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ETHICAL VALUES FOR LIVING: A STUDY OF THE ETHICAL
TEACHINGS CONTAINED IN THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Ouachita Baptist College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Wayne S. Smith, A.B., B.D.

August, 1964

**ETHICAL VALUES FOR LIVING: A STUDY OF THE ETHICAL
TEACHINGS CONTAINED IN THE EPISTLE OF JAMES**

Approved:

Date August 14, 1964

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Early Jewish Christians made an immeasurable contribution to the Christian way of life.¹ They were instrumental in the development of the church among the Gentiles and also provided literature for encouragement and instruction. Social and ethical concepts laid down by them have proved to be profound guides for churches and individual Christians. Although it is generally concluded that Paul initiated the Christian church among the Gentiles, the fact is that the Christian religion made its first impact on the Gentile world through the Jewish dispersion.² Luke states that the dispersion of Jewish Christians following the death of Stephen resulted in the effective spread of the gospel to the cities of the Gentiles.

They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.

But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.³

The Epistle of James is representative of first century Jewish

¹H. E. Dana, Jewish Christianity (New Orleans: Bible Institute Press, 1937), p. 97.

²Ibid., p. 97.

³Holy Bible, translated by the American Revision Committee, (New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1901), Acts 11:19-20.

Christian literature dealing with significant social and ethical values.

R. V. G. Tasker summarizes the unique role and the eternal message of the Epistle as follows:

. . . the Epistle has a permanent message both for the Church as a whole and for each individual Christian. There would, however, seem to be special times, both in the history of the Church and in the spiritual pilgrimage of the believer, when its message sounds forth with special relevance. Whenever faith does not issue in love, and dogma, however orthodox, is unrelated to life; whenever Christians are tempted to settle down to a self-centered religion, and become oblivious of the social and material needs of others; or whenever they deny by their manner of living the creed they profess, and seem more anxious to be friends of the world than friends of God, then the Epistle of James has something to say to them which they disregard at their peril.⁴

The study herewith proposed is intended to provide insight into the ethical teachings contained in the Epistle of James.

The primary problem in this study was to determine the significant ethical values in the Epistle of James. Ethics in this study included:

1. Social ethics, man's duties to man.
2. Personal ethics, man's duties to self.
3. Religious ethics, man's duties to God.

In order to solve the primary problem, answers to the following questions were:

1. Who was the author of the Epistle of James?
2. When was the Epistle written?
3. Who were the recipients of the Epistle?

⁴R. V. G. Tasker, The General Epistle of James: An Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 10.

4. What were the major problems relative to the canonicity of the Epistle of James?
5. What was the basic purpose of the Epistle?
6. What ethical teachings are contained in the Book of James?

Justification of the Study

An examination of the literature concerned with the Epistle of James indicates that although critical and exegetical studies of the Epistle have been made, significant studies dealing primarily with the ethical values of the Epistle of James, providing contemporary Christians with a sound basis for ordering their conduct in keeping with the highest traditions of New Testament Christianity, have not been made. The conclusions of the study should make available to students and teachers of ethics a practical guide for the study of the ethical values contained in the Epistle of James and should provide the layman not trained in theology with guides in applying Christian principles in daily life relationships. Since the Epistle of James has been considered a highly practical book,⁵ the conclusions reached in this study should be especially valuable to the scholar and layman alike.

Delimitations of the Study

The nature of the investigation made necessary the following delimitations:

1. The study is not intended to be an exegetical study of the Greek text; therefore, the American Standard Version of the Bible

⁵H. C. Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), p. 271.

will be used.

2. This study does not propose to determine the relative value of the contents or the ethical importance of the New Testament in general and the Epistle of James in particular.

Sources of Data

Library materials dealing with social ethics in general and Christian ethics in particular were studied. Works dealing with the Epistle of James were scrutinized carefully. The main sources of the study were as follows:

1. Major works in social ethics in general and Christian ethics in particular.
2. Critical books on the Epistle of James.
3. Commentaries.
4. Recent writings in scholarly journals.
5. The Holy Bible.

Passages in the Epistle of James dealing with ethical values were studied in light of major works in the field of ethics and standard works on the Epistle of James. Conclusions, therefore, were reached after a thorough scrutiny of the five major sources listed above.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

The author of the Epistle of James called himself Jacob, from whom the name James was derived, and he described himself as a ". . . servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."¹ The name Jacob was commonly used in the first century to describe all Christians; however, it was evident from the tone of authority used in the Epistle of James that the author ". . . must have been distinguished from other Jacobs by position or character."²

Although information about James is limited, there are available reliable data to present a reasonably clear picture of his personality.³ These limited items of evidence lead to the conclusion that the James who wrote the epistle under study was the Lord Jesus Christ's younger half-brother. This theory was strongly advocated by Helvidius in the fourth century.⁴ The Helvidian theory held that following the virgin birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had normal marital relationships and other children were born to them. This theory was considered heretical because of the increasing value that came to be placed upon Mary's virginity.⁵

¹Holy Bible, James 1:1.

²Joseph Mayor, The Epistle of St. James (Grand Rapids), p. 1.

³A. T. Robertson, Studies in the Epistle of James (herein after referred to as Studies), p. 13.

⁴Tasker, op. cit., p. 23.

⁵Tasker, op. cit., p. 23.

Jerome and some of the apocryphal infancy gospel authors were particularly enthralled by the idea that Mary was always virgin. Jerome even held to the idea that Joseph was a virgin. Vincent Taylor seems to be justified in his opposition to Jerome when he says that "the Helvidian view stands as the simplest and most natural explanation of the references to the brethren of Jesus in the Gospels."⁶

Authorship of the Epistle

The author of the Epistle of James has been described as one of the four men named in the New Testament who bore the name James: the son of Zebedee;⁷ the son of Alphaeus who was also known as the Little or the Less;⁸ the father of Judas the Apostle, not Iscariot;⁹ or the Lord's brother.¹⁰ In considering these men it becomes rather simple to determine that of the four, the Lord's brother is most likely the author.

The father of Judas is almost completely unknown. Indeed, he would be entirely unknown were it not for the cursory statements about him in the Gospel of Luke and the insistence by some scholars that he authored the epistle in question.¹¹

⁶Loc. cit.

⁷Holy Bible, Luke 6:16.

⁸Holy Bible, Matthew 10:3; Mark 15:40; John 19:25.

⁹Holy Bible, Luke 6:16.

¹⁰Holy Bible, Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19.

¹¹Henry C. Thiessen, op. cit., p. 276.

The son of Alphaeus was not likely the author. He, too, is little known. Except for the reference to him made by Mark¹² and the descriptive term little or less which was used in association with him, not a great deal is known about him.¹³

The son of Zebedee is more conspicuous in the gospels; however, he was known primarily because of the prominence of his brother, John, in the early church. No ancient author attributes the epistle to this James.¹⁴

The last two named were apostles. One reason that neither is credited with the book is best shown by the difficulty which the book encountered in being placed in the New Testament canon of scripture. There would surely have been no hesitancy in accepting the epistle if it had been reputed to have been of apostolic authorship. Thiessen said:

This James was really the Lord's half-brother; the two had the same mother, but not the same father. (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). He was probably among those who sought an interview with Jesus somewhere in Galilee (Matthew 12:46); he probably also went with Jesus to Capernaum (John 2:12), and later joined in the attempt to persuade Him to go to Judaea for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:5, 10). After the crucifixion he apparently remained with his mother in Jerusalem. We are told that after the resurrection Christ appeared to James also (1 Corinthians 15:7). This may have led him to believe in Jesus, for he is next seen among the Lord's brethren, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). He may have taken part in the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas (Acts 1:15-25).¹⁵

¹²Holy Bible, Mark 15:40.

¹³Mayor, op. cit., pp. 30, 31.

¹⁴F. W. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 266.

¹⁵Thiessen, op. cit., p. 274.

The internal evidence indicates that the author of the Epistle of James spoke with authority, and certainly the Lord's half-brother by his natural relationship to Jesus would have spoken authoritatively.¹⁶ Farrar adds to this thought when he speaks of the simple title "James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. . ." over against the title of Apostle. James did not need the title to command respect from Christians, for among them he exercised unquestioned authority; nor would he call himself "a brother of the Lord." This title was claimed for him by others. It was a true statement but not one to which James himself called attention. There is some evidence that each time he was so called, James was painfully reminded of wasted years and opportunities.¹⁷

Some scholars have alledged that since there is no claim to the title of "Brother of the Lord" this James was not the author of the epistle. They maintain that if the Lord's brother wrote the epistle, added weight would be given to its message if the relationship between the author and Jesus had been made clear. They have forgotten Jesus' teaching that earthly relationships do not have priority over spiritual union. On one occasion Jesus' family attempted to use their perogatives and talk with him. He made it clear that only true believers were his ". . . mother and brethren."¹⁸ Paul understood Jesus' idea ". . . of the disappearance of the

¹⁶W. Sanday, Inspiration, p. 359.

¹⁷Farrar, op. cit., pp. 324-325.

¹⁸Holy Bible, Mark 3:31-33.

earthly relationship in the higher spiritual union by which all members of the body are joined to the Head."¹⁹ He wrote in his letter to the church in Corinth ". . . though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more."²⁰ Too, James had failed to acknowledge Jesus as Master until after His resurrection. It seems fitting that he would shrink from claiming another name than that of a servant when he wrote.²¹

The above cited evidences establishing the Lord's brother as the author of this epistle add significance to the ethical teachings contained in the Epistle of James.

Date of the Epistle of James

The problems of establishing the date of this epistle are closely bound up with the problem of authorship. Scholars who hold to the belief that the epistle was published under a false name assign it a late date, either the end of the first century or during the early half of the second century.²²

The prevailing opinion today favors an early date. Mayor concludes that the epistle should be dated as soon after Pentecost as possible.²³ Evidences already mentioned indicate that James the Lord's brother authored

¹⁹Mayor, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁰Holy Bible, II Corinthians 5:16.

²¹Mayor, loc. cit., p. 5.

²²Tasker, op. cit., p. 30.

²³Mayor, op. cit., p. 150.

this epistle. This James was stoned by order of Ananus in the year 62 A.D., shortly before the siege of Jerusalem,²⁴ thus the epistle had to be written prior to 62 A.D.

The epistle agrees in character with the writings and sayings of James which are related in the epistles of Paul and in the Acts of the Apostles; it agrees in style and diction with the speeches and letter of James literally recorded in the latter book.²⁵ Many internal and external evidences indicate that this epistle was among the first documents of the New Testament to be written.²⁶ Mayor stands as one of the foremost proponents of an early date and makes a sound case when he affirms:

If it had been written between the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and the death of Clement (usually dated about A.D. 5) it must inevitably have some reference to the preceding calamity in which so many Jews of the Dispersion had been involved.²⁷

A second important factor in placing the date of this epistle centers around the silence of the epistle relative to the existence of Gentile Christians and their admittance into the church. If the epistle had been written after the violent arguments that were precipitated by Paul's preaching to the Gentiles, some mention would have been made of these events. Too, the Council of Jerusalem (A.D. 51), under the leadership of James, agreed to a compromise about Paul's preaching to the Gen-

²⁴Farrar, op. cit., pp. 303-304.

²⁵Mayor, op. cit., p. 144.

²⁶Tasker, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁷Mayor, op. cit., p. 145.

titles; Jerusalem (A. D. 51), under the leadership of James, agreed to a compromise about Paul's preaching to the Gentiles; James probably would have mentioned the terms of the compact to the Jews of the Dispersion asking them to deal fairly with their Gentile neighbors.²⁸

Another strong evidence for an early date may be found in the ". . . primitive character of the church order and discipline."²⁹ The synagogue was the meeting place of the early church. Dana states:

The Epistle of James reflects synagogue customs more vividly than any other New Testament document. It is the only literary product we have from what we might call "Synagogue Christianity". The situation reflected in 2:2-3 is characteristically Jewish. The propensity of the Jew toward wealth has been a typical trait through the ages, and it is quite evidently portrayed in the conduct which James condemns in this passage. The synagogue custom of having voluntary comments on the scriptures read seems to have been followed by the readers of this epistle, and abused to the detriment of decorum and religious life (3:1ff). The epistle itself, with just a few deletions and alterations, could quite appropriately have been a synagogue exhortation or "midhrash", delivered by a Jewish rabbi.³⁰

No mention is made of bishops or deacons, but only of teachers and elders.³¹ Teaching was still unorganized and was not confined to regularly ordained church officers.

. . . all we find is a deprecation of the eagerness on the part of individual members of the congregation to come forward as instructors.³²

²⁸ ibid, p. 146.

²⁹ Tasker, op. cit., p. 31.

³⁰ Dana, op. cit., p. 104.

³¹ Holy Bible, James 5:14; 3:1.

³² Mayor, op. cit., p. 147.

Additional confirmatory evidence for an early date is the Judaic tone of the epistle.³³ The change that came into the lives of the Jews who became Christians was not an easy one for them to make. Mayor points out that "the change from a narrow national and ceremonial religion to the universal and spiritual religion promulgated by Christ cannot be made in a moment. . .",³⁴ thereby indicating something of the difficulty. The change from one form of religion to the other was indeed a growing change rather than a sudden abandoning of the old for the new. The truth of this statement points up the early date given for the Epistle of James. The epistle is so intensely Jewish that it is sometimes thought of as Jewish literature rather than Christian literature. "It is distinctively a Jewish-Christian document of the first century. . .".³⁵

The evidence presented by many of the scholars of recent times reveals that the Epistle of James is generally recognized as being one of the earliest documents of the New Testament. Taking into account the evidences presented in favor of an early date, ". . . the year 40 A. D. is considered as the earliest, and 50 A. D. as the latest, at which the epistle could have been written."³⁶

³³Loc. cit.

³⁴Mayor, op. cit., p. 147.

³⁵Dana, op. cit., p. 103.

³⁶Mayor, op. cit., p. 150.

The Recipients

James addresses the Epistle of James ". . . to the twelve tribes which are to the Dispersion."³⁷ Clearly then, he is not writing to Gentiles, unless he, like Paul, includes them as spiritual children of Abraham.³⁸ The fact that he does not include them can be seen by his use of the term the twelve tribes which makes the literal sense probable.³⁹

The twelve tribes had long been scattered abroad. At various times in their history the Jews had been moved from their homeland to other countries by their captors. Not only had they thus been moved, but many of them in their pursuit of commerce had voluntarily moved to foreign lands.⁴⁰ Josephus cites Strabo as saying:

Now these Jews are already gotten into all cities, and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by it.⁴¹

These people were expected to send their yearly didrachmon to the temple in Jerusalem. Each Jew was expected at least once in his life to go to Jerusalem and offer a sacrifice.⁴² An idea of the numerous places from

³⁷Holy Bible, James 1:1.

³⁸A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (herein after referred to as Word Pictures), p. 5.

³⁹Loc. cit.

⁴⁰Theissen, op. cit., p. 275.

⁴¹Josephus, The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus (translated by William Winston), p. 417.

⁴²Holy Bible, James 1:1.

which the Jews of the Dispersion yearly made their pilgrimage to the Holy City is recorded in Acts:

Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Capadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians. . .⁴³

To be added to this list are those who disputed with Stephen in the synagogue: ". . . the synagogue of the Libertines, and of Cyreniana, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia. . ."⁴⁴ Besides these the Bible speaks of others that had the Christian message brought to them by missionaries. Among these are the people of Damascus,⁴⁵ Cyprus,⁴⁶ and perhaps the people of Babylon.⁴⁷ "James intended his Epistle for all Christian Jews wherever they were. . ."⁴⁸ Internal evidences presented by Mayor indicate that James had in mind primarily Jewish Christians.⁴⁹ Salmon declares, "The writer was not only a Jew, but he wrote for Jews."⁵⁰ Dods agreed with Salmon and added:

⁴³Holy Bible, Acts 2:9-11.

⁴⁴Holy Bible, Acts 6:9.

⁴⁵Holy Bible, Acts 9:2, 10, 14, 19, 25.

⁴⁶Holy Bible, Acts 4:36, 37; 11:19.

⁴⁷Holy Bible, 1 Peter 5:13.

⁴⁸Theissen, op. cit., p. 276.

⁴⁹Mayor, op. cit., pp. 136-143.

⁵⁰George Salmon, A Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament, p. 480.

The twelve tribes do not denote the spiritual Israel, the Church of Christ, whether Jewish or Gentile, for the Epistle is Jewish in every line.⁵¹

Smith affirms that the Epistle is directed to all Jewish Christians and of the Eastern Dispersion in particular.⁵² Robertson said:

It is probable. . . that James is addressing chiefly the Eastern Dispersion in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Babylonia as Peter writes to five provinces in the Western Dispersion in Asia Minor.⁵³

The Jewish Christians scattered about the world, especially those of the Eastern Dispersion, were the recipients of this epistle from James. The epistle had great appeal for these people, coming as it did from the leading elder of the great church in Jerusalem, a devout Jew, and the half-brother of the Lord.⁵⁴

The Place of the Epistle in the Canon

In the English version of the Bible, the Epistle of James is located after the Epistle to the Hebrews and is the first of the seven general or catholic epistles.⁵⁵ The church historian, Eusebius, was the first to describe the letters in this way.⁵⁶

⁵¹Marcus Dods, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 190.

⁵²David Smith, The Disciple's Commentary on the New Testament, pp. 412-413.

⁵³Robertson, Word Pictures, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁴Ibid, p. 5.

⁵⁵Dods, op. cit., p. 189.

⁵⁶Tasker, op. cit., p. 13.

Eusebius classes the Epistle of James among the Antilegomena; but in other places he cited it as being genuine:

It is omitted in the Muratorian fragment and in the Canon Mommsenianus; but included in the Peshitto and in the Catalogues of Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzua, Athanasius, Amphilochius of Iconium, Epiphanius, Jerome and Augustine, and finally accepted by the third council of Carthage.⁵⁷

The epistle was known to Clement of Rome, to the authors of the Didache and of the Epistle of Barnabas, also to Ignatius and to Polycarp. Hermas is full of allusions to the epistle. It is referred to by Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria. Origen first cites it by name as Scripture and as the work of St. James. Allusions to the epistle are found in Tertullian, Dionysius of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus, the Clementine Homilies, Constitutiones, Apostolicae, Lactantius, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Didymus.⁵⁸ Before this time Clement of Alexandria had referred to the letter from the Jerusalem Apostolic Council as a "catholic epistle".⁵⁹

The term catholic epistle is attributed to Oecumenius, a Bishop in Thessaly (600 A. D.) in the preface of a commentary on the Epistle of James. There we read:

"These Epistles are said to be catholic because they are encyclical. For this company of the Lord's disciples did not address their letters,

⁵⁷Mayor, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

⁵⁸ibid., pp. 12-13, 46.

⁵⁹Salmon, op. cit., p. 484.

as the inspired Paul addressed his Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, separately to one nation or city, but collectively to those who were believers.⁶⁰

In 1539, with the printing of the Great Bible, the Epistle of James was placed in its present position in the English Bible.⁶¹ That was the primary occasion when the arrangement of order in English versions of the Bible were made to conform to the order of the Latin Vulgate. Prior to this time English editors had been under the influence of Luther, who arbitrarily placed books which he considered of doubtful apostolic authority and of secondary value doctrinally at the end of his New Testament which was published in 1522.⁶² Luther doubted the apostolic authority of the Epistle of James and in introducing it said:

In fine, Saint John's Gospel and his first Epistle, Saint Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Saint Peter's first Epistle, . . . these are the books which show thee Christ, and teach thee everything that is needful and blessed for thee to know even though thou never see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore is Saint James' Epistle a right strawy Epistle in comparison with them, for it has no gospel character to it. I will not have it in my Bible in the number of the proper chief books, but do not intend thereby to forbid anyone to place and exalt it as he pleases, for there is many a good saying in it.⁶³

Tyndale's translation of the New Testament generally followed Luther's theme; however, on the whole his verdict concerning the Epistle of James was more favorable:

⁶⁰Tasker, op. cit., p. 13.

⁶¹Loc. cit., p. 13.

⁶²Loc. cit., p. 13.

⁶³Tasker, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

Though this Epistle was rejected in old time and not considered by many to be the Epistle of a true apostle, and though also it does not lay the foundation of the faith of Christ, but speaks of a general faith in God, neither preaching His death and resurrection, nor the mercy that is laid up in store for us in Him, nor the everlasting covenant made for us by His blood, which is the office and duty of a true apostle, as Christ says, "You shall testify of Me"; yet, because it sets up no human doctrine, but calls upon men to keep the law of God, and makes love which is without partiality fulfilling of the law, as Christ and all the apostles did, and has in reference to this many good and Godly sentences in it; and has also nothing that is not agreeable to the rest of the Scriptures, if it be considered impartially, I think it ought rightly to be regarded as Holy Scripture.⁶⁴

The foregoing statements seem to indicate the favorable acceptance which the Epistle of James had received by eminent theologians and church historians through the early phase of the reformation. Calvin in his commentary on the Epistle of James, which he published in 1551, further strengthened the position of the epistle and enhanced its acceptance in Christendom. Calvin declared:

Though he seems more sparing in proclaiming the grace of Christ than it behooved an Apostle to be, it is not surely required of all to handle the same arguments.⁶⁵

In a strident crystallization which would seem to put the argument at rest to his satisfaction once and for all, Calvin concluded:

It is enough to make men receive this Epistle, that it contains nothing unworthy of an apostle of Christ. It is indeed full of instruction on various subjects, the benefit of which extends to every Christian life; for there are there remarkable passages on patience, prayer to God, the excellency and fruit of heavenly truth, humility, holy duties, the restraining of the tongue, the cultivation for peace, the repression of lusts, the contempt of the world, and the like. . .⁶⁶

⁶⁴ ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁶⁵ John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, p. 276.

⁶⁶ ibid., pp. 276-277.

The order of the Catholic Epistles found in the American Standard Version, viz. James, I and II Peter, I, II, and III John, and Jude is, as has been mentioned, the order of the Latin Vulgate. The above mentioned order is also the one used in the majority of Greek manuscripts and in most of the ancient lists of books found in Patristic writings.⁶⁷

The Epistle of James became firmly established in the canon of the western part of Christendom by the end of the fourth century following the assembling of the third council of Carthage (A. D. 397). The Epistle had difficulty being recognized as canonical because of the uncertainty about the identification of James mentioned as the author in the opening verse. As long as even a hint of doubt remained there were some who, as Eusebius indicates, held the epistle to be a spurious work; or, the work was thought to be a letter written by someone else under the name of James. Universal acceptance of the epistle came when James, the Lord's half-brother, became generally recognized as its author.⁶⁸

The Basic Purpose of the Epistle

The basic purpose for the writing of the epistle is found in the key verse (James 3:2) which expresses James' desire for the reader to become a ". . . perfect man".⁶⁹ That the people to whom James addressed this epistle

⁶⁷Robertson, Studies, p. 12.

⁶⁸Tasker, op. cit., p. 19.

⁶⁹Thiessen, op. cit., p. 278.

had failed to attain this state of Christianity is heightened by his references to worldly greed, the pride of life, and selfish cruelty. It is evident that he wanted them to attain perfection, for throughout, this epistle is ethical. The epistle is called the Sermon on the Mount among the epistles in that it presents Christianity as the ethical fulfillment of law.⁷⁰

Farrar accented the ethereal as well as the practical qualities of the epistle by enunciating the accomplishment of elevating man from the mundane to an eternal ethical evaluation:

In this epistle, then, St. James has left us a precious heritage of his thoughts, a precious manual of all that was purest and loftiest in Jewish Christianity.⁷¹

The author of the Epistle of James attempted to meet the needs of Jewish Christians of the Dispersion.⁷² James, in order to fulfill the high purpose designed for his epistle, importuned the readers to have the proper attitude toward trials and temptations.⁷³ His purpose was to show them that one who faced trials would find a means of discipline,⁷⁴ would recognize a need for wisdom in trials,⁷⁵ and would accept his duty to be thankful for

⁷⁰Dods, op. cit., pp. 190-191.

⁷¹Farrar, op. cit., p. 308.

⁷²Thiessen, op. cit., p. 278.

⁷³Holy Bible, James 1:2-18.

⁷⁴Holy Bible, James 1:2-4.

⁷⁵Holy Bible, James 1:5-8.

trials.⁷⁶ He then points out the character of trials⁷⁷ which when united with discipline, wisdom, and duty aid one in becoming the perfect man.⁷⁸

James proceeded from the topic of trials to exhort the people to receive the Word properly.⁷⁹ To receive the Word properly was to practice the teachings of the Word; or as Conner says, ". . . pure religion consisted in doing good, but it was doing this before God".⁸⁰ From this position before God, man must turn in his quest for high living to being just in his dealings with other men.⁸¹

One of the most succinct statements concerning this thought has been expressed in the Interpreters Bible thusly: "The purpose of James. . . was to provide concrete ethical instruction for his readers. . . ." ⁸² High ethical living consisted of the proper use of the tongue and one's attitude toward true wisdom.⁸³

His arguments and appeals are directed against abuses of popular Christianity as it developed in circles where worldliness was infecting the faith and where misconceptions of belief were prevalent.⁸⁴

⁷⁶Holy Bible, James 1:9-11.

⁷⁷Holy Bible, James 1:12-18.

⁷⁸Dana, op. cit., p. 107.

⁷⁹Thiessen, Loc. cit., p. 278.

⁸⁰W. T. Conner, The Faith of the New Testament, p. 201.

⁸¹Dana, op. cit., p. 107.

⁸²George Buttrick, et. al., The Interpreter's Bible, p. 14.

⁸³Ibid., p. 18.

⁸⁴James Moffatt, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary, The General Epistles James, Peter, and Jude, p. 2.

James' desire to inspire his brethren to higher plains of ethical living led him to write this epistle, yet the author nowhere attempted a systematic treatment of ethics. Deems stated:

It is plainly meant to inculcate morals. The writer does not seek to reach this end by setting forth a systematic ethical treatise, but rather by warning his readers against such sins and errors as they would naturally fall into because of their early Jewish and late Christian circumstance, and to exhort them to themselves in showing that they really had such faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as made them fruitful as well as unblamable.⁸⁵

Thus, it becomes increasingly evident that the motive of the epistle seemed to be to call Jewish Christians to the agenda of their faith and to encourage holy living amid the peculiar temptations and trials to which they were exposed in order to make practice correspond to profession.

⁸⁵Charles F. Deems, The Gospel of Common Sense, p. 26.

CHAPTER III

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO HIMSELF

"What a man believes determines what he does" is the opening theme for Master Control, a popular week-end radio program. Seemingly the producers and writers have lifted the prevailing theme from the book of James and are using his theme as the central message for their show. Actually, James said that a man showed what he believed by what he did.¹

The desire of James was that every man might become a "perfect man", that is to say, a man in control of himself as he is directed by God.² In attempting to help people to reach this state of perfection, James spoke of man's relationship with himself, with his fellowman, and with God.

At the very outset of the epistle, James addressed those who were oppressed because of a doubly hard life (they were both Jews and Christians) with the unusual call to rejoice because of personal trials and temptations.³ The word used here by James had the double meaning of outward trials and inward temptations.⁴ Scholars differ in opinion as to the true meaning James meant to convey. Ideas range from mere persecution to the belief that both external trials and internal temptations were involved.⁵ The use of

¹Holy Bible, James 1:18.

²Holy Bible, James 3:2.

³Holy Bible, James 1:2.

⁴Tasker, op. cit., p. 40.

⁵Mayor, op. cit., p. 40.

the kindred word in verse thirteen, in which James said, "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God. . .,'"⁶ indicates that more than trouble and persecution were involved. At this point internal temptations are indicated, though Dana feels that the question at hand deals basically with persecution:

It means something that puts one to a test, whether in a good or bad sense. Here it refers to trials or difficulties through which the readers were passing. The precise nature of these trials we do not know. Some commentators think that they were the privations resulting from famine, such as prevailed in Syria and Palestine about 44-48 A. D. Others consider it to have been persecution. The latter view accords best with the contents of the epistle. Doubtless the safest ground is found in the observation of Plumptre that such trials were true, more or less, of the whole Jewish race, everywhere, but it was especially true of those who being of the Twelve Tribes, also held the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of those most of all who were most within the writer's view. Jews everywhere were suffering criticism and oppression, and those who were Christians would suffer not only at the hands of prejudiced Gentiles, but also from their own people who would ostracize or boycott them for following the new faith.⁷

The ideas spread out to include the broader view held by Oesterly when he stated that the theme "obviously means allurements to wrong doing, and this would appear to be the most natural meaning here on account of the way in which temptation is analysed, though the sense of external trials, in the sense of calamity, would, of course, not be excluded."⁸

The real meaning must include both outward trials and inward temptations. Robertson stated this view thus:

⁶Holy Bible, James 1:13.

⁷Dana, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

⁸W. E. Oesterley, The Expositor's Greek Testament, The General Epistle of James, Vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n. d.), p. 421.

The word in the Greek came to have either sense though originally it meant only to try, to attempt, just as our English word "tempt" was at first simply "try". But it is a short step from "try" to "make trial of" when suspicion exists or evil desire arises. Hence all through the Greek we find the old Greek word used in both senses. New Testament usage varies.⁹

James took for granted that the readers would distinguish between the two meanings of the word.¹⁰ The point James was making was that trials, which are considered mean, evil, or to be avoided, were to be joyfully accepted by Christians, since it was by overcoming difficulties that moral progress was achieved.¹¹ This is a far cry from the usual ideas men equate with happiness. More often than not the ideal of happiness is a state of ease, or contentment, or confidence. The summum bonum of such lives is the ability to skirt difficulties and "bask in pleasurable and undisturbed tranquillity".¹²

The effects that external conditions would have upon character are strongly indicated as being primary in this first instance, for James said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations".¹³ He was not saying that the trials themselves were to be enjoyed but rather that the beneficial results they would bring were to be rejoiced in as

⁹A. T. Robertson, Practical and Social Aspects of Christianity (New York: Hodder and Stroughton, 1915), pp. 53-54.

¹⁰Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 21.

¹¹Ibid., p. 22.

¹²Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 22.

¹³Holy Bible, James 1:2.

"blessed fruit."¹⁴ For in all the trial, testing, or temptation that comes one's way is thus directed toward an end. This end is that the tested is to emerge stronger. The test is not seduction into sin, but it is for the purpose of strengthening, proving, and purifying.¹⁵

Hort expressed a truth known by most Christians when he wrote that ". . . the Christian must expect to be jostled by trials on the Christian way."¹⁶ Experiences are going to come to one, but they should be moments when faith is crystallized, when minds are made up and thereby set at ease. Then one can realize that these tests are not sent to make one fall; they are sent to make one soar.¹⁷

The test most likely to be made is the test that tries the faith of the believer. Christ knew what was most likely to assail his followers and told Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."¹⁸ In the midst of trials when believers are wondering and wandering, they should look to the admonition given by Zechariah, "I will bring them through the fire, and they shall be refined as silver and gold is tried; and they shall say, the Lord is my God."¹⁹ Nothing should separate the man of faith from the fact that though

¹⁴John Adam, An Exposition of the Epistle of James (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867), p. 10.

¹⁵William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 48.

¹⁶ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷Barclay, op. cit., p. 50.

¹⁸Holy Bible, Luke 22:32.

¹⁹Holy Bible, Zechariah 13:21.

his testing is hard, God is his affectionate Father. As Manton pointed out:

Let not any hard dealing make you mistake your Father's affection. One special point of faith, under the cross, is the faith of our adoption: Hebrews 12:5. "The exhortation speaketh to you as children; my son, despise not the chastening of the Lord." It is as the apostle's own note that the afflicted are styled by the name of sons. Christ had a bitter cup, but saith He, "My Father hath put it into my hands" (John 18:11). "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink of it? It is a bitter cup, but he is still my Father."²⁰

Besides holding to faith in the saddest of trials, the man of faith was to keep his hopes new and alive. Believers were to counter-balance temptations with hope. There was no grief or loss so great but that faith must know how to meet and dispel the loss in the rosy glow the reward that is to come to the endurer of trials.²¹

The result of inward and outward testing was for men of faith to be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."²² The aim of testing has been completed. The believer becomes purged of impurity, has had the dross of human imperfections poured off, and is left clean and pure.²³ Barclay states that those whose faith is tried and who are able to meet the testing in the right way will find a characteristic known as unswerving constancy. Unswerving constancy is better than patience, for patience is simply the ability to bear things; unswerving constancy is the ability to turn things of trial to greatness and glory. For example, one need only refer to Christian martyrs who

²⁰Thomas Manton, An Exposition on the Epistle of James (London: The Banner of Truth and Trust, 1693, reprint 1962), p. 32.

²¹Manton, op. cit., p. 32.

²²Holy Bible, James 1:4.

²³Barclay, op. cit., p. 50.

amazed their heathen slayers by smilingly meeting death and by answering their incredulous questions with such sayings as, "In the flames I see the glory of God, and am glad."²⁴ Unswerving constancy is being able to suffer testing, trial, and tribulation, and welcoming the opportunity to do so.²⁵

Through such testing God works out His will in Christians by making them full-grown, mature, and lacking in no spiritual thing.²⁶ To be a full-grown and mature Christian is not a ready-made affair. Indeed, Manton's reservations about such a quality as perfection in Christians are well founded when he quotes James 3:2: "We all fail in many things. . . ." He does not feel that the apostle intended to assert a possibility of perfection in Christians, for grace in this instance is imperfect because the means are imperfect. He feels James meant that Christians

. . . should be sincere as sincerity is called perfection in scripture; or else it is meant of the perfection of duration and perseverance; or rather, that perfection is intended which is called the perfection of parts—that we might be so perfect, or entire, that no necessary grace might be lacking; that, having other gifts, they might also have the gift of patience, and the whole image of Christ might be completed in them—that nothing might be wanting which is necessary to make up a Christian. Some, indeed, make this a legal sentence, as implying what God may in justice require, and to what we should in conscience aim-to-wit, exact perfection, both in parts and degrees. It is true this is beyond our power; but because we have lost our power there is no reason God should lose His right.²⁷

²⁴Barclay, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁵Barclay, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁶Lehman Strauss, James, Your Brother (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1956), p. 15.

²⁷Manton, op. cit., p. 34.

Despite these reservations it needs to be pointed out that James insisted there is a type of perfection attainable in unswerving constancy. The idea he presented is that the perfection he intended is toward a given end and for a given purpose. For example, a sacrificial animal had this perfection if it was fit to be offered to God.

So, then, this constancy, born of testing well met, makes a man perfect, that is to say, it makes him fit for the task in the world which he was sent into the world to do, and which God meant him to do.²⁸

Also, unswerving constancy makes one complete, entire, perfect in every part. Again the example of the fit animal of sacrifice was used, and added to this was the thought of the priest who was fit to serve God. No disfiguring or disqualifying blemishes were to be found on either the beast or the man. Bit by bit, weaknesses and imperfections were removed from a man's character until daily conquests of old sins produced new qualities of sterling character.²⁹

James picked up this theme again in Chapter 5:7-9. Although the general subject had changed, James used the same word in describing the attitude that should characterize the actions of Christians even as they wait for the return of the Lord. In being true to oneself in one's quest for true religion, James admonished Christians to exhibit "patience until the coming of the Lord."³⁰ James thereby reminded the Christians that the temptation to lose patience may lead those who yield to the sins born of impatience, namely, vindictiveness

²⁸Barclay, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁹Barclay, op. cit., p. 52.

³⁰Holy Bible, James 5:7.

and despair.³¹ Vindictiveness in such an instance would be toward fellowmen, and despair would be directed toward God for slowing down the process of His coming in Christ.

The best of religion is to be God-like. God is characterized by His patience toward sinful humanity. James described Him as being "slow to anger" and "of great kindness." God does not act with great speed in inflicting evil-doers the full punishment they deserve, nor does He always apply the full penalty of the law in executing justice and assessing penalties. He gives the offender time to repent. As Tasker indicates,

if an all-holy God, faced with the enormity of human sin, is patient, so too, James implies, should the Christian be patient in the face of the injustices of human life.³²

James used a notable illustration depicting the patience of the farmer. The farmer patiently waits for the "precious fruits of the earth."³³ The farmer must wait for the early rain which comes in late October and early November; without this, the seed sown will not germinate. Too, he must wait for the late rains of April and May, without which rains the grain will not mature.³⁴ Months pass before the farmer can see the fruits of his labor, but all the waiting is marked by patience. As the farmer waits for nature to do her work, even so should the Christian wait for the coming of the Lord. Such waiting must not be

³¹Tasker, op. cit., p. 116.

³²Tasker, op. cit., p. 117.

³³Holy Bible, James 5:7.

³⁴Alvah Hovey, editor, An American Commentary on the New Testament (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1890) Vol. VI, p. 66.

marked by bad tempers or grumblings or surrender to evil. Neither must the Christian yield to the temptation to fall away. The Chinese have a descriptive saying for such who, having put their hand to the plow, turn away. Translated it says, "Before half the road is travelled, he runs away."³⁵ The Lord's return is imminent, and Christians must always be ready.

These attitudes can come to one only when he has wisdom. If one lacked this wisdom, James invited him to ask it of God.³⁶ Here the theme of the epistle is suggested and may be stated as "Christian wisdom." This is not mere speculative knowledge or revealed truth but practical knowledge, truth applied to life, creed resulting in character.³⁷ This naturally leads to the idea fostered by James, for to him wisdom is the right use of one's opportunities in holy living. James, like Christ, felt wisdom to be living in accord with the will of God. Such wisdom is necessary for Christians to know how to look at trials. Christians are to see trials in their true light and to give patience a chance to do its perfect work.³⁸

Such wisdom finds its source in God.³⁹ With simplicity and sincerity God liberally gives this wisdom. He does so without bargaining on His part, for there is no idea of reciprocity. It is normal and natural to ask God for

³⁵Butterick, Interpreters Bible, p. 66.

³⁶Holy Bible, James 1:5.

³⁷Charles R. Eerdman, The General Epistles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1929), p. 12.

³⁸Robertson, Studies, p. 41.

³⁹Alexander Ross, The New International Commentary, p. 29.

this wisdom. He will give it, prompting the asker to wonder why he did not ask sooner. The result of such wisdom accrues for good to the recipient and prompts him to use such wisdom for God's glory and for the blessing of the lives of others.⁴⁰

Barclay builds on this idea by mentioning the conditions of entreaty.⁴¹ The believer should ask without doubts; doubting hinders the asker in being able fully to appreciate God's power and ability to give. The doubter's mind is broken like the water of the sea, driven hither and thither by any chance wind. Such doubting divides the true believer in his allegiance, making him a halfway believer. In one instance he will consent to the wisdom of God, but at other times he will consent to the wisdom of the world.⁴² Such a man is possessed of two souls or two minds. "One mind believes, the other disbelieves; and the man is a walking civil war."⁴³ A life so divided will lose its essential unity, its concentration, and its true reward.⁴⁴

By leading his readers along the path of truth to themselves, James gave the unworldly call for Christians to rejoice over trials and to win the battle of faith through patience and wisdom. In addition he reminded them that the

⁴⁰Robertson, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

⁴¹Barclay, op. cit., p. 54.

⁴²George Barker Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 278.

⁴³Barclay, loc. cit.

⁴⁴Stevens, loc. cit.

Christian's status was unaffected by poverty or wealth.⁴⁵

The new status one finds in Christ does not necessarily change the fact that a poor man is still a poor man. The new status does not alter the fact that a man of great wealth, even though he is now a Christian, is still a man of means. The change is one of outlook. Christianity brings to the poor man a new sense of his own value.⁴⁶ In the church, the humble or poor man might be the richest, that is to say, rich in grace, love, peace, joy, righteousness, and fellowship.⁴⁷

The new status one finds in Christ removes all distinctions of class, wealth, poverty, greatness, or smallness as measured by the world.⁴⁸ In the early church there arose occasions when the slave ministered the word and ordinances of the church while the master of that very slave sat as a member of the congregation.⁴⁹ Social distinctions which divide men outside the church are obliterated, and there is none who ranks higher than any other.⁵⁰

Such people naturally find a new concept of their worth to the world. Eyes which were once cast down now search for the sinful and sorrowing. The sinful are sought in order to show them the change effected in the poor one's

⁴⁵Tyndale, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁶Barclay, op. cit., p. 55.

⁴⁷Robertson, Studies, p. 45.

⁴⁸Manton, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴⁹Barclay, loc. cit.

⁵⁰Loc. cit.

life; the sorrowful are sought in order to show them Christian joy.⁵¹

The "poor" Christian finds that his worth to God is far more than he can estimate. In this same area of thinking, Tyndale reminded us that all men find "status" with God.⁵² Barclay quotes Muretus as saying, "Call no man worthless for whom Christ died."⁵³

In his epistle James addressed the rich man. He declared that Christianity brings to this man a new sense of self-abasement. The man of wealth loses his anxiety to amass a greater wealth once he has found the riches of following Christ. James pointed out some of the perils that face the rich. He stated that the rich find a false sense of security in the possession of money. Such a person feels safe in the assurance that there is nothing to confront him from which his money cannot deliver him.⁵⁴ James chose to point out for one so deceived the brevity of human life and the temporal quality of material wealth. For the people of the desert, James painted a vivid picture when he told of the shower of rain that falls and brings forth the thin shoots of grass and flowers. His warning sounded when he reminded these people that the burning sun and the blowing wind will cause the grass and flowers to wither and die.⁵⁵ Such a burning and choking wind is common in Palestine where it blows from the south-east, straight out of the desert; and so devastating is

⁵¹Adam, op. cit., pp. 34-37.

⁵²Tyndale, op. cit., p. 43.

⁵³Barclay, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵⁴Strauss, op. cit., pp. 30-32.

⁵⁵Holy Bible, James 1:10.

its heat that it can change the landscape from green to brown.⁵⁶

This picture clearly indicated the end in store for one who depended on riches. Riches can be taken from one in a moment. Perhaps they are taken by natural calamity, by evil partners, by thieves and robbers, or by chance and changes of life. Often in this brief life, they take wings and fly away; and even if they do not, it should be remembered James stated that riches "must always pass away with the fading flower of life; not even the poorest fragment of them can be held by the relaxing hand of death."⁵⁷

James moved forth from his discussion of the poor and rich to conclude all the former discourse with a general sentence in verse 12.⁵⁸ The world sees one way; God, another. Consequently, when the author of this epistle wanted to point up such a difference, he used a Christian paradox. "Behold," he called to the world, "Blessed," already blessed and not miserable, "is the man. . ." who stands with God, and yields not to temptation.⁵⁹

James then began to talk of the crown of life which is such a wonderful climax for the man who meets trials and testings in the right way.⁶⁰ For this man there is joy here and hereafter.⁶¹ The crown of life is described as the

⁵⁶Butterick, et. al., op. cit., p. 25.

⁵⁷Cf. Holy Bible, James 1:11.

⁵⁸Holy Bible, James 1:12.

⁵⁹Manton, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

⁶⁰Holy Bible, James 1:13.

⁶¹Moffatt, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

wreath of victory in the games and was "usually woven of olive or ivy leaves, but sometimes of precious metals."⁶² The crown of life is also described as a garland of flowers which was worn at weddings and feasts.⁶³ In its highest connotations it is noted as a mark of royalty,⁶⁴ or kingly crown,⁶⁵ which consists of life in all its range and fulness.⁶⁶

The crown was anciently the emblem and the reward of victory. It was the grand prize carried off in the famous Grecian games, to which there are so many allusions in the apostolic writings. It was the proud trophy borne off by the successful competitor; were poor and perishable, fading leaves of laurel, or such like, the crown was valued more than the gold and silver. It is indicative of spiritual triumph - of the battle fought and the victory won. It is conferred only on him who overcometh.⁶⁷

Barclay agrees with Ross in determining that the crown consists of life; in fact, the crown is life itself. Through the Giver of Life, Jesus Christ, the Christian has entered into a more abundant and everlasting life. Such a life is a natural outgrowth of the faith and love of those who have received the promises of God.⁶⁸

⁶²Butterick, et. al., op. cit., p. 26.

⁶³Barclay, op. cit., p. 57.

⁶⁴Loc. cit.

⁶⁵Robertson, op. cit., p. 49.

⁶⁶Ross, op. cit., p. 32.

⁶⁷Adam, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

⁶⁸E. T. Winkler, Commentary on the Epistle of James, Vol. VI
An American Commentary on the New Testament (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1890), pp. 21-22.

So, then, if the follower of Christ and lover of God confronts trials and testings and temptations in steadfast and unswerving constancy, "life becomes infinitely more splendid. . . than ever it was before."⁶⁹ The struggle is the way to glory, and the very struggle itself is a glory.

In his teachings concerning man's relationships with himself, others, and God, James proceeded without systematic progression. Farrar says his

. . . groups of thoughts follow each other in distinct sections, which never interlace each other, and have little or no logical connection or systematic advance.⁷⁰

As a result of this style, the teachings must be picked up as they come. Under this general topic of man's dealings with himself, James in 1:19-26, related another of his outstanding teachings. This teaching concerned hearing and doing. In this brief passage James gave instructions that made this one of his finest paragraphs.⁷¹ Actually he laid down in the first two verses an important rule of life: be a brilliant listener in golden silence and avoid dull anger.⁷²

A brilliant listener learns and retains what he hears. Barclay quotes some early observations of the Jewish teachers:

In the Sayings of the Jewish Fathers we read: 'There are four characters in scholars. Quick to hear and quick to forget; his gain is cancelled by his loss. Slow to hear and slow to forget; his loss is can-

⁶⁹Barclay, op. cit., p. 58.

⁷⁰Farrar, op. cit., p. 319.

⁷¹Robertson, Studies, p. 60.

⁷²Ibid, pp. 61-63.

celled by his gain. Quick to hear and slow to forget; he is wise. Slow to hear and quick to forget; this is an evil lot.⁷³

In this passage James spoke of the advisability of being a good listener because then even poor speakers can become better. The speech here is from God's Word; and it is by the Word that men are regenerated and brought to the deepest truths about God, men, and all things.⁷⁴ The hearer becomes better because what he hears makes him wise, a good listener, and a better dispenser of God's Word.⁷⁵

This led James to give his second principle or rule for life, which rule is the opposite advice to speaking - "be slow to speak."⁷⁶ Words spoken can never be called back and may bring despair to the speaker.⁷⁷

James enjoined Christians for their good, the good of God, and the good of mankind to follow his simple rules of life which he climaxed with the third rule, "be slow to wrath."⁷⁸ In order to live with oneself without regret, it is necessary for the Christian to be slow to anger. Many times God is judged by the spirit that prevails in the Christian. Conversation which begins as a true endeavor to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion may end up in a bitter quarrel because of an unwise word, a hastily spoken word, or even

⁷³Barclay, op. cit., p. 64.

⁷⁴Ross, op. cit., p. 38.

⁷⁵Manton, op. cit., pp. 133-135.

⁷⁶Holy Bible, James 1:19b.

⁷⁷Robertson, Studies, p. 62.

⁷⁸Holy Bible, James 1:19c.

the desire on the part of one to monopolize the discussion.⁷⁹ Anger enters and "inflames one to hasty and unguarded talk."⁸⁰ Passions thus aroused often-times cause a Christian to say things and do things that negate his Christian witness.⁸¹

This is not to say that there is never a time when anger is justified; on the contrary, it is justified at times. Occasionally it is necessary. True, it is to be in the same sense and character of the anger Jesus exhibited in the gospel account.⁸² Such anger was not an expression of His private petulance but was a public resentment against the actions of people who, by their actions, caused innocent victims to suffer.⁸³ Such anger is referred to as righteous indignation. The Psalmist admonished, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."⁸⁴

Yet the Christian must be prompted by compassionate anger which will not lead him into sin. Regardless of how zealous one might be in his anger he does not know all the circumstances of the occasion which has prompted his wrath.⁸⁵ However righteous one feels in his wrath, it must be remembered that

⁷⁹Strauss, op. cit., p. 52.

⁸⁰Robertson, Studies, p. 63.

⁸¹Ross, op. cit., p. 38.

⁸²Holy Bible, Mark 3:5.

⁸³Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 31.

⁸⁴Holy Bible, Psalms 97:10.

⁸⁵Robertson, Studies, p. 64.

James said, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,"⁸⁶ Indeed, "anger harms the soul,"⁸⁷ and this is the special emphasis of this portion of this study of James.

James moved from these rules of life to give a suggestion as to the way in which the Word of God should be received and heard. Put away filthiness or wickedness which is sin and defiles your nature, pleads James.⁸⁸ This referred to both wrath and immorality. The manner of putting these things away was described as stripping.⁸⁹ Just as a man strips off soiled garments or a snake sloughs off its skin, so vice and sin should be removed from the person of the Christian.⁹⁰

James used remarkable language in this passage. He told his readers to get rid of anything and everything that might hinder God's message's reaching them--even down to telling them to clean their ears of wax that might stop their hearing God's true word.⁹¹ Further, he thought of vice and likened it to a tangled undergrowth which is so dense one must cut his way through as he proceeds. James spoke of vice as a growth which defiles the soul; by filling the soul with its presence, it thereby fills any vacancy God might

⁸⁶Holy Bible, James 1:20.

⁸⁷Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 30.

⁸⁸Holy Bible, James 1:21.

⁸⁹Holy Bible, James 1:21.

⁹⁰Barclay, op. cit., p. 66.

⁹¹Loc. cit.

otherwise occupy.⁹²

As one clears away the vices which James has described as undergrowth he prepares the soil for serving. In this instance the soil is his soul, and it must be prepared for what is to come--in this case, "the inborn word."⁹³ This could easily mean the innate "word." James may have been referring to the natural conscience which points toward an instinctive knowledge of good or evil in a man's heart. Barclay states that this ". . . guidance of that knowledge" should always be obeyed.⁹⁴ On the other hand, James may have had in mind "inborn in the sense of implanted, as a seed is planted in the ground."⁹⁵ If this be the case, James may have been referring to Christ's great Parable of the Sower,⁹⁶ which related how God's Word, the seed, is sown in the hearts of men.⁹⁷ From the beginning God had spoken in voice after voice, and through man after man; now, in this last planting time He spoke through Jesus Christ for man's good.⁹⁸ God sows, implants, waters, blesses, and desires growth. The wise man is the one who receives the Word and welcomes it.

⁹²Ibid, p. 67.

⁹³Holy Bible, James 1:21b.

⁹⁴Barclay, op. cit., p. 67.

⁹⁵Loc. cit.

⁹⁶Holy Bible, Matthew 13:1-8.

⁹⁷Barclay, op. cit., p. 67.

⁹⁸David Smith, The Days of His Flesh (New York: Harper Brothers Publishing Company, nd.), p. 73.

It may well be that we are not required to make a choice between these two meanings. It may well be that James is implying that knowledge of the true Word of God comes to us from two sources; it comes from the depth of our own being, and it comes from the Spirit of God and the teaching of Christ and the preaching of men.⁹⁹

The spirit that James has created in this passage strikes home when the individual dwells on the attitude he will possess as he strips himself, cleans himself, moves away from the superfluous, clears away the underbrush, and prepares to listen to the highest in himself and the Word of God. He will receive with "gentleness" or "meekness" the Word.¹⁰⁰ This is a one-word summary of the teachable spirit for which James began pleading in verse nineteen.

Spirit is docile and tractable, and therefore humble enough to learn. The teachable spirit is without resentment and without anger, and is, therefore, able to face the truth, even when the truth hurts and condemns. The teachable spirit is not blinded by its own overmastering prejudices, but is clear-eyed to the truth. The teachable spirit is not seduced by laziness, but is so self-controlled that it can willingly and faithfully accept the discipline of learning.¹⁰¹

This paragraph by Barclay describes the conquest and control of the forces active in man's nature, which forces might hinder his seeing, learning, and obeying the truth.

In 1:19-25, James spoke of a man's willingness, in fact his duty, to hear and do. He reminded his readers that it is not enough just to receive the Word; one must obey the Word's commands.¹⁰² Hearing the Word puts one in

⁹⁹Barclay, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁰⁰Barclay, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁰¹ibid., p. 68.

¹⁰²Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 32

the position of being a bucket filled with water. It is productive. It is fruitful. It is full, but until it gives up its contents it cannot save the thirsty wanderer. The Christian who is full of the hearing of God's Word is a worthless worshipper until he allows the Word to spill over into daily living.¹⁰³

Indeed, such worship by hearing without resulting activity "is as useless as a glance in a mirror which is straightway lost to mind."¹⁰⁴ The ideal is caught when one gazes upon the good that he "sees" as he reads and listens; however, if he finds smut in his soul, as he might find on his face by looking into the mirror, and fails to take measures to clean himself up, all the reading, listening, and looking in the world will do him no good. Such a person is at the most a careless listener, a wayside hearer.¹⁰⁵ James pointed up the importance that what "is heard in the holy place must be lived in the market place"¹⁰⁶ - or there is no point in hearing at all.

With this, James spoke of the man who carefully examines what he hears. Such a man will not merely glance upon a thing, but will "bend his body toward it."¹⁰⁷ Such action implies deep meditation, diligence of inquiry (prying into the mind of God), and liveliness of impression. When Moses talked with

¹⁰³W. T. Conner, op. cit., p. 205.

¹⁰⁴Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁰⁵A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. VI (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1933), p. 22.

¹⁰⁶Barclay, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁰⁷Manton, op. cit., p. 161.

God his face reflected the impression.¹⁰⁸ When Jesus was transfigured "His face did shine as the sun."¹⁰⁹ When Christians converse with the Word they "carry away the beauty and glory of it in their spirits."¹¹⁰ "We, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."¹¹¹

The true believer sees the "perfect law of liberty"¹¹² as he peers and stoops nearer to examine the Word. This is the law of the new covenant which God has put into men's inward parts and upon their hearts.¹¹³ It is not an imposed law from without in the form of a code of external rules and regulations. It is not a dead letter; rather, it is a living power. It is a "law of liberty" because it shows men true freedom in the service of God's will and because the "believer accepts it without any compulsion."¹¹⁴

This passage, along with others, caused Luther to be outspoken in his dislike for this epistle. Luther did not like the idea of law at all and derided James' writing by saying that "James drives us to law and works."¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸Holy Bible, Exodus 34:29.

¹⁰⁹Holy Bible, Matthew 17:2.

¹¹⁰Manton, op. cit., p. 161.

¹¹¹Holy Bible, II Corinthians 3:18.

¹¹²Holy Bible, James 1:25.

¹¹³Holy Bible, Jeremiah 31:33.

¹¹⁴Tasker, op. cit., p. 53.

¹¹⁵Barclay, op. cit., p. 70.

"Yet there is a sense in which James is right."¹¹⁶ In Christianity there is an ethical demand, a law of life and living, which Christians must know, receive, and put into action. It is the "perfect law" and the "law of liberty."¹¹⁷ As such, it is God's law, given and revealed by Him. It is so perfect it cannot be equalled or bettered. "The Christian law is the law of love; and the demand of love can never be satisfied."¹¹⁸ It is perfect, too, in the completion of its given end.

Not only is this the "perfect law," but it is also the "law of liberty." In keeping this law men find true liberty. Many great men of the ages have agreed that in obeying God's law a man becomes free. Seneca said, "To obey God is liberty." The Stoics said, "The wise man alone is free, and every foolish man is a slave." Philo adds to this when he said, "All who are under the tyranny of anger or desire or any other passion are altogether slaves; all who live with the law are free."¹¹⁹ Consequently, so long as a man obeys his passions, emotions, and desires, he is nothing other than a slave. The free man continues to scrutinize the reflections he receives in order to be adorned and to find truths that will enable him to improve his activities.¹²⁰ In this way he attains and sustains his highest happiness because he freely

¹¹⁶Loc. cit., p. 70.

¹¹⁷Holy Bible, James 1:25.

¹¹⁸Barclay, op. cit., p. 70.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 71.

¹²⁰Winkler, op. cit., p. 30.

chooses to do and to live in accord with the purposes of God.¹²¹

The people James had been talking about were people who must, in God's providence, be able to take care of themselves and to control their action. In 1:26, James began to admonish his readers to control their tongues. This would work to their own advantage and point them out as religious people.

The section, James 3:1-12, expresses the author's desire that the Christian should be able to control himself. The Christian was urged to stay away from vanity and selfishness, and oracular egotism which Farrar called the "itch to teach."¹²² This is the first of two chief parts with which the author deals in this passage. That it has a place in man's relationship to himself is obvious when viewed from the warning given by James about the peril of the idle word.¹²³

In the primitive church the teachers were people of special importance, and always they are mentioned with honor. Teaching was an office to which many in the early church aspired; however, it was not the kind of office one would choose for himself. The true teacher received his gift of teaching from the ascended Lord.¹²⁴

In the church at Antioch the teachers were ranked with the prophets who sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey.¹²⁵ Teachers

¹²¹Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 33.

¹²²Farrar, op. cit., p. 337.

¹²³Robertson, Studies, p. 104.

¹²⁴Holy Bible, Ephesians 4:11.

¹²⁵Holy Bible, Acts 13:1.

ranked only behind apostles and prophets on the list of those who possess great gifts in the church.¹²⁶ Perhaps the reason for this ranking lay in the fact that the apostles and prophets were ever on the move and had the whole church as their endeavor. On the other hand, the teachers worked within the framework of one church

. . . and their supreme importance was that it must have been to them that the converts to Christianity were handed over for instruction in the facts of the Christian gospel, and for edification in the Christian faith. It was the teacher's awe-inspiring responsibility that he could put the stamp of his own faith and knowledge onto those who were entering the church for the first time.¹²⁷

In light of the above statement, the comment by Ross, when he refers to Moffatt's translation of this passage, seems out of place. He suggests that "do not swell the ranks of the teacher"¹²⁸ might mean that James was quietly indicating that there were too many empty "windbags" among them already.¹²⁹

James' warning had a more serious note than this. He seems to have had in mind those teachers who had failed in their responsibility and task and who had become false teachers. Some of the early teachers had tried to make Christianity a kind of Judaism, rather than a unique religion, by introducing circumcision and the necessity to keep the law.¹³⁰ Other teachers taught a

¹²⁶Holy Bible, I Corinthians 12:28.

¹²⁷Barclay, op. cit., p. 93.

¹²⁸Holy Bible, James 3:1.

¹²⁹Ross, op. cit., p. 58.

¹³⁰Holy Bible, Acts 15:24.

"do as I say, not as I do" kind of Christianity. These did not live out their teachings. Their lives were "contradictions of their instruction,"¹³¹ and they brought dishonor on the religion they professed.¹³² Others wanted to teach without being equipped with knowledge. These blind ones in their ignorance wanted to lead other sightless ones.¹³³ Still others were false teachers who taught only what they felt the crowd wanted to hear.¹³⁴ Also, as Robertson points out,

Some men with a certain fluency of speech had no message and only spoke out of vanity and really thought more of the admiration which they might excite by a display of their powers than of the light and strength which through God's grace they might give their brethren.¹³⁵

Apart from the lack of qualifications he listed, James was convinced that teaching is a dangerous vocation because teachers are exposed to a greater condemnation than those who do not teach.¹³⁶ The teacher is more responsible because "his instrument is speech and his agent the tongue."¹³⁷ James taught the unlimited and wide-ranging ability of the tongue to sin. Other members of one's person are limited - the hand to steal and kill, the eye to lust.

¹³¹Barclay, op. cit., p. 93.

¹³²Holy Bible, Romans 2:17-29.

¹³³Holy Bible, I Timothy 1:6-7.

¹³⁴Holy Bible, II Timothy 4:3.

¹³⁵Robertson, Studies, p. 106.

¹³⁶Albert Barnes, Barnes on the New Testament (London: Blackie and Son, n.d.), p. 54.

¹³⁷Barclay, op. cit., p. 94.

But the tongue covers the whole range of iniquity. It can steal another's good name or do murder to another's character. It can spew forth lust, hatred, irreverence to God, profanity, insolence, and arrogance. "There is no ambitious and selfish motive which may not achieve its ends by speech."¹³⁸

This warning strikes at the teacher; for by the use of his tongue, the teacher becomes a guide, a director of the way, an implanter of seed - thoughts upon which his hearers build all their ideas and actions.¹³⁹ Consequently, the teacher teaches those young in years or those who are young in faith in Christ. This calls for truth, not opinions or prejudices. The teacher is thus warned that his conduct should never cast reflections upon his words.¹⁴⁰

Exposure to a greater condemnation or a more severe judgment should stay the false teacher, the ambitious-for-prestige teacher, or the ill-equipped teacher. James contended teachers are to have a more severe trial and are to give a stricter account of their sayings and doings. In anticipation, James transported the teachers to the judgment seat and bade them there to determine their "call" to the teaching ministry.¹⁴¹

James gave reason to his admonition when he proceeded to talk of the effects produced by the tongue. It is a small member, but it produces vast

¹³⁸R. W. Dale, The Epistle of James (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), pp. 94-95.

¹³⁹A. H. Cullen, The Teaching of James (London: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1903), pp. 137-138.

¹⁴⁰Barclay, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

¹⁴¹Cullen, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

and unending effects. It is potent and powerful. James illustrated by mentioning the small bit that enables one to bridle even the fiercest of war horses.¹⁴² The use of the bit is the assertion and means of mastery. By guiding the bridle one is able to turn the whole horse about. The implication James made is that one who is able to master a great war horse should be able to master himself.

The second illustration James used was that of a great ship and how it is controlled by a small rudder.¹⁴³ The ship is guided by the rudder which is handled by one man on the bridge of the ship. In the hands of this one man rests not only the fate of himself, his crew, and passengers, but also all those on land who anxiously await the cargo of food that means life or death for them.¹⁴⁴ There can be no mistaking what James meant when he used this graphic example. Shipwreck at sea is no worse than "soulwreck" on land. To be true to oneself, one is to avoid "soulwreck" by watching his use of words. Uncontrolled use of the tongue disturbs a man's relations with himself, God, and others.

The power of the tongue for evil is shown in the use of the metaphor of fire.¹⁴⁵ A single spark can start a great conflagration, and the tongue can start a chain of events that result in shame, sorrow, and regret. What

¹⁴²Holy Bible, James 3:3.

¹⁴³Holy Bible, James 3:4.

¹⁴⁴Ross, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

¹⁴⁵Holy Bible, James 3:6.

was once a small spark becomes a raging forest fire. Its effects can only be determined when it has finally burned itself out. What was once a half-truth or insignificant curse grows, multiplies, increases, and consumes.

"All the evil characteristics of a fallen world, its covetousness, its idolatry, its blasphemy, its lust, its rapacious greed, find expression through the tongue."¹⁴⁶ As a result, James indicates, the whole body is defiled.¹⁴⁷

This is not a temporary phenomenon. The results of words are the same as the results of actions. They continue on through the course of human life and beyond into eternity. James used the interesting phrase ". . . and setteth on fire the wheel of nature. . . ."¹⁴⁸ The wheel was a symbol among the ancients depicting the changeableness and the completed round of human life.¹⁴⁹ Mayor spoke of the fact that the axle is the source of fire for the wheel, and as such he compares this to the ability of the tongue to spread mischief from the beginning of life to the end.¹⁵⁰ Tasker continued in the same vein when he said, "The evil influence of the tongue spreads out from the axle to the entire circumference of the wheel at every moment in its revolving course."¹⁵¹ This is from the beginning of life to the end.

¹⁴⁶Tyndale, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁴⁷Holy Bible, James 3:6.

¹⁴⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁴⁹Tasker, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁵⁰Mayor, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁵¹Tasker, op. cit., p. 76.

James carried this idea even beyond the end of life when he mentioned the fact that the fire of the tongue is said to be "set on fire of hell."¹⁵² The Bible mentions two kinds of fire. The fire which cleanses and brightens the life of the believer is started by the Holy Spirit and comes down from above.¹⁵³ The other kind of fire is that which fires a person's passions and infects human life throughout its existence. This second fire is from Satan and comes from below. It is the fire of Gehenna in which the unrepentant sinner is to be punished.¹⁵⁴ Loss of one's soul is a possible result of an untamed tongue.

James pointed out that "every kind of beast and bird, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind."¹⁵⁵ From the start, mankind has had the ability to tame all things under his dominion. In effect, James said that man can do almost anything except control his tongue.

James continued to picture the power and evil of an uncontrolled tongue as he mentioned that "it is full of deadly poison."¹⁵⁶ The poison of the serpent is in a pocket of the mouth, ever ready, when the serpent strikes, to do its deadly work. The tongue is as full of deadliness when it follows the dic-

¹⁵²Holy Bible, James 3:6.

¹⁵³Holy Bible, Acts 2:2-3.

¹⁵⁴Holy Bible, Matthew 5:22; 18:9.

¹⁵⁵Holy Bible, James 3:7.

¹⁵⁶Holy Bible, James 3:8.

tates of an evil mind and spews its victim with deadly venom. Robertson pictures it thus: "The hiss of the serpent. . . is often reproduced in the sibilant tongue of the slanderer."¹⁵⁷

James pointed out the ability for evil which the tongue possesses. It is inconsistent, attempting to bless God while at the same time cursing men. The effect upon the one who is supposed to control this tongue is soul-shattering, for it reveals a divided heart and a split personality.¹⁵⁸

Men who profess to be acquainted with God and yet lapse into loose and licentious language do injustice to themselves and their fellows. As has been said, "The fires of Pentecost will not rest where the fires of Gehenna are working."¹⁵⁹ One cannot use two kinds of speech from the same tongue. James said that a fountain cannot give forth bitter and sweet water at one and the same time.¹⁶⁰ The inconsistency is blessing and cursing. If then one does not "bless God" with his tongue, does he have a right to "curse God?" Maclaren answered this question:

Of course when the Apostle gibbets the grotesque inconsistency of such a union, he is not to be taken as allowing cursing, if it only keeps clear of 'blessing God?' Since the latter is the primary duty of all, and the highest exercise of the great gift of speech, anything inconsistent with it is absolutely forbidden, and to show the inconsistency is to condemn the act.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷Robertson, Studies, p. 120.

¹⁵⁸Russell Bradley Jones, Proclaiming the New Testament, The Epistles of James, John, and Jude (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 42.

¹⁵⁹Robertson, Studies, p. 120.

¹⁶⁰Holy Bible, James 3:11.

¹⁶¹Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1910), p. 435.

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¹⁵⁹Robertson, Studies, p. 120.

¹⁶⁰Holy Bible, James 3:11.

¹⁶¹Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1910), p. 435.

James continued in the same vein when he spoke of the laws of nature regarding fig-trees, olives, and vines.¹⁶² As is the root so will be the fruit."¹⁶³ James was consistent with the teaching of Jesus at this point. The Master had said that grapes are not gathered from thorn-bushes nor figs from thistles.¹⁶⁴

James had used these illustrations to point out that the tongue gives full insight to the character of the man. One may not "curse God," but he may "curse men," and there is the true index to what lies in his heart. Although this teaching falls in the category of one's relation to himself, it is well to point out that evil use of the tongue hurts three persons: "the person who utters the slander, the one who listens, and the one of whom the slander is told."¹⁶⁵

James actually summed up the whole idea at the beginning of the passage when he said, "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man. . . ." ¹⁶⁶ Indeed, man has put most things under his power, but no "just" man can be found because none has been able to bridle his tongue perfectly.¹⁶⁷ James taught that the perfect man is one who talks when he should and keeps

¹⁶²Holy Bible, James 3:12.

¹⁶³Tyndale, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁶⁴Holy Bible, Matthew 7:16.

¹⁶⁵Robertson, Studies in the Epistle of James, p. 123.

¹⁶⁶Holy Bible, James 3:2b.

¹⁶⁷Ross, op. cit., p. 59.

silent when he should, thereby proving his mastery of himself.

One of the clearest teachings about the individual's relation to himself was presented in James 1:27. Here the author described true religion or the ability to worship correctly. Man cannot be true to himself if he is false in his worship.¹⁶⁸ Consequently, although one may give money, pray, and fast, he may still be missing the point of true worship or the possession of true religion.¹⁶⁹ In essence, James said, "The finest rituals and the finest liturgy you can offer to God is (sic) service of the poor and personal purity."¹⁷⁰ Real worship lies not in vestments, liturgy, music, or a great sermon but rather in practical service to those around the world and in personal purity.¹⁷¹ In this insistence James was no different from the Psalmist and the prophet; "God is a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows."¹⁷² Zechariah long complained that the people shrugged their shoulders and hardened their hearts at the demands that they "execute true justice" and "show mercy and compassion every man to his brother."¹⁷³ Furthermore, the prophet insisted that widows were not to be oppressed, nor were the fatherless, the stranger, or the poor; and that no evil thoughts were to be entertained

¹⁶⁸Eerdman, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁶⁹Loc. cit., p. 21.

¹⁷⁰Barclay, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁷¹Jones, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

¹⁷²Holy Bible, Psalms 68:5.

¹⁷³Holy Bible, Zechariah 7:9.

in the heart against someone else.¹⁷⁴ Micah joined hands with Zechariah at this point by saying that all ritual sacrifices were without benefit if they were not accompanied with justice, mercy, and humility.¹⁷⁵ If one is to possess true religion, it most certainly will not be at the expense of his fellows.

Without the preceding, a pure life is impossible. With all that has gone before, one walks with God in humble pride and with a firm assurance of acceptance of himself by himself, others, and God.¹⁷⁶

James further showed his readers how to be true to themselves in the quest of religion by discussing sinful self-confidence.¹⁷⁷ Involved is presumptuousness--that is, living as if there is no God in the world. These plan their lives without taking God into account. In 4:15 James pointed out the folly of one's declaring, "I am the master of my own destiny." Such is not true; all planning which is to be done is "God's will."

The Jews were the great traders and merchants of James' day. They were practitioners of the art of making money. Governments in the ancient world made it possible for the Jews to enter countries and cities because populations were scattered and sparse. Cities were thrown open and citizenship was offered to the Jews if only they would come and bring their money, goods, and shrewd ability along with them.¹⁷⁸ Barclay pictures a man gazing

¹⁷⁴Holy Bible, Zechariah 7:6-10.

¹⁷⁵Holy Bible, Micah 6:6-8.

¹⁷⁶Mayor, op. cit., p. 206.

¹⁷⁷Holy Bible, James 4:13-16.

¹⁷⁸Barclay, op. cit., p. 133.

at a map and musing to himself, "Here is a new city where there are great trade chances. I'll go there; and I'll get in on the ground floor; and I'll make my fortune, and come back rich."¹⁷⁹ It is confidence such as this that James considered sinful self-confidence. This is planning without God or His will. This is detailing every step with absolute assurance, without thought of God. This is considering the days of man in his self-control rather than in God's control.

James warned of the essential uncertainty of the morrow, and the day after, and the day after that.¹⁸⁰ As the author of Proverbs said, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."¹⁸¹ James told men that planning without taking God into account was planning on a foundation as uncertain as a vapor.¹⁸² He was stating the same truth that Jesus taught when the Lord told of a man who laid plans for his crops, his animals, and himself. Here was a man with a fortune, but he was foolish. He planned his future without taking God into his plans.¹⁸³

Commenting on the teachings of Jesus and James at this point, Mayor says,

When our Lord said 'take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself' (Matthew vi. 34), he did not mean to forbid serious consideration of the course to be adopted under given circumstances. He did not mean that it was wrong to make engagements be-

¹⁷⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁸⁰Holy Bible, James 4:14.

¹⁸¹Holy Bible, Proverbs 27:1.

¹⁸²Holy Bible, James 4:14.

¹⁸³Holy Bible, Luke 12:16-21.

forehand and to take steps to keep our engagements; that it was wrong for a man to deliberate carefully before choosing a profession or accepting wrong for a statesman to consider carefully what measures he should bring forward in Parliament. His meaning was that we should not worry ourselves with the anticipation of evil; we should make all due preparation for it, and then await it calmly in reliance upon God. As Christ forbade undue anxiety, so St. James here forbids undue confidence. We should bear in mind that we cannot foresee the issues of things, so that what we now think desirable may turn out hereafter to have been undesirable; and again that the best-laid plans are liable to fail, so that, however good the object, still it may be unattainable by us; that we should therefore but join with all our life as it were on a single throw of the dice, but join with all our plans for the future the reservation 'if God will' and the aspiration 'Thy will be done.' Some people, perhaps thinking of Christ's promise of divine assistance to those who should be brought before synagogues and magistrates for his sake, seem to have an idea that forethought and planning are in themselves opposed to something approaching to impiety in making preparations for the future. It is enough to say in answer to this, that grace will be sufficient for us in whatever difficulties, still it is our duty to use all our powers, especially our nobler powers, in God's service; that the powers of imagination, hope, and reason were given to us especially as guides to action; and that no great and permanent work has ever been effected in which these powers were not full exercised.¹⁸⁴

"Do not claim an ability you do not, in fact, cannot possess," said James as he reproves presumptuousness in man.¹⁸⁵ Instead of a vaunting attitude dependent upon self, one should possess the spirit that pleads, "If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that."¹⁸⁶ Such a phrase as "the Lord willing" or "please God" should not always be on one's lips in mere formalism, but the truth of God's providence should be in one's heart. The facts that life and one's blessings are gifts from God and that the future is in

¹⁸⁴Mayor, op. cit., p. 228.

¹⁸⁵Holy Bible, James 4:14.

¹⁸⁶Holy Bible, James 4:15.

His sure grasp should so control one's thoughts that sinful self-confidence and presumption would be impossible.¹⁸⁷ Any attitude other than this is claiming an ability one does not possess, and this James described as evil.¹⁸⁸

The continuation of the discussion of one's relationship to himself leads James to speak of a particular Christian virtue, the patience of the righteous. In 5:7-11, James discussed this virtue as it related to the wrongs a Christian may be called upon to suffer at the hands of unscrupulous men.¹⁸⁹ That his brethren were suffering is obvious; the object of James is to help them bear their oppressions without murmuring or resistance.¹⁹⁰

Calvin pointed out that judgment for these who oppress God's own is to be meted out, not by the oppressed, but by God Himself.¹⁹¹ The present confusion will be set in orderly fashion with "the coming of the Lord."¹⁹² With this coming the righteous will receive their just due. It is folly for the righteous man to fret, suffer, and be impatient, because the day is coming when present troubles will be past. The man who has been true to himself and to God can face this day in the sure knowledge that his steadfastness will be rewarded.¹⁹³ This, of course, is not to say that employees or poor

¹⁸⁷Eerdman, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁸⁸Holy Bible, James 4:16.

¹⁸⁹Holy Bible, James 5:7-11.

¹⁹⁰Barnes, op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁹¹John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 347.

¹⁹²Holy Bible, James 5:7.

¹⁹³Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 65.

men, as is the example in this passage, may not use every lawful means at their disposal to redress wrongs; but they must not yield to the temptation to speak hot words and do angry deeds.¹⁹⁴

As James enjoined patience as a virtue that is to be possessed by those who await the coming of the Lord, he gives the example of a waiting farmer.¹⁹⁵ The farmer prepared his fields and planted his seed; then in patient anticipation he awaited the all-important early and late rains. Without the early rain of October and November, the Palestinian farmer could not expect the sown seed to germinate. The late rains of April and May brought the grain to maturity.¹⁹⁶ All this came in due season; impatience would not change the course of nature. Impatience will not hasten the Lord's return.

Other examples given to present the practice of patience are Job and Jesus. The authors of the Interpreters Bible voice an interesting opinion when they mention that James was thinking not only of the Old Testament account of the suffering and patience of the prophets, but even more of the many Jewish traditions regarding their afflictions.¹⁹⁷

In speaking of Job's patience it might be better if the Greek word were rendered "steadfastness."¹⁹⁸ James was seeking steadfastness on the part

¹⁹⁴Eerdman, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁹⁵Holy Bible, James 5:7.

¹⁹⁶Barclay, op. cit., pp. 142-143.

¹⁹⁷Holy Bible, Hebrews 11:36-38.

¹⁹⁸Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, James 5:11.

of all Christians in order that they never lose their faith in God.¹⁹⁹ The supreme idea of the whole passage is that man becomes a better man if he endures to the end.²⁰⁰

James moved, as he so readily did from one topic to another, to an idea that had no connection with what had preceded unless his words be interpreted as directions for right behavior for those who wait patiently for the coming of the Lord.²⁰¹ In 5:12 James entreated the true believers not to swear or to break into oaths. Ross interprets these sayings of James to infer that suffering causes profanity in men.²⁰² On the other hand, the Interpreters Bible contends that this misses the lesson James was trying to teach. The rendering of the Interpreters Bible speaks of the fact that honesty is the best policy, and an honest man does not have to "swear on the Bible" to a statement of truth.²⁰³

For the writer is not concerned with what we call "profanity," the reckless use of holy names to add emphasis, but with oaths taken to assure truthfulness; the opposite of which would not be "profanity" but "perjury." The danger of the use of such oaths is that men come to feel that if these are omitted, there is no binding necessity to speak the truth.²⁰⁴

The sin of untruthfulness removes what trust fellowmen might have in each other. It causes the liar to feel a sense of guilt and a disgust for

¹⁹⁹Eerdman, op. cit., p. 45.

²⁰⁰Ross, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

²⁰¹Holy Bible, James 5:12.

²⁰²Ross, op. cit., p. 95.

²⁰³Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 64.

²⁰⁴Loc. cit.

self. Liars will have their eternal abode in hell.²⁰⁵

The other view of scholars is that James means cursing. Robertson pointed out that James had more to say about the evils of the tongue than any other sin.²⁰⁶ Included in this context would be talkativeness, unrestrained speaking, love of correcting others, railing, cursing, boasting, and murmuring.²⁰⁷ In this instance he joined Jesus in setting bounds for a man's speech patterns.²⁰⁸ His earnestness in this prohibition is explained when one realizes the constancy with which the Jews broke the third commandment. These people were flippantly calling God to witness words they were using. It became for them the natural bit of conversation, and they failed to realize they were profaning God's name.²⁰⁹

The use of oaths, from the lowest to the greatest, was condemned by James when he pointedly said, "Swear not, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."²¹⁰ This is plain enough. All the oaths in the world will not make a lie the truth. The truth does not need oaths to support it. A man's character speaks louder than all his words.²¹¹

²⁰⁵Holy Bible, Revelations 21:8; Revelations 22:15.

²⁰⁶Robertson, Studies, p. 183.

²⁰⁷Holy Bible, James 1:9; 2:9; 3:1-12; 4:11, 13; 5:9.

²⁰⁸Holy Bible, Matthew 5:34-37.

²⁰⁹Mayor, op. cit., p. 132.

²¹⁰Holy Bible, James 5:12.

²¹¹Barclay, op. cit., p. 150.

In 5:13-18, James issued his call for total consecration. This call was directed to the church and is threefold in nature. It is included in this division of this study because it is necessary for individuals who are true to themselves to be involved with the activities James sets forth in this passage.

James called for a singing church. The early church was a singing church. Paul himself attested to the veracity of this when he described the meetings of the Corinthian Church.²¹² Singing was an integral part of those services. At another time Paul was reminded of a song when he thought of God's grace which was being extended to the Gentiles. He said, "I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy name."²¹³ In his Ephesian letter, Paul made note of the characteristic make-up of the Christians. They spoke to each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord.²¹⁴ These people responded in such a way because of their gratitude. Paul pointed this out in his letter to the Colossians. The word of Christ dwelled in these Christians; and they admonished each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord.²¹⁵ The joy which came from the Christians was a result of freedom from anxiety and fear, which freedom came with the accept-

²¹²Holy Bible, I Corinthians 14:15, 26.

²¹³Holy Bible, Romans 15:9.

²¹⁴Holy Bible, Ephesians 5:19.

²¹⁵Holy Bible, Colossians 3:16.

ance of Christ as Saviour and Lord.

The direct opposite of the Christian was the pagan. From the lowest slave to the highest Ceasar the pagan world was marked by sadness, fear, and fright. Matthew Arnold described that world in a poem:

"On that hard Pagan world disgust
 And secret loathing fell;
 Deep weariness and sated lust
 Made human life a hell.
 In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
 The Roman noble lay;
 He drove abroad in furious guise
 Along the Appian Way;
 He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
 And crowned his hair with flowers -
 No easier nor no quicker past
 The impracticable hours."²¹⁶

In contrast to the dark pagan world filled with doom, misery, hopelessness, and an attitude of "get now, do now, hurry, for tomorrow may be too late," James presented the Christian filled with singing joy.²¹⁷

James pointed out a second characteristic that should be evident in total consecration. He called for a healing church.²¹⁸ Barclay cites this as an evidence of the connection of James with Judaism. Barclay states, "When a Jew was ill, it was to the Rabbi he went rather than to the doctor. The Rabbi anointed him with oil. . . and prayed over him."²¹⁹ The early church was devoted to its sick. The early church fathers left many writings

²¹⁶Farrar, op. cit., p. 4.

²¹⁷Holy Bible, James 5:13.

²¹⁸Holy Bible, James 5:14.

²¹⁹Barclay, op. cit., p. 152.

confirming this attitude.²²⁰ Justin Martyr mentioned demoniacs who were healed by Christians when everyone and everything else had failed.²²¹ Irenaeus, writing in the second century, mentioned that sick people were being healed by having hands laid on them.²²² Tertullian gave an example of the healing power of a Christian and the resultant fortune that came the healer's way. In the middle of the third century the Roman Emperor, Alexander Severus, was desperately ill. A Christian named Torpacion laid his hands on the ruler and made him well. In gratitude the Roman Emperor "kept Torpacion as a guest in his palace until the day of his death."²²³

The responsibility of the individual is explicit here. James said that the sick are responsible to make known to the church their condition.²²⁴ The elders are to be called in to minister to this person's needs. It then becomes the deacons' duty, as the eyes of the pastor, minister, or bishop, to let the congregation know who is sick in order that the people might visit them and give whatever other assistance is needed.²²⁵

The major purposes for the visit would be to encourage the sick person by the fact that people know about his illness and care what happens to him. Not only was this a fact, but James said, "Pray over him, anointing

²²⁰Ross, op. cit., p. 101.

²²¹Barclay, op. cit., p. 152.

²²²Loc. cit., p. 152.

²²³Ibid., p. 153.

²²⁴Holy Bible, James 5:14.

²²⁵Mayor, op. cit., p. 170.

him with oil in the name of the Lord."²²⁶ Prayer and medication were purposes of visitation.

The use of oil as a medicine was widespread in the ancient world, but it was never regarded as a "cure-all."²²⁷ Something more than a medicinal effect is anticipated by James. Eerdman wrote,

It may be. . . that sending for 'elder' instead of a '. . . physician', and the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord, point to the regulated exercise of the miraculous 'gift of healing', which undoubtedly was granted to the early church. . . .²²⁸

He continued by stating that the emphasis is on "the prayer of faith" and noted that the "oil" may be a mere symbol of the Holy Spirit, who will effect the cure. The sufferer's faith would play a great part in the remedy attained because he would be strengthened by the use of a medicine he knew had worked on others in times past. As his sins seem to be connected with the origin of his illness, he would be reminded of the healing and cleansing ability of the Spirit of God.²²⁹

This passage in no way refers to "extreme unction," which is used by some to prepare a soul for death. Extreme unction was a development of the later Greek and Roman Catholic Churches. Protestant churches generally hold that the doctrine of extreme unction cannot be substantiated by the use of

²²⁶Holy Bible, James 5:15.

²²⁷Buttrick, et. al., op. cit., p. 70.

²²⁸Eerdman, op. cit., p. 48.

²²⁹Mayor, op. cit., p. 232.

this part of James' epistle. There is no magic formula or ritual devised by God or man to stave off death or to prepare a soul for one's journey into death.²³⁰ The anointing to be done by the leaders of the church "in the name of the Lord" was designed to show forth God's ability and His tender affection toward afflicted people and to restore their bodies to health.²³¹

In the very next verse James credits prayer and God's power with the healing of the ill. ". . . The prayer of faith shall save the sick. . . ." ²³² No inference is made that medicine and doctors are not to be used. They are to be used; however, it must be clear that "God works through medicine and without medicine."²³³

Man is obligated to himself to provide the best possible aid for himself in times such as the ones described by James in this passage of scripture. The best "medicine" in case of sickness is Christians who have power to reach God with their prayers. In addition, common sense calls for the ministrations of good doctors and nurses who know medicine. God works through Christians and medicine to the end that what is best in His plan shall be accomplished.²³⁴

James mentioned one other thing in this passage that deals with a man's quest for the best in religion. "Confess your faults one to another,

²³⁰Robertson, Studies, p. 190.

²³¹Eerdman, op. cit., p. 48.

²³²Holy Bible, James 5:15.

²³³Robertson, Studies, p. 191.

²³⁴Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 49.

and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."²³⁵ James went back to his Jewish beginnings in this passage of scripture. He revealed three basic concepts of the Jewish religion. The first was the idea that sickness is due to sin; the second was the idea that confession to God and the wronged man must be made for a cure to be effective; and the third impression was the limitless power of prayer.²³⁶

There was a deeply-rooted feeling on the part of the Jews that suffering and sickness were the results of sin. The rabbis said, "There is no death without guilt, and no suffering without sins."²³⁷ Rabbi Alexandria said, "No man gets up from his sickness until God has forgiven him his sins."²³⁸

Such feelings naturally evolved into a system of confession of sins. No man who desires to be fair to himself wants to die in his sins or with guilt on his conscience.²³⁹ All long for forgiveness. In the words of James one finds that for confession to be effective it must be made to God and to the individual who has been wronged. Man usually finds it easier to confess sins to God than to men he has wronged. Two barriers have been built by sin, the barrier between man and man and the one between God and man.²⁴⁰ A third

²³⁵Holy Bible, James 5:16.

²³⁶Mayor, op. cit., pp. 232-236.

²³⁷Barclay, op. cit., p. 154.

²³⁸Loc. cit.

²³⁹Barnes, op. cit., p. 95.

²⁴⁰Barclay, op. cit., p. 154.

and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."²³⁵ James went back to his Jewish beginnings in this passage of scripture. He revealed three basic concepts of the Jewish religion. The first was the idea that sickness is due to sin; the second was the idea that confession to God and the wronged man must be made for a cure to be effective; and the third impression was the limitless power of prayer.²³⁶

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²³⁶Mayor, op. cit., pp. 232-236.

²³⁷Barclay, op. cit., p. 154.

²³⁸Loc. cit.

²³⁹Barnes, op. cit., p. 95.

²⁴⁰Barclay, op. cit., p. 154.

barrier exists, and that one is between man and himself. It is impossible to admit guilt to God or fellowman without first admitting ones guilt to himself. If the barriers existing because of sin are to be broken down, then confessions to self, God, and others (within reason) are to be made.

CHAPTER IV

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FELLOWMAN

The discussion of the quest for religion in the previous chapter emphasized the fact that the Word of God was used as an instrument to assist in imparting "new life"¹ to the believer. This would mean that the origin of the new birth will be found in Heaven.² However, man's destiny worked out in Heaven calls for positive action on the part of the believer. In this case, James called for believers to possess a positive attitude toward others.³ Incorporated in this attitude were three basic actions which one must evidence toward his fellowman.

First, James said that one should be quick to hear good about others. Good listeners were the greatest deterrent to uncontrolled speech. If there were no listeners to excited and impassioned speakers, the effects of such speakers would be negated.⁴ Good auditors are as God-controlled as good speakers.⁵

The second admonition James gave to the Christian was to be slow to speak evil of others.⁶ The ancients took up this theme and compounded it

¹Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 19.

²Tasker, op. cit., p. 50.

³Holy Bible, James 1:19-20.

⁴Ross, op. cit., p. 38.

⁵Butterick, et. al., Interpreter's Bible, p. 30.

⁶Holy Bible, James 1:19.

when they spoke proverbs about hearing and speaking. Some examples of this are as follows:

Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak!

The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and keep it within proper bounds.⁷

This was the first thing James had to say about the evils of the tongue. These sayings were mild when compared with the strong words he used later in his book.

Quickly James moved to the third injunction to believers in quest of a sure knowledge of God. "Be slow to wrath,"⁸ he pleaded. "Govern and restrain your temper," says Barnes.⁹ The constantly wrathful man loses his influence with his hearers; however, James did not mean that white hot anger against tyranny and sin would work the same effect. On the contrary, this feeling would be found among those who would join the fray against evil.¹⁰

Manton went beyond others when he warned of the girth and growth of wrath. He stated, "Anger groweth not by degrees, like other passions, but at her birth she is in her full growth. . . ." ¹¹ Full-grown wrath comes hard on the heels of poor listening and poor speaking habits. If one listens to evil

⁷Barnes, op. cit., p. 29.

⁸Holy Bible, James 1:20.

⁹Barnes, loc. cit.

¹⁰Barclay, op. cit., p. 65.

¹¹Manton, op. cit., p. 137.

about others long enough, soon he will speak the things he has heard. The result will be bitter accusations against a fellow man, the renunciation of any belief in his worth, and finally the attempted annihilation of that person's character. Only faith in God can remove wrath and replace it with a state of love.¹²

James, again moving rapidly and seemingly without systematic order, plunged into his next lesson for man in dealing with others. He gave injunctions for the proper attitude toward those in need.¹³ The road he had travelled previously led him, but he definitely was not negative here. He seemed to say, 'Here is the positive test of true religion. You have paddled on the surface with 'thou shalt not,' now bury yourself in the positive depths of 'thou shalt,' visit the fatherless child and the widow.'¹⁴ The ones here specified were not the only objects of a right attitude; they were used as examples of a multitude needing love, understanding, guidance, and a sure knowledge that they were not forgotten and were not held in disdain. Numbered with these, as objects of charity, were the poor, the sick, the captive, and the stranger.¹⁵ James made special mention of the fatherless and husbandless because he felt they were the ones most in need of sympathy and aid.¹⁶

¹²Ibid., p. 174

¹³Holy Bible, James 1:27.

¹⁴Calvin, op. cit., p. 300.

¹⁵Manton, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁶Eerdman, op. cit., p. 21.

Micah and Zechariah, two prophets of old had supplied James with background material for this gracious attitude he exhibited as he urged his fellow Christians toward a proper attitude for those in need. Zechariah had complained that the people pulled themselves away from these poor, husbandless women and fatherless children. He had said the people made their hearts as hard as stone when it was demanded that true justice be executed by them. James said that compassion should be distinguishing qualities (along with abstinence from evil thoughts against another).¹⁷

James made clear the test of religion as he said, "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. . . ." ¹⁸ Evidently James knew Micah's meaning when Micah claimed that ritual sacrifices were useless if a man did not do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God.¹⁹

As Micah and Zechariah hit ethical high-water marks for their people in their age, James did no less for all ages as he invited one to test his religion on the guage of his attitude toward others.²⁰

James continued from the attitude one should hold toward those in need to a warning against being a "respector of persons."²¹ This is one of

¹⁷Holy Bible, Zechariah 7:6-10.

¹⁸Holy Bible, James 1:27.

¹⁹Holy Bible, Micah 6:6-8.

²⁰Tasker, op. cit., p. 54.

²¹Holy Bible, James 2:1-13.

the three longer sections of the epistle; the others are James 2:14-26 and James 3:1-12. The section is held together by the fact that there is a constant theme running throughout the passage. This general theme has to do with keeping the royal law,²² which is that one should love his neighbor as himself. The form used is a loosely connected list or series of reproofs "set down apparently as they occurred to the author's mind."²³ The thesis was developed in the outset of the passage. "My brothers"²⁴ at this place marked the fourth time James had used this term of endearment. James reminded his readers that in Christ Jesus men do become brothers.²⁵ Other groups such as unions, racial societies, social clubs, and fraternal organizations have been built on this idea of brotherhood,²⁶ but theirs is a brotherhood for temporal progress, while the union of men and women in Christ is for eternal gain.

James spoke to the "brotherhood" about their conduct toward one another. As people of "faith," they were to look on the inward man and not on the external appearance of man.²⁷ They were not to show respect to certain persons, for to do so would be to exhibit undue and unfair partiality.²⁸ This partiality

²²Holy Bible, James 2:8.

²³Buttrick, et al., Interpreters Bible, p. 34.

²⁴Holy Bible, James 2:ff.

²⁵Guy H. King, A Belief That Behaves, p. 39.

²⁶Strauss, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁷A. H. Cullen, The Teaching of James (London: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1903), pp. 106-107.

²⁸Robertson, Studies, p. 75.

means truckling, pandering, or paying undue or exorbitant attention simply because that person is powerful or rich.²⁹ James taught that the possession of rank, power, prestige, and riches was not necessarily a reason to seek a man out. To overlook disdainfully the poor man in order to get to the rich was expressly forbidden by the Lord's half-brother.³⁰

James feared snobbery would invade the church. As a result, he painted a picture of two men's entering the house of worship. One man was richly dressed, and from his fingers golden rings glistened. The other man was shabbily dressed. His hands showed no gold, but revealed blisters, cuts, and other evidence that these were the hands of a poor man of toil. "Be careful!" cried James. This was the moment of crisis. These men were strangers, and it behooved the congregation to act properly toward them both.³¹

Alas! the rich man, ushered to the front, had a special seat of honor, with all due ceremony and respect; while the poor man had to stand or to squat on the floor, beside the footstool of the well-to-do. That James did not exaggerate the case is clear from early and late sources. A passage from the Ethiopic Statutes of the Apostles says,

If any other man or woman enters in fine clothes, either a man of district or from other districts, being brethren, thou, presbyter, while thou speakest the word which is concerning God, or while thou hearest or readest, thou shalt not respect persons, nor leave thy ministering to command places for them, but remain quiet, for the brethren shall receive them, and if they have no place for them, the lover of brothers and sisters

²⁹W.H. Bennett, The Century Bible, The General Epistles, p. 156.

³⁰Holy Bible, James 2:2-4.

³¹Barnes, op. cit., p. 36.

will rise, and leave a place for them. . . . And if a poor man or woman of the district or of other districts should come in and there is no place for them, thou, presbyter, make place for such with all thy heart, even if thou wilt sit on the ground, that here should not be the respector of persons of man but of God.³²

Social problems have long been with the church, and many there are who could and can give accounts of them. Early in the first century A.D., when the church was young and James wrote this epistle, worshippers were mostly slaves, servants, or the very poor. Occasionally one of position, power, or wealth would enter the service. This should have been the one place where class distinctions were not made. Perhaps the influential ones did not expect or even want distinctions made; nevertheless, they were and are made.³³

To get a true picture of what James had in mind, one must recall early church history. The church was the one leveller. It was the one place where class distinctions should not exist.³⁴ Sometimes a situation arose when a slave was seated next to a master or was served the Lord's Supper by a master. This would have been undreamed of before the intervention of God through Jesus Christ. How one person treated another thus became vitally important. The master had the power of life or death over the slave; the gap in their social system must have been so great as to seem insurmountable. Outside the love each possessed toward Jesus, it would not be possible for the two to meet on

³²Barclay, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

³³Russell Bradley Jones, The Epistles of James, John, and Jude (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), pp. 30-31.

³⁴Charles M. Jacobs, The Story of the Church (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publishing House, 1925), pp. 9-22.

any common ground.³⁵

Most of the members of the early church were poor people. When a rich person was converted and joined the congregation, it became a great temptation to fuss and fawn over him.³⁶ The church from the very first practiced this custom of undue esteem, a custom whose dye has colored the "rivers of water flowing from the throne of God"³⁷ ever since.

Two things were wrong with this type of behavior. First, it showed a divided allegiance. This was the very thing Jesus had warned against when He mentioned that men could not serve both God and mammon.³⁸ James condemned this "double-mindedness" earlier in his epistle.³⁹ Second, it marked the one making the distinction a judge "with vitiated motives."⁴⁰

James digressed at this point⁴¹ to introduce a new theme. Having said that no special privileges should be extended to the rich, he claimed these privileges for the poor.⁴² The poor were the chosen ones of God, the ones who welcomed the message from God.⁴³ Though the world judged one way,

³⁵Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

³⁶Barclay, op. cit., p. 76.

³⁷Holy Bible, Revelations 22:1.

³⁸Holy Bible, Matthew 6:24.

³⁹Holy Bible, James 1:7-10.

⁴⁰Tasker, op. cit., p. 58.

⁴¹Holy Bible, James 2:5-7.

⁴²Buttrick, et al., Interpreters Bible, p. 36.

⁴³Strauss, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

God judged in just the opposite manner.⁴⁴ God chose the poor "to be rich in faith."⁴⁵ As the Gospel of Luke rendered it, the poor are rich in the gifts of the Spirit.⁴⁶ This is not to say that God had limited His choice to the poor, but historically they have been favored by Him.⁴⁷ Abraham Lincoln once said, "God must love the common people because He made so many of them."⁴⁸

From the time that Jesus claimed, "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,"⁴⁹ Christianity has had a special appeal to the poor. From the beginning it was to the crowds that the street preachers spoke. Those who mattered so little to the world mattered intensely to God. Paul the apostle said, "You see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."⁵⁰

One might begin to feel, from the theme that runs throughout the scriptures, that if a man is rich he has no hope to possess God's love and grace. This is not true. God has made His call to the rich, but as was the case of the rich young ruler, the rich find great difficulty in putting aside their earthly riches to follow Christ.⁵¹ Barclay says,

⁴⁴Holy Bible, James 2:5.

⁴⁵Loc. cit.

⁴⁶Holy Bible, Luke 12:21.

⁴⁷Holy Bible, Luke 1:52; I Corinthians 1:26.

⁴⁸Barclay, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴⁹Holy Bible, Luke 4:18.

⁵⁰Holy Bible, I Corinthians 1:26.

⁵¹Holy Bible, Luke 18:18-30.

It is not that Christ and the church do not want the great, and rich, and the wise, and the mighty; we must beware of an inverted snobbery, as we have already seen. But it was the simple fact that the gospel offered so much to the poor who were swept into the Church.⁵²

Assuredly James did not exclude the rich from the Master's grace. What he expressed and emphasized was that Christ and His church loved and made a place for all men. The poor responded because here they found their individual worth. Here they found in themselves abilities they did not know they had. Here they found love - love for God and fellowman. These were great treasures to men and women who had never before been made to feel worthy, capable, or loved.⁵³

The society in which James lived was one in which the rich exploited the poor. Examples of their meanness are varied and many. James asked,

Do not the rich oppress you, and is it not they who drag you to the law courts? And is it not they who abuse the fair name by which you have been called?⁵⁴

James made a strong case against showing partiality. He buttressed his case by setting forth the royal law: "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. . . ."⁵⁵ For Christians there is one changeless law: the law of love.⁵⁶ The critics of Christianity may scoff at this law by pointing out that James just made some telling arguments against the rich. Yet what critics claim as a weakness

⁵²Barclay, op. cit., p. 78.

⁵³Barnes, op. cit., p. 37.

⁵⁴Holy Bible, James 2:6-7.

⁵⁵Holy Bible, James 2:8.

⁵⁶Eerdman, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

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Assuredly James did not exclude the rich from the Master's grace. What he expressed and emphasized was that Christ and His church loved and made a place for all men. The poor responded because here they found their individual worth. Here they found in themselves abilities they did not know they had. Here they found love - love for God and fellowman. These were great treasures to men and women who had never before been made to feel worthy, capable, or loved.⁵³

The society in which James lived was one in which the rich exploited the poor. Examples of their meanness are varied and many. James asked,

Do not the rich oppress you, and is it not they who drag you to the law courts? And is it not they who abuse the fair name by which you have been called?⁵⁴

James made a strong case against showing partiality. He buttressed his case by setting forth the royal law: "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. . . ."⁵⁵ For Christians there is one changeless law: the law of love.⁵⁶ The critics of Christianity may scoff at this law by pointing out that James just made some telling arguments against the rich. Yet what critics claim as a weakness

⁵²Barclay, op. cit., p. 78.

⁵³Barnes, op. cit., p. 37.

⁵⁴Holy Bible, James 2:6-7.

⁵⁵Holy Bible, James 2:8.

⁵⁶Eerdman, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

in the Christian system is actually a strength. It is precisely the point of this chapter. This law answers the question raised in the test of religion: How shall the Christian regard his fellowman? James said that all should be treated alike.⁵⁷

This is "the royal law" partly because it is the law of the King (Jesus Christ) and partly because of its comprehensiveness.⁵⁸ It is the "royal law" because it is superior to all other laws.⁵⁹ This law governs all other laws dealing with human relationships.⁶⁰ If this law is truly kept, then it is all right to show regard for the rich, but certainly not at the expense of the poor.⁶¹ Calvin has indicated, "It is odd to honor one's executioners and in the meantime injure one's friends."⁶²

Differences in feeling, expression, and attitudes toward fellowman can lead one to be a "respector of persons," which James declared to be sinful.⁶³ In the face of conviction at this point, a person is condemned as a law-breaker and is exposed to the just judgment of God. To add emphasis to the guilt, James added, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet

⁵⁷Holy Bible, James 2:8.

⁵⁸Tasker, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵⁹Eerdman, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶⁰Tasker, loc. cit.

⁶¹Ross, op. cit., p. 48.

⁶²Calvin, op. cit., p. 305.

⁶³Holy Bible, James 2:9.

stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all,"⁶⁴ This is not to say that all sins are equally serious, injurious, or great, or that it is as bad to break one commandment as to break all.⁶⁵ However, when one breaks God's law, even in one point, he has shown disobedience to God and thus places himself under judgment because of his indifference to the law and to the will of God. Seemingly the author inferred an equality of care and respect for the whole law, not an equality of sin.⁶⁶

Barclay explains this passage by relating the feeling of the Jews concerning the law. They were prone to think of the law as a disjointed series of injunctions. A law kept was to be credited to one's good account; a law broken was to be credited to one's bad account. On the basis of such an idea, one could enjoy either a credit or even a credit balance. As the rabbis would say, "Whoever fulfills only one law, good is appointed to him; his days are prolonged, and he will inherit the land." Other rabbis believed that "the Sabbath weighs against all precepts," and to keep it was to keep the whole law. In this way a man could break some laws, but in keeping others he could still come forth with a credit balance.⁶⁷ James insisted that the whole law be kept.⁶⁸

⁶⁴Holy Bible, James 2:10.

⁶⁵Eerdman, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶⁶Ross, op. cit., p. 48.

⁶⁷Barclay, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶⁸Holy Bible, James 2:10-12.

James reached a high moment in his teaching regarding man's relationship to fellowman when he said for one to

. . . so speak and so act as those who are going to be judged under the law of liberty. For he who acts without mercy will have judgment without mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.⁶⁹

This is similar to the teachings of the Master, who said, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."⁷⁰ James pointed out two truths in the concluding passage of this section. He revealed the law under which Christians live--the law of liberty. This was not a law which governed a man's behavior by a series of rules and regulations. It went far beyond this point and governed him from within by the compulsion of love. Such a law placed a man on his honor and demanded from him devotion and direction toward a good life. Such self-governing and self-direction can be possessed only by those who are not governed by a man-made law but by a God-given love.⁷¹

The second truth taught was that the only Christian who would find mercy was the dispenser of mercy.⁷² James continued to paraphrase the teachings of Jesus, for He earlier had said, "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."⁷³ This beatitude has been described as the most appealing,

⁶⁹Holy Bible, James 2:13.

⁷⁰Holy Bible, Matthew 6:14.

⁷¹Barclay, op. cit., p. 82.

⁷²Holy Bible, Matthew 18:23-25.

⁷³Holy Bible, Matthew 5:7.

the most important, and the most difficult.⁷⁴ The appeal of the precept, given by Jesus and elaborated upon by James, was that the highest achievements of man were counted therein: kindness, unselfish service, and good will. Its importance was recognized by the Scriptural writers and teachers, for all agreed that he who desired mercy for himself must first of all dispense mercy to others.⁷⁵ James declared that ultimately mercy will triumph over judgment. He meant that in the day of judgment the merciful man will find a multitude of his sins forgiven because of his acceptance of Christ's mercy.⁷⁶

Perhaps the most famous section of James' entire epistle, 2:14-26, dealt with man's relationship with his fellows - the test of religion. The author's philosophy produced this statement. He was a common-sense moralist whose greatest concern was with everyday conduct.⁷⁷ This is not to say that he was not concerned about the relationships existing between God and man, but it is to say that he was deeply concerned with assisting people to perform properly the tasks of daily life.⁷⁸

It was apparently not the intention of James to debate the question of whether a man was or is saved by faith or works; rather, he sought to

⁷⁴ Charles L. Allen, God's Psychiatry (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1953), p. 144.

⁷⁵ Strauss, op. cit., p. 100.

⁷⁶ Barclay, op. cit., p. 83.

⁷⁷ Buttrick, et al., Interpreter's Bible, p. 40.

⁷⁸ Loc. cit.

prove to mankind that, for the Christian, faith and works were and are inseparable.⁷⁹ On the surface there seemed to be a variance with Paul the Apostle on this vital question.⁸⁰ Paul plainly stated that man is saved or "justified" by faith without works of law.⁸¹ He was emphatic on the fact that faith, and faith alone, justified and saved.⁸² James just as clearly stated that a man was justified by works and not by faith alone.⁸³ More than a superficial reading is required to determine that there is no marked difference in the teachings of these two Christians.⁸⁴ One talked about the means of salvation (i.e., faith), while the other was talking about the proof of salvation (i.e., works).

Barnes noted that James returned to the subject he had treated in 1:22-27. Therein he described the importance of attention to the duties of religion and the assurance that men could not be saved by merely acquiescing to speculative intellectual opinion, or by holding to "proper" sentiment.⁸⁵

The date of this epistle and the later writings of Paul bring a great deal of light to the controversy. This epistle was written before

⁷⁹Eerdman, op. cit., p. 26.

⁸⁰Conner, The Faith of the New Testament, p. 203.

⁸¹Holy Bible, Romans 3:28.

⁸²Holy Bible, Romans 4.

⁸³Holy Bible, James 2:24.

⁸⁴Conner, loc. cit.

⁸⁵Barnes, op. cit., p. 42.

A. D. 50,⁸⁶ Paul wrote his letters at a later date, during the heat of a debate between Christians and Judaizers over circumcision as an element essential to salvation.⁸⁷ No issue stirred Paul more than this. There is a distinct possibility that there were those who based their claims for circumcision on this very passage in James.⁸⁸ The Judaizers felt that Christianity alone was not sufficient for salvation but needed to be supported by Judaism.⁸⁹

James may have had in mind some who were taking refuge behind the doctrine of faith as the sole requirement or condition for salvation. He hoped to be able to show them that their standing before God would, in great measure, be dependent on their standing with men.⁹⁰ James brought what he meant right down to the level of man as he stated,

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?⁹¹

James said to act! One should not feel righteous simply because of a profession of faith. Such a professed faith, totally lacking in results, is

⁸⁶See Chapter Two, Date of the Epistle.

⁸⁷Robertson, Studies, p. 91.

⁸⁸Holy Bible, James 2:14-26.

⁸⁹Mayor, op. cit., p. 218.

⁹⁰Conner, op. cit., p. 204.

⁹¹Holy Bible, James 2:15-16.

useless.⁹² That the hearers and readers of James did not hold others in high enough esteem to feed and clothe them proved their heartlessness and became their damnation. Profession was nothing if there were no corresponding action to alleviate suffering, hunger, pain, and death. As Conner said, "A religion that is all creed and no deed is no good."⁹³ If one only said, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled. . ."⁹⁴ he spoke dead words. Such words would send the searcher away more destitute and depressed than when the searcher came seeking aid. James concluded that faith

. . . which has not in itself, . . . the power and the desire to meet the infinite pathos of human life with something of the infinite pity which God has shown to man in Jesus Christ, is no faith at all.⁹⁵

As James continued his theme, he illustrated his meaning by using imaginary people and conversations. The objectors claimed that some people laid claim to the gift of faith, while others laid claim to salvation because of their ability to work. In effect, James said, "Fine, show me your faith apart from your works, and I will prove my faith by my works."⁹⁶ James was not questioning that faith was the instrument of salvation, but he clearly indicated that a faith which was real would act.⁹⁷

⁹²Tasker, op. cit., p. 64.

⁹³Conner, op. cit., p. 204.

⁹⁴Holy Bible, James 2:16.

⁹⁵Tasker, op. cit., p. 64.

⁹⁶Holy Bible, James 2:18.

⁹⁷Eerdman, op. cit., p. 26.

James extended his point to show the vanity of a faith that relied on nothing more than intellectual assent. For example, James used an orthodox Jew as his working-piece because such a person believed that God was one, although this truth apparently produced little change in the orthodox Jewish character.⁹⁸ Calvin agreed with James that it was a good thing to have knowledge of God, but it could "no more connect a man with God than the sight of the sun can carry him to heaven."⁹⁹ With this established, James declared that such righteousness was matched by demons, and their knowledge superceeded even that of the orthodox Jew, who plumed himself daily with recitations and long prayers. The demons, though, which were conscious of their deserved doom and of their rebellion against God, in their superior knowledge shuddered and dreaded the hopeless dark future of their destiny.¹⁰⁰ They hated God and in terror awaited "the coming of that day when He will cast them into the lake of fire."¹⁰¹

The implication James left in this passage was that though people of true faith felt a sense of awe in the presence of God, they did not shudder in fear of God. With boldness they approached His throne of Grace.¹⁰² God looked forward to these people's coming. God's expectations of their accomplishments would not be rewarded with the presence of quaking cowards,

⁹⁸ Holy Bible, James 2:19.

⁹⁹ Calvin, op. cit., p. 309.

¹⁰⁰ Winkler, American Commentary, p. 41.

¹⁰¹ Holy Bible, Matthew 8:29.

¹⁰² Holy Bible, Hebrews 4:16.

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⁹⁸Holy Bible, James 2:19.

⁹⁹Calvin, op. cit., p. 309.

¹⁰⁰Winkler, American Commentary, p. 41.

¹⁰¹Holy Bible, Matthew 8:29.

¹⁰²Holy Bible, Hebrews 4:16.

but with the presence of those who love in themselves deeds done in the flesh for fellowmen.¹⁰³

A fresh idea was introduced in the argument James had been putting forward. This idea was expressed in the words, "Wilt thou know?"¹⁰⁴ Here James reached the heart of his teaching that "faith without works is dead,"¹⁰⁵ because he asserted that real faith employed action.¹⁰⁶ In establishing the fact that the faith of a true believer would show itself in good works, James used Abraham as an example.¹⁰⁷ Abraham was a man who had exhibited his faith on many occasions, even when God promised seeming impossibilities.¹⁰⁸ Yet, when James used Abraham as an example the author's case was made on the basis that Abraham's faith was proved by Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Issac, Abraham's son, at the apparent demand of God.¹⁰⁹

To add more credence to this position, James called the recipients of this epistle to remember the famous harlot, Rahab.¹¹⁰ One wonders at the selection of such a person as Rahab, unless one feels that James desired to

¹⁰³Tasker, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁰⁴Holy Bible, James 2:20.

¹⁰⁵Holy Bible, James 2:17.

¹⁰⁶Eerdman, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁰⁷H. Maynard Smith, The Epistle of St. James, p. 148.

¹⁰⁸Tasker, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁹Winkler, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

¹¹⁰Holy Bible, James 2:25.

show the distance that existed between Abraham and Rahab as objects of God's grace and to show how far God goes to pay tribute to all faith.¹¹¹ If a person like Rahab could be saved, then there was hope for all mankind.¹¹² Rahab's "faith" was avowing the cause of God and Israel, and her "work" was protecting the Jewish spies.¹¹³

James came finally to lay to rest any arguments about the relationship between faith and works when he said, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."¹¹⁴ James had been pleading for a marriage, not a divorce.¹¹⁵ James did not call for a divorce between creed and conduct, but James did call for an indissoluble marriage between faith and works.¹¹⁶

Generally speaking, scholars have not felt that there was a conflict between James and Paul at this point. There may have been a difference of a starting place rather than a practical or theological difference. For example, Barclay has said that the main difference in the views held by James and Paul

. . . is this - they begin at different times in the Christian life. Paul begins at the beginning. He insists that no man can ever win or

¹¹¹Robertson, Studies, p. 101.

¹¹²Loc. cit.

¹¹³Moffatt, op. cit., p. 45.

¹¹⁴Holy Bible, James 2:26.

¹¹⁵Robertson, op. cit., p. 102.

¹¹⁶Loc. cit.

earn the forgiveness of God; no man can ever put himself into a right relationship with God. That initial step must come from the free grace of God; a man can only accept the forgiveness which God offers him in Jesus Christ; . . .

James begins much later; James begins with the professing Christian; the man who already claims to have been forgiven, the man who already claims to be in this right relationship with God. Such a man . . . must live a new life for he is a new creature. He has been justified; he must now go on to show that he is sanctified, and with that Paul would have entirely agreed.¹¹⁷

Robertson said almost the same thing when he insisted that James and Paul were not answering one another (as if there were a debate going on between them). They were talking about different aspects of the subject and only came close enough to touch at points and then go in another direction. He continued by saying, "In all probability each would agree to the statements of the other if the language of each were put in the proper perspective."¹¹⁸

Mayor explained their differences as verbal contradictions. He spoke of their substantial agreement with each other when he said, "Both agree that in many things we offend all; that man is saved not by his own merits, but by the goodness and mercy of God."¹¹⁹ Mayor went on to explain that Paul argued against a dependence on the minute compliance and scrupulous performance of the Jewish law, and against the narrow nationalism of the Jewish people that would deny others salvation unless they too complied to Jewish laws and traditions. James, said Mayor, argued against depending entirely upon Jewish orthodoxy, irrespective of moral conduct. Consequently, whatever

¹¹⁷Barclay, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

¹¹⁸Robertson, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

¹¹⁹Mayor, op. cit., p. 218.

differences existed between these two Christian leaders would fall into the realm of character and development.

To the one, whose spiritual experience had been broken by the violent shock, and whose special office it was to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, the Gospel is the antithesis of the Law; to the other, who had been brought up with Jesus, who had known His disciples from the first, and whose special office it was to make the final offer of salvation to his own countrymen, the Gospel was the consummation of the Law. Again, the one with his deeply speculative nature loves to fix his gaze on the Divine factor in man's salvation, the other with his strong practical bent directs his attention mainly to the human factor; though each fully allows and even asserts the doctrines complementary to that which may be called . . . his own.¹²⁰

James desired to lead his readers into a right relationship with their fellowmen.¹²¹ Previously he addressed them concerning their relationship with themselves; he proceeded to pursue the same subject, but as it related to others.¹²² The churches or recipients James addressed were torn by contentious, self-appointed teachers who boasted about their knowledge, who found pleasure in disputing with learners and fellow-teachers, and who grew so bitter in their discussions that they became more interested in defeating their enemies than in establishing truth.¹²³ James indicated that the problem these teachers had was due to their evil hearts.¹²⁴ Not only were their hearts evil, but James said that their vaunted wisdom was false

¹²⁰ Mayor, op. cit., pp. 218-219.

¹²¹ Holy Bible, James 3:1-12.

¹²² Holy Bible, James 3:13-18.

¹²³ Charles Brown, The General Epistle of James (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1907), p. 77.

¹²⁴ Holy Bible, James 3:14.

and unreal.¹²⁵

James asked, "Who is wise and understanding among you?"¹²⁶ By this he did not mean to imply that none among them was such, but instead he intended to goad out the boasters from among them and thereby expose those who practiced the evils he condemned.¹²⁷ "Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of religion."¹²⁸ The theme James set in these verses was that "the man who is genuinely wise remembers his moral responsibilities toward others."¹²⁹ The real sage or teacher was one who lived out a life of gentleness and graciousness before those around him. In such a way he not only proved his ability for the office of teacher, but he also inspired others to follow his example.¹³⁰

"But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth."¹³¹ In this passage James spoke of zeal and warned specifically against envy, jealousy, and selfish ambition. The last warning held special interest because of the deterioration of the word's original meaning. At first the word meant "spinning for hire" and was used

¹²⁵Eerdman, op. cit., p. 32.

¹²⁶Holy Bible, James 3:13a.

¹²⁷Dana, op. cit., p. 119.

¹²⁸Holy Bible, James 3:13b.

¹²⁹Buttrick, et al., Interpreters Bible, p. 50.

¹³⁰Mayor, op. cit., p. 222.

¹³¹Holy Bible, James 3:15.

to describe serving women. From this beginning, it gradually came to mean any kind of work that was done solely for what could be gained from it. At last it reached the bottom; it entered politics. Selfish ambition was as high as such a person could go. Such a one was for self at the expense of others and would plot, use intrigue, and any other means to get his desire.¹³²

James warned that the teacher was under a dual temptation. The first of these was the temptation to arrogance, and the second was to bitterness.¹³³

Arrogance was one of the besetting sins of the rabbis. Barclay quoted from The Sayings of the Father, "He that is arrogant in decision is foolish, wicked, puffed up in spirit."¹³⁴ He continued, "It rests with thy colleagues to choose whether they will adopt thy opinion; it is not for thee to force it upon them."¹³⁵ The great danger for the teacher was that he would fail to give proper attention to the attitudes and opinions of others and would miss the lesson of humility. James joined Jesus in teaching, "Treat others the way you want to be treated."¹³⁶

The temptation to give utterance to bitterness was described by Barclay when he quoted Sir Thomas Browne's comments on the savagery of

¹³² Barclay, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

¹³³ Bennett, Century Bible, p. 169.

¹³⁴ Barclay, op. cit., p. 107.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Holy Bible, James 3:3-15.

scholars:

Scholars are men of peace; they bear no arms, but their tongues are sharper than Actin's razor; their pens carry farther and give louder report than thunder; I had rather stand the shock of a basilisco than the fury of merciless pen,¹³⁷

James said this kind of wisdom was not from God, but was filled with earthly passion. There was no touch of the heavenly in this kind of wisdom. It was unspiritual and of the devil.¹³⁸

In sharp contrast James came to speak of "the wisdom that is from above."¹³⁹ The wisdom from above possesses several characteristic properties. Such a wisdom was pure; it was unsullied because it was inspired by God, and it was free from improper motives and methods.¹⁴⁰ Purity included cleanliness in heart and life as Matthew quoted Christ as saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart."¹⁴¹ Barclay summed it best when he said, "The true wisdom is the wisdom which is so cleansed of all ulterior motives, so cleansed of self, that it has become pure enough to see God."¹⁴²

The next property of true wisdom was "peaceableness."¹⁴³ When this word "is used of men its basic meaning is right relationships between man

¹³⁷Barclay, loc. cit.

¹³⁸Holy Bible, James 3:15.

¹³⁹Holy Bible, James 3:17.

¹⁴⁰Moffatt, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁴¹Holy Bible, Matthew 5:8.

¹⁴²Barclay, op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁴³Holy Bible, James 3:17.

and man, and between man and God."¹⁴⁴ This true wisdom brings men closer to each other and closer to God.

Many different words have been used to explain the intent of James as he wrote of true wisdom. For example, Eerdman used the term "gentle."¹⁴⁵ Barclay used the term "considerate."¹⁴⁶ Winkler in the American Commentary referred to true wisdom as being "mild and forbearing."¹⁴⁷ Manton said it meant "just with moderation."¹⁴⁸ All of these terms have been used because the idea James was stating was almost untranslatable.¹⁴⁹ Yet all the words gave evidence of the kind of person James was describing. He described a true Christian gentleman who knew how to forgive wrong, even though justly he could condemn. He was capable of making allowances and tempering judgment with mercy.¹⁵⁰ In short, he was a man of "sweet reasonableness."¹⁵¹

In much the same vein, James described the possessor of Christian wisdom as one who was easily persuaded.¹⁵² The person so described was not to be thought of as being weak and pliable but as being wise enough to listen

¹⁴⁴Barclay, loc. cit.

¹⁴⁵Eerdman, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁴⁶Barclay, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁴⁷Winkler, op. cit., p. 52.

¹⁴⁸Manton, op. cit., p. 318.

¹⁴⁹Barclay, loc. cit.

¹⁵⁰Barclay, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁵¹Eerdman, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁵²Holy Bible, James 3:17.

to reason and appeal. Hence, instead of being one of rigid austerity and a possessor of an unreasonable spirit, one became a willing listener, subject to persuasion, and wise enough to know when to yield.¹⁵³

The terms "full of mercy and good fruits"¹⁵⁴ were terms that could be taken together. This kind of wisdom was described by means of comparison. Instead of envy, which could grow into hate, the wise person was one who showed compassion and love to his fellowmen.¹⁵⁵ In order to render the right service to fellowmen, one should produce kindness as opposed to bitterness; one should show joy rather than wrath. This meant showing an active sympathy towards the suffering and the sorrowing.¹⁵⁶

The wise man would not show partiality in his dealings with associates, friends, and strangers.¹⁵⁷ Dale said,

The man who is governed by worldly wisdom is apt to be shifty - what he himself would call politic. He sets his sails to the prevailing wind; speaks well of men of whom he spoke ill yesterday - not because the men themselves are better than they were, but because yesterday he could get nothing by speaking well of them, and today he can.¹⁵⁸

One never knows what attitude to expect from men like these.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³King, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁵⁴Holy Bible, James 3:17.

¹⁵⁵Eerdman, op. cit., p. 34.

¹⁵⁶Tasker, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁵⁷Holy Bible, James 3:17.

¹⁵⁸Dale, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁵⁹Ross, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

James went on to write that the man who exhibited the right attitude toward his fellows would never be hypocritical.¹⁶⁰ Tasker claimed that this person met the qualifications and characteristics pronounced "blessed" by the Master Teacher¹⁶¹ and that he "perfectly exhibited him who Himself was the divine Wisdom incarnate."¹⁶²

In verse eighteen one of the great purposes and rewards of life was mentioned, namely, "the attainment of righteousness not only in one's self but in one's relationship with others - so helping them to attain righteousness also."¹⁶³

Peace was described as the right relationship between man and man; it was a state in which men enjoy an uninterrupted friendship together. Barclay paraphrased the words of James as he said,

We are all trying to reap the fruit and the reward and the results which a good life brings. But the seeds which bring the rich harvest can never flourish in any other atmosphere than in the atmosphere of right relationships between man and man. Right relationships are the soil in which the reward of righteousness alone can grow. And the only people who can sow these seeds, and who will reap the reward, are those whose life work it has been to produce such right relationships.¹⁶⁴

Nothing good can grow where impure, trouble-making, roguish, hard-headed, merciless, politic-playing, hypocritical men war with each other. Such

¹⁶⁰Holy Bible, James 3:17.

¹⁶¹Holy Bible, Matthew 5:3-11.

¹⁶²Tasker, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁶³Buttrick, et al., Interpreter's Bible, p. 51.

¹⁶⁴Barclay, op. cit., p. 114.

men as these cut themselves off from good lives here and the hope for a reward which God grants "to those who live His life."¹⁶⁵ He continued, "Without right relationships between man and man, righteousness cannot exist, and all man's striving for righteousness is rendered ineffective and without reward."¹⁶⁶

As has been previously stated, James had no systematic style that would enable one to follow a set trail with him. Because of this the final section of this chapter, entitled "Positive Christian Virtues," brings together sundry teachings of the author. With two exceptions these teachings are included in the epistle in one chapter, Chapter Five.

James pointedly talked about a man's relations with his fellows in the business world and about the possibility that one could become so absorbed in his material affairs that he might forget God.¹⁶⁷ The arrogant and barren heart of the merchant was exposed for all the world to see.¹⁶⁸ A heart like that was filled with worldliness,¹⁶⁹ and with flippancy it criticized neighbors and rested upon self-satisfaction.¹⁷⁰ The Jewish merchant was one of the most useful men in New Testament days, and his was an honorable calling until disfavor fell upon him because of questionable

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁶⁷ Buttrick, et al., Interpreter's Bible, p. 60.

¹⁶⁸ Holy Bible, James 4:13.

¹⁶⁹ Holy Bible, James 4:1-10.

¹⁷⁰ Holy Bible, James 4:11ff.

business transactions. An old saying described these people: "A merchant will hardly keep himself from doing wrong; and a huckster will not be declared free from sin."¹⁷¹ The point James was making was that one bears responsibility to God and to man in his business dealings, and selling for a high profit the materials bought at a low price dishonors all concerned: the merchant, the victim, and almighty God.¹⁷² James did not denounce trading as evil, nor did he insist that all merchants were ungodly; in fact, he did not condemn a fair profit taking. He clearly taught that questionable business practices tended to influence the merchant to such an extent that he took his eyes off God and let them rest fondly on ill-gotten gains.¹⁷³ Proper business transactions on the part of Christian businessmen were and are possible. "Hustle and enterprise need not condescend to underhand methods."¹⁷⁴

In keeping with the idea of one's test of his religion, as it pertains to his fellowman, James wrote of the situation that existed between the rich and the poor.¹⁷⁵ In this section James attempted to show the ultimate worthlessness of earthly wealth and to expose the detestable character of those who possessed riches.¹⁷⁶ He attacked the rich landowners in a

¹⁷¹Robertson, Studies, p. 158.

¹⁷²David Smith, The Disciple's Commentary on the New Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton limited, 1932), pp. 442-443.

¹⁷³Barnes, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁷⁴Robertson, Studies, p. 159.

¹⁷⁵Holy Bible, James 5:1-6.

¹⁷⁶Barclay, op. cit., p. 135.

scathing message of indignation,¹⁷⁷ hoping thereby to show his hearers the folly of putting their trust and all their aims on the accumulation of wealth.¹⁷⁸ James called upon the rich to notice their plight and to "weep and shriek,"¹⁷⁹ as demonstrative Orientals were so prone to do,¹⁸⁰ especially when doom was pronounced upon them. This doom was shown them in highly-colored Jewish phrases, carefully chosen for their vividness and picturesqueness.¹⁸¹

James touched the very fibre of rich men's souls in this passage. Not only theirs, but the hearts of all those who would be rich, regardless of methods or consequences. James placed before them the charge of hoarding their riches and keeping everything for themselves, even those things which they could not use but which would be used by others.¹⁸² James apparently had in mind the three sources of riches available to the people of that day: namely, corn and grain, the wealth that rots;¹⁸³ garments, the source of wealth that can be devoured by moths;¹⁸⁴ and finally, gold and silver, the

¹⁷⁷Moffatt, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁷⁸Barnes, op. cit., p. 80.

¹⁷⁹Holy Bible, James 5:1.

¹⁸⁰Bennett, Century Bible, p. 175.

¹⁸¹Buttrick, et al., Interpreter's Bible, p. 62.

¹⁸²Holy Bible, James 5:1-3.

¹⁸³Holy Bible, James 5:2a.

¹⁸⁴Holy Bible, James 5:2b.

wealth that will rust through.¹⁸⁵ All wealth, as men reckoned wealth, would ultimately be destroyed.¹⁸⁶ The warning James gave was that desire for these things could become such an obsession that man could lose his soul in the pursuit of material possessions. Such possessions were temporal, subject to decay, and valueless.¹⁸⁷

James spoke, too, about the fraudulent treatment of laborers.¹⁸⁸ "A specific sin of the wealthy is defrauding workmen of their pay. . . ."¹⁸⁹ This was an especially grave crime in Judaism, for the Mosaic code ordered that the wages of a laborer were to be paid every evening. "You must pay him his wages by the day, nor let the sun go down on it, lest he cries to the Eternal against you and you incur guilt."¹⁹⁰ James recalled the language of Isaiah's denunciation of selfish landowners and recognized that the cries of the victims in that day were heard by the Lord of Sabaoth.¹⁹¹

The last charge James places against these rich men was wanton luxury with its social cruelty.¹⁹² Self-indulgence had led the rich to a

¹⁸⁵Holy Bible, James 5:3.

¹⁸⁶Barclay, op. cit., p. 136.

¹⁸⁷Jones, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

¹⁸⁸Holy Bible, James 5:4.

¹⁸⁹Buttrick, et al., Interpreter's Bible, p. 64.

¹⁹⁰Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 24:15.

¹⁹¹Holy Bible, Isaiah 5:8-9.

¹⁹²Holy Bible, James 5:5-6.

life of soft luxury, which life would simply fatten them for the day when the slaughter would come.¹⁹³ Barclay declared that the soft living of these idle rich would sap their energies and destroy their moral fibre. When their resistance reached a low state, then they played the wanton. Theirs became a life of lewdness, lasciviousness, and riotousness. Their condemnation was that they had gratified their own comfort and lusts, and they had forgotten their duty to their fellowmen.¹⁹⁴ Just as the beasts of the field ate to satisfy their appetites, so the sinful rich sought to fill their lives with earthly pleasure.¹⁹⁵

James impressed on his readers their responsibilities to their fellowmen. He implied that those who were able should clothe the naked and feed the hungry.¹⁹⁶ Toward such as these, the true Christian was to be an example of triumphant patience and faith in God.¹⁹⁷ James illustrated these Christian virtues by calling to mind Job, about whom his readers had long been taught.¹⁹⁸ Barclay, in explaining these Christian virtues, said, ". . . The great fact about Job is that in spite of all his torrent of questioning, . . . which tore at his heart, he never lost his faith in God."¹⁹⁹ Job said,

¹⁹³Moffatt, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

¹⁹⁴Barclay, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁹⁵Tasker, op. cit., p. 115.

¹⁹⁶Holy Bible, James 2:16.

¹⁹⁷Holy Bible, James 5:7-11.

¹⁹⁸Holy Bible, James 5:10-11.

¹⁹⁹Barclay, op. cit., p. 147.

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."²⁰⁰ "My witness is in heaven,
and my record is on high."²⁰¹ "I know that my redeemer liveth. . . ."²⁰²

Such a spirit and witness as that were the desire James had for the followers of Jesus. He wanted them to be possessed of a gallant spirit that could overcome doubt, disaster, sorrow, pain, and death, and be stronger for the struggle.

At the end of his epistle James sets down the great differentiating characteristic of Christian truth.²⁰³ Christians were "callers out into the black night of sin attempting to reach the sinner and gain for the guilty fellow-creature an eminent and abiding good."²⁰⁴ Winkler continued by claiming that Christians were the greatest philanthropists in the world. Not only did the Christians show the way to the only life worth the living, but they also assisted in delivering their fellowmen from a life of misery begotten by sin.²⁰⁵ Christians told men the truth about man's sinful, lost state; and they tried to win men to the love of God.²⁰⁶

The Christian obligation was not completed once the lost man was saved, having multitude of sins so covered that they were not visible to

²⁰⁰ Holy Bible, Job 13:15.

²⁰¹ Holy Bible, Job 16:19.

²⁰² Holy Bible, Job 19:25.

²⁰³ Barclay, op. cit., p. 157.

²⁰⁴ Winkler, op. cit., p. 74.

²⁰⁵ Loc. cit.

²⁰⁶ Holy Bible, James 5:19-20.

the eyes of God;²⁰⁷ but Christians needed to encourage each other continually, pray for one another, and lead the wandering Christian to see the error of his way.²⁰⁸ Obligations rightly met resulted in claiming or re-claiming the lost and wandering ones. This in itself was reward enough. The "reward"²⁰⁹ of the Christian was no less than the glorious satisfaction of knowing that he was continuing the work that was begun by Jesus. Such Christians saw dead souls in living bodies saved from eternal death. This made the saved (both the director and the directed) happy. Not only this, but the good side of man's nature was revealed, and the evil side was covered by love.²¹⁰ "Love covers a multitude of sins."²¹¹

²⁰⁷Winkler, loc. cit.

²⁰⁸Robertson, Studies, p. 198.

²⁰⁹Loc. cit., p. 41.

²¹⁰Loc. cit.

²¹¹Holy Bible, I Peter 4:8.

CHAPTER V
MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

James had no systematic order in his epistle, either in ethics or theology.¹ The epistle was primarily ethical; in fact, at the first or casual reading there seems to be no theology at all.² However, careful study reveals ethics and theology march together through the entire writing.³

The basic accomplishment is recognition of God as master and self as servant.⁴ James recognized this as he described himself as a "slave of God."⁵ James described man's whole relationship to God in implying at least four things: obedience, humility, loyalty, and pride.⁶ Herein lie man's only honor and glory.⁷

Slavery to God meant for James absolute obedience, even as the slave who knew no law apart from his master's commands and who possessed no rights other than those granted him by his master. James considered himself "the absolute possession of God,"⁸ and he felt bound to give Him his

¹Robertson, Studies, pp. 30-32.

²Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 4.

³Mayor, op. cit., p. 182.

⁴Holy Bible, James 1:1.

⁵Loc. cit.

⁶Barclay, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

⁷Barnes, op. cit., p. 16.

⁸Barclay, op. cit., p. 41.

absolute and unquestioning obedience, "holding himself at the divine disposal"⁹ of God.

Such action implied absolute humility. This implication was borne out in his brief line of greeting, which contained no long introduction of himself.¹⁰ He was a servant of God who worshipped and humbly obeyed Jesus Christ, the divine Lord and Master.¹¹ The humble servant in this instance thought not of his rights and privileges but of his obligations and duties.¹² God demanded that he lose himself in God's service. The humble servant is lost to everything other than God's will, saying "no" to self and "yes" to God.¹³

Loyalty is the third virtue implied in the author's recognition of God. James likened the loyal to a soldier who turned his back on personal interests in order to pledge himself to God's interests. As Barclay says, "What he does, he does for God. His . . . profit and . . . preference do not enter into his calculations. His loyalty is to God."¹⁴

Inconsistency may be implied in the last of these words that describe James' recognition of God; namely, pride. It becomes obvious that the word

⁹Winkler, American Commentary, p. 13.

¹⁰Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 15.

¹¹Loc. cit.

¹²Barclay, loc. cit.

¹³Loc. cit.

¹⁴Barclay, op. cit., p. 41.

carried various other implications.¹⁵ Consecration and dedication were a part of this pride. The author stood in a long line of great servants: the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets, and many dedicated Christians.¹⁶ This was not boastful pride, but rather it was the proud knowledge that he was a part of God's eternal scheme. Such union with God and Christ in service and spirit is the only relationship that abides and brings true satisfaction.¹⁷

The reality of God for James was not assumption but actuality. After all, he was reared with Jesus. True, James did not comprehend the claims of Jesus, nor was he convinced of Christ's claims by His performance of miracles or His preaching of messages. James illustrated the poignant regret of those who fail to give proper emphasis to the familiar and near, and give no honor to a prophet in his own house. However,

he never lost the impression made upon him by the words and works of Christ; and when, in the light of the resurrection, the light which alone brings conviction. . ., he saw the true nature of his brother according to the flesh, he was ready to worship and serve Him as his divine Lord and Master.¹⁸

Such recognition called for action, and James proceeded to spell out this action to his readers when he called for "doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves."¹⁹ This was the wedding of

¹⁵Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 20.

¹⁶Holy Bible, II Timothy 2:24; I Peter 2:16; Revelation 7:3.

¹⁷Winkler, American Commentary, p. 13.

¹⁸Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 11.

¹⁹Holy Bible, James 1:21.

ethereal theology and practical ethics. It was what has been described as "the central thought of the epistle as James insisted that truth must be received into the heart and expressed in the life."²⁰ The best of religion is here. The best of religion is not simply hearing or debating the word; the best of religion is "hearing and doing."²¹

James likened the "hearer only" to a man who hastily glanced into a mirror and turned away forgetful of what he had seen, thus making no effort to change his appearance.²² God's mirror shows all faults, failures, and infirmities. These may be all a man sees of himself, but God's mirror is full of another image, too. It shows the image of the ideal man, the image of what man himself can become in Christ.²³

James said that man was capable of deceiving himself concerning his religious state. His self-inflicted deception may take the form of enjoying religious discussions, being fluent in speaking on religious subjects or displaying heated passion in religious disputes. One may perform another form of self-deception by the care with which he performs rites and ceremonies. All forms of religion may be practiced--almsgiving, prayer, fasting, hymn-singing, and observance of sacraments--and one still find his religion an empty and vain delusion.²⁴ What then can be done to prove true religion

²⁰Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 19.

²¹Holy Bible, James 1:21.

²²Holy Bible, James 1:22-24.

²³Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 20.

²⁴Loc. cit.

and to show obedience to God's word? James said three things: self-control, charity, and purity. Though these have been discussed fully in Chapter III of this thesis, they are applicable here also.

As James continued his recognition of God, he encouraged his readers to see God as the object of their faith.²⁵ The passage in which God was shown as the object of faith is that discussing faith and works. James rested his whole argument or claim to faith on his works. He said, "Show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith."²⁶ Mere profession of faith or intellectual assent to the oneness of God is not enough.²⁷ Acknowledgement is admirable, but in itself it has no saving power whatever.²⁸ Calvin suggested that "knowledge of God can no more connect a man with God than the sight of the sun can carry him to heaven."²⁹ It is faith, not knowledge, which enables a man to draw near to God.³⁰ Intellectual acknowledgement of God must be coupled with faith in God, thereby bringing about vital union with God.³¹ Even "the demons believe"³² and recognize the oneness or completion of God. Actually, there

²⁵Holy Bible, James 2:19-23.

²⁶Holy Bible, James 2:18.

²⁷Robertson, Studies, pp. 96-97.

²⁸Tasker, op. cit., p. 66.

²⁹Calvin, op. cit., p. 57.

³⁰Tasker, loc. cit.

³¹Robertson, op. cit., p. 98.

³²L. H. Marshall, The Challenge of New Testament Ethics, p. 271.

is nothing extraordinary about one who simply concedes God's existence and completeness because the concession does not make the person any better.³³ The believing demons "shudder,"³⁴ showing their faith through "terror, an emotion of self-interest, but that does not save them."³⁵

The only true faith is one that has God as its object³⁶ and good deeds or works as its conveyance.³⁷ To illustrate this fact, James cited the obedient trust of Abraham.³⁸ In offering his son Isaac upon the altar,³⁹ Abraham proved he served God from love and not merely from fear. He knew God would go with him down into the darkness of death and would make plain His command that was so hard to obey.⁴⁰

James bolstered the presentation of his case by referring to Rahab.⁴¹ In so doing James went to the farthest extreme, for Rahab was at one time a heathen, a harlot, and a proselyte. If such a person could be saved, then no one need despair. Rahab expressed her faith in God thus: "I know that the Lord hath given you the land . . . the Lord your God, He is God in heaven

³³Holy Bible, James 1:19.

³⁴Holy Bible, James 2:18.

³⁵Moffatt, The General Epistle, p. 41.

³⁶Conner, op. cit., p. 201.

³⁷George Barker Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament, p. 289.

³⁸Holy Bible, James 2:20.

³⁹Holy Bible, Genesis 22:9.

⁴⁰Robertson, Studies, pp. 99-100.

⁴¹Holy Bible, James 2:25.

above, and in earth beneath."⁴² She had exhibited her faith by avowing the cause of God and His chosen people, by running the risk of death when she protected the Israelite spies and by living uprightly thereafter.⁴³

James continued his discussion of the recognition of God as he said that God's will determines the issues of life and death.⁴⁴ James reminded them that too many people plan without taking into account the transitoriness and practical uncertainties of life.⁴⁵ Cullen says that James goes beyond this reminder when he showed the absurdity and even wickedness of the position one may take in systematically laying his plans for his whole life, for he does not know what God has in store for him on the morrow.⁴⁶ James protested the temper and the policy that shut out the recognition of God from huge areas of life. Such are the people who want to relegate God to a brief time on one holy day, thereby confining Him to religious ceremonials. James indicated "that a Sabbath Day religion and a God who is confined to the region of ceremonial are not good enough."⁴⁷ God is constant, and His followers in constancy must depend on Him.⁴⁸

⁴²Holy Bible, Joshua 2:9-11.

⁴³Winkler, American Commentary, p. 44.

⁴⁴Holy Bible, James 4:13-17.

⁴⁵H. Maynard Smith, The Epistle of St. James, p. 262.

⁴⁶Cullen, op. cit., p. 190.

⁴⁷Cullen, op. cit., p. 190.

⁴⁸Barclay, op. cit., p. 134.

James completed the section having to do with man's recognition of God and began the section dealing with God's nature, when he identified God by various names, titles, or designations. God is known by His names, the first of which is Father.⁴⁹ James had been talking of God as the source of good and not the source of temptation for man.⁵⁰ James explained that all giving is good,⁵¹ even the gift that evil men give their children.⁵² Yet in comparison with God's gifts, all other gifts lack perfection.⁵³ In this context James spoke of God as "the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning."⁵⁴ The stability of God is emphasized by James' statement.⁵⁵ The physical light created by God may change, but God remains permanent.⁵⁶ As Farrar said in quoting Wetstein, "God is always in the meridians."⁵⁷ Farrar continued by stating that God dwells in perpetual light. For Him there is no changing light. "No darkness can flow from the fountain of that unchanging Sun, which is not liable to the parallax and eclipses of the heavenly bodies which He has made."⁵⁸

⁴⁹Holy Bible, James 1:17.

⁵⁰Tasker, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵¹Holy Bible, James 1:17.

⁵²Holy Bible, Matthew 7:11.

⁵³Tasker, loc. cit.

⁵⁴Holy Bible, James 1:17.

⁵⁵Robertson, Word Pictures, p. 20.

⁵⁶Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 29.

⁵⁷Farrar, op. cit., p. 332.

⁵⁸Loc. cit.

Variability, change is characteristic of all created things. God is the creator of the lights of heaven - the sun, the moon, the stars. The Jewish morning prayer says, "Blessed be the Lord God who hath formed the lights." The lights change and vary, but He who created them never changes.⁵⁹

James next spoke of God as "our God and Father."⁶⁰ In this designation James showed God's nature by the depth of His love and concern for mankind. James presented God as the father of man.⁶¹ He is vitally interested in the welfare of the unwanted ones of this world--orphans and widows.⁶² External wrappings marked "religion" are of no concern to God, "however punctiliously performed, unless accompanied by a genuine desire on the part of the worshipper to render sympathetic and practical service to his fellow-men."⁶³

Such a characterization of God is not exclusive to James. God was revealed by the Psalmist as "a Father of the fatherless, and judge of the widows."⁶⁴ Not only is God such a person, but He fully expects His adopted sons to be like Him. In the light of the miracle performed by Jesus in the restoration of the son to the bereaved widow of Nain, it is not without significance that the people said, "God hath visited His people."⁶⁵ Jesus

⁵⁹Barclay, op. cit., p. 63.

⁶⁰Holy Bible, James 1:27.

⁶¹Manton, op. cit., p. 174.

⁶²Holy Bible, James 1:27.

⁶³Tasker, op. cit., p. 54.

⁶⁴Holy Bible, Psalms 68:5.

⁶⁵Holy Bible, Luke 7:16.

showed a similar attitude when He strongly condemned the Pharisees for enriching themselves at the expense of women and children who were left widows and orphans.⁶⁶

Personal service is an attribute of God, and He demands such as a function of true religion. Right relations with fellowmen cannot be achieved apart from right standing with God.⁶⁷ In this connection, James showed God's high regard for man.⁶⁸ When fellowmen bless God and curse each other from the same mouth, they fail to realize the importance of the individual as God considers him.⁶⁹ Man was created in God's image; and, regardless of how far he has fallen, his Lord and Father esteems him still.⁷⁰

The author of the epistle used the title "the Lord,"⁷¹ to show the authority of the Lord over creation. Regardless of how independent men might like to be, all are subject to Him for life and success.⁷² As Barnes pointed out, "There is nothing on which the success of our plans depends over which we have absolute control. . . ."⁷³

⁶⁶Holy Bible, Mark 12:40.

⁶⁷Tasker, op. cit., p. 55.

⁶⁸Holy Bible, James 3:9.

⁶⁹Ross, International Commentary, pp. 63-64.

⁷⁰Smith, op. cit., p. 187.

⁷¹Holy Bible, James 4:15; James 5:11-12.

⁷²Barnes, op. cit., p. 79.

⁷³Loc. cit.

"The Lord willing" or "please God" are trite expressions often times used by men as indications that they are dependent upon God. Yet this is not what James had in mind when he used the expression, "if the Lord will. . . ." ⁷⁴ He had in mind the truth of God's care, the knowledge that life and its blessings are gifts from the Almighty, and the belief that the future rests wholly within His power. Such an attitude makes self-confidence and presumption impossible. ⁷⁵

In further describing the ethical nature of God, James recalled the example of Job and God's attitude toward him. ⁷⁶ In this instance James pictured God as "the Lord (who) is very pitiful and of tender mercy." ⁷⁷ By His very nature God brought out of Job's steadfastness His purpose and in the end showed His kindness and mercy. ⁷⁸ The use of Job as an illustration is debated by the editors of the Interpreter's Bible, ⁷⁹ but Robertson points out that the example of Job had already "become a stock illustration of loyal endurance." ⁸⁰ This illustration brings to mind the words of the Psalmist as he described God as "very pitiful and of tender mercy." ⁸¹

⁷⁴ Holy Bible, James 4:15.

⁷⁵ Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 41.

⁷⁶ Holy Bible, James 5:11.

⁷⁷ Loc. cit.

⁷⁸ Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 68.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

⁸⁰ Robertson, Word Pictures, p. 63.

⁸¹ Holy Bible, Psalm 103:8.

One last term was used by James in explaining the nature of God. This was the most unusual and interesting of all in that it was used only twice in the New Testament, once in this epistle and once in Romans 9:29, where it is quoted directly from Isaiah 1:9.⁸² The term was "sabaoth" and means "host."⁸³ James used this term of assurance in a passage that dealt with the sins of the rich against the poor, the master against the slave, the ruthless employer against the exploited employee. He told those who were being shamefully used that the Lord of hosts would hear their cries and would vindicate them. Although there seemed to be no one to champion their cause on earth, the One who bore the majestic title here used by James, "the God of Sabaoth," the Sovereign who is omnipotent, would be their helper and would avenge them.⁸⁴ Therefore, it is with hope that the oppressed, crying constantly from all parts of the earth, recognize that "God to whom they cry--the mighty Ruler of all worlds--is able to vindicate them."⁸⁵

Mayor noted two important facts in his discussion of this passage. One is that the author shows the truest kindness possible when he set before the oppressor and the oppressed the fact of imminent judgment.

To the rich it was a final invitation, the hand writing on the wall, which, if instantly accepted, might still enable them to seek a share in the humiliation of a Christian; to the poor it was the encourage-

⁸²Tasker, op. cit., p. 113.

⁸³Ross, op. cit., p. 88.

⁸⁴Tasker, op. cit., p. 113.

⁸⁵Barnes, op. cit., p. 84.

ment needed to prevent their falling away.⁸⁶

This passage gives further insight into relations that must exist between men because of the ethical nature of God. This takes concrete form in employee-employer relations. James bitterly denounced the injustice which his readers suffered at the hands of their employers.⁸⁷ His prediction concerning these was that theirs was an impending doom.⁸⁸ He saw their wealth consumed by rust and their rich vestments by moths.⁸⁹ The wages of the poor laborers, whom they had defrauded, cried out for vengeance.⁹⁰ The rich in their exploitation of the poor lived in selfish ease, but they were like animals fattening themselves for the slaughter. James said the righteous have suffered without resistance, but their cries have been heard by the Lord of hosts, and the day of vengeance is hastening on.⁹¹

Manton agreed with Mayor and Stevens and described more fully the original use of the name "Lord of Sabaoth," or "Lord of hosts," when he noted that it was a name often used in the prophetic books, most commonly used in Zechariah and Isaiah.⁹² The reason for this is explained by the context

⁸⁶ Mayor, op. cit., p. 230.

⁸⁷ Holy Bible, James 5:1-6.

⁸⁸ Holy Bible, James 5:1.

⁸⁹ Holy Bible, James 5:2-3.

⁹⁰ Holy Bible, James 5:4.

⁹¹ Stevens, op. cit., pp. 279-280.

⁹² Manton, op. cit., p. 410.

of the passage in the book of James. He reached all the way back to the above-named prophets to find a message, a term, and a time that suited his present situation. In the days of Zechariah and Isaiah, James noted, the people of God were in misery and needed much defence and protection. They were in danger of letting their fears of men cause their hope to die.⁹³ James' word of encouragement was undergirded by the use of a term that let the people know that the God of hosts, "commander-in-chief of all creatures, angels, men, thunder, lightnings, storms, showers, lions, and fevers," was at His command.⁹⁴

All the names used by James gave qualities or characteristics of God's nature. God's nature is indicated not only by names and titles given Him, but also by His bountiful giving of wisdom. Wisdom is a characteristic of God not indigenous to man aside from his being given it by God.⁹⁵ Strauss agreed when he said, "Wisdom is obtained through prayer."⁹⁶ Such wisdom is discernment, judgment, and dexterity in applying knowledge gained in all pursuits.⁹⁷

God is the source and author of all wisdom. He gives this higher wisdom to those who ask, thereby making the gift supernatural, Himself

⁹³Manton, op. cit., p. 410.

⁹⁴Loc. cit.

⁹⁵Manton, op. cit., p. 38.

⁹⁶Strauss, op. cit., p. 18.

⁹⁷Loc. cit.

liberal, and the recipients possessors of a never-ending source of spiritual blessing.⁹⁸

Continuing his discussion of God's nature, James stressed the moral perfection of God. He identified Him as good and a giver of good gifts to men.⁹⁹ He had already indicated as much by his discussion of God's bountiful giving of wisdom to those who asked for it,¹⁰⁰ but here he tied in God's gifts with the more important fact that God was morally perfect; that is, He was beyond being tempted with evil.¹⁰¹ As the editor of the Interpreter's Bible indicated, tempted man has no ground on which to stand when he says, "I am tempted of God,"¹⁰² for "evil has no attraction for God."¹⁰³ "Man can be tempted because of the propensity to evil in his own nature; God cannot be tempted because He is absolute goodness."¹⁰⁴

Doubters and scoffers of conservative ethics may at this point attempt to discredit God by referring to scriptures that refer to God's tempting man, as He tested the obedience of Abraham.¹⁰⁵ Other references to the

⁹⁸ Tasker, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

⁹⁹ Holy Bible, James 1:13-18.

¹⁰⁰ Holy Bible, James 1:5.

¹⁰¹ Holy Bible, James 1:13.

¹⁰² Loc. cit.

¹⁰³ Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ Mayor, op. cit., p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ Holy Bible, Genesis 22:1.

same general theme might be made regarding the children of Israel's wandering in the wilderness for forty years "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart."¹⁰⁶ It must be noted that the design of temptation at the above-mentioned times differed greatly from the type mentioned in James 1:13-18. The temptations were not designed by God to draw men into sin but were trials "with the view of discovering his motives and principles and of gradually building up Christian character."¹⁰⁷

Man has from the beginning, as recorded in the Genesis account of Adam's fall, blamed God for his temptation and consequent sin. This is a prevalent danger. As Tasker indicated, "The writer of Ecclesiasticus felt compelled, like James, to warn his readers against such blasphemy."¹⁰⁸ "Say not thou, it is through the Lord that I fell away . . . it is He that caused me to err. . . ."¹⁰⁹ Man must be careful not to blame God for tempting him. The real history of temptation, that which allures man to sin, must be found apart from God.¹¹⁰ Mayor continued,

Sin originates when we choose to dwell upon the thought of the pleasure suggested, though knowing or strongly suspecting that it cannot be lawfully obtained. The desire becomes stronger by indulgence, the thought of sin ceases to shock as it becomes more familiar, until at last that which had been long rehearsed in the imagination is enacted in real life.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 8:2.

¹⁰⁷ Mayor, op. cit., p. 195.

¹⁰⁸ Tasker, op. cit., p. 45.

¹⁰⁹ Loc. cit.

¹¹⁰ Mayor, op. cit., p. 195.

¹¹¹ ibid., p. 196.

The denial made by James in this passage was not that God did not try men but that Almighty God did not tempt men with evil intent, thereby tempting them to sin.¹¹² As has been indicated already, God, by His very nature, cannot be tempted with evil; since He has no contact with evil, He cannot be the cause of man's sin.¹¹³ It must be admitted that the Scriptures speak of men who are blinded by God, who are given up to a reprobate mind, and are delivered over to filthy and shameful lusts.¹¹⁴ Calvin answered this problem by saying,

But there are two things to be noted here: when Scriptures ascribe blindness or hardness of heart to God, it does not assign to Him the beginning of this blindness nor does it make Him the author of sin, so as to ascribe to Him the blame; and on these two things only does James dwell.¹¹⁵

There is in God a characteristic that makes particular demands on His people; He is a jealous God who requires from His followers an undivided heart.¹¹⁶ James again referred to the teachings of Jesus. James preceded this section with the words, "The fruit of righteousness is sown for them that make peace."¹¹⁷ Jesus had said, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."¹¹⁸ Not a great deal of peace

¹¹²Tasker, op. cit., p. 46.

¹¹³Buttrick, Interpreter's Bible, p. 28.

¹¹⁴Holy Bible, Romans 1:24-26.

¹¹⁵Calvin, op. cit., p. 288.

¹¹⁶Holy Bible, James 4:1-5.

¹¹⁷Holy Bible, James 3:18.

¹¹⁸Holy Bible, Matthew 5:9.

belonged to the people to whom James addressed this epistle, nor were they possessed of a very peaceable spirit; consequently, hard on the heels of his admonition he "breaks out into vehement reproaches."¹¹⁹ In actuality, he asked a basic question--which do you propose to do, submit to God or gratify your own selfish desires?¹²⁰ One way was God's way; the other way was the world's way. James admonished the people to submit to God and claim peace or submit to the world and suffer the evil consequences.¹²¹

James depicts God's attitude toward infidelity to Him and shows that friendship with the world is enmity to Him. God is a jealous lover "who will brook no rival, and who will share the human heart with no other love."¹²² This has always been true. Moses told his people that "they provoked Him (God) to jealousy with strange gods."¹²³ God said, "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God."¹²⁴ He declared Himself to be the solitary object of worship in Israel: "I the Lord am a jealous God."¹²⁵

The word "jealous" presently has connotations that cause hesitation on the part of contemporary society to ascribe such a characteristic

¹¹⁹ Dale, The Epistle of James, p. 121.

¹²⁰ Holy Bible, James 4:1-3.

¹²¹ Barclay, op. cit., pp. 115-118.

¹²² Ibid., p. 122.

¹²³ Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 32:16.

¹²⁴ Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 32:21.

¹²⁵ Holy Bible, Exodus 22:5.

to God.¹²⁶ The Hebrew word has in it the idea of hot and burning heat, identifying God's divine love as an intense desire which is unalterable either in time or space.¹²⁷

Let there be no resentment, therefore, against the exactingness of God's claim on us. It is the exactingness of an infinite love, which cannot be content with anything less than our complete restoration to the image of the Divine holiness, and our perfect fellowship with the Divine joy. That which God asks for He gives. If He requires from us an absolute and complete devotion to Himself, it is because He is ready to grant us the power of His Spirit to create and to sustain that devotion in our hearts. Every precept is but the reverse of a promise; every command is but the prophecy of a grace. The loftier His commands the larger His bounty. Augustine summed up this truth in the words: 'Give what thou askest, and then ask what thou wilt.'¹²⁸

This God, with all His characteristic nature thus exposed by James, was identified as the creator of man in His likeness.¹²⁹ Amazingly, all men, regardless of their sinfulness, bear the divine similitude of God.¹³⁰ This truth which James pointed out was included in the great passage on the use of the tongue: "therewith we bless God even the Father; and therewith we curse men, that are made after the similitude of God."¹³¹ The teaching emphasized in this section was not to be a reiteration of the teachings about the tongue, but was to point out God's nature in His highest form of creation.

¹²⁶Barclay, op. cit., p. 123.

¹²⁷Strauss, op. cit., p. 157

¹²⁸Dale, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

¹²⁹Holy Bible, James 3:9.

¹³⁰Tasker, op. cit., p. 78.

¹³¹Holy Bible, James 3:9.

There is in man something of God. Such men, formed in the likeness of God, will, in keeping with His nature, keep themselves unspotted from the world.¹³² James described such men as those who are in the world but are not of the world.¹³³ Worldly men are the enemies of God.¹³⁴ Worldly men are so caught up in the people who are like themselves that no time can be found for God and His people.¹³⁵ God's men walk through the world, but their fidelity and allegiance belong to Him.¹³⁶

Man's relationship to God finds further fertile fields as God's abilities are catalogued. For example, James assured his readers that God was able to hear and answer prayers.¹³⁷ James had depicted God's giving and man's asking. The whole passage is connected with the testing experiences of man.¹³⁸

When man was tested and asked himself the value of such testing and where he would find the wisdom to meet the test and understand it aright, James answered, "Ask of God."¹³⁹ As freely as man asks, God gives. God is a generous giver, and He never holds that fact before man to keep

¹³² Holy Bible, James 1:27.

¹³³ Holy Bible, James 4:4.

¹³⁴ Ross, op. cit., p. 77.

¹³⁵ Barnes, op. cit., p. 69.

¹³⁶ Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 36.

¹³⁷ Holy Bible, James 1:5-8.

¹³⁸ Holy Bible, James 1:1-4.

¹³⁹ Holy Bible, James 1:5.

man in subjection. Man yields through conviction, conversion, love, and gratitude--not out of fear. Some givers give with the idea in mind that what is given by them will return tenfold. Others give out of vanity and pride. Still others sense conquest over and obligation from the recipient. Of course, the receiver is never allowed to forget the benefits harvested from such a bountiful giver.

God is not like these; He gives generously.¹⁴⁰ Barclay quoted Philemon, the Greek poet, who called God "the lover of gifts," not meaning that gifts add to His stature or power, but meaning that God loves to bestow gifts. Paul has said of God that ". . . he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."¹⁴¹ He gives without thought of return; it is His nature to give.¹⁴²

Of the innumerable good gifts God gives to His believers, the gifts of the new birth, hence new life, "is the greatest and most important."¹⁴³ God regenerates men.¹⁴⁴ "Of His own good will He makes us Christians by the word of truth."¹⁴⁵ Christians of James' day are described as the "first-fruits."¹⁴⁶ Such "firstfruits" and subsequent Christians were and are sacred

¹⁴⁰ Adam, op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁴¹ Holy Bible, Acts 17:25.

¹⁴² Barclay, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁴³ Tasker, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁴⁴ Holy Bible, James 1:18.

¹⁴⁵ Conner, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁴⁶ Holy Bible, James 1:18.

to God,¹⁴⁷ for they are "special possessions of God,"¹⁴⁸ The old Israel was called "the first fruits of His increase,"¹⁴⁹ with the natural result being that such language could be used in referring to members of the Christian body--hence, the church.

Strengthening the idea that God's ability is a part of ethics, James presented a strong argument when he made special reference to the fact that God assists Christians in viewing all men without distinction.¹⁵⁰ The worth of all men was clearly taught by James as he stated that respect for one person over another because of position, power, or money is unChristian. Tasker spoke of "the futility of any profession of Christianity"¹⁵¹ which fails in right conduct at this point. He continued by saying,

To claim to be worshipping Him who came on earth to reveal to mankind the love of God by laying down His life for all sorts and conditions of men, and at the same time to separate from the family for whom Christ died a particular section as objects of favouritism because of their more fortunate economic status--this is perversion of true religion.¹⁵²

Not only was man to be guided by God through love, he was also reminded by James that God was the lawmaker and judge who was able to save or destroy.¹⁵³ The primary teaching of this entire passage has to do with

¹⁴⁷ Holy Bible, Leviticus 23:10.

¹⁴⁸ Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 18.

¹⁴⁹ Holy Bible, Jeremiah 2:3.

¹⁵⁰ Holy Bible, James 2:1.

¹⁵¹ Tasker, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁵² Loc. cit.

¹⁵³ Holy Bible, James 4:12.

man's relations with his fellowman, but the secondary teaching also has significance. Man who judges fellowman infringes on the prerogative of God. No person has the divine right to judge others; "the right of judgment belongs to God and to God alone."¹⁵⁴

The scriptures teach that only God is capable of saving or destroying. God says, "I kill and I make alive."¹⁵⁵ "The Lord killeth and maketh alive," vowed Hannah in prayer.¹⁵⁶ When Naaman came demanding of a shocked Israelite king a cure for his leprosy, the king asked, "Am I God to kill and make alive?"¹⁵⁷ Jesus added to this evidence when He warned against fearing men, who at the most, can only kill the body; however, He continued, "Fear Him who can destroy both body and soul."¹⁵⁸ To God alone belong the issues of life and death, said the Psalmist.¹⁵⁹ To judge another is to take to oneself a right which is exclusive to God, "and he is a reckless man who deliberately infringes the prerogatives of God."¹⁶⁰

Great blessings accrue as a result of following God. James made this clear in several of his teachings, not the least of which is that the

¹⁵⁴ Barclay, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁵⁵ Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 32:39.

¹⁵⁶ Holy Bible, I Samuel 2:6.

¹⁵⁷ Holy Bible, II Kings 5:7.

¹⁵⁸ Holy Bible, Matthew 10:28.

¹⁵⁹ Holy Bible, Psalm 68:20.

¹⁶⁰ Barclay, op. cit., p. 132.

follower will become a "doer of His word."¹⁶¹ This is basic to James' philosophy of practical religion; "this is a religion of deed as well as one of profession or creed."¹⁶² This is the heart of James' teaching "that truth must be received into the heart and expressed in the life."¹⁶³ Does this mean that hearing and attending to the word are unimportant as results of following God? Absolutely not. Does it mean that humanitarian acts will suffice, fill the soul, and satisfy God's created likeness? Again, absolutely not according to Conner, who said that James

. . . did not believe in a godless humanism. He did not believe in a humanitarianism that tried to sustain itself without faith in God. A religion of high humanistic ideals and humanitarian deeds can no more sustain itself apart from God than a tree can bear fruit without being rooted in mother earth. And James never had any such foolish dream as that and called it religion. Nor . . . did James believe in a religion without creed any more than he believed in a religion of creed without deed.¹⁶⁴

What is the basic doing of the Word? James summed it up in several ways. He believed that pure and undefiled religion was to visit the fatherless and the widows but to do this under the guidance and leadership of God.¹⁶⁵ Other essentials were taught by James, such as "keeping unspotted from the world," a major teaching of this master teacher.¹⁶⁶ To fulfill

¹⁶¹ Holy Bible, James 1:22.

¹⁶² Conner, op. cit., p. 205.

¹⁶³ Eerdman, General Epistles, p. 19.

¹⁶⁴ Conner, op. cit., p. 205.

¹⁶⁵ Holy Bible, James 1:27.

¹⁶⁶ Loc. cit.

the royal law handed down by Jesus, "love thy neighbor as thyself," was another admonition of the author.¹⁶⁷ Be filled with patience;¹⁶⁸ let the mouth issue forth only pure conversation;¹⁶⁹ pray for the sick;¹⁷⁰ and recall the erring¹⁷¹ were others. These form only a few of his teachings. However, they give an example of what James meant when he declared that following God makes one a "doer of the word."¹⁷²

One last portion of the epistle of James will be considered in this paper. In James 4:1-10, the writer made a special plea concerning man's relationship to God.¹⁷³ He gave a list of worldly lusts that separate men and God. He enjoined God's people to resist these things. Included in this list were selfishness of the human heart, a desire for possession of material things, a desire for power, and worldly lusts. James stated that such desires cause war, war among nations and war within the heart of man. In the teachings of James, the war of selfishness was contrasted with the peace of true wisdom.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Holy Bible, James 2:8.

¹⁶⁸ Holy Bible, James 5:7-11.

¹⁶⁹ Holy Bible, James 5:12.

¹⁷⁰ Holy Bible, James 5:14-15.

¹⁷¹ Holy Bible, James 5:19-20.

¹⁷² Holy Bible, James 1:22; 25.

¹⁷³ Holy Bible, James 4:1-10.

¹⁷⁴ Eerdman, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

A secondary teaching at least implied in this passage, gives the origin for most of the wars ever fought between nations. Their beginnings can be traced to what James referred to as "lust."¹⁷⁵ Among these listed were the desire for booty, the love of conquest, the consuming ambition to extend boundaries or longevity of authority, revenge, the implantation of a new religion, and similar drives that often cause global combat.

James suggested that some men, in order to gain their desired ends, would resort to prayer. In James 4:3, the writer stated, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may spend it in your pleasures,"¹⁷⁶ The true spirit of prayer is submission to the will of God, but prayer for selfish gain is a perversion. Such prayer is impertinent on the part of man and an insult to God.

As his final watchword, James urged his readers to be humble before God.¹⁷⁷ He assured them that the very greatness of God's love was an immediate and present blessing to the humble. This then is the apex of God's relationship to man, for though the creature may be unfaithful and unloving, God stands ready to take into His fold the one who humbly turns to Him. He "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be subject therefore unto God."¹⁷⁸ Only when one humbles himself, sees his need, and knows God can supply the answer to that need can the proper relationship between God

¹⁷⁵Holy Bible, James 4:2

¹⁷⁶Holy Bible, James 4:2-3.

¹⁷⁷Holy Bible, James 4:6.

¹⁷⁸Holy Bible, James 4:6-7.

and man be brought about.

In James 4:7, the author gave strength to his readers as he assured them that the forces of Satan could not overcome a true relationship with God.¹⁷⁹ Peter concurred with James on this issue, for he said,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;

Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.¹⁸⁰

James gave great assurance to his readers, for he gave them the knowledge that they had access to the Father, God.¹⁸¹ This had not always been true. Under the old order, only the priest was allowed to approach God.¹⁸² By the new and living way men could draw nigh to God.¹⁸³

James set forth ethical requirements involved in the approach to God. To James the ethical and practical were never far apart.¹⁸⁴ In Judaism there had been ceremonial washing of the hands with water to cleanse one and make him clean enough to approach God.¹⁸⁵ James teaches that God required a great deal more. The phrase came to stand for moral purity. The Psalmist

¹⁷⁹Holy Bible, James 4:7.

¹⁸⁰Holy Bible, I Peter 5:8-9.

¹⁸¹Holy Bible, James 4:8.

¹⁸²Holy Bible, Exodus 19:22.

¹⁸³Holy Bible, Hebrews 7:19.

¹⁸⁴Holy Bible, James 4:8-10.

¹⁸⁵Holy Bible, Exodus 30:19-21.

said, "I will wash mine hands in innocence."¹⁸⁶ In the New Testament Timothy said, "Lift up holy hands. . . ."¹⁸⁷ Barclay states,

The very history of the phrase shows a deepening consciousness of what God demands. Men began by thinking in terms of an outward washing, a ritual and ceremonial thing; and ended by seeing that the demand of God is a moral, and not a ritual demand.¹⁸⁸

The thought of cleanliness extended to clean lips,¹⁸⁹ clean hands,¹⁹⁰ a clean heart,¹⁹¹ and a clean mind.¹⁹² The ethical demands made on man by God included clean words, clean deeds, clean emotions, and clean thoughts. God desired both inward and outward cleanliness on man's part, for only the "pure in heart" shall see God.¹⁹³

Adding to this plea for cleanliness, James extended once more his call for humility. Included in this call was godly sorrow. Jesus had laid the foundation for the words of James, "Let your laughter be turned to sorrow and your joy to gloom,"¹⁹⁴ when He said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."¹⁹⁵ Remembered sins bring sorrow to

¹⁸⁶ Holy Bible, Psalms 26:6.

¹⁸⁷ Holy Bible, I Timothy 2:8.

¹⁸⁸ Barclay, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

¹⁸⁹ Holy Bible, Isaiah 6:5-6.

¹⁹⁰ Holy Bible, Psalms 24:4.

¹⁹¹ Holy Bible, Psalms 73:13.

¹⁹² Holy Bible, James 4:8.

¹⁹³ Holy Bible, Matthew 5:8.

¹⁹⁴ Holy Bible, Matthew 5:8.

¹⁹⁵ Holy Bible, Matthew 5:4.

the Christian.

In it all, man draws nigh to God and finds Him, for He is always near at hand. A person's very dependence on God reveals one's only source of independence which is, of course, the strength one gains from God's strength. Instead of collapse and defeat due to one's own efforts, a person's life in God will propel that person to victory and will exalt one's Creator.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions

Early Jewish Christians contributed immeasurably to the Christian way of life by assisting in the development of the Gentile church in various ways. Among their chief contributions are the writings of early New Testament days, which writings provided literature for instruction and encouragement. The social and ethical concepts laid down by early Jewish Christians in their lives and writings proved to be profound guides for churches and individuals. The generally-accepted idea relative to the beginning of the church among the Gentiles is that Paul, the missionary apostle, initiated the Gentile church. However, a study of the literature of that period shows that the Christian religion made its first impact on the Gentile world because of the dispersal of Jewish Christians throughout extensive reaches of the known world.¹ This dispersal came as a result of the death of Stephen and resulted in the effective spread of the gospel to the cities of the Gentiles.

They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.

But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.²

¹H. E. Dana, Jewish Christianity, p. 97.

²Holy Bible, Acts 11:19-20.

The Epistle of James is representative of the type of literature herein described. It is an Epistle that deals with the social and ethical values that are extremely valuable for individual Christians and churches. Tasker summed up the value of the message of the Epistle as follows:

. . . The Epistle has a permanent message both for the Church as a whole and for each individual Christian. There would however seem to be special times, both in the history of the Church and in the spiritual pilgrimage of the believer, when its message sounds forth with special relevance. Whenever faith does not issue in love, and dogma, however orthodox, is unrelated to life; whenever Christians are tempted to settle down to a self-centered religion, and become oblivious of the social and material needs of others; or whenever they deny by their manner of living the creed they profess, and seem more anxious to be friends of the world than friends of God, then the Epistle of James has something to say to them which they disregard at their peril.³

The value of this message is proved by the very teachings of the Epistle of James. If no other data could be found outside the Epistle itself, still the teachings are such that the Epistle is easily recognizable as a practical guide for triumphant Christian living. Throughout the Epistle are significant ethical values. The primary problem in this study was to determine these values. In order to do so, the basic ethics--social, personal, and religious--were used as guidelines.

In the matter of social ethics, i.e., man's duties to his fellow-man, the following teachings were noted:

(1) One must possess a positive attitude of good will toward others. James indicated that this is done by being quick to hear good about others, by being slow to speak evil of others, and by being slow to be wrathful

³R. V. G. Tasker, The General Epistle of James: An Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 10.

toward one's fellows.⁴

(2) One should be mindful of those in need. James enjoined Christians to visit the fatherless and widows and to keep themselves unspotted from the world.⁵

(3) One should obey the laws of God. James said that the royal law is the basic guide; along with it he pleaded for the keeping of the whole law. In keeping the law, one was to be careful not to show deference toward the rich.⁶

(4) One should demonstrate his faith by his works.⁷ It was apparently not the intention of James to debate the question of whether a man was or is saved by faith or works; rather, he sought to prove to mankind that, for the Christian, faith and works were and are inseparable. Possession of true wisdom is necessary for right relations to exist between fellowmen. James said that there are two kinds of wisdom. One is from above. The other is from below. The one from above produces mercy and the fruits of a peacemaker. The wisdom from below produces bitter jealousy and self-interest.⁸

In the matter of personal ethics, i.e., man's duties to himself, the following major teachings were noted:

⁴Holy Bible, James 1:19-20.

⁵Ibid., James 1:27.

⁶Ibid., James 2:1-13.

⁷Holy Bible, James 2:14-26.

⁸Holy Bible, James 3:13-18.

(1) Man should be true to himself. This included the ability to rejoice in any condition, even an adverse one. In such a manner the individual would grow as a Christian by seeking patience and wisdom. Such times are testing times, and James contended that through such testing God worked out his will in Christians by making them full-grown, mature, and lacking in no spiritual thing.⁹ Such a man would be deficient in nothing. No permanent defeat would be suffered in the quest for religion. Such a person would be true to self and rejoice over the opportunities to continue the struggle.

(2) One should be fair in his dealings with others. Especially was this true where rich and poor were concerned. Right attitudes bring rewards and actions.¹⁰

(3) One should guard his speech carefully and discipline his body. To control one's tongue and body as well was among the most difficult things one must do in this world. These are almost impossible, but if one would reach the standard set by James the ability must be used. Only by such abilities does one possess true religion, avoid sinful self-confidence, fail to commit sins of omission, attain patience, forego swearing, and totally consecrate himself to others and God.¹¹

⁹Holy Bible, James 1:2-5; 5:7-11.

¹⁰Holy Bible, James 1:9-25.

¹¹Holy Bible, James 1:26-27; 3:1-12; 4:13-17; 5:7-18.

In the realm of religious ethics, i.e., man's relation to God, James admonished the Christian to do the following:

(1) One should recognize his duty to render service to God by being obedient to His Word, seeing Him as an object of faith, and by knowing that His will determined issues of life and death.¹²

(2) One should see that God is related to believers through His nature. His names give insight into His nature. For example, James used terms such as "the father of lights," which showed God's constancy and unchangableness.¹³ He continued with a list that demonstrated God's love, power, and greatness.¹⁴ In addition, James pointed out the moral perfection of God by showing His goodness, purity, abhorrence to evil, pity, and mercy.¹⁵

(3) One should recognize God's distinctive abilities. These include answering prayer, regenerating men, assisting in life relationships, judging, and saving or destroying men.¹⁶

(4) One should recognize that following God resulted in doing God's will, speaking no evil, avoiding wrongful desires, being humble, having patience, engaging in pure conversation, praying for the sick, confessing sins to one another, seeking the lost and erring, and receiving the

¹²Holy Bible, James 1:1; 1:21-27; 2:19-23; 4:13-17.

¹³Holy Bible, James 1:17.

¹⁴Holy Bible, James 1:27; 3:9; 4:15; 5:4; 5:11.

¹⁵Holy Bible, James 1:13-18; 5:11.

¹⁶Holy Bible, James 1:5-8; 1:18; 2:1; 4:12.

blessings that accrue to those who do God's work.¹⁷

In continuing to solve the primary problem, answers to the authorship, date, recipients, canonicity, and basic purpose of the Epistle were also sought. The evidence of sheer numbers brings one to the conclusion that the scholars have generally agreed that the James who authored this Epistle in the New Testament was the younger half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Authorship fairly well determined the date, which was fixed at between 40 A.D. and 50 A.D. James wrote this epistle to assist Jewish Christians in their relations with God, man, and self.

Difficulties arose regarding the canonicity of the Epistle. Luther would not include the Epistle in his list of New Testament Scriptures, saying that it was ". . . a right strawy epistle."¹⁸ However, the weight of evidence fell in favor of the Epistle of James; and, when the majority of scholars accepted the Lord's half-brother as the author, the epistle became generally acceptable.

Study revealed that the Epistle of James contains many practical guiding principles which can elevate daily life relationships and bring peace to the believer. One who follows the teachings of this Epistle would be led from self-centeredness toward an awareness of the social and material needs of others. One would live what one professes if one practiced the teachings of this book.

¹⁷Holy Bible, James 1:22; 25; 4:1-10; 5:7-20.

¹⁸Tasker, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

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ETHICAL VALUES FOR LIVING: A STUDY OF THE ETHICAL
TEACHINGS CONTAINED IN THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

An Abstract of a Thesis
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the Graduate Council of
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by
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The social and ethical concepts laid down by the early Jewish Christians have proved to be profound guides for churches and individual Christians. The Epistle of James, which is representative of first century Jewish literature, deals with significant social and ethical values. These social and ethical values are the very heart of the message of the Epistle of James. Consequently, these values become a practical guide to the layman, who is not trained in theology, in applying Christian principles in daily life relationships.

The primary problem in this study was to determine the significant ethical values in the Epistle of James. A study of the literature which relates to the book of James revealed that the significant ethical values contained in the Epistle of James fall into three categories: social ethics, man's duties to his fellowman; personal ethics, man's duties to himself; and religious ethics, man's duties to God. Social ethics test one's religion. Personal ethics involve the quest for religion. Religious ethics test the caliber of one's relationship with God.

In solving the primary problem, the literature studied, in the majority of cases, also revealed that the Epistle of James was written by the younger half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. The weight of evidence showed the Epistle of James to have been written between 40 A.D. and

50 A.D. ". . . to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion."¹

The place of the Epistle of James in the canon of the Holy Bible was another determination to be made in solving the primary problem. Suffice it to say that the Epistle of James became firmly established in the canon of the western part of Christendom by the end of the fourth century; and it became universally accepted only after James, the Lord's younger half-brother, became generally recognized as the author.

The author's purpose was to meet the needs of Jewish Christians of the Dispersion. These needs ranged from proper attitudes in the face of trials to praying for one another. In between these teachings he incorporates enough practical and ethical instruction to call early Jewish Christians and all subsequent believers to make their practice correspond to their faith.

¹Holy Bible, James 1:1.