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we say it softly or aloud, it means that we have a good conscience or the desire for a good conscience in God's sight.

What God requires and what the world needs is a larger number of men and women who are honestly prepared to say 'Amen' not only with

their lips, but also in their lives. 'Let us one by one make a conscience of saying "Amen" thoughtfully and seriously at the end of every prayer and act of praise, so that we may thereby be enabled to answer "Yes, Lord," without reluctance or reserve, when God honours us with some fresh demand for a conscientious service of His will.'

The Message of the Epistles.

James.

BY PROFESSOR W. P. PATERSON, D.D., LL.D., EDINBURGH.

THE authorship of the Epistle of James has been the subject of an unending debate, and it is unlikely that the problem will ever be solved with general assent. But whatever its origin, it renders the valuable service of fixing attention on the chief end of the Christian religion as the making of the new man, while the deliverance of the Church has been that it has unmistakable canonical quality, and contains the indubitable word of God.

I.—THE PROBLEM OF THE AUTHOR.

From the fourth century down to the eighteenth, the Epistle was generally accepted as the work of James, supposed by many scholars to be a son of Joseph and Mary, who presided over the Church of Jerusalem in the apostolic age, ranked with Peter and John as a pillar of the Church, and sealed his testimony by a martyr's death. In his learned Commentary, Mayor thought that he had finally established the authorship of this James, and German scholars of the highest repute, notably Bernard Weiss and Zahn, pronounced with equal confidence on the same side. Within the last generation the tide of critical opinion has set strongly in the opposite direction. Following von Soden and Harnack, who ascribed it to an unknown writer about the beginning of the second century, Dr. Moffatt in his *Historical New Testament* speaks of the defenders of the traditional view as influenced by an amiable prepossession, which they have supported by arguments of no pith or moment. As a fact an intelligent jury of Biblical students might well come to the conclusion that the advocates on both sides have asked for

a finding which goes beyond the evidence, and that 'not proven' is the proper reply to both pleadings. As the result of the debate we are left the choice between two opinions—one that the Epistle probably is, but possibly is not, the work of the Apostle, the other that it probably is, but possibly is not, the work of an unknown author of the second or third generation.

That the writer was James, the Lord's brother, cannot be ranked higher than a probable opinion, as the authenticity of the Epistle was widely doubted and denied down to the time of Eusebius, while it has allusions which suggest that the Church was no longer in its first youth. On the other hand, the negative thesis has certainly not been demonstrated. The opposition in the patristic Church was due as much to theological bias as to special information, for the meagreness of its doctrine was an offence to those who searched the Scriptures for light on the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Nor is the internal evidence so conclusive as is contended by recent critics. Dr. Moffatt makes much of the argument that the Galilean James could not have written such fluent and idiomatic Greek, but Mayor had previously pointed out that more than one of the famous Greek scholars of the period were natives of Gadara, and it may be added that in our day some of the best Greek verse has been written by men who were born and educated in the region of Aberdeen. The claim of an early date, it is further said, is disposed of by the fact that the writer borrows from writings of the post-apostolic period, but Mayor had previously gone into this in minute detail, and made out quite a good case for the priority of

the parallels in the Epistle of James. The question is settled, the argument proceeds, by the observation that the Epistle does not expound the theology of the Apostolic Church in Jerusalem, but represents the undogmatical and moralistic type of religion which had a vogue in the second century and has a monument in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The ordinary student must attach weight to the chronological sense of Harnack and Moffatt, and yet may take leave to doubt that the contents of the Epistle of James justify the description which is given of the theological standpoint of the author. The Epistle is of the nature of a practical sermon, and there may be little in such a discourse of the preacher's distinctive system of theology. Further, so far as the author discloses his theology, it must be granted that it is rudimentary, but this was no less true of the doctrinal teaching of the Jewish Christian Church in the primitive period than of the message of a section of the universal Church in the early decades of the second century. What is more certain than the dependence of the writer on an undogmatic school of the third generation is that he was inspired by the teaching of Jesus which has been preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, and also gloried in the supplementary facts of His resurrection and His exaltation to the right hand of the Father. The message, so far as disclosed, is what was to be expected from a Jewish Christian who, when others called themselves disciples of Paul or Cephas or Apollos, said that he was of Christ, meaning thereby that he followed the teaching of the Lord in speaking of the things of the Kingdom of God.

But while one may still take leave to hold that the Epistle is a legacy from the great apostolic figure, its unsystematic and fragmentary character points to its being a selection from his sayings which was made by another hand, and cast in the form of a pastoral letter. There were doubtless disciples who set down in writing many of the words of James; and after his martyrdom one of these would naturally put forth his 'Memorabilia' as a gift to the mother-church, and also as a message to the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion. In the selection of material from his reminiscences, a disciple would be guided in part by a literary interest, and include the most striking and weighty of the dicta. He would also be influenced to some extent in his selections by his personal convictions, and would give prominence to those elements of the Apostle's teaching with which he was himself in heartiest accord. On the other hand, the teaching embodied in the Epistle has the clear

character of an attempt to define the essential nature of the Christian religion, and it may be held with a good conscience that in its central message we hear the voice of the great representative of Jewish Christianity.

II.—THE CHARACTER OF THE NEW MAN.

The chief end of the religion which took its name from Christ, and which was beginning to turn the world upside down, is set forth in our Epistle as the re-making of human souls after the highest pattern of piety and virtue. 'Of his own will,' so it is put, 'he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures' (1¹⁸). And to emphasize this cardinal truth it is added: 'Be sure of that, my beloved brethren.' It is the same truth that was expressed by St. Paul when he said that 'if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature' (2 Co 5¹⁷), and in the words of the Fourth Gospel that 'except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (Jn 3³). In the Pauline and Johannine writings, however, there are many treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and to this servant of Christ it seemed desirable to concentrate on the truth that the purpose of God in Christ was to set up a new and higher ideal, and also to provide the means by which the divine purpose could be realized. That the question raised in the Epistle is 'What is Christianity?' appears further from the fact that it offers a definition—'pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unpolluted from the world' (1²⁷). This, of course, did not mean that religion is identical with morality, and that nothing really matters but conduct. To a Jewish thinker it went without saying that religion consists in a relationship to God, and in duties toward God, and so all the stress could be laid on the loving service of man and on personal purity as the necessary accompaniments of piety.

1. *The Duties of Piety.*—The teaching as to the vital requirements of piety may be summed up by saying that God is to be loved, that He is to be trusted, and that He is to be obeyed. The disciple of Jesus does not forget how He said that the first commandment is to love God with all the heart (Mk 12³⁰), and he puts it another way by speaking of those who will obtain the crown of life as lovers of God (1¹²). Nothing, however, is made of the emotional side of love, and it may be that he did not much distinguish between love of God and

obedience to God. Nor is there any reference to the Christian experience of mystical union with the risen and glorified Lord. With more fulness and emphasis he reminds us how Jesus bade His disciples trust the Heavenly Father, believing that with Him all things are possible, and that He dispenses all good things to them that ask them. The Christian is bidden to trust confidently in the Father 'who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not' (1⁵)—primarily for the forgiveness of sins, heavenly wisdom, gracious succour and eternal life, but also for the kindly care of a Providence that besets him behind and before. Yet while God is the author and finisher of a great salvation, the main stress is laid, as of old by Hebrew prophets, and in the later Church by Calvinistic divines, on the obligation to make to God a whole-hearted and complete self-surrender in the forms of patient submission and of active obedience to His holy will. The exhortation to patience under trials is in fact, as remarked by Bengel, a main purpose of the Epistle, which begins with it, returns to it at the close, and strengthens it by the assurance that the use of the afflictions is to make Christians 'perfect and entire' (1⁴). The husbandman, they are reminded, exercises patience in 'waiting for the precious fruit of the earth,' and much more should they endure in patience, as knowing that the Lord is at hand (5^{7a}). But above all we are made to realize that the chief concern of man with God should be to keep His commandments and to be used in His service.

A distinctive feature of the Epistle is the prominence that it gives to the conception of Christianity as the perfect law, which it is our privilege as well as our duty to obey. And to the perfect law, it is added, God requires a perfect obedience. The servant may not think that if he observe some of the precepts, he may claim a dispensation from others. If he 'stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all' (2¹⁰).

2. *Duty toward Man.*—This is summed up, as by Jesus in the commandment, now called the royal law: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (2⁸). The form of service which is specified as the most obvious is personal help of widows and orphans (1²⁷). In general it is said that those who have the wisdom which is from above are full of mercy and good fruits (3¹⁷).

What is meant by love of our neighbour is made clearer by a condemnation of the natural tendencies which work on as a leaven in the Christian society. As in the teaching of Jesus covetousness is spoken of as the master-principle of unregenerate human

nature. That the worshippers of Mammon are also fools is proved by the commonplace that the tenure of wealth is uncertain during life, and the loss of it inevitable at death (5^{1a}). A second principle incompatible with the royal law is respect of persons—in Moffatt's phrase 'servile regard to people,' which is seen even in the life of the congregation in the diverse treatment of the man with a gold ring and the man in vile raiment (2²). Were honour rendered where it is due it would be to those who are 'rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom' (2⁶).

Alongside of loving service of man the Epistle places purity, 'to keep himself unspotted from the world' (1²⁷). This meant that there was to be a complete breach with the unclean spirit of the world, but doubtless the hearers would think first of the Christian call to chastity in its sharp contrast with the moral corruption of the Gentile world. The virtue which they were bidden to practise included the self-control of the Greek sages, and embraced in addition all that Jesus meant when He required purity of heart.

A third element of character on which the highest store is set by our teacher is the grace of meekness. We have already observed a form of meekness in the piety which disposes the Christian to humble himself in the sight of the Lord, and to endure his trials without murmuring. In relation to man it has these marks—'let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath' (1¹⁹). It is self-effacing when it is only the interests of the lower nature that are affected, and even when forced into conflict, the Christian remains 'peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated' (3¹⁷). Its opposite is the egotism which is bent on self-display, and which, when denied what it seeks, nurses envy and jealousy and flares forth in anger. Above all, the writer exhorts us to meekness in bridling the tongue, by which is wrought so much of misery and confusion in the world, for it sets 'on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell' (3⁶).

III.—THE MAKING OF THE NEW MAN.

The purpose of our religion being to produce a new and higher humanity, the Epistle naturally has something to say about the means by which the natural man is changed, and also about the means by which the new man goes on towards perfection.

1. *The Genesis of the New Man.*—The transformation of the natural man is said to be effected by

'the word of truth' (1¹⁸). It is the same view which is familiar to many in the form that 'the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, is the effectual means of convincing and converting sinners.' As no reference is made to baptism, it would seem that the sacrament was regarded, not as the means of regeneration, but only as attesting it after it had taken place. By 'the word of truth' an early writer would mean, not of course the New Testament canon which was not yet in existence, but the gospel message, based on our Lord's teaching and the witnesses to the Resurrection, which was proclaimed by the evangelists and expounded by teachers of the time. And it has been a much debated question as to what precisely was this Gospel according to James, and how it compares with the Gospel according to Paul, which was to become the core of evangelical theology.

The Epistle of James undoubtedly has a message deserving the name of a gospel. For James no less than for Paul, Christianity is the great salvation, and there is the same conception of its blessings, of which the chief are deliverance from the guilt and the power of sin, and the sure promise of everlasting life. For him also God is the author of this salvation, and he looks for the return of the Lord in judgment to complete the Divine plan (5⁸). In particular, conversion is said to be the work of God, who of His own will brought us forth (1¹⁸)—a repudiation of the view, afterwards known as Pelagian, that in the last resort it is left to a man to save himself. On the other hand, the Epistle does not give the same place as Paul to the work of Christ. Paul gloried in the death of Christ as the ground of our salvation, and could sum up his message as the preaching of Christ crucified, but James has only one allusion to our Lord's passion, and then only refers to it as the heinous crime of the Jews (5⁶). There is, however, no difficulty in this, if the voice be that of James of Jerusalem, for in that case he would simply be representing the primitive Church, which believed that Jesus was the Messiah although He had been crucified, and had not yet apprehended the gospel of the Cross as the message in which, above all, it gloried. More serious is the contrast in regard to the topic which is discussed in theology as the method of the appropriation of salvation. According to Paul the central blessing of the gospel is justification, the acceptance of the sinner by God as righteous, and the one and sufficient condition of his justification is faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2¹⁶). It is 'not of works, that no man should glory' (Eph 2⁹). In James, on the other hand, it is declared that 'by

works a man is justified, and not only by faith' (2²⁴).

It is now generally agreed that the strictures of James do not touch the doctrine of justification by faith as taught by Paul. By faith James understood assent to the doctrines of Christianity, Paul meant by it the act of self-surrender and trust in which the sinner throws himself on God, and if the matter had been expounded in other language it might have appeared that they were substantially agreed. At the same time, there is a palpable difference between them in the proportion and perspective of the doctrine of justification. For James as for Paul, the forgiveness of sins was a vital part of the Christian salvation, but while Paul treats it as the starting-point and pre-supposition of the new life, James is more interested in conversion or the fashioning of the new man, and looks on justification as one of the privileges of the regenerate state. The explanation of the difference may be found in the fact that they represented two types of religious experience. In the modern investigation of conversion it has been brought out that with one class the motive leading to conversion is the fear of the Divine wrath against sin, and that conversion is experienced in a sense of Divine pardon, while for another class the chief motive is the desire to follow an ideal, and the decisive event is the decision to accept and follow Christ as Lord. And if Paul speaks for the first class, James represents the second. To him, we may suppose, the greatest thing in the world was to know the will of God and to do it; and the features of the new religion which took his soul captive were the lofty ethic of Jesus which he calls the perfect and royal law, and the doctrine of the heavenly Father, who is able and willing to give the help that is needed for the fulfilment of the law. We may think that Paul and the Reformers saw deeper when they taught that the sinner must seek first acceptance with God when all spiritual power will be added unto him; but as a fact many good Christians, and notably in the later age of the Church, have begun by feeling the spell of the law of Christ and following Him as Master, and have only become conscious as they served Him of the need and of the reality of the forgiveness of sins.

2. *Progress towards Perfection.*—In the perfecting of the new man, as at the initial stage, the word is mentioned as the principal means of grace. It is called the implanted word, since the law becomes as it were an organic part of the being, when it brings forth the fruits of meek and loving deeds,

to the salvation of the soul (1²¹). The readers are exhorted to faith and importunity in prayer, by which they obtain wisdom from above with all other spiritual blessings (1⁵). There is also a reference to the additional aids which were enjoyed in the life of the Christian society, with its common worship in which rich and poor met together on the footing of children of God and brethren in Christ. We have a glimpse of the congregation as a fellowship whose members placed their diverse gifts at the service of the body, and there is a special injunction to confess their sins one to another and to pray for one another (5¹⁶). Nor were the blessings sought in prayer merely spiritual, for the elders were charged with a ministry of healing to sick persons of the flock (5¹⁴). The writer also reckoned among the means of grace the providential events of the individual life, and especially the afflictions, which when borne with patience purify and enrich the soul (1⁴).

IV.—COUNTERFEIT RELIGION.

That the purpose of the Christian religion is to produce beings of a higher spiritual order, weaned from selfishness and worldliness, and becoming ever more Christlike, is a truth which has been little grasped by the mass of its adherents. But it has at least been known that the Lord requires some service, and so some offering has been made as a substitute for the one thing needful. The commonest compromise has been to think that the demands of our religion are fully met by being a member of the Christian Church, taking part in its worship, and accepting its doctrines. In the apostolic age it meant much even to profess a faith which was despised when it was not persecuted, but the Epistle pays no compliments on this score,

and earnestly bids its readers see to it that their religion is more than a form and an opinion. It was well to join in the worship of the Christian congregation, and to be instructed in the word of truth, but the vital matter was if they were living the life to which they were called by the gospel, 'being doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding their own selves' (1²²). In particular we are warned against supposing that Christianity consists merely in accepting doctrines concerning God and salvation. It was made plain that the Christian faith has a very substantial doctrinal foundation, but it was deemed most necessary to insist that the Church is more than a school of thought, and that, without character, orthodoxy is nothing. If by faith is meant merely intellectual belief, the devils share it with nominal Christians, and with small advantage from it (2¹⁹). The Epistle further warns us not to suppose that the highest form of Christian service is the labour of the theologians. It counsels disciples 'not to swell the ranks of the teachers,' and bids teachers remember that for them also there is a time to be silent. The reason given is that 'they will be judged with special strictness' (3¹). The writer was deeply impressed by the evils of theological controversy, with its sins against the law of love, while if he could have foreseen the labour to be expended by the critics on his Epistle he would probably have said that their energies would have been better employed in saving souls from death.

The message of the Epistle of James has been a needed rebuke to the Church in periods when it has sunk into formalism and a lifeless orthodoxy. In our day, when forms tend to be neglected and orthodoxy is at a discount, it suggests to seeking souls that they should at least begin by accepting the law of Christ as their rule of life.

Literature.

CHRISTIAN MASS MOVEMENTS IN INDIA.

FROM the Abingdon Press there comes a really interesting and informing book on *Christian Mass Movements in India*, by Dr. J. Waskom Pickett. We expected to be able to publish an article by Dr. Pickett on this subject some months ago, but most unfortunately his MS. was lost in transit and

is now being rewritten. So in the meantime we are giving as full an account as possible of the book, for the subject is an important one. Is it generally understood that 'the 1931 Census shows an increase of 1,542,684 in India's Christian population during the preceding decade'; or 'that probably ninety per cent. of this growth is due to Mass Movements'?

What is a Mass Movement? 'Whenever a group, larger than the family, accustomed to