which James condemns. A careless oath is criminal, because every oath involves an appeal to God. (Matt. 23: 16-22.)

any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment.

13 Is any among you suffering? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise. Is any among

1 Or, let yours be the yea, yea, and the nay, nay. Compare Matt. 5: 37.

A habitual oath is criminal, because it depreciates the simple word, and shows an indifference to truth, "which stands in striking contrast with the earnestness of the Christian Spirit." Clement of Alexandria ("Strom." vii. 8) proudly remarks that "it is indignity for a Christian to be put upon his oath." The yes or no of a true man always suffices. The forms of swearing here mentioned were those common among the Jews. **Lest ye fall into condemnation.** This shows the importance of the prohibition. The frivolous swearer will incur the judgment of the Great Day. Profane expletives were common in our Lord's day, and then, as now, they were expressions of impiety toward God, and the resort of fraud and falsehood toward men. (Matt. 23: 16-22.) And the irreverence for God, thus displayed and encouraged, strikes at the foundation of religion and morality. Hence, James' emphatic 'above all.'

13. Yet while God's name should not be abused by trivial oaths, every occasion of life should recall it. The afflicted should pour out their hearts to him in prayer, the joyful in sacred song. These are the proper modes of appeal to God. **Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.** The affliction may be either of the mind or of the body. The pain is softened, and the murmur is hushed, as the suffering Christian reminds himself of the wisdom, power, and love of God, and submits himself trustfully to the divine providence. Thus he receives guidance and help, and is strengthened for the courageous endurance of his sufferings. **Is any merry (cheerful)? Let him sing psalms**—literally, *let him play*—that is, *upon the harp*. As such music (the psalm) was the accompaniment of sacred song, it came to indicate the words themselves. The "psalm," as distinguished from the hymn and the spiritual song, required the use of an instrument of music. See Trench on New Testament Synonyms, Part II., § 28. The "hymn" was a song of praise. The "spiritual song" was a lyrical expression of Christian experience. All these varieties were familiar to Christian antiquity,

as we learn from Col. 3: 16 (consult Lightfoot on the passage), and Eph. 5: 19. We may suppose James to have embraced them all in his injunction. Prosperity and happiness cease to be seductive when they are traced to their Author, and welcomed as the gift of a loving Father. Gratitude to God will lead to a wise use of fortune. The character of worship must correspond with the sad or the cheerful spirit of the worshiper. Hence the prayer must be genuine and true. (John 4: 23, 24.) In regard to the worship by music, Plumptre remarks: "It is perhaps specially characteristic of James that he contemplates what we may call the individual use of such music, as well as the congregational, as a help to the spiritual life. We are reminded of two memorable instances of this employment in the lives of George Herbert and Milton. Compare also Hooker's grand words on the power of Psalmody and Music. 'Eccles. Polity,' V. 38." Pliny, in his letter to Trajan (Ep. 9: 7), speaks of the hymns which the early Christians used to sing among themselves to Jesus Christ as God. None of these hymns survive; yet some of the passages in the epistles, which are full of lyric rapture, may give some idea of what they were. Such is the hymn to Christian love in 1 Cor. 13, and the paean of Christian assurance in Rom. 8: 31-39. See also 1 Tim. 3: 16, which rings like a battle-song. Compare Pressensé, "Apost. Era," p. 372, s. In the age to which the gospel was given, Christian life spontaneously expressed itself in song. (Acts 16: 25.) One of the most laudable objects of the systems of modern education is the recovery of this last accomplishment which, after having been made an art too fine for popular use in the last century, has been well nigh supplanted by instrumental music in this. Personal enjoyment of singing, which is all that James here specifies, would lead to congregational singing. Mr. Ellerton sketches the liturgical use of hymns in Smith's "Dict. Antiq.," p. 801, § 99.

14. Another kind of pious appeal to God is indicated—intercessory prayer in behalf of

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and

you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him,<sup>1</sup> anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord

1 Or, *having anointed*.

those afflicted by sickness. (Ver. 14-16.) **Is any sick among you?** The language is general, seeming to indicate any case of sickness (Matt. 10: 8; Luke 4: 40): but the connection would seem to imply that the case intended was that of one who, in addition to his bodily ailment, was also suffering spiritually, and was shaken in faith. For, in addition to the remedy customarily used for the relief of pain (Mark 6: 13; Luke 10: 34), prayer was also to be employed for the cure and the forgiveness of the patient. (Ver. 15.) **Let him call for the elders of the church.** These were the presiding officers of the church (the name having been transferred from the synagogue) who were more than one in number, because anciently there seems to have been but one church in a city or community, with several preaching places, instead of separate churches as now. (Acts 20: 17.) They were in no respect different from bishops, their Greek title (as Jerome on Titus 1: 7 admits). Hence the names of elders and bishops are interchanged (Acts 20: 17, 28; Titus 1: 5, 7), and so also are the offices. (1 Peter 5: 1, 2.) Besides the extraordinary office of the apostle (an eye witness of the resurrection, Acts 1: 22), there were but two ecclesiastical officers, that of the bishop and that of the deacon. (Phil. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 3: 1, 8.) From the diverse origin and associations of these titles, the name *bishop* marked the duty, that of *elder* the dignity of the same office. In the case of affliction here indicated these officers were to be called in. **And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.** The oil was not to be used to produce any magical effect; for it was, as we observed above, the common means of healing. Celsus prescribed rubbing with olive oil as a remedy for fever. Herod used oil baths. To its use in healing an allusion is made by the prophet Isaiah. (1: 6.) Yet in connection with its use, as doubtless in the case of the disciples (Mark 6: 13), a new efficacy was communicated to the friendly ministry by the prayer of faith. (Ver. 15.) The elders prayed, as the organs of the Church, and in dependence upon the blessing of the Lord, in whose name the act was done. On

the supposition that the gifts of healing (1 Cor. 12: 9), with other miraculous powers of the early Church, have ceased, the Greek Church observes the injunction of James by the united prayer of the elders for the cure of the sick, the natural remedies being also used—a practice warranted by the inspired injunction. The Roman Catholic Church has adopted, instead, an ordinance of its own invention called the sacrament of extreme unction, which is administered not as here to those who may hope for recovery, but only to dying persons, and which is supposed to impart to them spiritual healing. This sacrament is entirely unwarranted by James' teachings, which now are followed when we use the appropriate means of healing, and pray and trust that God will make them effectual, and when, with still stronger faith, we invoke spiritual blessings upon the sufferer, whom Satan hath bound. (Luke 13: 16.) How strangely the simple direction has been abused! Oil when blessed by a bishop is regarded by Romanists as having a miraculous efficacy, as imparting spiritual blessings, and even investing lifeless objects with sanctity. Hence it becomes an object of superstitious veneration. "The prayers" says Fleury, "may in case of necessity be omitted, and the unction alone used." Edgar has an instructive chapter upon this subject (chap. 15) in his "Variations of Popery." Mr. Seudamore gives a learned and dry account of sacerdotal and sacramental follies in oil, in Smith's "Dict. Chris. Antiq.," pp. 2000.

15. Such intercessory prayer is encouraged by the salutary result that may be expected from it. **And the prayer of faith shall (will) save the sick**—Syriac, "will heal him who is sick." The prayer of faith (genitive of the subject) is the prayer which faith offers. The elders who offer the prayer must have confidence in its acceptance. (John 14: 13, 14.) Yet the faith of the sick man who has sent for them, and prays with them, is also implied. Compare Matt. 9: 22; Luke 7: 50; 8: 48, and so many other cases where our Lord in healing had regard to the faith of the

the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,

shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, 16 it shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous 17 man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like <sup>1</sup>passions with us, and he prayed <sup>2</sup>fer-

1 Or, nature ..... 2 Gr. with prayer.

sufferer. In this case, not the oil, but the prayer is represented as instrumental in procuring the desired blessing. On account of this, the Lord Jesus (Acts 9: 34) will raise the sick man from his bed of languishing, **And if he have committed sins, they (it) shall be forgiven him.** Even if the sickness should have been caused by the man's sins (compare 1 Cor. 11: 30), the case would not be desperate. In response to the prayer of faith, the sins themselves should be forgiven, of which the cessation of the sickness would be the evidence. The absoluteness of the promise displays the coloring of the age of miracles (1 Cor. 12: 9), yet it must not be confined to that age; wherever a corresponding faith is exercised, a corresponding result will occur. See this subject as unfolded in Dr. Mell on "Prayer." The ordinary petition of faith has the humble limitation, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26: 39.) Yet such a faith, while it does not demand the healing of the body, may not the less confidently assure itself of the forgiveness of the contrite, believing soul. Plumptre: "It is noticeable that the remission of sins thus promised is dependent not on the utterance of the quasi-judicial formula of the *absolvo te* (that was not used indeed at all until the thirteenth century) by an individual priest, but on the prayers of the elders as representing the Church. Compare John 20: 23, where also the promise is in the plural, "Whosoever sins *ye* remit." Under a spiritual dispensation a merely verbal, official forgiveness has no value; evil is not conquered except by faith, which, deriving strength from a higher sphere, struggles with it, casts it away, and rises beyond it "into magnificence of rest." See Ruskin's illustration of this principle in art, "Modern Painters," p. 300.

16. The general conditions upon which such grace is imparted are mutual confessions and prayer, to which accordingly believers are exhorted. **Confess your faults (transgressions) one to another.** According to the Vatican manuscript, *Confess therefore,*

etc. The exhortation implies that the sick man confessed his transgressions to the elders, when they prayed for him, acknowledging his sins against God and his fellow-men; and it further requires that such confessions should be made not only by the private members of the church to the elders, but by believers to each other. These confessions might be in public, as those mentioned in Matt. 3: 6; Acts 19: 18, 19, or such as are made in the class meetings of Methodists; or they might be in private intercourse. (1 John 1: 9.) The confession of wrong doing and of desert of punishment, as it is the first step of reformation, is therefore a condition of forgiveness. And, like the confessions, the mutual prayers might also be in public or private. The intercessions of believers for each other have as large a scope and as rich a promise as the intercessions of the elders for the sick. Here, however, without excluding necessarily its proper meaning, the *healing* is used in a figurative sense, as in Heb. 12: 13; 1 Peter 2: 24, having special reference to the spiritual maladies, of which the "transgressions" were the symptoms. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.** It is difficult to decide upon the precise meaning of the participle here translated by the two words *effectual fervent*. It signifies an inworking prayer—a prayer by which the worshiper is, as it were, *possessed* (Rom. 8: 26), and which is therefore fervent and strenuous, and will take no denial. Compare Gal. 2: 8; Eph. 3: 20. That such desires for the welfare of others, or for the prosperity of the cause of Christ, will be accompanied by active exertions, follows as a matter of course. The prayers must be those of a 'righteous man'—that is, a man whose will is in conformity with the will of God.

17. An incident in the history of the prophet Elijah shows the power of such prayer. (Ver. 17, 18.) **Elias was a man, subject to like passions as we are.** Instead of 'subject to,' etc., read of *like passions with us*. Thus the great prophet is described by James, in order that

and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

18 the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him; <sup>1</sup> let him know, that he

1 Some ancient authorities read *know ye*.

his readers might be persuaded to follow his example. He was not elevated above the ordinary conditions of our humanity, but was a man of like constitution and nature with ourselves. Compare Acts 14: 15, having the same feelings and passions as we. Syriac: "Of sensations like us." **And he prayed earnestly that it might not rain.** This prayer of Elijah is not mentioned in the ancient record. (1 Kings 17: 18.) Yet the statement of James suffices; and indeed it may be concluded that Elijah was a man of prayer, not only on account of his steadfast faith (1 Kings 17: 1), but from the incidental account of his posture as a worshiper on the summit of Carmel. (1 Kings 18: 42.) There is an allusion to this history in Rev. 11: 6, 12. **And it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.** Luke 4: 25 makes the same statement as to the duration of the drought. This is not contradicted by the account of the termination of the drought in the third year, if we suppose that "the third year" marks the length of Elijah's residence at Zarephath, which, allowing a year for his seclusion at the Brook Cherith (1 Kings 17: 2-8), would be the fourth year of the famine. 'The earth' may signify only the chastised *land* of Palestine. Compare Luke 4: 25; 21: 23; Rom. 9: 28. A similar drought occurred at about the time when James wrote. The people were instant in prayer; and at a time when the clouds promised no response were blest with a copious shower. Jos. "Ant." 18: 8, 6. Eusebius mentions a parallel instance of an answer to prayers for rain in the case of the Thundering Legion in the war with the Marcomanni. "Hist." 5: 5.

18. **And he prayed again**—better, *and again he prayed*. It is noticeable that this second prayer, uttered by Elijah, was founded upon the promise previously given, before he set forth from Zarephath. (1 Kings 18: 1-42.) This circumstance suggests that the first prayer also was preceded by a revelation of God's will. Without such warrant, it is not safe to

invoke a judgment upon wrong doers, whether of drought or of fire "as Elijah did." **And the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit**—such as she is accustomed to bear. Both these personifications express strikingly the success of Elijah's prayer. And the refreshment and relief thus obtained encourages our intercessions for others, that they may receive the richer blessings of the skies. For here too a promise may be pleaded: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." (Isa. 44: 3-5.) Perhaps this latent suggestion in the passage prepared the way for the succeeding verses which relate to the conversion and salvation of souls.

3. *Slowness to wrath*. Instead of striving with men as rivals or persecutors, seek to save them. Ver. 19, 20.

19. Instead of the wrath, which James denounces as contrary to the genius of the gospel (3: 13; 4: 17), he exhibits the Christian spirit as a loving interest in the salvation of sinners—a thought with which the Epistle appropriately ends. **Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth**—better, *if any one among you be led astray from the truth*. The expression indicates a wandering away from the principles of the gospel, and from such a course of life as those principles require and enforce; it embraces errors of the understanding, such as unbelief and superstition, and also departures from the ways of duty and virtue. The word of truth is the word of life, and the way of truth is the way of life. **And one convert him**—recall the wandering soul to faith and virtue. Such was the grand office assigned to John the Baptist

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

among the erring Jews at the beginning of the Gospel Dispensation. (Luke 1: 16, 17.) And to the same sublime office of philanthropy is every Christian called.

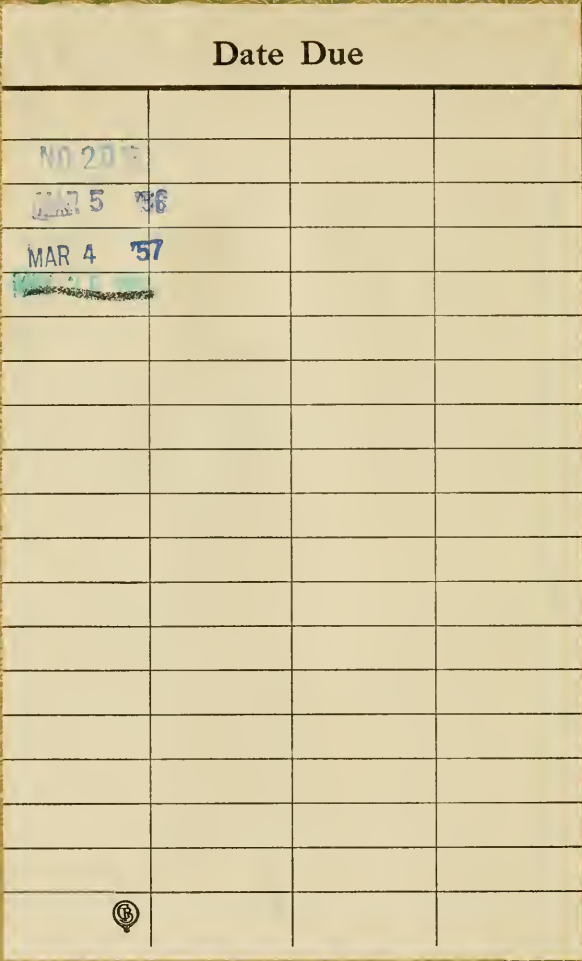
**20. Let him (the converter) know** the great results achieved by such evangelistic undertakings and labors. **That he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way.** The general definition of a sinner is a wanderer from the truth. (Ver. 19.) Error is the contrast to the truth. This proposition, which serves as the foundation of Wollaston's ingenious treatise on "The Religion of Nature," § 1, on Moral Good and Evil, pp. 4-52, is here assumed as undoubtedly true. Just as certainly as truth saves, error degrades and destroys. **Shall save a soul from death.** The 'soul' is that spiritual part which, through the divine blessing and in the use of the means of grace, may attain eternal salvation, and which, on the other hand, by the neglect or rejection of the gospel, incurs eternal ruin. He who converts a sinner saves a soul from destruction, and thus secures for an endangered and guilty fellow creature an eminent and abiding good. Of all philanthropists, the zealous, loving Christian is the greatest. He alone saves the soul from the loss of that life which alone is worth the living; from that misery begotten by sin, beginning on earth, enduring and increasing after the death of the

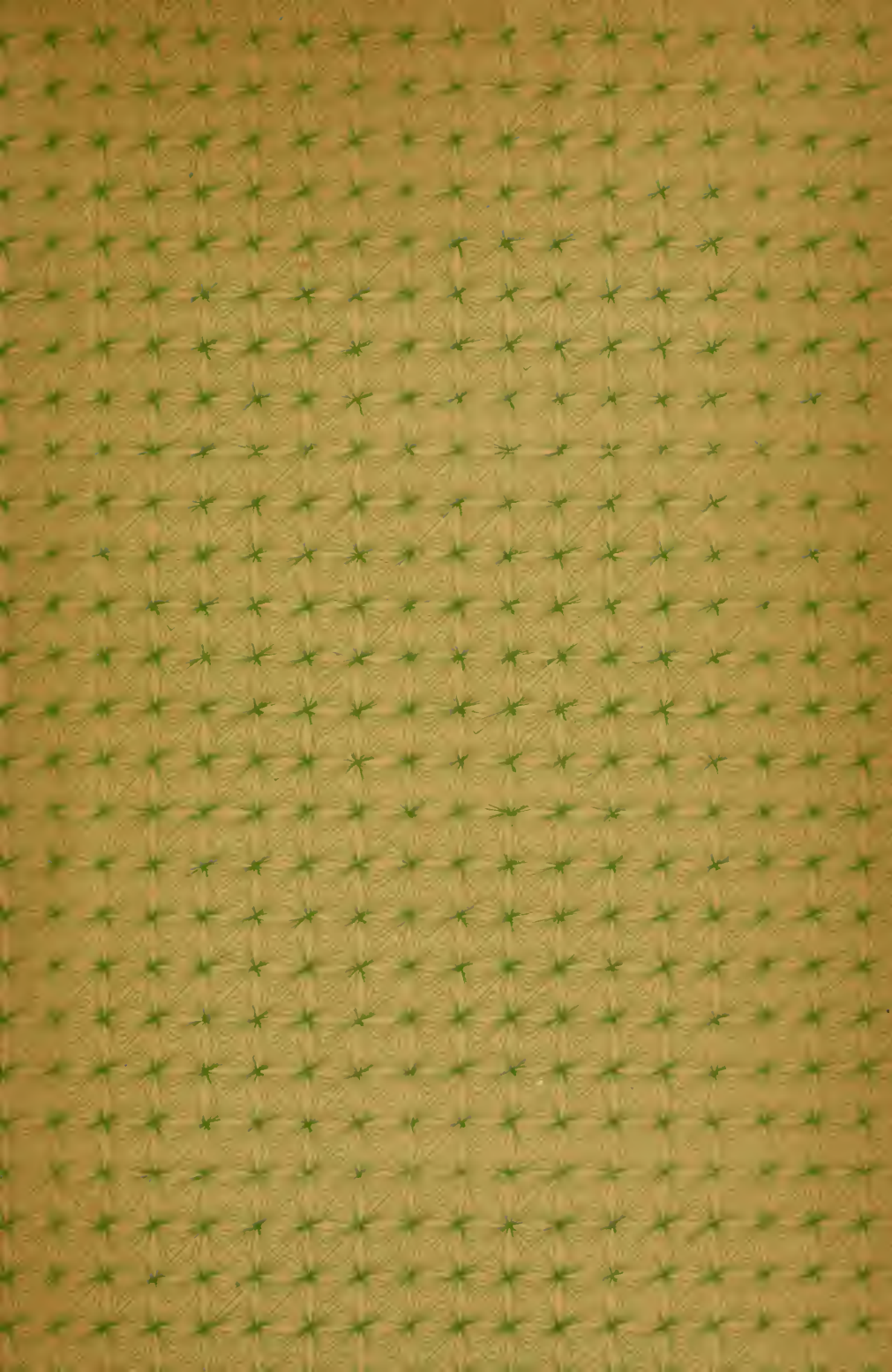
body, and continuing forever. **And shall hide (cover) a multitude of sins.** This is commonly regarded as meaning that the sins of the person converted are, as it were, hidden from the eyes of God, in being forgiven. These are 'a multitude'; for every act of a moral agent has a moral character, and therefore a heart at enmity to God is perpetually sinning against him. "The plowing of the wicked is sin." Yet we prefer to regard the phrase as having the meaning of the parallel passages, Prov. 10: 12; 1 Peter 4: 8, etc., whose theme is the covering of sins by charity. Labor for the spiritual welfare of others would be the most effective way of soothing the discords which James is here recalling, as he shows the more excellent way of charity. Christians would find it easier to forgive the wrongs and insults of others, if they regarded others as fellow sinners needing the gospel and journeying with them to the bar of God. However numerous these sins may be, Christian charity can cover them all. Solomon says: "Love covereth all sins." Peter says: "Love shall cover the multitude of sins." It can hardly be in a different meaning that James uses the same proverbial phrase. The Syriac reads: "He who turneth the sinner from the error of his way will resuscitate his soul from death, and will cover the multitude of his sins."



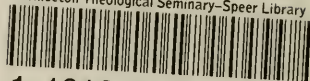




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