

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

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Exposition and Homiletics
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Homilies by Various Authors.
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THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE.

CH. i. 1, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The following is a list of all those of this name mentioned in the New Testament:—

1. James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee and Salome: put to death by Herod, A.D. 44 (Acts xii. 2).

2. James the brother of the Lord (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3; Gal. i. 19).

3. James the son of Mary (Matt. xxvii. 56; Luke xxiv. 10, equivalent to James the Little; Mark xv. 40).

4. James the son of Alphæus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13).

5. James the *father* of Jude (Luke vi. 16; Acts i. 13. The ellipse in the expression, Ἰούδαν Ἰακώβου, is rightly supplied in the Revised Version, "Judas the son of James," not as A.V. "brother").

6. James (Acts xii. 17; xv. 13; xxi. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 7; Gal. ii. 9, 12).

7. James the brother of Jude (Jude 1).

8. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (ch. i. 1).

Of these eight, (1) numbers 2 and 6 are certainly the same (cf. Gal. i. 19 with ii. 9, 12). (2) 3 and 4, and perhaps 5, may also be identified; as may be (3) 7 and 8. Next, there can be little doubt that (4) 7 and 8 may be further identified with 2 and 6. It is true that the oldest manuscripts simply ascribe the Epistle to "James." κ , A, C, have no superscription. B has Ἰακώβου ἐπιστόλη. In the subscription, B has simply Ἰακώβου: κ , ἐπιστόλη Ἰακώβου: A, Ἰακώβου ἐπιστόλη. But no other James was of sufficient importance in the early Church, after the death of the son of Zebedee, for there to be any hesitation about this identification. The view that the Epistle was the work of the son of Zebedee scarcely requires serious consideration. It rests on the subscription in the Codex Corbeiensis (ff),

a Latin manuscript of the ninth century: "Explicit Epistola Jacobi filii Zebedei." It has lately been advanced, with arguments which are ingenious rather than solid, by Mr. Bassett ('The Catholic Epistle of St. James,' 1876). A refutation of this theory (if such be needed) may be found in Dean Plumptre's volume in the Cambridge Bible for schools, 'Epistle of St. James,' pp. 6—10.

We have now reduced the list to *three*—

1. James the son of Zebedee.
2. James the son of Alphæus, one of the twelve.
3. James the brother of the Lord, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and writer of the Epistle, one of the most prominent figures in the early Church.

Shall we proceed a step further, and identify 2 and 3? This brings us to a very difficult question, and one with regard to which much may be urged on either side. On behalf of the identification, reference may be made to Dr. Mill's volume on the 'Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels,' p. 219, *seq.*

Against it, it will be sufficient to direct the reader's attention to Bishop Lightfoot's dissertation on "The Brethren of the Lord" in his 'Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,' p. 247, *seq.* The identification rests mainly on John xix. 25 as compared with Matt. xxvii. 56 and Mark xv. 40; and requires us (1) to take "Mary the wife of Clopas" as "his mother's sister;" (2) to identify Clopas with Alphæus; and (3) to give ἀδελφός a wide meaning, so as to include first cousin. None of these things is impossible; indeed, they can scarcely be said to be improbable; and in favour of the identification it may be urged (1) that if the two Jameses are distinct, then one of them, James the son of Alphæus, one of the twelve, disappears altogether from the New Testament after Acts i. 13, his place being silently taken by another "James," whose relationship is not specified in the Acts, and who at once takes a prominent position in the Church. This is an important consideration, and has scarcely had sufficient weight attached to it. Elsewhere St. Luke is very careful in specifying and distinguishing characters; e.g. the two Philips are distinguished; the other James is "the brother of John," etc. It is, therefore, most improbable that, after having mentioned "James the son of Alphæus" in Acts i. 13, he should introduce an entirely new character in Acts xiii. 17 without any clue to his identity.

Again, (2) if the two are distinct, we have certainly *two*, and in all probability *three*, pairs of cousins bearing the same names: James, Joseph, and Simon, the Lord's brethren; and James, Josès, and Symeon (see Eusebius, iv. 22), the sons of Clopas (equivalent to Alphæus). The names, however, being all common ones, not much stress can be laid upon this argument.

On the other hand, in favour of the distinction of the two Jameses, it may be urged—

- (1) That it enables us to give the term "brother" its natural meaning.
- (2) That if the two are identified, James the Lord's brother must have been one of the twelve; whereas we are expressly told in John vii. 6

that his brethren did not believe on him. This, however, is not conclusive, for St. John only speaks in general terms, and one of the brethren may have been an exception. (It must be remembered that there is no sufficient reason for supposing Simon Zelotes to have been a brother of James, and that Judas the apostle was the *son* not *brother* of James. Hence the random assertion, so often made, that on this view *two* or even *three* of the "brethren" were apostles, falls to the ground.) The statement of St. Paul in Gal. i. 19 is too doubtful in meaning for any stress to be laid on it in either way. The *prima facie* view is that he *does* include the Lord's brother among the apostles. But no reliance can be placed on this, as it may fairly be asserted that ἀπόστολος is applied to others besides the twelve; or it is even possible (with R.V. margin) to render εἰ μὴ "but only," in which case St. James will be excluded from the number of the apostles.

(3) A third argument may be given in Bishop Lightfoot's words: "The Lord's brethren are mentioned in the Gospels in connection with Joseph his reputed father, and Mary his mother, never once with Mary of Clopas (the assumed wife of Alphæus). It would surely have been otherwise if the latter Mary were really their mother" ('Galatians,' p. 256).

(4) The identification is apparently due to St. Jerome in the fourth century, never being heard of before his day.

These last considerations are weighty, and will show us that there are difficulties in either view. If the identification be given up, there still remains two competing theories, known as the Helvidian and the Epiphonian.

(a) *The Helvidian*, which supposes that the "brethren" were own brothers of our Lord, the sons of Joseph and Mary.

But (a) the passages quoted in favour of this view utterly fail to establish the point for which they are adduced (see Lightfoot, 'Galatians,' p. 263).

(β) If Mary had other children of her own, why did our Lord, on the cross, commit her to the care of the beloved disciple, who took her to his own home from that hour?

(γ) The "brethren" appear to have been older than our Lord, from the part which they took in endeavouring to restrain him, in advising him, etc.

(δ) The early Church *must* have had knowledge on such a point as this.

(b) *The Epiphonian* theory, which supposes that the brethren were sons of Joseph by a former wife, has a considerable amount of support from early writers, and has lately been revived and supported with consummate ability by Bishop Lightfoot. It has the advantages mentioned above, and is not open to the same formidable objections as the Helvidian. But at the same time, the points urged in favour of the Hieronymian theory are weighty objections to it. The real choice, however, must lie between these two—the Hieronymian and the Epiphonian. The arguments are so evenly balanced, and the objections to both so considerable, that it is difficult to decide positively in favour of either; and the writer of these lines is inclined to think that the question is one of which, in our present state of knowledge, a

solution is impossible. He will, therefore, leave it undecided whether the author of our Epistle was the first cousin of the Lord, or his reputed half-brother, a son of Joseph by a former wife.

II. CHARACTER AND POSITION OF THE WRITER.

His position throughout the Acts of the Apostles appears as that of Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, the only example of *diocesan* episcopacy before the closing years of the apostolic age. The earliest reference to him in this capacity is found in Acts xii. 17, just about the time when persecution first fell on the members of the apostolic college. Subsequent notices of him are in Acts xv. and xxi. At the Council of Jerusalem he acts as president, sums up the debate, and gives sentence (ἐγὼ κρίνω, Acts xv. 19) ; and it has been thought, from certain slight coincidences with his Epistle, that the letter to the Syrian Churches was drawn up by him. Later on, St. Paul, on the occasion of his last visit to Jerusalem, "went in unto James, and all the elders were present" (Acts xxi. 18).

As might be expected from the bishop of the Church of the circumcision, the glimpses we get of him show us one who is zealous for the Law.

1. While St. Peter "proposes the emancipation of the Gentile converts from the Law, it is James who suggests the restrictive clauses of the decree."

2. Very characteristic is the allusion made by him to the fact that "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Acts xv. 21).

3. Equally characteristic is the tenderness shown by him for the feelings of the "many thousands of the Jews which believe, who are all zealous of the Law" (Acts xxi. 20), and the suggestion with regard to the vow (ver. 23).

4. In accordance with all this, it is not unnatural that the Judaizers in Gal. ii. 12 are spoken of as having come "from James." "It is not improbable," says Bishop Lightfoot, "that they came invested with some powers from James which they abused."

This is all that can be gathered from Holy Scripture with regard to the person and position of St. James. To fill in the outline of the picture thus sketched, we must have recourse to tradition and early historical notices, some of which are interesting and suggestive.

(1) The fact that one of the early appearances of the risen Saviour was to "James" is stated by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 7 ; but there is no further mention of it in the New Testament. We learn, however, from Jerome, 'Catalogus Scr. Eccl.' (s.v. "Jacobus"), that the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' contained an account of this appearance. The passage from this apocryphal Gospel is given by Mr. Nicholson, in his edition of the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' (p. 62), as follows:—

"And when the Lord had given his linen cloth to the servant of the priest, he went to James, and appeared unto him.

"For James had sworn, that he would not eat bread from that hour wherein he had drunk the cup of the Lord, until he saw him rising again from the dead.

". . . bring a table and bread.

". . . [and ?] he took up the bread, and blessed, and brake, and afterwards gave to James the Just, and said to him, My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from them that sleep."

Without giving credence to the details thus brought before us, it is at least interesting to notice how the *Jewish* character of St. James comes out in the vow attributed to him. Compare the oath of more than forty men, "neither to eat nor drink till they have killed Paul" (Acts xxiii. 12).

(2) Eusebius (Bk. II. xxiii.) has preserved the following remarkable account from Hegesippus, a writer of the second century, "who flourished nearest the days of the apostles :"—"James, the brother of the Lord, who, as there were many of this name, was surnamed the Just by all, from the days of our Lord until now, received the government of the Church with the apostles. This man was holy (*ἅγιος*) from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed himself with oil, and never used a bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary (*εἰς τὰ ἁγία*). He never wore woollen, but linen garments. He was in the habit of entering the temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees, and asking for the forgiveness of the people; so that his knees became as hard as camels', in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And, indeed, on account of his exceeding righteousness, he was called the Just (*διὰ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐκαλεῖτο δίκαιος*), and Oblias (*Ὠβλίας*), which is in Greek 'bulwark of the people' and 'righteousness,' as the prophets declare concerning him."

It is impossible to accept this account as literally true. There are difficulties in it which cannot be explained (see Lightfoot on 'Galatians,' p. 349; and Routh, 'Reliquiæ Sacræ,' vol. i. 228, *seq.*).

But there can be little doubt that there is *some* foundation for the portrait thus drawn; and his surname of "the Just" bears witness to his rigid observance of the Mosaic ritual. This appears to have been a name not uncommonly given to those who were signalized by an extreme devotion to the observance of the Law (Acts i. 23; xviii. 7; Col. iv. 11; cf. Schöttgen, 'Horræ Hebraicæ,' vol. i. p. 407).

(3) Clement of Alexandria, in a fragment of his 'Hypotyposes,' preserved by Eusebius (Bk. II. i.), has thus recorded St. James's appointment to the charge of the Church of Jerusalem: "Peter and James and John, after the ascension of our Saviour, did not contend for the honour, but chose James the Just as Bishop of Jerusalem." And in another fragment he says, "The Lord imparted the gift of knowledge to James the Just, to John, and Peter,

after his resurrection; these delivered it to the rest of the apostles, and they to the seventy."

(4) Epiphanius ('Hær.,' lxxviii. 14) strangely enough transfers to St. James the well-known statement of Polycrates with regard to St. John, that he wore the *πέταλον ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς* (cf. Eusebius, V. xxiv.)—a statement which cannot be literally true, but could never have been invented except of one who was known to regard the Mosaic ritual with the utmost veneration.

(5) Of the death of St. James two accounts have been preserved. (a) A brief one in Josephus, 'Ant.,' xix. ix. § 1: "Cæsar, having learnt the death of Festus, sends Albinus as governor of Judæa . . . Ananus . . . supposing that he had a favourable opportunity in consequence of the death of Festus, Albinus being still on the way, assembled the Sanhedrim, and brought before it James [the brother of him who is called Christ], and some others, and having charged them with breaking the laws, delivered them over to be stoned. But those of the city who seemed most moderate and most accurate in observing the Law were greatly offended at this, and secretly sent to the king, entreating him to send to Ananus with the request not to do these things, saying that he had not acted legally even before this." Eusebius (Bk. II. xxiii.) and Origen (in 'Matt.' xiii. 55, 'Contr. Celsus,' i. 47; ii. 13) also ascribe to the Jewish historian the statement that the murder of James was the immediate cause of the siege of Jerusalem and the troubles which fell upon the Jews. "These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was the brother of him that is called Christ, and whom the Jews had slain, notwithstanding his pre-eminent justice." There is, however, no sort of doubt that the passage is spurious. It is not found in the existing copies of Josephus.

(b) A longer and very remarkable account is given by Hegesippus in Eusebius, Bk. II. xxiii. The passage is so familiar that there is no need to repeat it here, more especially as it contains serious difficulties, and is unhesitatingly set aside by Bishop Lightfoot in favour of the shorter version of Josephus (see Lightfoot's 'Galatians,' p. 348, *seq.*; and cf. Routh's 'Reliquiæ Sacræ,' vol. i. p. 228, *seq.*).

The date of St. James's death is fixed for us by Josephus as happening between the death of Festus and the arrival of his successor Albinus, *i.e.* in the year A.D. 62 (see the date discussed in Lewin's 'Fasti Sacri,' p. lxxix.; cf. No. 1931).

III. OBJECT AND CHARACTER OF THE EPISTLE.

As might be expected from the position and character of the writer, the Epistle is addressed to *Jewish Christians*.

1. "To the twelve tribes . . . scattered abroad" (ch. i. 1). "The standpoint of the Epistle," it has been well said, "is essentially Jewish: the address, as we have seen, is to the twelve tribes; the terms 'rich' and 'poor'

are distributed after the manner of the Old Testament writers; the place of worship is the synagogue (ch. ii. 2); the definition of the faith they possessed is the Jewish creed, the *Sh'ma Israel*, that 'God is one,' (ch. ii. 19); the oaths prohibited are Jewish (ch. v. 12, etc.); the sins denounced are those to which the Jews were addicted—pride, self-conceit, ostentation, overbearing, fraud" (Bassett, 'The Catholic Epistle of St. James,' p. xlii.).

2. The somewhat wide salutation is practically limited to *Christians* by the following ἀδελφοί μου, and ch. ii. 1. That it is addressed to Christian Jews is also implied in ch. i. 18; ii. 7; v. 7, 14. There is force also in Huther's remark, that "if the author as a δοῦλος of Christ had written to non-Christians, his Epistle could only have had the intention of leading them to faith in Christ; but of such an intention there is not the slightest trace found in the Epistle" (Introduction to 'Commentary on St. James,' p. 11).

We cannot, however, understand the Epistle aright unless we remember that those to whom it is addressed, in becoming Christians, *had not ceased to be Jews*. We are probably prone to exaggerate the gulf which existed between Jews and Christians in the early days of the Church.¹ At first the preaching of the apostles was "rather a purification than a contradiction of the popular doctrine." Those who were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost must have carried home little more than the fact of the Messiahship of Jesus and the barest rudiments of Christianity. The gospel preached by those "who were scattered abroad upon the persecution which arose about Stephen" would be somewhat fuller, though still incomplete. It was preached "to none but Jews only;" but it spread the new faith over a wide region—"as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch." Thus Christian communities would be founded in the Jewish quarters in most large cities; but it must have been years before they ceased to be Jews and were entirely separated from the synagogue with a definite and complete organization of their own. A careful examination of the account of St. Paul's missionary labours as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles shows us that, even with the apostle of the Gentiles, it was often a matter of time before his converts were separated from the synagogue.

(1) At Antioch in Pisidia the separation was made after two sabbaths.

(2) At Iconium it was made at once.

(3) At Thessalonica for three sabbaths St. Paul was suffered to preach in the synagogue.

(4) At Berea apparently the whole synagogue was converted *en masse*.

(5) At Corinth for some time St. Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath."

(6) At Ephesus it was three months before "Paul separated the disciples."

¹ Very striking and significant is the fact that men who "had not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost was given," and who had been only baptized "into John's baptism," are nevertheless styled μαθηταί (Acts xix. 1-7).

In other cases, where men laboured, by whom the "liberty of the gospel" was not so emphatically preached, it was probably far longer before the separation was made. Nor is it likely that Berea was the solitary synagogue whose members were won over *en masse* to the Christian faith. For some years Jewish Christians would go on attending their synagogues and observing the Law as strictly as other Jews, only superadding to it "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." That they would do so is evidently supposed by St. James, from his remark about Moses in Acts xv. 21, and again from his description of the "*many thousands of the Jews which believe, who are all zealous of the Law*" (Acts xxi. 20). It is to such as these that he is writing. Not, perhaps, to a definitely organized and *mixed* Christian Church consisting of Jews and Gentiles, but rather to those synagogues which, like that of Berea, had embraced Christianity. To these he writes in the style of one of the old prophets.¹ Their synagogue was still open to all Jews. Into it the rich man might freely enter. Though not actually a "brother," still there was sufficient likelihood of the message reaching him for St. James to pen words of sternest denunciation, bidding him weep and howl for the miseries that were coming upon him. These communities of Jewish Christians, in the mind of St. James, stood in the position of Israel of old, and required just the same treatment at the hands of Christian teachers and prophets as Judæa and Samaria had received from the prophets of the old covenant (see especially ch. iv. 1—10 and v. 1—6, with notes). This theory of the relative position of the writer and his hearers will, it is believed, satisfactorily account for the remarkable language used, and the allusions to sins which, on any other theory, appear almost incredible in a Christian community.

The *object* of the Epistle is evidently to exhort these Jewish Christians to patience under the trials to which they were exposed. The Epistle begins and ends with this (ch. i. 2 and v. 7). The special trials were probably those of persecution from unbelieving Jews. To this there is apparently allusion made in ch. ii. 6 (see note). But while writing with this special object, St. James is not unmindful of the general needs of his readers, and takes occasion (1) to warn them against various sins and evil tendencies of which they stood in danger; and (2) to instruct them in various points of Christian morality.²

The Epistle, like the sapiential books of the Old Testament, which have so largely influenced the thoughts and phraseology of its writer, is almost impossible to analyze. The following scheme will, however, serve to show the principal subjects treated of, and the order in which they are discussed :—

¹ "The Epistle of St. James is the farewell voice of Hebrew prophecy" (Wordsworth).

² On the position of St. James as the great teacher of moral rectitude rather than of doctrine, see a striking passage in F. W. Robertson's 'Sermons,' vol. iii. p. 1, *seq.*

Ch. i. 1. Salutation.

1. Ch. i. 2—27.

(1) Vers. 2—18. The subject of temptation.

(2) Vers. 19—27. Exhortation (a) to hear rather than speak; (b) not only to hear, but to do.

2. Ch. ii.—iv. 12.

(1) Ch. ii. Warnings against (a) respect of persons (vers. 1—13); (b) a mere barren orthodoxy (vers. 14—26).

(2) Ch. iii. Further warnings against (a) over-readiness to teach, leading to general remarks on the need of governing the tongue (vers. 1—12); (b) jealousy and faction (vers. 13—18).

(3) Ch. iv. 1—12. Rebuke of quarrels arising from pride and greed.

3. Ch. iv. 13—v. 6.

(1) Ch. iv. 13—17. Special denunciation of overweening confidence in our own plans and our ability to carry them out.

(2) Ch. v. 1—6. Special denunciation of rich sinners.

4. Ch. v. 7—end. Concluding exhortations.

(1) Vers. 7—11. To patience and long-suffering.

(2) Ver. 12. Against swearing.

(3) Vers. 13—20. With regard to behaviour in health and sickness.

IV. THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE.

1. The *terminus ad quem* is definitely fixed by the death of St. James in A.D. 62.

2. How much earlier the Epistle was written will depend upon the view taken of its relation to the writings of St. Paul and St. Peter.

(1) There are coincidences between St. James and the First Epistle of St. Peter which can hardly be accidental, but must point to a knowledge on the part of one writer of the work of the other (see the notes on ch. iv. 6 and v. 20, where reasons are given for thinking that St. James is the earlier of the two).

(2) The relation between the teaching of St. James and St. Paul on the subject of justification is examined in the notes on ch. ii. 14, *seq.* If St. James is writing (as many think) with direct reference to a perversion of St. Paul's teaching, his Epistle will be subsequent to those to the Romans and Galatians, and will thus belong to the last years of his life, about A.D. 60—62. But there are strong reasons given in the notes for holding that the teaching of the two apostles is really entirely independent of each other, and that the error which St. James is combating is a strictly Jewish one. Thus we are still left entirely free in our search for a *terminus a quo*. It is, perhaps, impossible to fix one with any degree of exactness, but the arguments for an *early* rather than a *late* date seem to the present writer overwhelming. They may be summed up as follows:—

(a) The very slight line which appears to exist between Judaism and Christianity.

(b) The absence of definite Christian phraseology. Contrast the saluta-

tion in ch. i. 1 with that in other Epistles. The term *εὐαγγέλιον* never occurs, etc.

(c) The absence of dogmatic teaching. Our Lord's *name* is only mentioned twice (ch. i. 1 and ii. 1). "The apostle calls Christianity the law of freedom, the royal law of love which God writes on man's heart by faith; but otherwise the weightiest New Testament doctrines are not once touched on" (Döllinger's 'First Age of Christianity,' p. 106). An acknowledgment of our Lord's divinity would, however, underlie the expression in ch. ii. 1, and it must not be overlooked that, by designating himself as the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, the writer places Christ on an equality with God. Further, "the circumstance that the author directly unites the Divine judgment with the coming of the Lord, indeed designates the Lord himself as the Judge, points to this higher dignity of Christ" (Huther, p. 18). Still, it must strike every reader that there is very little specifically *Christian* doctrine in this Epistle.

In this respect it is interesting to compare it with St. John's Epistles, the *latest* of New Testament writings. Like St. James's, they are remarkable for the absence of allusion to the historic facts of Christianity, but how full of doctrine which is based upon those facts!

(d) From the absence of all reference to *Gentile* Christianity, and the questions which arose between Jewish and Gentile Christians, it may fairly be argued that the Epistle was written even prior to the Council of Jerusalem, A.D. 50.

On the whole, then, we conclude that we have before us the *very earliest* of the writings of the New Testament. With this accords its position (so far as the Epistles are concerned) in the oldest manuscripts, in which, as is well known, the Catholic Epistles precede those of St. Paul. "And this position," says Dean Stanley, in a remarkable passage, which it is well to quote at length, "does, in fact, exactly correspond to its character, both historically and morally. Whether it be or be not the earliest in time, which, however, there is much reason to believe, it is certainly the earliest in spirit. It belongs, if not to an age, at least to a mind, which knew nothing of the contest which shook the whole Christian society to its very foundations in the time of St. Paul; not only is the Gentile Christian completely out of sight, but the distinction between Jew and Christian is itself not yet brought to view; both are equally addressed in the Epistle as belonging to the twelve tribes scattered abroad; it passes at once from rebuking the unbelieving Jews of the higher orders to console the believing Jews of the lower orders; the Christian assembly is still spoken of under the name of 'synagogue;' the whole scene, in short, is that which appears before us in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. . . . And as in these outward circumstances, so also in its inward spirit, this Epistle exactly coincides with the character of him in whom the Jew and the Christian throughout his whole life were indistinguishably blended together. Christianity appears in it, not as a new dispensation, but as a development

and perfection of the old; the Christian's highest honour is, not that he is a member of the universal Church, but that he is the genuine type of the ancient Israelite; it instils no new principles of spiritual life, such as those which were to 'turn the world upside down,' in the teaching of Paul or of John, but only that pure and perfect morality which was the true fulfilment of the Law; it dwells, not on the human Teacher or Friend whose outward acts and words are recorded minutely in St. Mark, or on the human Sufferer whose sorrows and whose tenderness are brought out in St. Luke, nor yet on the inward and essential Divinity impressed upon us by St. John; but as we might again expect from the position of its author, it is the practical comment on that gospel which internal evidence as well as general tradition ascribes to the Church of Palestine, and in which our Lord appears emphatically as the Judge, the Lawgiver, and the King" ('Sermons on the Apostolic Age,' p. 305).¹

The place from which the Epistle was written was undoubtedly Jerusalem. Every notice of St. James, scriptural, historical, and legendary, connects him with this city, and no other place has ever been seriously suggested. Internal evidence points to the same locality, *e.g.* the allusions to the natural phenomena of Palestine, the "early and the latter rain," the *καύσων*, the bitter springs, etc.

V. AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.

So far this has been taken for granted. It will, however, be well to say a few words on this head before concluding the Introduction.

The testimony of Eusebius in the fourth century is given in 'Hist. Eccl.,' Bk. II. xxiii.: "These accounts are given respecting James, who is said to have written the first of the Catholic Epistles; but it is to be observed that it is considered spurious (*νοθεύεται*). Not many, indeed, of the ancients have mentioned it, nor yet that called the Epistle of Jude, which is also one of the seven called Catholic Epistles. Nevertheless, we know that these with the rest are publicly used in most of the Churches."

From this passage we gather—

1. That the Epistle was ascribed to James.
2. That doubts were current as to its genuineness.
3. That not much use was made of it by early writers.
4. That nevertheless it was generally read in the Churches.

In Bk. III. xxv. Eusebius ranks it among the *ἀντιλεγόμενα*, "which are nevertheless well known and recognized by most (*γνωρίμων τοῖς πόλλοις*)."

¹ The frequent references to the recorded discourses of our Lord in this Epistle cannot fail to strike the most careless reader. They are all pointed out in the notes on the text. But it is worth noticing in this connexion that we "find a statement in the works of Athanasius (tom. ii. p. 102) that the Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew was translated into Greek by *James the Bishop of Jerusalem*" (Stanley, *ubi supra*).

But his own opinion with regard to it may be shown from the fact that he makes free use of it in his other writings, and ascribes it to "the apostle" (see Westcott on the 'Canon,' p. 392).

At a later date than that of Eusebius it was apparently rejected by *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, but there is no need to discuss his witness. Turning to earlier writers, we find that *St. Cyprian* has no reference to it, and that there is nothing in the writings of *Tertullian* to show that he was acquainted with it. Further, Dr. Westcott says that "there is no external evidence to show that the Epistle of St. James or the Second Epistle of St. Peter was included in the *Vetus Latina*. The earliest Latin testimonies to both of them . . . are those of Hilary, Jerome, and Rufinus in his Latin version of Origen" ('Canon of the New Testament,' p. 234). Considerations of style and language are also said to lead to the conclusion that it did not form part of the original African Version of the Scriptures. It is found, however in what appears to be an early Italian recension in Codex Corbeiensis (ff).

Thus the Epistle would seem to have been unknown to the African Church of the first three centuries. Elsewhere the case is different. Against the absence of allusions in the remains of *Novatus* (Westcott on the 'Canon,' p. 345), and the silence of the '*Muratorian Fragment*,' we may set the fact that *Hippolytus* (A.D. 220) has one (unacknowledged) quotation from it: 'Ἡ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνιλεώς ἐστὶ τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος (edit. Lagarde, p. 122; cf. Jas. ii. 13), and that *Irenæus* (A.D. 180) has one fairly clear allusion to it: "Ipse Abraham . . . credidit Deo et reputatum est illi ad justitiam et amicus Dei vocatus est" ('Adv. Hær.,' IV. xvi. 2; cf. Jas. ii. 23); while at a still earlier date there are two important witnesses to the knowledge of this Epistle in the West, viz. *Hermas*, the author of 'The Shepherd,' and *Clement of Rome*. With regard to the former of these, Dr. Westcott writes that "'The Shepherd' bears the same relation to the Epistle of St. James as the Epistle of Barnabas does to that of the Hebrews. The idea of a Christian law lies at the bottom of them both; but, according to St. James, it is a law of liberty, centering in man's deliverance from corruption within and ceremonial without; while *Hermas* rather looks for its essence in the rites of the outward Church." Again, "whole sections of 'The Shepherd' are framed with evident recollection of St. James" ('Canon of the New Testament,' p. 180). The passages in question are too numerous for quotation, but may be seen in full in Professor *Charteris*' admirable volume on 'Canonicity,' p. 293. [The date of 'The Shepherd' is somewhat difficult to fix precisely. Zahn puts it as early as A.D. 97; others as late as A.D. 140. (See 'Dictionary of Christian Biography,' ii. p. 918.)] *Clement of Rome* (A.D. 96) was undoubtedly familiar with our Epistle, although he never names the author and makes no formal quotation from it. He speaks of Abraham as called "the friend" (ὁ φίλος προσαγορευθείς, ch. x.; cf. Jas. ii. 23), and instances Rahab as saved by *faith and hospitality* (ch. xii.), an instance "doubtless suggested by Heb. xi. 31 and Jas. ii. 25" (Lightfoot, *in loc.*). His

quotations of Prov. iii. 34 and x. 12 in ch. xxx. and xlix. agree closely with St. James's version of these passages, differing from both Hebrew and LXX. There appear also to be reminiscences of Jas. i. 8 in ch. xi., and of iv. 1 in ch. xvi. (see further Charteris, 'Canonicity,' p. 292). So strong did these coincidences seem to Bishop Lightfoot, that he actually spoke of them as "numerous and patent quotations" ('Commentary on Colossians,' p. 53), although he has since withdrawn the expression as "too strongly worded," while still maintaining that the references seem to be perfectly clear (ibid., p. 413). And yet Alford speaks of the allusions in both *Hermas* and *Clement* as "very doubtful indeed"!

To pass from the Western Church to the East. In the third century our Epistle was probably known to *Gregory Thaumaturgus* (A.D. 250. See Westcott on the 'Canon,' p. 353). It is directly quoted by *Dionysius of Alexandria* (A.D. 260. Ibid., p. 333); and *Origen* in one passage refers to it as "the Epistle in circulation under the name of James" (this is apparently the first occasion on which it is directly assigned to St. James). Elsewhere he quotes it without further remark ὡς παρὰ Ἰακώβου, and, according to the Latin version of his 'Homilies,' he calls the writer "the apostle," and cites it as "divina scriptura" (Westcott, p. 331). It is uncertain whether it was known to Origen's teacher, *Clement of Alexandria*. Eusebius (Bk. VI. xiv.) says somewhat vaguely that "Clement in his 'Hypotyposes' has given us abridged accounts of all the canonical Scriptures, not even omitting the disputed ones, I mean the Book of Jude and the other Catholic Epistles." This statement is criticized and examined by Dr. Westcott ('Canon of the New Testament,' p. 322), and the conclusion at which he arrives is that St. James was probably an exception, and that Clement had no knowledge of it. Against this we may, however, fairly set the fact that the Epistle is included in both the ancient Egyptian Versions, the Memphitic and Thebaic, which belong to the third or even possibly to the second century. While even earlier it finds a place in the *Peschito Syriac*, which undoubtedly dates from the second century. "This testimony," says Huther, "is of the greater importance, as the country from which the *Peschito* proceeded closely bordered on that from which the Epistle originated; and as that testimony was repeated and believed in by the Syriac Church of the following age." *Melito of Sardis* (A.D. 180) has one strong coincidence with it (see Westcott, pp. 201, 202), which exhausts the list of references in early writers.

From the days of Eusebius down to the sixteenth century scarcely a doubt was raised with regard to its authenticity. At the time of the Reformation its claims were again subjected to a close scrutiny, and, on grounds of internal evidence and supposed opposition to "Pauline" teaching, some writers were inclined to reject it. Luther's hasty and unjust estimate is well known. In the preface to the New Testament (1522) he calls it "a right strawy Epistle, for it has no true evangelical character." This remark disappears from later editions, but was never formally retracted. Nor does it stand alone. Huther quotes also statements to the effect that

it is "no genuine apostolic Epistle" ('Sermons on the Epistle of St. Peter,' 1523); that it "was neither written by an apostle nor has the true apostolic ring, nor does it agree with the pure doctrine" ('Kirchenpostille,' delivered in 1527-8). So in his 'Table Talk,' "Many have endeavoured and laboured to reconcile the Epistle of James with Paul. Philip Melancthon refers to it in his 'Apology,' but not with earnestness; for 'faith justifies' and 'faith does not justify' are plain contradictions. Whoever can reconcile them, on him I will put my cap, and allow him to call me a fool."

This depreciatory verdict of Luther's rests on an entire misconception of apostolic teaching, and has not convinced many of the non-apostolic origin of our Epistle. The "contradiction" between St. James and St. Paul is shown in the notes on ch. ii. to be purely imaginary. And it is believed that the references to the Epistle in early writers which have been given above, taken together with the steady manner in which it won its way to general acceptance, are amply sufficient to prove it to be a genuine work of him whose name it bears; especially when we consider that it is not difficult to account for the hesitation felt in early days as to the recognition of its claims. "The Epistle was directed *only* to the Jewish-Christian Churches, and the more these, by holding to the original type, distinguished and separated themselves from the other Churches, the more difficult must it have been to regard an Epistle directed to them as the common property of the Church, especially as it appeared to contain a contradiction to the doctrine of the Apostle Paul" (Huther, p. 24). That the Epistle was finally accepted by the whole Church in spite of these adverse circumstances is surely a consideration to which great weight should be given.

VI. AUTHORITIES FOR THE TEXT.

1. The Epistle is contained in the following uncial manuscripts:—

The four great Bibles of the fourth and fifth centuries. Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (Σ), of the fourth century; Codex Alexandrinus (A) and Codex Ephræmi (C), of the fifth century. (The last-mentioned manuscript is defective towards the close of the Epistle, and only contains ch. i. 1—iv. 2.)

Besides these, it is found in three secondary uncials: Codex Mosquensis (K²), of the ninth century; Codex Angelicus (L, formerly G), of the ninth century (quite a different manuscript from the very valuable L, Codex Regius, of the Gospels); Codex Porphyrianus (P), a palimpsest of the ninth century, published by Tischendorf (in this ch. ii. 12—21 are barely legible).

2. Besides these uncial manuscripts, it is contained in more than two hundred cursive manuscripts.

3. Versions—

(1) Syriac; the Peschito (second century); and Philoxenian of the fifth or sixth.

(2) The Memphitic and Thebaic (second or third century) Egyptian Versions.

(3) As has been already mentioned, it was not in the original old Latin Version, as made in Africa. It is found, however, in Codex Corbeiensis (ff), which apparently contains an Italian recension of the text, and, partially in (m) the readings extracted by Mai from a speculum wrongly ascribed to Augustine. This contains "an interesting but not early old Latin text" (Hort, Introduction, ii. p. 89). The fragments found in s (Codex Bobbiensis), often quoted as "Old Latin," are said by Dr. Hort to be "apparently Vulgate only." It is scarcely necessary to mention that the Epistle is contained in St. Jerome's version; but the reader should note that the readings quoted in the Commentary as Vulgate are taken (unless it is stated to the contrary) from Codex Amiatinus, and not from the Clementine edition.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—**SALUTATION.** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. (On the person who thus describes himself, see the Introduction.) It is noteworthy that he keeps entirely out of sight his natural relationship to our Lord, and styles himself simply “a bond-servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” That, and that alone, gave him a right to speak and a claim to be heard. *Δούλος* is similarly used by St. Paul in Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 1; by St. Peter in 2 Pet. i. 1; and by St. Jude ver. 1. It is clearly an *official* designation, implying that his office is one “in which, not his own will, not the will of other men, but only of God and of Christ, is to be performed” (Huther). To the twelve tribes, etc. Compare the salutation in Acts xv. 23, which was also probably written by St. James: “The apostles and the elder brethren unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, greeting.” (1) *Χαίρειν* is common to both, and not found elsewhere in apostolic greetings. (It is used by Ignatius in the opening of all his epistles except that to the Philadelphians.) (2) The letter in the Acts is addressed to *Gentile* communities in *definite* regions; St. James’s Epistle, to *Jews of the dispersion*. So also his contemporary Gamaliel wrote “to the sons of the dispersion in Babylonia, and to our brethren in Media, and to all the dispersion of Israel” (Frankel, ‘*Monatschrift*,’ 1853, p. 413). *Ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς* (cf. *δωδεκάφυλον* in Acts xxvi. 7; Clem., ‘*Rom.*,’ 1, § lv.; ‘*Protev. Jacob.*,’ c. i.). Such expressions are important as tending to show that the Jews were regarded as representing, not simply the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, but the whole nation, including those so often spoken of as “the lost tribes” (cf. 1 Esdr. vii. 8). *Διασπορά*. The abstract put for the concrete. It is the word used by the

LXX. for the “dispersion” (2 Macc. i. 27, Jud. v. 19; cf. Dent. xxviii. 25, etc.), i.e. the Jews “so scattered among the nations as to become the seed of a future harvest” (Westcott on St. John vii. 35). (On the importance of the dispersion as preparing the way for Christianity, see the ‘*Dictionary of the Bible*,’ vol. i. p. 441.) It was divided into three great sections: (1) the *Babylonian*, i.e. the original dispersion; (2) the *Syrian*, dating from the Greek conquests in Asia, Seleucus Nicator having transplanted large bodies of Jews from Babylonia to the capitals of his Western provinces; (3) the *Egyptian*, the Jewish settlements in Alexandria, established by Alexander and Ptolemy I, and thence spreading along the north coast of Africa. To these we should, perhaps, add a fourth—(4) the *Roman*, consequent upon the occupation of Jerusalem by Pompey, B.C. 63. All these four divisions were represented in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (see Acts ii. 8–11)—a fact which will help to account for St. James’s letter. The whole expression, “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” makes it perfectly clear that St. James is writing (1) to Jews, and (2) to those beyond the borders of Palestine.

Vers. 2–18.—**THE SUBJECT OF TEMPTATION.** This section may be subdivided as follows:—(1) The value of temptation (vers. 2–4). (2) Digression suggested by the thought of perfection (vers. 5–11). (3) Return to the subject of temptation (vers. 12–18).

Vers. 2–4.—*The value of temptation.* Considered as an opportunity, it is a cause for joy.

Ver. 2.—**My brethren.** A favourite expression with St. James, occurring no less than fifteen times in the compass of this short Epistle. Count it all joy, etc.; cf. 1 Pet. i. 6, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temp-

tations. that the proof of your faith (τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως) . . . might be found unto praise," etc. The coincidence is too close to be accidental, although the shade of meaning given to δοκίμιον is slightly different, if indeed it has any right in the text in St. Peter (see Hort, vol. ii. p. 102). Here it has its proper force, and signifies that by which the faith is tried, i.e. the instrument of trial rather than the process of trial. Thus the passage in ver. 3 becomes parallel to Rom. v. 3, "tribulation worketh patience." With regard to the sentiments of ver. 2, "Count it all joy," etc., contrast Matt. vi. 13. Experience, however, shows that the two are compatible. It is quite possible to shrink beforehand from temptation, and pray with intense earnestness, "Lead us not into temptation," and yet, when the temptation comes, to meet it joyfully. Περιπέσῃτε. The use of this word implies that the temptations of which St. James is thinking are external (see Luke x. 30, where the same word is used of the man who fell among thieves). 1 Thess. ii. 14 and Heb. x. 32, 33 will show the trials to which believing Jews were subject. But the epithet "manifold" would indicate that we should not confine the word here to trials such as those.

Ver. 3.—*Patience*. Ἱσχυροσύνη in general is patience with regard to things, μακροθυμία is rather long-suffering with regard to persons (see Trench on 'Synonyms,' p. 186, and compare the notes on ch. v. 7, etc.).

Ver. 4.—*Patience alone is not sufficient*. It must have scope given it for its exercise that it may have its "perfect work." That ye may be perfect (ὡς ἦτε τέλει); cf. Matt. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect." Both τέλειος and δόκλος were applied to the initiated, the fully instructed, as opposed to novices in the ancient mysteries; and as early as 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7 we find τέλειος used for the Christian who is no longer in need of rudimentary teaching, and possibly this is the thought here. The figure, however, is probably rather that of the full-grown man. Τέλειοι, equivalent to "grown men" as opposed to children; δόκλοι, sound in every part and limb (cf. δόκλος in Acts iii. 16). From this τέλειος assumes a moral complexion, that which has attained its aim. Compare its use in Gen. vi. 9 and Deut. xviii. 13, where it is equivalent to the Latin integer vitæ, and the following passage from Stobæus, which exactly serves to illustrate St. James's thought in vers. 4 and 5, Τὸν ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα τέλειον εἶναι λέγουσιν, διὰ τὸ μηδεμίαν ἀπολείπεισθαι ἀρετῆς. The "perfection" which is to be attained in this life may be further illustrated from Heb. xii. 23—a passage which is often misunderstood, but which undoubtedly means

that the men were made perfect (πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων), and that not in a future state, but here on earth, where alone they can be subject to those trials and conflicts by the patient endurance of which they are perfected for a higher state of being. The whole passage before us (vers. 2—6) affords a most remarkable instance of the figure called by grammarians anadiplosis, the repetition of a marked word at the close of one clause and beginning of another. "The trial of your faith worketh patience; but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. But if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of the giving God . . . and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing doubting, for he that doubteth," etc.

Vers. 5—11.—*Digression suggested by the thought of perfection*. There can be no true perfection without wisdom, which is the gift of God, and must be sought from him. It is possible that the thought and connection of the passage is due to a reminiscence of Wisd. ix. 6, "For though a man be never so perfect (τέλειος) among the children of men, yet if thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded." But whether this be so or not, the teaching is manifestly founded on our Lord's words with regard to prayer, Matt. vii. 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you;" and Mark xi. 23, "Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say . . . and shall not doubt (διακρίθῃ) in his heart," etc. Τοῦ διδόντος Θεοῦ. The order of the words shows that God's character is that of a Giver: "the giving God." His "nature and property" is to give as well as to forgive. Man often spoils his gifts, (1) by the grudging way in which they are given, and (2) by the reproaches which accompany them. God, on the contrary, gives to all (1) liberally, and (2) without upbraiding. Ἀπλῶς: only here in the New Testament, but cf. ἀπλότης in Rom. xii. 8; 2 Cor. viii. 2; ix. 11, 13. Vulgate, affluenter; A.V. and R.V., "liberally." It is almost equivalent to "without any arrière pensée." Μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος: cf. Ecclus. xli. 22, Μετὰ τὸ δοῦναι μὴ ὀνειδίσει.

Ver. 6.—The A.V. "nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea," is unfortunate, as suggesting a play upon the words which has no existence in the original. Render, with R.V., nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea. Κλύδων, the surge; ἀνεμίζόμενος and ριπιδόμενος both occur here only.

Vers. 7, 8.—The A.V., which makes ver. 8 an independent sentence, is certainly wrong. Render, Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord, double-minded man that he is, unstable in all his ways. So Vulgate, Vir duplex animi, inconstans

in omnibus viis. (The Clementine Vulgate, by reading *est* after *inconstans*, agrees with A.V.) Another possible rendering is that of the R.V. margin, "Let not that man think that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, shall receive," etc. But the rendering given above is better. **Double-minded**; *διψυχος* occurs only here and in ch. iv. 8 in the New Testament. It is not found in any earlier writer, and was perhaps coined by St. James to represent the idea of the Hebrew, "an heart and an heart (לֵב אֶחָד וְלֵב אֶחָד)" (1 Chron. xii. 33). It took root at once in the vocabulary of ecclesiastical writers, being found three times in Clement of Rome, and frequently in his younger contemporary Hermas. St. James's words are apparently alluded to in the Apost. Const., VII. xi., *Μὴ γίνου διψυχος ἐν προσευχῇ σου εἰ ἔσται ἡ οὐ*: and cf. Clem., "Rom.," c. xxiii. The same thought is also found in Ecclus. i. 28, "Come not before him with a double heart (*ἐν καρδίᾳ διπλῇ*)."
Unstable; *ἀκατάστατος*, only here and (probably) ch. iii. 8.

Vers. 9—11.—A very difficult passage, three interpretations of which are given, none of them entirely satisfactory or free from difficulties. (1) "But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate [*i.e.* his Christian dignity]; but let the rich [brother glory] in his humiliation" (*i.e.* in being poor of spirit, Matt. v. 3). (2) "But let the brother," etc. (as before); "but the rich man [rejoices] in his humiliation" (*i.e.* in what is really his degradation; cf. "whose glory is in their shame," Phil. iii. 19). (3) "But let the brother, . . . but let the rich [grieve] in his humiliation." The ellipse of *ταπεινωθῶ* in this last is very harsh and unexampled, so that the choice really lies between (1) and (2). And against (1) it may be urged (a) that the "rich" are never elsewhere spoken of as "brothers" in this Epistle. See ch. ii. 6; v. 1, and of the way in which they are spoken of in other parts of the New Testament (*e.g.* Luke vi. 24; Matt. xix. 23; Rev. vi. 15); and in Ecclus. xiii. 3: (b) that in ver. 11 the thought is, not of *riches* which make to themselves wings and fly away, but of the *rich man himself*, who fades away; (c) that *ταπεινωσις* is elsewhere always used for external lowliness of condition, not for the Christian virtue of humility (see Luke i. 48; Acts viii. 33; Phil. iii. 21). On the whole, therefore, it is best to adopt (2) and to supply the indicative: "but the rich man [not 'brother'] glories in his humiliation;" *i.e.* he glories in what is really lowering. **Because as the flower**, etc. A clear reference to Isa. xl. 6, which is also quoted in 1 Pet. i. 24.

Ver. 11.—*Ἀνέτειλε . . . ἐξήραν . . .*

ἐξέκασε . . . ἀπώλετο. Observe the aorists here and in ver. 24. The illustration or case mentioned by way of example is taken as an actual fact, and the apostle falls into the tone of narration (see Winer, 'Grammar of New Testament Greek,' § xl. 5, 6, 1). Render, *For the sun arose with the scorching wind, and withered the grass; and the flower thereof fell away, and the grace of the fashion of it perished.* *Καὶ ὥς* may refer to (1) the heat of the sun, or (2) more probably, the hot Samûm wind, the *قارون* of the Old Testament (Job xxvii. 21; Ezek. xvii. 10, etc.).

Vers. 12—18.—*Return to the subject of temptation.* Ver. 2 taught that temptation regarded as an *opportunity* should be a cause for joy. Ver. 12 teaches that the *endurance* of temptation brings a blessing from God, even the crown of life. Comp. Rev. ii. 10, the only other place in the New Testament where the "crown of life" is mentioned; and there also it stands in close connection with the endurance of temptation. Elsewhere we read of the "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. iv. 8), and the "crown of glory" (1 Pet. v. 4). The genitive (*τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς*) is probably the gen. ex. ex., "the crown, which is life." 'Ο Κύριος of the Received Text has but slight authority. It is wanting in A, B, x, ff, and is deleted by the Revisers, following all recent editors. Render, *which he promised*, etc. The subject is easily understood, and therefore, as frequently in Jewish writings (*e.g.* 1 Maccabees), omitted from motives of reverence.

Ver. 13.—God is not the author of temptation; cf. Ecclus. xv. 11, 12, "Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away: for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth. Say not thou, He hath caused me to err: for he hath no need of the sinful man." **From God**; *ἀπὸ Θεοῦ* (the article is wanting in x, A, B, C, K, L). Contrast *ὅτι τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας*. 'Απὸ Θεοῦ is a more general expression than *ἐκ Θεοῦ*, which would refer the temptation *immediately* to God. 'Απὸ Θεοῦ is frequently used as a kind of adverb *divinitus*. **Cannot be tempted**; *ἀπειράστος*: an *ἄπαξ λεγόμενον*. Syriac, "is not tempted with evils;" Vulgate, *intenter malorum*; R.V., "cannot be tempted of evil;" R.V. margin, "is untried in evil." Alford has a good note on this word, in which he points out that it has but two meanings: (1) that has not been tried; (2) that has not tried. The rendering of the Vulgate is thus etymologically possible, but is against the context. The use of the word may, perhaps, be extended somewhat wider than the renderings given above would allow, so that it may be paraphrased as "out of the sphere of evils" (Farrar). Neither tempteth he, etc. Here the writer

has in his mind the conception of a direct temptation from God. *Αὐτός* is emphatic. Render with R.V., *And he himself tempteth no man*.

Ver. 14 states the true origin of temptation. While the *occasion* might be of God "in the order of his providence and of our spiritual training," the *inclination* is not of him. Compare with this verse the description of the harlot in Prov. vii. 6—27. Here lust is personified, and represented as a seducing harlot, to whose embraces man yields, and the result is the birth of sin, which in its turn gives birth to death.

Ver. 15 shows where temptation passes into sin. *Ἐπιθυμία*, lust, is clearly not in itself "true and proper sin," but it is no less clear that, as our Article IX. says, it "hath of itself the nature of sin." With this whole passage we should compare St. Paul's teaching on *ἐπιθυμία*, *ἀμαρτία*, and *θανάτος*, in Rom. vii. 7—11. *Ἀποκτείνε* occurs only here and in ver. 18; translate, *gendereth*.

Vers. 16—18.—The connection of thought with what goes before appears to be this. God cannot be the author of temptation, which thus leads to sin and death, because all good and perfect gifts, and these only, come from him.

Ver. 16.—*Do not err*; better, *be not deceived*; *μὴ πλανᾶσθε*. The same formula is also found in 1 Cor. vi. 9; xv. 33; Gal. vi. 7.

Ver. 17.—*Every good gift, etc.* The words form a hexameter verse, though this is probably accidental, and no sign that they are a quotation. *Δόσις* and *δώρημα* should be distinguished. "Every kind of gift that is good, and every one that is perfect in its kind" (Dean Scott). *Δόσις* and *δῶρον* occur together in the LXX. in Prov. xxi. 14. They are expressly distinguished by Philo, who says that the latter involves the idea of magnitude and fulness, which is wanting to the former (see Lightfoot on 'Revision,' p. 77). "Every good gift and every perfect boon," B.V. The Father of lights (*ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν φώτων*). The word must refer to the heavenly bodies, of which God may be said to be the Father, in that he is their Creator (for "Father," in the sense of Creator, cf. Job xxxviii. 28). From him who "made the stars also" comes down every good and perfect gift, and with him "there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." These last words appear to fix the meaning of *φῶτα*, as *τροπή* is used in the LXX. as in classical writers for the changes of the heavenly bodies (see Job xxxviii. 33; Deut. xxxiii. 14; Wisd. vii. 18). *Οὐκ ἔστι*, "there is no room for." It negatives, not only the fact, but the possibility also (cf. Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11).

Ver. 18.—*Begat*; literally, *brought forth*; *ἀπεκύνησεν*. The word has been already used of sin in ver. 15. The recurrence of it here points to the connection of thought. The offspring of sin has been shown to be death. God, too, who is both Father and Mother (Bengel), has his offspring. But how different! *Ὑς* (*ἡμᾶς*). To whom does this refer? (1) To all Christians. (2) To Christians of the apostolic age. (3) To Jewish Christians, to whom the Epistle is specially addressed. Probably (3). Just as Israel of old was Jehovah's firstborn (Exod. iv. 22), so now the germ of the Christian Church, as found in these Judæo-Christian communities, was to be "a kind of firstfruits." The thought may be illustrated from a striking parallel in Philo ('De Creat. Princ.'): *Τὸ σὺμπαν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος . . . τοῦ σὺμπαντος ἀνθρώπων γένους ἀπενεμήθη ὅλα τις ἀπαρχὴ τῇ ποιητῇ καὶ πατρὶ*. Transfer this from the Jewish to the Judæo-Christian communities, and we have the very thought of the apostle. By the word of truth (cf. 1 Pet. i. 23, where, as here, the new birth is connected with the Word of God). A kind of firstfruits of his creatures (*ἀπαρχή*). The image is taken from the wave sheaf, the firstfruits of the harvest, the earnest of the crop to follow. St. Paul (according to a very possible reading) has the same figure in 2 Thess. ii. 13, "God chose you as firstfruits (*ἀπαρχήν*);" see R.V. margin. Elsewhere he applies it to Christ, "the Firstfruits of them that are asleep" (1 Cor. xv. 20). "His creatures (*κτίσματα*)." It does not appear to be absolutely necessary to extend the use of this word so as to include the irrational creation as well as mankind. *כִּרְיָ* is frequently used in rabbinical writings for the *Gentile world*, and *κτίσμα* may be given the same meaning here, and perhaps *κτίσις* in Mark xvi. 15; Rom. viii. 19, etc.; Col. i. 23.

Vers. 19—27.—EXHORTATION (1) TO HEAR RATHER THAN TO SPEAK, (2) NOT ONLY TO HEAR, BUT ALSO TO DO.

Ver. 19.—The text requires correction. For *ἵστε* . . . *ἔστω* *πᾶς* of the Textus Receptus, read, *ἵστε* *ἀδελφοί* *μοι* *ἀγαπῶντι* *ἔστω* *δὲ* *πᾶς*, *κ*, A¹, B, C, Latt. *ἵστε* is probably indicative, and refers to what has gone before. "Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man," etc. The verse gives us St. James's version of the proverb, "Speech is silver. Silence is golden." Similar maxims were not unfrequent among the Jews. So in Ecclus. v. 11, "Be swift to hear; and let thy life be sincere; and with patience give answer;" cf. iv. 29, "Be not hasty in thy tongue, and in thy deeds slack and remiss." In the rabbinical work, 'Pirke Aboth,' I. xii., we have the following saying of Rabbi Simeon, the son

of Gamaliel (who must, therefore, have been a contemporary of St. James): "All my days I have grown up amongst the wise, and have not found ought good for a man but silence; not learning but doing is the groundwork; and whose multiplies words occasions sin." This passage is curiously like the one before us, both in the thoughts and in the expressions used.

Ver. 20 gives the reason why men should be slow to wrath. Because man's wrath does not work God's righteousness (δικαιοσύνην Θεοῦ), the righteousness which God demands and requires.

Ver. 21.—With the form of expression in this verse, comp. 1 Pet. ii. 1, "Putting away, therefore, all wickedness (ἀποθέμενοι οὖν πᾶσαν κακίαν), and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as new-born babes long for the spiritual milk," etc. Filthiness (ρυπαρίαν). Here only in the New Testament, never in LXX.; but the adjective ρυπαρός is the word used of the "filthy garments" in Zech. iii. 3, 4—a narrative which illustrates the passage before us. Κακία is not vice in general, but rather that vicious nature which is bent on doing harm to others (see Lightfoot on Col. iii. 8). Thus the two words ρυπαρία and κακία comprise two classes of sins—the sensual and the malignant. Engrafted; rather, *implanted*. The word is only found again in Wisd. xii. 10, where it signifies "inborn." St. James's teaching here is almost like a reminiscence of the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii. 3, etc.). The "implanted Word" is the gospel teaching. The seed is the Word of God" (Luke viii. 11).

Ver. 22.—They are not merely to receive and hear the Word; they must also act upon it. Compare St. Paul's teaching in Rom. ii. 13, "For not the hearers (ἀκροαταί) of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified." Ἀκροατής occurs nowhere else except in these passages. Deceiving your own selves (παρalogίζειν); to lead astray by false reasonings; only here and in Col. ii. 4. Not uncommon in the LXX.

Vers. 23, 24.—Illustration from life, showing the folly of being led astray. His natural face (τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ); literally, *the face of his birth*. The expression is an unusual one, but there is no doubt of its meaning. In a glass; rather, in a mirror, ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ: cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 12, Δι' ἐσόπτρου. The mirror of burnished brass.

Ver. 24.—Observe the tenses; literally, He considered (κατενόησε) himself, and has gone away (ἀπελήλυθε), and straightway forgot (ἐπελάθετο) what he was like (compare note on ver. 11).

Ver. 25.—Application of the illustration in the form of a contrast. Looketh into (παρεκύβηας) for the literal sense of the word, see John xx. 5, 11; Luke xxiv. 12. The figurative meaning occurs only here and in 1 Pet. i. 12. Properly it signifies to "peep into." See its use in the LXX., Gen. xvi. 8; Prov. vii. 6; Ecclus. xxi. 23. When used figuratively, it conveys the idea of looking into, but scarcely with that intensive force which is often given to it, and for which ἐγκύπτειν would be required (see Dr. Field's 'Otium Norvicense,' p. 147). Its use in St. Peter, *loc. cit.*, is easy enough to explain. Angels desire even a glimpse of the mysteries. But what are we to say of its use here? Is it that, though the man took a good look at himself in the glass (κατανοεῖν, consider, is a very strong word; cf. Rom. iv. 19), yet he forgot what he was like, while the man who only peeps into the law of liberty is led on to abide (παρამείνας) and so to act? The perfect law of liberty; rather, *the perfect law, even the law of liberty*; νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας. The substantive is anarthrous, yet the attributive has the article. This construction serves to give greater prominence to the attributive, and requires the rendering given above (see Winer, § xx. 4). The conception of the gospel as a "law" is characteristic of St. James (cf. ch. ii. 8, "the royal law," and ch. iv. 11). A forgetful hearer (ἀκροατὴς ἐπιλησμονής); i.e. a hearer characterized by forgetfulness, contrasted with ποιητὴς ἔργου, a doer characterized by work.

Ver. 26.—Seem (δοκεῖ); seems to himself rather than to others; translate, with R.V., *thinketh himself to be*. Vulgate, *Si quis putat se esse*. Religious (θρησκός). It is difficult to find an English word which exactly answers to the Greek. The noun θρησκεία refers properly to the external rites of religion, and so gets to signify an over-scrupulous devotion to external forms (Lightfoot on Col. ii. 18); almost "ritualism." It is the ceremonial service of religion, the external forms, a body of which εὐσεβεία is the informing soul. Thus the θρησκός (the word apparently only occurs here in the whole range of Greek literature) is the diligent performer of Divine offices, of the outward service of God, but not necessarily anything more. This depreciatory sense of θρησκεία is well seen in a passage of Philo ('Quod Det. Pot. Jus,' 7), where, after speaking of some who would fain be counted among the εὐλαβεῖς on the score of divers washings or costly offerings to the temple, he proceeds: Πηλάνηται γὰρ καὶ οὗτος τῆς πρὸς εὐσεβείαν ὁδοῦ, θρησκείαν ἀντὶ δοσότητος ἡγουμένους (see Trenchon on 'Synonyms,' from whom the reference is here taken). "How delicate and fine, then, St.

James's choice of *θρησκός* and *θρησκεία*! 'If any man,' he would say, 'seem to himself to be *θρησκός*, a diligent observer of the offices of religion, if any man would render a pure and undefiled *θρησκεία* to God, let him know that this consists, not in outward lustrations or ceremonial observances; nay, that there is a better *θρησκεία* than thousands of rams and rivers of oil, namely, to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God (Micah vi. 7, 8); or, according to his own words, 'to visit the widows and orphans in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world'" (Trench on 'Synonyms,' p. 170: the whole passage will well repay study. Reference should also be made to Coleridge, 'Aids to Reflection,' p. 15). Bridleth not (*μὴ χαλινάγειν*). The thought is developed more fully afterwards (see ch. iii. 2, etc., and for the word, cf. Polyc., 'Ad Phil.,' c. v.).

Ver. 27.—*God and the Father*; rather, *our God and Father*. The article (*τῷ*) binds together *Θεῷ* and *Πατρί*, so that they

should not be separated, as in the A.V. To visit the fatherless . . . and to keep himself unspotted. Observe that our duty towards our fellow-men is placed first; then that towards ourselves. *Ἐπισκέπτεσθαι* is the regular word for visiting the sick; of Ecclus. vii. 35, "Be not slow to visit the sick (*μὴ ὀκνεῖ ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ἀρρώστον*)."

The fatherless and widows (*ὀρφανούς καὶ χήρας*). These stand here (as so often in the Old Testament) as types of persons in distress; the "persons miserabiles" of the Canon Law (see e.g. Deut. x. 18; Ps. lxxviii. 5; lxxxii. 3; Isa. i. 17; and cf. Ecclus. iv. 10). "Be as a father unto the fatherless, and instead of an husband unto their mother; so shalt thou be as the son of the Most High, and he shall love thee more than thy mother doth." To keep himself unspotted. Man's duty towards himself. (For *ἄσπιλον*, cf. 1 Tim. vi. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19; 2 Pet. iii. 14.) From the world. This clause may be connected either with *τηρεῖν* or with *ἄσπιλον*, as in the phrase, *καθαρὸς ἀπὸ* in Acts xx. 26.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—4.—*Temptation as cause for joy*. What a reversal of the ordinary view, which regards trial and temptation as an unwelcome visitation! Prosperity is the blessing of the old covenant, adversity is the blessing of the new. Temptations should be regarded, not only as *probations*, i.e. as testing what we are, but as designed also for moral discipline and *improvement*. The character that has never been tried may be innocent, but it is liable to be crushed. It is lacking in the strength and vigour which come from the formed habit of resistance, and therefore temptation may be the means of strengthening him who is subjected to it. It thus becomes an *opportunity*, and as such should be welcomed with joy. It produces *patience*, that "queen of virtues," which bears up under the heaviest weight, and purifies and ennobles the whole character. Patience must next be allowed her "perfect work;" for the Christian can never consider himself *τέλειος* till he has come "to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

(Shakespeare.)

(On temptation regarded as an *opportunity*, see Mozley's 'Parochial Sermons,' Sermon ii.)

Vers. 5—8.—1. *The need of wisdom*, which Holy Scripture never, without a touch of irony, ascribes to any but God and good men, and which, therefore, is not merely intellectual wisdom, but rather that practical knowledge of things Divine which can enable a man to say with the psalmist, "I am wiser than the aged, *because* I keep thy commandments." This it is, and not intellect and brilliancy, which is here promised to be given to all that ask in faith. (All through Scripture the use of the terms "wise" and "foolish" should be noticed. It is the "fool" who said in his heart, "There is no God." They are "fools" who make a mock at sin. The "wise" who shall "shine as the brightness of the firmament" are parallel with those "who turn many to righteousness," etc.). 2. *The reason why so many prayers remain unanswered*. Man too often betakes himself to prayer as a *dernier ressort* when all other means have failed, hoping against hope, not entirely disbelieving and yet not entirely believing; now

buoyed up for a moment with hope, and now again sinking into the depths of despair. To such a one there is not merely no promise; we are especially told that he is *not* to think that he will receive *anything* from the Lord. "A doubtful petitioner offers not to God a steady hand or heart, so that God cannot deposit in it his gift" (Stier).

"Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers;
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all."

(Tennyson.)

Vers. 9—12.—*The only true ground for boasting.* High and low, rich and poor, can glory in their Christian exaltation. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," said St. Paul; and, referring to that same cross, the Saviour said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Thus the cross forms part of the "lifting up," the "exaltation" in which the Christian is to glory. "Per crucem ad lucem." Our Christian privileges cannot be separated from our Christian sufferings. In both alike we are to rejoice and glory.

Vers. 13—18.—*The genesis of sin.* 1. Four stages are described. (1) The *desire*—the appetite draws the man towards evil indulgence. (2) The *will* yields to the desire, which thus becomes pregnant with action. (3) *Sin* is born, the offspring of the unhallowed union between will and desire or lust. (4) Lastly, sin, "when it is full grown, bringeth forth *death*" (cf. Milton's allegory in 'Paradise Lost,' bk. ii. l. 745, etc.). "First there cometh into the mind a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination thereof, afterwards delight, and evil motion, and then consent. And so little by little our wicked enemy getteth complete entrance, for that he is not resisted at the beginning" (Thomas à Kempis). 2. God is not tempted with evil, and he doth not tempt to evil. "Ascribe it not to the *Father of lights*, but to the *prince of darkness*. But ascribe all good, from the smallest spark to the greatest beam, from the least good giving to the best and most perfect gift of all, to him, the Father of lights" (Andrews, 'Sermons,' iii. p. 363). If there can be no change with the Father of lights, no "shadow cast by turning," what folly to suppose that the works of darkness come from him! Temptation may be regarded (1) as a *test* to prove a man; (2) as a *discipline* to improve him; (3) as an *allurement* to entice him. In the two former aspects it has been already treated of by the apostle, and has been shown to be a cause for joy. As an *allurement* it can have no power, unless it meets with some response in man. Thus man has no right to charge his sins upon God, or to make God the author of his temptations. The outward occasion *may* indeed be from him, sent either as a test or a discipline; but the *inward inclination*, that which leads a man away and entices him, is entirely evil.

Vers. 19—27.—*Deeds, not words.* 1. The right spirit for the Christian is the *receptive*; ready to hear, and to receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is to be as the seed falling on the good ground (comp. Matt. xiii. 3, etc.). A heathen philosopher has noted that man has *two ears and only one mouth*; showing that he should be more ready to hear than to speak. 2. A receptive spirit is not alone sufficient. *Action* must follow. Holy Scripture is a mirror, in which a man may see his own image reflected. The man who merely listens to it sees his own likeness, perhaps, but "goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Without *doing*, what is the good of hearing sermons? Knowledge without obedience only increases condemnation. So our Lord's severest denunciations were for those cities which had known most of his mighty works; and "many stripes" were reserved for that servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not (Luke xii. 47). (On the subject of ver. 22, see a good sermon of Bishop Andrews, 'Sermons,' vol. v. Sermon ix.) 3. Government of tongue may serve as a test of a man's religion, it being "a most material restraint which religion lays us under; without it no man can be truly religious." Sins of the tongue include not only such flagrant ones as lying, swearing, filthy conversation, etc., but what Bishop Butler calls "unrestrained volubility and wantonness of speech," which is the sin more particularly alluded to by St. James, and which is "the occasion of numberless evils and vexations in life." "If people would (1) observe the obvious occasions of silence; if they would subdue (2) the inclination to tale-bearing, and (3) that eager desire to

engage attention which is an original disease in some minds, they would be in little danger of offending with their tongue, and would, in a moral and religious sense, have due government over it" (Bishop Butler. See the whole sermon 'On the Government of the Tongue:' 'Sermons,' No. iv.). It has been well said that the talkative often do more harm than the wilfully false and malicious. They betray secrets, part friends, embitter foes, wound hearts, blight characters, hinder truth. Is not this true of many a man who seems to himself to be religious? 4. If the external service, the *ritual* of Christianity, is a life of purity and self-devotion in the service of others, what must its inmost spirit be?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*A joyful salutation for a time of adversity.* James, in the opening sentence of his letter, "wisheth joy" to the Christian Jews who were scattered over the Roman world (ver. 1). He knew that they were environed with adversity; they suffered from the persecution of the heathen, and from the upbraidings of their unbelieving countrymen. Yet his loving, sympathetic heart wishes them joy even in all time of their tribulation.

I. THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD REJOICE AMIDST TRIALS. (Ver. 2.) It was natural that the readers of the Epistle, when they received this counsel, should ask how they could reasonably be expected to do so. 1. *This is possible.* Only, however, to the Christian. The worldly-minded man will regard such a suggestion as unnatural, and indeed unintelligible. The Stoic, when plunged into adversity, can at best only school himself to submit to inevitable fate. The Epicurean becomes quite helpless in presence of calamity. Only the man who holds the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ possesses the alchemy by which sorrow may be turned into joy. 2. *It is dutiful.* To rejoice amidst trials is in the line of all Christian knowledge and faith and hope. The believer knows that God is his Father, and that he "pitieth his children." He is sure that God's arrangements for him must be absolutely the best. He is persuaded that, although God chastises his sons, he has still the heart of a Father. Not only do tribulation and distress not separate the believer from the Divine love; they work for him "more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." So it belongs to the afflicted Christian to adorn in his own experience this paradox of the renewed life—"Sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing." 3. *It is often exemplified.* Only, however, in the most exalted ranks of the peerage of faith. Moses "accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Paul sang hymns to God in the prison of Philippi, although his feet were fast in the stocks. The apostles "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for Christ's name." Latimer closed his brave career at the stake with the famous words, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley." Bunyan lay for twelve years in an execrable prison, but he made his cell the vestibule of heaven. Dr. Arnold could say, between the paroxysms of angina pectoris, "Thank God for pain." And from thousands of death-beds, of which the world has never heard, there has gone forth the testimony of God's hidden ones: "We glory in tribulations also."

II. THE REASONS FOR SUCH REJOICING. These may be reckoned. Vers. 3 and 4 supply a basis of judgment. 1. *Trial promotes self-knowledge.* It is "the proof of your faith" (ver. 3). It tests the reality and the strength of character. The person who stands on the deck of a sinking ship will learn, if he did not know it before, whether he is a hero or a coward. Affliction shows a man "all that is in his heart." The strain caused by some unexpected calamity may reveal defects of character which he would not otherwise discover, or possibilities of holy attainment about which he might never have dreamed. 2. *It develops patience.* (Ver. 3.) James, throughout his Epistle, exalts and inculcates this grace. His word for it here means "persevering endurance." Christian patience is not the submission of indifference, or merely the determination of an obstinate will; it is inspired by living piety, and is therefore full of intelligence and manliness. Patience consists in the holding still of some parts of our nature in calm waiting upon the Divine will, in order that other parts may be exercised and educated. The apostle's words show that he regards this grace of endurance as inexpressibly precious. He looks upon its possessor as in the truest sense a wise and wealthy man. The man who uses every fresh trial in such a way as only

to increase his power of holy endurance is unspeakably a gainer by his calamities, and should receive the congratulations ("greeting") of his brethren rather than their sympathy. 3. *It contributes to moral perfection.* (Ver. 4.) This is the end which God has in view in all his dealings with his people. He wants them to be "perfect and entire;" that is, complete and all-accomplished in spiritual culture. Now, the habit of persevering and joyful endurance conduces to the maturity and the symmetry of the soul. Sanctified trial educates. Some of the most refined Christian virtues—such, e.g., as resignation and sympathy—can be acquired only in connection with affliction. A delicately balanced Christian spirit is not the outcome of a smooth and unruffled life. No character can approximate in finish to the ideal standard which does not "come out of the great tribulation," and which is not made "perfect through sufferings." This thought is emphasized everywhere in the New Testament, from the Gospels to the Apocalypse. It has interpenetrated all literature. Our life must be "battered with the shocks of doom, to shape and use." "'Tis sorrow builds the shining ladder up," on which our souls climb nearer God.

Notice in conclusion: 1. While it is positively unchristian to murmur amid trials, the model Christian frame is not mere submission. 2. It is very comforting to the believer to know that his crosses are sent to promote his perfection. 3. The child of God has here a crucial test of the measure of his spiritual attainment.—C. J.

Vers. 5—8.—*Wisdom for those who ask it.* The apostle has just been saying that the trials and burdens of life should conduce, if wisely borne, to the purifying of the believing soul, the bracing of its moral energies, and the perfecting of its spiritual life. But how hard it is to bear severe afflictions thus wisely! Every one needs a wisdom above his own, who would "count manifold trials all joy," and "let patience have its perfect work."

I. A UNIVERSAL WANT. (Ver. 5.) Wisdom means the right use of knowledge. A man may know a very great deal, and yet not be a wise man. Wisdom classifies the materials of knowledge, and studies to use them so as to build up and beautify the life. It proposes right ends, and chooses the best means by which to reach them. It shows itself not so much in doing the right thing, as in doing it at the proper time. In the highest use of the word, "wisdom" is just another name for piety. It is that state of mind and heart which is produced by the believing reception of gospel truth. The one fool of the Bible is the sinner. The only wise man is he who regards the glory of God as the end of his life, and who makes his acts and habits means to that end. Now, we all naturally lack wisdom, and a thoughtful man realizes this lack most thoroughly in the time of trial. What a rare and difficult attainment is that holy discretion which can welcome even the contrary winds of calamity, and the driving storms of tribulation, because it can make them helpful in steering joyfully towards the desired haven!

II. AN ABUNDANT SOURCE OF SUPPLY. "God, who giveth to all" (ver. 5); literally, "the giving God." The living, loving Jehovah is the one Source and Fountain of wisdom. That is one of his essential attributes; and it is his prerogative to impart it to his creatures. He gives the Holy Spirit to work wisdom in the hearts of believers. Now, the God of wisdom is the Giver of all good things. His resources are infinite, and his gifts are universal and unceasing. In his common providence he imparts blessings to all his creatures—to the barnacle that clings to the rocks, and to the archangel that ministers before the throne. And he is "the giving God" in grace also. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" So he is ready to bestow wisdom at all times, and especially in the day of trial; he waits to impart to every devout sufferer a wealth of holy patience and of spiritual joy. And the giving God gives liberally and unrepentingly. It is his characteristic habit to be exceedingly bountiful.

III. AN EASY METHOD OF OBTAINING. "Let him ask, and it shall be given him" (ver. 6). Holy wisdom is not the result merely of thought or speculation. No Aristotelian or Baconian method can produce it. No habit of sullen, dogged Stoicism reveals its presence. It is to be had from God, and for the asking. God is the living God, and he is very near us; and we, his children, have the freest access to him. He gives "simply" to those who pray simply. He bestows "liberally" upon those who petition

liberally. It is his way "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." When Solomon asked only for wisdom, God gave him riches and honour too. When the prodigal requests only the place of a hired servant, his Father assures him of the station and honour of a beloved son. The Lord always gives liberally; never with a grudge—never ungraciously. He always gives with his heart when he opens his hand. Does the consciousness of much personal guilt make any of us slow to "ask of God"? Does our past neglect or abuse of his gifts deprive us of childlike confidence in coming to him? Then let us remember that he "upbraideth not." What a sweet word is that! It limns for our comfort a most touching trait of the character of the giving God. How unlike he is to human benefactors! Instead of reproaching the returning prodigal, he welcomes him with kisses of love. God upbraids no one for his great ignorance, or for his enormous guilt, or for his repeated backslidings, or for his long delay, or for making himself a last resource, or for coming too often, or for asking too much. How easy this God-appointed method of obtaining wisdom! We have only to "ask, and it shall be given" us. And how great the encouragement! "God giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not."

IV. AN INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE TO SUCCESS. (Vers. 6—8.) Prayer is not real unless it be the expression of faith. It must issue "from a living source within the will," and be inspired by perfect confidence in God's readiness to help. How much unbelief prevails in our time on the subject of prayer! The scientific temper of the age merely allows a man to "pray to God, if there be a God—to save his soul, if he have a soul." And the forcible words of James, in these three verses, suggest that still, in the case of very many Christians, an imperfect faith in God's readiness to respond to their prayers is one of the greatest defects of their spiritual life. We are apt, even, to speak of evident answers to prayer as unusual, and—when they do occur—as remarkable. Now, the gift of wisdom is promised only to him who asks it with a steady faith, and who evinces the reality of his faith by a life of consistent purpose. God our Father demands the confidence of his children. "Nothing doubting" should be the Christian's motto in prayer. The petitioner must not shift backwards and forwards between faith and doubt, like a tumbling billow of the sea. He must not swing like a pendulum between cheerful confidence and dark suspicion. It must be his fixed persuasion that God is, and that he is the Hearer of prayer. He must expect an answer to his supplications, and be ready to mark the time and mode of it; else he may rest assured that no answer will come. Transient emotions are not religion. It is the men and women within whom faith is the dominant power who take the kingdom of heaven by force. God is all simplicity himself, and he gives with simplicity; so he can have no sympathy with an unstable, double-souled man. A mind that continually vacillates in its choice will be prone in the end to fail in both the purposes between which it has hesitated. Certainly it will not obtain that Divine wisdom which every human heart so greatly needs for the exigencies of adversity. Steadfast faith, and that alone, will give a man singleness of eye, make him strong to keep hold of the angel of the covenant, and draw down upon him the richest blessings of gospel grace.—C. J.

Vers. 9—11.—*The poor and the rich brother.* The counsels contained in these verses spring out of the general exhortation of ver. 2. Riches and poverty are among the "manifold trials" which the subjects of them are to "count all joy." This passage has also a real connection with ver. 8, as the introductory conjunction in the original shows. The connection may be either in the thought that the love of money is a prevailing source of "double-mindedness;" or, that the comparison of one's own outward circumstances with those of one's neighbour may tend, apart from grace, towards spiritual unsteadiness rather than Christian simplicity.

I. TWO SPECIAL FORMS OF TRIAL. (Vers. 9, 10.) There are found together in the Church, as well as in the world outside, "the rich brother" and "the brother of low degree." Everywhere inequalities obtain among men, which are of the Lord's appointing. He gives to one man larger intellectual possibilities than to another. In his providence he places one man in a more favourable position than another for the development of his energies. Fortunes vary according to abilities and opportunities, as well as in connection with causes which entail personal responsibility. Now, "the brother of low degree" finds his poverty a trial. It tries his body, by exhausting it with labour. It tries his

mind, by placing obstacles in the way of his acquiring knowledge. It tries his heart, by limiting narrowly his enjoyment of the luxury of giving. It tries his temper, by wearing out his patience and inclining him to be fretful and satirical. But "the rich brother" has his trials also, arising out of his riches. The temptations of wealth are more serious, because more subtle, than those of poverty. The rich man's mind is often distracted with care; he finds that "a great fortune is a great slavery." Or, he may suffer the weariness and misery of *ennui*. Especially is he in danger of allowing his spiritual life to become corrupted by his abundance. A wealthy man is prone to grow high-minded and self-sufficient. He has to contend against the inveterate tendency of our fallen nature to abuse prosperity. When Jeshurun the upright "waxes fat," he is apt to "kick," i.e. to become self-willed, petulant, insolent, and neglectful of God. A rich man needs special grace to make and keep him a Christian.

II. HOW TO TRIUMPH OVER THE TRIAL OF POVERTY. (Ver. 9.) The apostle, in using here the term "brother," supplies a hint as to the secret of patience and joy under this form of trial. A Christian man may be "of low degree," but he is all the same a "brother." Straited resources are no barrier, but the reverse, to the love and sympathy of the Lord Jesus; and they should be no barrier to that of his people. Well, the Christian who is in humble life is to "glory in his high estate." He is to accustom his mind to the thought of his exaltation as a believer. He has a real dignity: he is rich toward God. He belongs to the Divine family. "His elder Brother is a King, and hath a kingdom bought for him." He moves already in the beat and blesseddest society; and he is an heir of the heavenly inheritance. Angel-guardians minister to him, and use the very trial of poverty as a means of investing him with the true riches. What a blessed antidote is there in these things to the ills of penury!

III. HOW TO TRIUMPH OVER THE TRIAL OF RICHES. (Ver. 10.) The "rich" man here means a wealthy man who is a Christian "brother." There were a very few such persons in the membership of the early Church. Now, to the Christian who is wealthy, his very wealth is a God-sent trial. He is apt to make his material resources a ground of glorying or boasting. But James says here that the rich believer ought to boast "in that he is made low." Although a rich man, let him strive to be "poor in spirit." It is not necessary, at least in ordinary circumstances, that he divest himself of all his goods for Christ's sake. Rather is it desirable that the capital which drives the wheels of our commerce should be in the hands of Christian men, provided they use it aright. But the rich believer should give very liberally out of his profits. He should be a servant of servants to his brethren. He should constantly remember the Divine Giver of his prosperity; and, finding that it is hard to carry the full cup steadily, he should pour it out before the Lord. The greatest honour that can attach to the rich man is that he be a humble Christian. Humility is in his case particularly beautiful and becoming. In spiritual things he is a pensioner upon the charity of Heaven equally with other men. When he realizes his own guilt and sin, he ought to feel the more humbled that Providence is filling his lap out of the horn of plenty. Let him exult in the grace of Christ which has enabled him to pass through "the needle's eye." And let him realize how transient and perishable all earthly riches are. "As the flower of the grass he shall pass away." Some providence may suddenly strip him bare of all his wealth. And at least he will not be able to carry it with him into the next world. Therefore, let him not glory in his outward possessions. The rich Christian brother will triumph over the trial of material prosperity by glorying in his humiliation as sharing with the lowliest the true riches.

IV. THE DOOM OF THE UNGODLY RICH. (Vers. 10, 11.) Although these verses speak directly of the blight which may fall upon the wealth of a Christian man, yet this other thought is suggested none the less. A believer may so use his wealth as to help him towards heaven (Luke xvi. 9); but an evil rich man will do the very reverse. Material possessions are uncertain and perishable; and the man who joins on his life to them, and identifies his being with them, must inevitably perish, as they do. The sirocco-blast of the eternal storm shall wither up both the "grass" and the "flower." "The rich man shall fade away in his goings," i.e. when engrossed with his commercial journeys and purposes. The wealthy farmer shall be summoned from the world when he is drawing out the plans of his enlarged premises. He shall stumble out into eternity a fool (Luke xii. 20). "He is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. xlix.).

Learn from this subject that neither poverty nor wealth is anything more than a circumstance in a man's life. Each of these conditions brings its blessings and its burdens. Each "doth place us proximate to sin, to suffer the contagion." But a man may through grace rise to equally great attainments in spiritual culture and in purity of life, whether he be very poor or very rich, or possessed of that moderate competency—less perilous than either extreme—for which Agur prayed (Prov. xxx. 8).—C. J.

Vers. 12—15.—*The natural history of evil.* In the previous part of the chapter James has spoken of "temptation" in the general sense of "trial," and as coming mainly in connection with outward circumstances. In this passage he proceeds to speak of it in the sense in which the word is now ordinarily used, as meaning only internal trial by solicitation to sin. Ver. 12 marks the transition from the one sense to the other, and predicates "blessedness" of "the man that endureth temptation" in either form.

I. THE GENESIS OF TEMPTATION. (Vers. 13, 14.) The sacred writers very rarely deal in such abstract psychological analysis as we have in this passage. These verses remind us that there is natural history in the moral world as well as in the physical—"the law of sin and of death" as well as "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." There are two conflicting theories always prevalent regarding the origin and development of temptation. 1. *The false theory.* (Ver. 13.) Men are prone to ascribe the authorship of temptation to God. This heresy is as old as the garden of Eden and the Fall. Our first parents blamed God for the first sin. And the world has adopted the same excuse, in various forms, ever since. Systems of philosophy have done so. Pantheism, for example, says that man is only a mode of the Divine existence, and that good is God's right hand, while evil is his left. Fatalism teaches that all events—good and evil—come to pass under the operation of a blind necessity. Materialism in our day regards the vilest passions of bad men and the holiest aspirations of believers as alike only products of our physical organism. And the same dreadful error prevails equally in common life. Superstitious persons, from the time of James until ours, have had the impression that their misdeeds are necessitated by the Divine decrees. Some blame their nature for their sins, and ascribe to their Maker the origination of their corrupt propensities, as the poet Burns did once and again in lines of daring blasphemy. Others trace their sins to their circumstances, blaming God's providence for surrounding them with evil influences, which, they submit, lay them under an inevitable necessity of sinning. But the apostle advances reason and argument against this impious theory. Think, he says, of the purity and perfection of the Divine nature. Moral evil has no place in God. There is nothing in him that temptation can take hold of. And if he is not himself open to the seductions of sin, it is impossible that he can be a tempter of others. God is the infinite Light, and sin is darkness. God is the eternal Righteousness, and sin is crookedness. God is the unchangeable Beauty, and sin is deformity. So, he will not and cannot solicit men towards what is opposed to his own nature. He tries and tests men; but he does not tempt them. He does not cause sin; he simply permits it. When we pray, as Christ has taught us to do, "Bring us not into temptation," we beg that God may not in his providence place us in circumstances from which our hearts may take occasion to sin. 2. *The true theory.* (Ver. 14.) Temptation originates within the heart of the sinner himself. It is in vain for him to blame his Maker. Sin is no part of our original constitution, and it is not to be excused on the plea of an unfavourable environment. A man sins only when he is "enticed" by the bait, and "drawn away" by the hook of "his own lust." That is, the impelling power which seduces towards evil is the corrupt nature within us. The world and the devil only tempt effectually when they stir up the filthy pool of depraved personal desire. "Lust" includes, besides the appetites of the body, the evil dispositions of the mind, such as pride, malice, envy, vanity, love of ease, etc. Any appeal made from without to these vile principles and affections can be successful only with the consent of the will. Every man is personally responsible for his sin; for each man's sin takes its rise in "*his own lust.*" Conscience brushes away the cobwebs of the false theory, and assures us all that we are "merely our own traitors." Only one Man has ever lived within whose soul there was no hook or bait of corrupt desire on which any evil suggestion could

fasten; and no one but he could say, "The prince of the world cometh, and he hath nothing in me."

II. THE GENEALOGY OF SIN. (Ver. 15.) "Lust" is throughout this passage personified in allegorical fashion as a harlot, ever striving, like the harlot Folly of Prov. ix. 13—18, to allure and captivate the will. First, she draws the man "who goes right on his way" out of the path of sound principle and wholesome pleasure; and then she entices him into her embrace with the siren strain, "Stolen waters are sweet." Lust may be said to "conceive," when it obtains the consent of the will, or disarms its opposition. The man who dallies with temptation, instead of meeting it with instant and prayerful resistance, will be sure eventually to succumb to it. From the guilty union of lust with the will, a living sin is born. The embryo corruption becomes developed into a deed of positive transgression. And this is not all. Sin, the progeny of lust, itself grows up from the infancy of mere choice to the adult life of settled habit; and "when it is full-grown," it in turn becomes, as the result of union with the will, the mother of death. It was so with the sin of our first parents in Paradise. It was so with the sin of Achan (Josh. vii. 21); he saw, coveted, took, and died. It is so with the sin of licentiousness, which has suggested the figure of this passage; the physical corruption which the practice of sensuality entails is just a sacrament of spiritual death. Death is the fruit of all sin. Sin kills peace; it kills hope; it kills usefulness; it kills the conscience; it kills the soul. The harlot-house of lust and sin becomes the vestibule of perdition. As Milton has it, in a well-known passage of bk. ii. of 'Paradise Lost'—a passage suggested by this very verse—Sin is

"The snaky sorceress that sat
Fast by hell-gate, and kept the fatal key;"

while Death, her son, is "the grizzly Terror" on the other side, which stood

"Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell."

III. THE GLORY AWAITING HIM WHO ENDURES. (Ver. 12.) This comfortable word reminds us of the Beatitudes. The blessedness of which it speaks belongs not only to all Christians who—"letting patience have its perfect work"—endure "temptations" in the sense in which the word is used in ver. 2, but to all also who escape victorious from the solicitations of evil desire, referred to in the verses which we have been considering. Notice here: 1. *The character of the blessed man.* He "loves the Lord," and in the spirit of this love he "endures temptation." Love is the substance of the Christian character, and love "endureth all things." Love alone will enable a man to stamp out lust. 2. *His glorious reward.* "He shall receive the crown of life." Not a chaplet of parsley, not even a diadem of gold; but a crown composed of life. Eternal life itself will be the believer's reward. Temptation unresisted, as we have seen, is always pregnant with sin and death; but holy endurance entails upon one the gracious reward of spiritual life, which shall be confirmed in spotless purity for ever and ever. This glorious blessing is guaranteed; the believer has for it a definite warranty from his Redeemer. 3. *The time and condition of its bestowal.* It is "when he hath been approved;" i.e. tested as gold or silver in the white heat of the refiner's fire. The one way to the kingdom is the way of persevering endurance. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

LESSONS. 1. Flee from spiritual death. 2. Crucify sin. 3. Mortify lust. 4. Cultivate the grace of endurance. 5. Watch and pray against outward occasions of evil. 6. Sprinkle the conscience with the blood of atonement, and wash the soul in the laver of regeneration.—C. J.

Vers. 16, 17.—*All good is from God.* The exhortation of ver. 16 introduces additional confirmation of the truth that God cannot tempt men to sin. He is the Author of all good. He not only abhors evil, but from him come those gracious influences which destroy it. Three shades of thought appear in the argument of ver. 17.

I. CONSIDER HIS GIFTS. Each of these is "perfect" in its matter, and "good" in the manner of its bestowal. While raw sins (ver. 14) and ripe sins (ver. 15) alike spring from one's "own lust," "every good gift and every perfect boon is from above." All temporal blessings come from God; and even in this lower province his bounty

is supreme. But especially he is the Author of all spiritual blessings—every good gift of grace, and every perfect boon of glory. Jesus Christ came down from heaven. The Holy Spirit is from above. Ministering angels descend the stairway “whose top reacheth to heaven.” The regenerated are born from above (ver. 18; John iii. 3). The graces of the new life are from God: e.g. wisdom, to bear trials (ver. 5); single-mindedness, to rise above outward circumstances (ver. 8); steadfast endurance of temptation (ver. 12). And, at last, “the holy city, new Jerusalem, shall come down out of heaven from God.” It is impossible, then, that God, the universal Benefactor, can be in any way responsible for a man’s sin.

II. CONSIDER HIS WORKS. He is “the Father of the lights.” What a splendid title! and how suggestive of the purity of God! He is Light in his own nature, and he is Light in all his relations to the universe. He made the starry lights—to which, indeed, the expression seems primarily to refer. He is the Author of all intellectual and spiritual illumination—all Urim and Thummim, “lights and perfections.” “The first creature of God in the works of the days was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work ever since is the illumination of his Spirit” (Lord Bacon). Thus Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is “the Light of the world;” and, in relation to the absolute God whom he reveals, he is “Light of light.” His people, again, are “children of light;” they reflect the lustre of the Sun of righteousness. In God “is no darkness at all;” but sin is darkness, so it cannot proceed from him. He is only “the Father of the lights.”

III. CONSIDER HIS NATURE. The expressions in the last two clauses have almost an astronomical savour. They have evidently been suggested by the mention of the upper starry lights. The thought which they present is that, while God is the Creator of sun, moon, and stars, he is not subject, like them, to revolutions and mutations. “With him can be no variation;” literally, “parallax.” Parallax, in astronomy, denotes the apparent displacement of a star from its true position; but with “the Father of the lights” there can be no parallax, no real change of place or purpose. “God is always in the meridian.” The shadow of the Almighty is not “cast by turning.” Astronomy treats of the revolutions and eclipses of the heavenly bodies; while piety reposes upon the unchangeableness of the eternal Light. Being in his own nature immutable, God will be “bounteous still to give us only good.” He never has been, nor could be, the author of sin.

LESSONS. 1. Be grateful for God’s gifts. 2. Admire his works. 3. Rejoice in his faithfulness. 4. See that these sentiments fructify in holiness of life.—C. J.

Ver. 17.—“*The Father of the lights:*” a sermon to children. Light is one of the most wonderful things in the world. Some heathen nations have been worshippers of fire or of the sun; but we should be thankful that we know better than they. Our souls want a living, loving God; and the sun does not love or live. We worship, not light, but “the Father of the lights.” Let us think of some of the lights of which God is the Father.

I. SUN-LIGHT. The sun is a great work of God. It is adorned like a “bridegroom,” and it is strong like a “giant.” Our whole world, and many others, get all their light from it. The moon takes the sun’s place during night; but its light is just sun-light second-hand. Star-light, too, is sun-light, for all the twinkling stars are suns. Now, God made all these upper lights. He made also all light and fire which man has on earth. Every coal-field is just so much “sown” light. Every lump of coal is full of bottled sunshine. Man may strike a light, but only God is its Father.

II. LIFE-LIGHT. The light of life is a higher kind of light than sun-light, and it also comes from God. We see it: 1. *In plants.* What makes a flower so beautiful? It is the light of life. The eye of the daisy—the “day’s eye”—is bright with this light. 2. *In animals.* Life-light makes the birds sing and the lambs gambol, and fills the air with the buzz of insect gladness. The lion is the king of beasts so long as he has the light of life, but “a living dog is better than a dead lion.” 3. *In man.* In him this light is of a more precious kind, which shall burn on for ever. “The soul that rises with us, our life’s star,” shall never set. It shall blaze on after the great lights of heaven shall have been put out. 4. *In angels.* Every angel is “a flame of fire.” Those who stand before God’s throne are the brightest; they are the seraphim, the shining ones. The angels are “the morning stars,” and God is their Father.

III. TRUTH-LIGHT. This gives us the light of knowledge. Every useful book which tells us truth about nature, or the world, or our own bodies and minds, is a light from God. But the highest and best kind of truth is about God himself, and about the way to him. We have this truth in the Bible; and so the Bible is "a lamp shining in a dark place." Those lands are in darkness which have not the Bible; for it tells of Jesus the Saviour, who lived and died and lives again—"the Light of the world," the dear Son of "the Father of the lights."

IV. GRACE-LIGHT. Truth-light is a light outside; but grace-light is one which God kindles within our hearts. Only those persons have the light of grace whose souls are illuminated by God's Holy Spirit. No sooner does he touch our sin-blinded minds and our sin-darkened hearts than they begin to shine with God's light. This new soul-light will "shine more and more unto the perfect day." All the lamps of grace are fed, as well as kindled, by "the Father of the lights."

V. HEAVEN-LIGHT. The home of God there is full of light. In hell, all is darkness; on earth, there is mingled light and darkness; in heaven, there is only light. "There shall be no night there." God and the Lamb are "the light thereof." And everything in heaven reflects its light—the jasper walls, the pearly gates, the golden streets, the crystal river, the white robes. Now it is holiness that is the light of heaven. All there is pure. Grace-light, when a good man dies, blazes up into glory-light. And all the holiness of heaven streams from the Holy, Holy, Holy One—"the Father of the lights."

CONCLUSION. 1. "The Father of the lights" is the Father of little children, and he wants them to call him by that name. 2. He wishes to set the children among his lights.—C. J.

Ver. 18.—*The chief good is from God.* In this verse the apostle singles out for special mention the highest and best of all God's gifts to his people—that of regeneration. His argument is, that if God voluntarily breathes a new life into those who are spiritually dead, it is inconceivable that he should ever seduce to that which "bringeth forth death."

I. THE BEST OF ALL GIFTS. Regeneration is the *summum bonum*, being a gift which at once supplies man's deepest want, and satisfies all that is highest in his nature. The new birth is a *necessity*; for man comes into the world destitute of the principle of spiritual life. It is sad that so much of the fashionable literature of the day should ignore this, and represent natural virtue and amiability as everything in character. But regeneration is a *fact*; as every Christian knows, both from observation and from his own experience. It does not consist in reformation; it is a new "birth"—the re-creation of the whole soul after the Divine image, through the infusion of a new spiritual principle. It involves a new heart, a new self, a new character, a new life.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE GIFT. Where resides the power that can renew the soul? Not in a man himself; one's birth is not one's own act. It is "the Father of the lights" who performs the miracle of regeneration. Such a change can only be effected by his almighty power. To bestow this gift is the special office of God the Holy Ghost; we are "born of the Spirit." And what induces God to confer this invaluable blessing? He gives it "of his own will." He is not constrained to give it by fate. He is not moved by fitful impulse. He is not incited by any deservings on our part, for we have none. He is not even prevailed upon to regenerate, as the result of the work of Christ. The ultimate cause is simply "the good pleasure of his will." It is his nature to love, and bless, and bestow gifts of grace upon the undeserving. Man's will in union with his lust generates sin and death (ver. 15); but the will of "the Father of the lights" imparts new life to dead souls.

III. THE INSTRUMENT OF THE GIFT. "By the Word of truth;" i.e. the gospel of Jesus Christ—the doctrines of grace contained in the Scriptures. The gospel is in our hands as a definite "word," and one which is absolutely and divinely true. While the Holy Spirit is the Agent in regeneration, he employs the Word as the instrument. Although the Scriptures are charged with moral power, man's understanding is so blind, and his affections are so corrupt, that they could never by themselves impart life to any soul; but in the hand of the Spirit the doctrines of grace become "living and powerful." Thousands have been regenerated in connection with the private reading of the Bible, and hundreds of thousands as the result of public preaching. The Word is needed in regeneration

as the means of calling forth the new thoughts and feelings, the new desires and resolves, of the new life. Only in connection with the apprehension of revealed truth can a man begin to believe the gospel, or love the Saviour, or in any way "exercise himself unto godliness."

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFT. "That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." These words refer to God's gracious purpose towards his people themselves. They suggest the dignity and honour which belong to the regenerate. The image is derived from those provisions of the Hebrew ceremonial law by which the firstfruits of the harvest, and the firstborn of man and beast, were dedicated to God. The consecration of the firstfruits asserted their own intrinsic value as Divine gifts; and it also symbolized and foreshadowed the consecration of the harvest that was to follow. Now, these Hebrew Christians of the dispersion were the precious "firstfruits," in the first century, of the entire world of the redeemed. Similarly, we in this age are the "firstfruits" in relation to the Church that is still future. Not only so, but the entire company of believers of all ages and of both worlds is "the Church of the Firstborn." They are all of them elect, precious, devoted to God. Every regenerate man is a pledge of the ultimate regeneration of the multitude which no man could number; as well as of "the restoration of all things," when the new creation of the world shall be accomplished, and Paradise be restored.

In conclusion, have we the assurance that this incomparable gift is ours? Can we say, individually, "He begat us"? What a joy to know, from the marks of grace upon us, that "we have passed out of death into life"!—C. J.

Vers. 19—21.—*The reception of the Word.* "The Word of truth" being within our reach, as the means of conveying to us the great gift of regeneration, it is most important that we cultivate those dispositions which are most favourable to the realization of its saving power. These three verses accordingly contain four counsels, each of which touches a deeper part of our nature than the one preceding. If we would rightly "receive" the Word, we must have—

I. A QUICK EAR. "Swift to hear." This precept refers to the acquisition of religious knowledge, whether in connection with reading or hearing. We should be careful as to the entire matter of our reading, making the staple of it not fugitive literature, far less frivolous books, but such as are solid and improving. For directly spiritual instruction we should go seldomer to books about the Bible, and oftener straight to the Word of God itself, that we may hear him speaking in it. We should also be "swift to hear" the oral proclamation of the gospel. "Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Rom. x. 17). His word appeals to the heart more powerfully when spoken by a living earnest man, than when it is read even from the written page of Scripture. We should, therefore, embrace every opportunity of hearing in the sanctuary, and be attentive and teachable, and follow up our hearing with reflection and obedience.

II. A CAUTIOUS TONGUE. "Slow to speak." This exhortation naturally follows the preceding, for the man who is exceedingly fond of hearing himself speak will never be a ready listener. The precept is good for common use in the conduct of our life; but its specific reference in this passage is to caution in the declaration of "the Word of truth." While we are under a sacred obligation to "exhort one another day by day" (Heb. iii. 13), and to "speak often one to another" (Mal. iii. 16), we are to be "slow to speak" in the sense of weighing well our words, and of realizing the responsibility which attaches to them. Ministers should preach only what they have carefully thought out; and they should beware of publishing crude speculations on theological subjects. It is right, too, that candidates for the ministry should be required to undergo a lengthened curriculum of training before they are entrusted with the continuous instruction of a congregation (ch. iii. 1, 2; 1 Tim. iii. 6).

III. A CALM TEMPER. "Slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (vers. 19, 20). Much speaking tempts to passionate speaking; every one knows what is meant by "the heat of debate." At all times we ought to be "slow to wrath:" to cultivate such a spirit is an important part of the imitation of God. But we should particularly guard against irritation of temper at Church-meetings, and in conversation or conference upon religious subjects. The clergyman must labour to avoid the *odium theologicum*. The preacher must threaten and warn only in love

and tenderness. The hearer must not listen in a captious spirit, or quarrel with the truth when it comes to him in practical form. For an angry heart will destroy edification (ver. 20). Scolding from the pulpit will not "work the righteousness of God" in the hearts of the hearers; and, on the other hand, resentful feelings against the preacher can only hinder regeneration and sanctification.

IV. A PURE HEART. (Ver. 21.) If "the Word of truth" is to sanctify and save, it must be received in a docile, humble, tractable spirit; and this involves the "putting away" of all malice and impurity. Hasty and passionate speech is just a foul overflow from the deep depravity of the heart; and, if we would prevent the overflow, we must cleanse out the dark pool of corruption itself. If we put away the "filthiness" of the heart by a gracious process of earnest renunciation, that filthiness will no longer soil the tongue or spoil the temper. Those who cultivate the quick ear and the cautious tongue and the calm temper, in connection with the purifying of the heart, prepare themselves as good soil for "the implanted Word" (Luke viii. 15). The grandest joy of life is to have the scion of the Word so "implanted" that it shall prove itself to be the power of God to the soul's salvation, by working out visibly in the life "the righteousness of God." And the teaching of this passage, is that if a man would attain that blessing, his own will must co-operate with the grace of God and the power of "the Word of truth."—C. J.

Vers. 22—25.—*Hearers and doers.* The writer has said in ver. 21 that the wise hearer is a "receiver" of the Word, and he now proceeds to emphasize the fact that he is also a "doer" of it. "Receiving" represents the root of the Christian life, and "doing" indicates its fruit.

I. THE INJUNCTION. (Ver. 22.) Very many hearers of the gospel are not sufficiently upon their guard against the dreadful danger of being "hearers only." Some, when the service is over, seldom think of anything but going home. Others will pass a remark about the sermon, and then dismiss the subject finally from their thoughts. A few will express more deliberately the pleasure with which they listened to the discourse; but perhaps even these are satisfied merely with having enjoyed it. The purpose of preaching, however, is not that the people may be "very much pleased," but that they may be profited, edified, and inspired to live an upright, generous, godly life. The highest praise that can be bestowed upon a Christian minister is not to tell him how much his preaching is enjoyed on sabbaths, but to let him see how well it is being translated into the life on the other days of the week. We live in a practical age; and the mission of the pulpit is as practical and definite as that of any other institution of our time. It is an agency for man-building. Its work is to promote the doing of the Word of God in the everyday lives of men. Those people, therefore, are the victims of a miserable self-deception who regard "hearing" as the sum of Christian duty. Such persons have no idea of the nature of true piety. Their profession is nothing better than an empty form. They may be strictly orthodox in doctrine and evangelical in sentiment; but what does this profit, if their church-going carries with it no power to direct their daily life into the ways of holiness? A theologian is not necessarily a Christian. The "hearer only" is on the road to final spiritual ruin.

II. A COMPARISON TO ENFORCE THE INJUNCTION. (Vers. 23—25.) Our Lord had illustrated the same thought by the figure of the wise and foolish builders (Matt. vii. 24—27). The simile here is that of two men looking at their faces in a mirror. "The Word of truth" is the spiritual glass in which we may see the reflection of our own souls. The Bible not only reveals the holy God to man; it also discovers sinful man to himself. But the mere hearer, after he has momentarily recognized himself in it, goes on his way and forgets his moral uncomeliness. He finds it convenient not to remember that what he saw was the features of "the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit." The wise hearer, on the other hand, looks into the mirror that he may learn the law of his renewed life. The gospel law brings no bondage or terror to him. It does not constrain him to an unwilling obedience. It is to him "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (ver. 25), which the Holy Spirit is writing within his heart. The apostle indicates three elements of contrast between the conduct of the two men in relation to the gospel mirror. 1. *The one man "beholdeth;" the other "looketh."* In the case of the mere hearer it is only a passing, cursory, careless glance of the eye—

a look at the mirror, and at himself in it. But, in the case of the wise hearer, it is the serious, eager, anxious gaze of the soul: this man stoops down to take a close look "into" the law of liberty. 2. *The one man "goeth away;" the other "continueth" to look.* The mere hearer glances hastily and briefly, because uninterestedly. He thinks always of sermons as dull, and is glad to dismiss the subject of religion so soon as the church-service is over. But the wise hearer goes on looking. His gaze is persistent and unwearied. He looks so long that what he sees becomes indelibly impressed upon his heart. 3. *The one man "straightway forgetteth;" the other is "a doer that worketh."* The mere hearer soon dismisses the thought of the spots and blemishes which he saw upon his spiritual features when he glanced at them in the gospel mirror. But the wise hearer looks carefully and continuously, because he wants to know himself, and because it is his purpose to be always a "doer." He has learned that it is the business of his life to obey the perfect law of liberty. By the doing of this work he will attain both self-knowledge and self-government. And in the doing of it he shall be "blessed."

CONCLUSION. We learn from this passage, what is insisted upon throughout the whole Bible, that the secret of true human happiness lies in holy obedience to the will of God.—C. J.

Vers. 26, 27.—*The true ritualism.* These two verses enforce by an example what those immediately preceding illustrate by a simile. The words "religious" and "religion" denote external religious service—the body, or outward attire of godliness, rather than its inward spirit. The apostle indicates in these two sentences the "work" of which every one who truly "receives" the gospel is a "doer."

I. AN EXAMPLE OF VAIN RELIGIOUS SERVICE. (Ver. 26.) This statement points back to the exhortation of ver. 19. The tongue is an unruly member; it requires to be "held in with the bit and bridle" of Christian principle. A man's words are a true index or evidence of his character; and they also react upon that character, and tend to confirm it for good or evil. Should, therefore, a person who has been for many years a member of a Christian Church indulge always, without restraint, in evil-speaking; should he be in the habit of soiling his tongue with impure, or malicious, or false, or foolish words; what other conclusion can be drawn about his character than just that he is not a true Christian? Such a man is a "hearer only," and therefore either a self-deceiver or a hypocrite. He may cherish some of the sentiments and instincts of religion; but the most sublimated sentiment is quite worthless, if it cannot be translated into everyday life. Where there is no government of the tongue, what avails love for the Church and its services? "This man's religion is vain;" it is an idle, empty, useless, unreal thing—a counterfeit of genuine worship. The apostle's language here is exceedingly strong; but it is the language of inspiration, and it runs parallel with what we read in other parts of Scripture (Matt. xii. 36, 37). Many professing Christians may well tremble when they read this verse. How prone we all are to sin with our lips! How constantly we are tempted to idle speaking! Let us guard against the sin of slander, of depreciating goodness, of imputing selfish motives; and against every other form of uncharitable speech. If we do not "keep our mouth with a bridle" (Ps. xxxix. 1), we "deceive our hearts" as to our spiritual state before God; in which case there is danger that all our psalm-singing and sermon-hearing may only help to drag us down to a deeper perdition.

II. AN EXHIBITION OF TRUE RELIGIOUS SERVICE. (Ver. 27) James here submits a rubric for the ritual of the Church. It is to this effect, that the services which God loves are not ceremonial observances, but habits of purity and charity. The moral in our Church life is infinitely more important than the liturgic. Indeed, the moral and spiritual are the great end which our fellowship contemplates, and to that end rites and ceremonies are but the means. 1. *The true ritual consists in the maintenance of personal purity in a world of sin.* The Christian is a man who, having been once washed all over in the blood of atonement, must labour in the strength of God's Spirit to keep himself from fresh defilement. He is to guard himself against the contaminations of the world, its pursuits, ambitions, counsels, and its grosser pleasures. He must not become an ascetic or a hermit; rather, he is to show to his fellow-men that he can live in the world an unworldly life. It is hard to do so, doubtless; it requires rare moral courage to resist evil, and to brave the contempt and persecution which such resistance entails. Yet this is the worship to which God calls us. He will not accept

our "devotions" if we refuse him our devotion. A holy life is the most beautiful of psalms. It is the blossom and fruit of all other praise. It is grander than the finest cathedral service, for it is the perfect realization of the Divine ideal of worship. 2. *The true ritual consists in the exercise of active benevolence in a world of suffering.* Christ, when on earth, "went about doing good;" and every Christian is an imitator of Christ. "A doer that worketh" (ver. 25) finds his chief sphere of social activity in kindness to the poor and suffering. We are joined together in the fellowship of the gospel that we may be helpful to our fellow-Christians and our fellow-men who are in affliction and poverty. All our public worship is "vain" if no hearts are made happier, and no firesides warmer, because of it. The Church exists that its members may be inspired to become a fountain of spiritual sympathy to the widow, and a ministry of moral help to the orphan. A congregation can offer no comelier praise than the music of constant acts of loving-kindness and tenderness and self-sacrifice. Where this worship is not rendered, the grandest sanctuary, so called, will be rather only a sepulchre of souls, and the most æsthetic church-service a "vain oblation." The true gospel *cultus* lies in personal acts of sympathy and kindness, done to the poor out of love to Jesus, and because the poor are his "brethren" (Matt. xxv. 34—40). Every professing Christian should therefore try the reality and strength of his piety by this test: Does he give himself to the celebration of the true full ritual of Christ's house—that which lies in a life of purity and charity?—C. J.

Ver. 1.—*The writer and his work.* Our business to identify writer, trace life and character, consider special aim in Epistle, and note its main characteristics. (See especially Plumptre.)

I. IDENTIFY WRITER. Four men of this name come before us in New Testament: (1) James son of Zebedee; (2) James son of Alphæus; (3) James the Less, son of a certain Mary, the wife of Clopas; and (4) James "the Lord's brother." So far as writer's description of himself goes, he might have been any one of the four. Therefore evidence must be sought elsewhere. As to James the son of Zebedee, never seriously maintained till lately, and on grounds by no means conclusive. Never been attempted to ascribe it to James the son of Alphæus, except on the supposition that he was the same as James the son of Clopas, and identical likewise with him who was called "the brother of the Lord." But neither of these identifications can be established. And therefore the ancient and general opinion, with which internal evidence agrees, remains as the most probable hypothesis, that the Epistle was written by "the Lord's brother." In what sense this appellation given? See Lightfoot ('Galatians'), Plumptre, Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' Neander, and critical notes. Whether or not an actual son of Mary, in all probability a son in some sense, and therefore one of the household of Nazareth.

II. LIFE AND CHARACTER. For early life, left to conjecture. One of the elder brothers, perhaps, in the Nazareth home, watching the unfolding of that young life. Trained devoutly by parents. Passing at father's death into world, leaving the mother to be maintained by her Son Jesus, whom men thenceforward called "the carpenter." So till the preaching of the Baptist, when the brothers became baptized unto John's baptism, and Jesus, no longer the carpenter, unfolded his mission as the Son of man. And now follows the offence. The reading at Nazareth, and avowal that the promises of the prophets were fulfilled in him. "They were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong" (Luke iv.). The brethren tremble for him, but are not prepared to believe in his mission (Mark vi. 4). The mission proceeds. Disciples gather, but plots thicken. Pharisees and Herodians combine to bring him to his death. Still he teaches and works. And his brethren and mother, anxious to save him, and thinking him beside himself, come to Capernaum seeking him, and bring upon them the rebuke of Matt. xii. 48—50. But still his heart yearns towards them (Matt. xiii. 54). But still they disbelieve. And even to the last (John vii. 5). Then the betrayal, the trial, the death. Their worst fears were realized; their misguided Brother had brought this doom upon himself. Ah, as yet their eyes were sealed! But soon would the unveiling come, and the giving of sight to the blind. The Crucified rose, and appeared to his disciples, and—"to James" (1 Cor. xv. 7). And now the true belief, the sincere discipleship, the steadfast witnessing and work, the

martyr's death. For this an outline of the subsequent history of James. But more fully. During the waiting in the upper room "these all continued in prayer . . . with his brethren" (Acts i. 14). They took part in the election of Matthias; they, with the rest, received the Holy Ghost. Natural prominence now among disciples. Paul, three years after his conversion, coming to Jerusalem, was received by Peter, and by "James the Lord's brother" (Gal. i. 18, 19). Then the death of James the son of Zebedee (Acts xii.), and probable election of namesake to the vacant place. And (Acts xii. 17) on Peter's departure, probably left in charge of the Church at Jerusalem. And out of this new position probably originated the Epistle with which we have to do. Then the council (Acts xv.), James acting as president, and speaking with the authority of a recognized head. Gives Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, and publicly sanctions their work among the Gentiles. And he, at Paul's last visit, recommends the presentation of himself in the temple, which led, unfortunately, to such ill results (Acts xxi.). Here the New Testament record ends. Tradition tells us of his martyr's death. (See account by Hegesippus, quoted by Plumptre from Eusebius.) Such, then, the life. And the character? It stands out from the life, strongly marked. Belief in Christ slow to form, but, once formed, formed for ever. Attachment to the old religion in its outward expression, at least in part, as a national institution. Spotless integrity; James the Just. True charity of heart. Faithful unto death. With all this, as indicated by text, humility; "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," sinking his relationship according to the flesh.

III. AIM OF EPISTLE. Have considered its probable origin: his elevation to virtual apostleship, and superintendency of Churches of Judæa. An encyclical. Addressed primarily to Churches of Judæa themselves. References to persecution. And of these alone a personal knowledge. But the feasts brought to Jerusalem those of the dispersion, as in Acts ii., with some of whom he would come into contact. From Parthia, Persia, and Media, the descendants of the ten tribes; from Mesopotamia, children of the Babylonian captivity; from Egypt and Ethiopia; and from every province of the Roman empire. His heart was drawn towards them. Fellow-worshippers. In some sense holders of the truth. But greed, respect of persons, and bitter wrangling, as among his own countrymen. Their monotheism was the substitute for holiness: "The Name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles through them" (Rom. ii. 24). With this in view, his letter should be to them also, summoning them at least to live up to their ideal. But especially to Christian Jews. Their belief in Jesus Christ as much a mere dogma, in many cases, as monotheism of their brethren. And the fruits of faith must be set forth to them as necessary to the validity and life of the faith itself. So, then, to the Jews of the dispersion, to Christian Jews, and especially to Christian Jews of Judæa, his words were addressed. And the aim throughout was to bring the practice of religion up to its ideal, to urge the necessity of a true life as the outcome of a true faith.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS. Little mention of distinctive doctrines of Christianity; remember aim, as above. Let the scattered Jews but be true, and they would then be likely to recognize him who was the Truth. Yet there is distinct and uncompromising mention of Christ as the Lord and Saviour. Insistence upon necessity of works. Imagined antagonism between this and the teaching of Paul. But see sequel. One other noticeable feature—prominence given to wisdom. The Christian life is not divided; it is one. But the same life takes on diverse forms. So, as Plumptre remarks, while faith is the special characteristic of Paul, hope of Peter, and love of John, wisdom was the special characteristic of James: "The wisdom that is from above—first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy."

And so, in conclusion, let us thank God that he has spoken his own truth to us, not only in human voices, but in divers tones, that each one may hearken to the tone which most quickly touches a responsive chord in his own heart. And, entering upon the study of this book, let us remember that "every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).—T. F. L.

Vers. 2—4.—*The strange paradox.* He has given them "greeting" (ver. 1), or,

literally, wished them "joy." Was this a bitter irony? For in what condition were they? Persecuted, as Jews and especially as Christian Jews; oppressed, the poorer by the richer; and all, in the common heritage of human woe, afflicted in a hundred ways. And does he wish "joy" to these? Yes, even so. And, as though surmising the question, he goes on to insist yet more emphatically on the "greeting" which he has given. Joy? Yes, "count it all joy, when ye fall into manifold temptations." Joy in spite of these things? Rather, joy by reason of these things. Nor was this teaching unique among the apostles of the new faith (comp. Rom. v. 3—5; 1 Pet. i. 6, 7). And confirmed by the common experience of Christendom: not merely joy in sorrow, but, by the blessed transmuting power of the gospel, joy wrought out through sorrow, strength out of weakness, life out of death. In the text we have these three truths presented—our religion is a faith, a faith tested, a faith perfected.

I. A FAITH. The fundamental condition of all life is faith. We must believe in ourselves, and in the instincts and promptings of our nature; in the world of nature, with its facts and forces and laws; in the world of men, with the relationships which it involves; and, largely, in the conduct and intents of our fellow-men respecting us; for daily we place practical trust in others in a thousand ways. Yes, faith, not knowledge, is the first condition of all life—faith as checked and regulated by knowledge, truly, and as leading to fuller knowledge; but, primarily and essentially, faith. So with the spiritual life, the life in God; we must, as a first condition, believe in him, in his relation to us, in his will concerning us. But why is faith in him called distinctively "faith," when it is but one application, however important, of a principle which runs through all our manifold life? Because, in this application, it is the new use of a disused faculty; it is faith in One who is saving us; who, in saving, is dealing with us in a way we know not. So our faith, religiously, is our practical realization of spiritual things, and an absolute trust in God as the God of our life and God of our salvation.

II. FAITH TESTED. "Divers testings." What are these? A world of sense, to which we have been enslaved; a world of sin, to which likewise we have been enslaved; and a world of suffering, besetting us on every side. The first testing our practical realization of unseen things; the second, our faith in the dictates of duty; the third, our trust in God, as dealing with us in love. Why is our faith thus tested? To prove it, whether true or false. No real holiness is possible, without the possibility of unholiness; hence what we call, specifically, "temptation." And no real trust is possible, without the possibility of untrust; hence what we call, specifically, "trial." Consider the infinite possible cost of holiness, in the constitution of a moral world. Sin; and, if sin, atonement. But God would allow that price to be paid, that holiness might be secured. Consider the terrible cost of a chastened trust, in the redemption of a moral world: suffering, alas, how bitter and prolonged! But God will allow that price to be paid, that trust may be secured. Yes, he *will* test. The allusion of δοκιμιον: testing of precious metals. So, "that the testing of your faith, being much more precious," etc. (1 Pet. i. 7). But the figure fails, for a test applied to a dead thing is only a test; whereas a test applied to a living thing becomes more than a test—developing, strengthening that which is tested. So the tree rocked by the storm, the army on the long march. So here: "The proof of your faith worketh patience." Untried innocence develops into holiness, and holiness becomes an enduring holiness, by the testing of "temptation;" trust develops into enduring trust, and endurance becomes more enduring, by the testing of "trial." So, by these "divers testings," does God work out our salvation. And in and through all there is the glorious power of the great redemption.

III. FAITH PERFECTED. God is working towards an end: "That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." "Entire." Hence the divers testings, by which each part of our character is put to the proof. Importance of a many-sided education; so a many-sided Christian life. God tests us, therefore, in this way and in that way, that, not halt or maimed, but with a completed manhood, we may enter into life. "Perfect." Not only must each part be proved, but each part put to the full proof; just as the artist will not only chisel the marble into a complete statue, but also chisel each part of the statue to a perfection of exquisite finish. The goal, then, "perfect and entire;" tested sufficiently, in manifoldness and in continuance, till "lacking in nothing."

"Count it all joy." Yes, a joy sacred and awful, as of the martyr in the flames. But

very real. For only so can it be said of us, "These are they which came out of great tribulation" (Rev. vii. 14); and, "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev. iii. 4).—T. F. L.

Vers. 5—8.—*The prayer of faith.* In the former verses the writer, after the apparent paradox of wishing "joy" (ver. 1) to those so persecuted and tried, proceeded (vers. 2—4) to urge, not merely joy in spite, but joy by reason, of these things. For, said he, by these things the faith, which is of so great price, is developed and perfected. It might seem, however, that, with God so purposing, and man thankfully concurring in the Divine purpose, yet, from lack of true discernment, of wise judgment, man might fail to realize the profit of the Divine purpose; might lose, not gain, by the testings. For surely it requires much Christian judgment so to meet temptation, and so to bear trial, that the continued testing, instead of depressing and damaging our life, shall be evermore bearing us upward and onward. And now, in the verses before us, this is provided for. "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God." In order that at last we may be "lacking in nothing," God will supply this present lack, which is so urgent. And the general principle, which gives force to this special application, is here set forth. The main thoughts are two—God's giving; man's receiving.

I. GOD'S GIVING. An essential element of God's nature is self-impartation, if we may reverently speak of him as he has revealed himself. So the inmost significance of the doctrine of the Trinity; so the great fact of the creation. And so to all created things there is a constant streaming forth of God's goodness. Like the shining of the sun. But the streaming forth of God's goodness is conscious, deliberate, free. We may have regretfully to relinquish the etymology which identifies the words "God" and "good;" but never need we relinquish the truth that God is essentially the Good One. "God giveth:" 1. Our life, including existence itself, so sacred as being thus from him; our appetences and their satisfactions; our powers and scope for use; our ideals and their realization; our idiosyncrasy of life, and of life-history. 2. Our redemption, including the gift of the Son; the Spirit; our penitence; our faith; the blessedness of the new life in God. 3. And now the blended life, in the world and in God; all "good things" (Matt. vii. 11). "Liberal;" i.e. simply, absolutely, disinterestedly. Out of the abundance of his goodness. Hence, "to all;" no caprice in such a One. And hence, "upbraideth not." Selfishness gives, grudges, and rebukes; he gives with a perfect love, and hence delights to give. Let us realize this conception of God. How it alters the complexion of life! what effect it has upon character! We may not, indeed, forget his inflexible holiness, his absolute demands on our obedience. This, indeed, the fundamental relationship; so probably the true etymology of "God," as meaning "Ruler." This the one deep significance of the cross, which shows God's holy love. And this the meaning of the absolute call to repent, as preceding the gift of life; an unconditional surrender. Yes, remember that, realize it, act upon it—the truth that God is holy. But, so soon as the barrier of unrepented sin is removed, realize all the infinite affluence of his love—that he delighteth in mercy, that he is emphatically the Good Being, whose goodness is ever surging and streaming forth that it may lavish itself upon his creatures, upon me! As regards your life-history—realize God's yearning love; the boundless possibilities of your future. As regards your salvation—all grace, in a world of conflict; all glory, in the world of perfected conquest.

II. MAN'S RECEIVING. The higher the nature of any creature, the more are its development and growth conditional upon its own appropriation of the material of development and growth. Consider, in this respect, mere existences and forces; vegetation; animal life; man. Hence the life of man, the creature of freedom, is at once a life of the greatest perils and of the greatest possibilities. Lordship over the world; mental acquisitions. He may climb so high; he may sink so low! Is it not well thus? Does not our manhood dwindle in proportion as we become mere passive recipients? Illustrate the high manhood of personal achievement by artist and his work—would he care to find his picture finished by an unseen hand? also by enterprise of a people, which calls forth their powers and goes to make them what they are. So the glory of our spiritual life is that it is not necessitated, but free. And so the supreme glory of the kingdom of heaven, as a kingdom of redemption, is that, humanly speaking, it "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Hence, if we would become

possessors of spiritual blessings, we must possess ourselves of them. If God gives grace freely to free beings such as we are, his giving is conditional upon our asking, and asking in faith. In the nature of things this is reasonable and right. "Let him ask;" that he may realize more fully his own dependence and need; that he may value more truly the blessings sought; that he may learn God's large, free love. Could any thing be simpler, more natural? Because of the creaturely relationship, a recipient of the bounty of the Creator; because a conscious, intelligent, free creature, a conscious, free recipient, a suppliant. Ask, and have. "In faith." This the active element in the asking, the appropriating power. To truly realize God's power and blessing, we must have a trustful appreciation of God's purposes of love. So for a wise endurance of trial; so for a wise meeting of temptation. It is better to endure, better to resist; this must be our assurance of faith. Contrast with this the waverer, or doubter; doubting in the sense of hesitating between God and the world, halting between two opinions; most miserable. A double-minded man, to his own cost; unstable; like the surge of the sea. He shall receive nothing, for the true spirit of reciprocity is altogether vitiated. The man is shutting his soul towards God even while professing to open it. No, "the just shall live by faith;" by a constant aliveness to spiritual realities; by an earnest, trustful appropriating of spiritual blessings.

The two great lessons: God is single-minded in giving; we are to be single-minded in receiving. But how does this bear on the special gift in question here—spiritual wisdom? This is largely an intuitive faculty of the spiritual life, and it is educated by communion with God's mind and will, which brings our spiritual wisdom into harmony with his own. So the very prayer itself is the instrumentality of the answer to the prayer. And such wisdom, let us remember, is wisdom "unto salvation." A constant choosing between good and evil, which results at last in the total abolition of evil and triumph of good. May we thus prove to the uttermost "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"!—T. F. L.

Vers. 9—11.—*The glory of manhood in Christ.* Diversities of condition among men—the millionaire and the pauper, the autocrat and the slave. The cry for a levelling—communism, socialism, nihilism. So other differences—of station, of education, and even of natural gifts. But, after all, what are these differences in comparison with that which is common to all—the royal humanity which each one has received from God? For take the highest, the most cultured, the best endowed, and again a poor peasant man or woman, and let some crisis of joy or of sorrow sound the depths of their common nature, and how utterly do the surface differences disappear in presence of the deep stirrings of the common manhood or womanhood! Yes, when the great deeps are broken up, we take little account of the surface waves. This, then, the great truth, in presence of which all bickerings amongst men well might disappear. "Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me"? Nay; "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (see Luke xii. 13—15). A man's manhood is more than everything. But this is only true in all its truth when manhood becomes really manhood. What are we now? The wreck of a splendid ship; the ruins of a glorious temple; discrowned kings. Oh, let our manhood be re-made, let the crown of true royalty be placed on the brow, let Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, and then how little and paltry will seem either the possession or lack of the things which in their folly men call great! This is the exact thought which James urges in the text: "Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate"—as being a man in Christ; "and the rich, in that he is made low"—in the stripping off of his adventitious greatness, by the estimate of Christianity, that his true greatness may be realized. We have to consider—the exaltation of the poor, the humiliation of the rich.

I. THE EXALTATION OF THE POOR. To Christianity belongs the unique glory of having recognized the worth of man as man, whether with or without the extraneous advantages on which other systems have laid such stress. How was it in cultivated heathendom? The foreigner was a "barbarian," forsooth; and the slave? In some cases worse than the brute beasts! Judaism, too, had become exclusive—nay, worse than exclusive, proudly bigoted—in its relation to other people; and even amongst the Jews themselves there was the same contemptible pride (Matt. ix. 11; Luke xviii. 11; John vii. 49). But it remained for Christianity to show that, however bemired and

befouled, a human soul is a jewel of the rarest worth. Listen: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luko iv. 18); and, "Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see: . . . the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. xi. 4, 5); and again, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luko vi. 20). Now, this is the exaltation of the brother of low degree of which James speaks; the recognition of his "high estate" as possessing a God-made manhood—a manhood endowed with all the privileges and blessings of the salvation of Christ. 1. "In our image, after our likeness" (Gen. i. 26). That the inalienable dignity of "man"! Man's range of swift-winged thought, man's wealth of tender affection, man's intrepidity of heroic purpose; man's discernment of the eternal law of holiness, and power of freely choosing the good which he discerns; and man's immortality;—all these are flashes from the very life of God himself, communicated to man, and constituting man by native right God's child. Man has fallen? Yes, truly. But the very depth of the fall betokens the loftiness of the primal calling; the very degradation tells of the intended dignity. 2. And man's redemption? Oh, words can never tell the worth of the human soul in the sight of God, as evidenced by so wonderful a redemption of the son of man from the degradation and death of sin. This truly is the sign-manual of the worth of man, as well as of the love of God: "Ye were redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). And the salvation itself? "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ:" ye see your calling, brethren! Well may "the brother of low degree glory in his high estate," so created, so redeemed!

II. THE HUMILIATION OF THE RICH. The antithesis is only one of outward seeming, for the rich is really endowed with all the glory of redeemed manhood equally with the poor, if he would but recognize and realize his endowment. But he is tempted to exalt himself by what is really a self-humiliation, and make his manhood depend upon his appendages and trappings. And therefore his real exaltation can only be by what might seem to the world as a self-humiliation. Let him throw off his regard for this vain show, and prize that wealth of human privilege and Divine blessing which are his in common with his "brother of low degree." Let go the shadow and grasp the substance; for these things are yours too, if you will have them, and they are the true riches. This needs no arguing, but it may need enforcing. 1. The false glorying of the world—glitter, pride, and power. The supercilious scorn of the "high," as speaking of the "masses," and of them as the "vulgar," the "ignorant," the "plebeian." The essential vulgarity and ignorance is in the people who so speak; their words recoil upon themselves. Again, the false ambition of the "low;" they covet those things that are above their reach, and so deserve most strongly the stigma of vulgarity. Yes, the vulgar man is he who cares inordinately about either the possession or the lack of these things; the true patrician is the man who values his manhood infinitely above them all. For these things? "As the flower of the grass" they "pass away." The great statesman and the mighty author—they die like common men. They are one with the grass of the field. 2. A false glorying in the Church. This which James hinted at; this which he directly rebukes in ch. ii. Let us beware. Pride on one side, envy on the other. Both alike betray an utterly false estimate of worldly things in comparison with the "common salvation" of the grace of God. Ah yes! it is the "grace" of the common salvation that abides, and is alike our glory in life and our support in death. The humblest Christian upon whom Christ's Name is truly named ranks as high in the sight of God as the Christian millionaire or prince; and, when death comes, the man of consecrated wealth and the preacher of consecrated gifts die, like the poorest Christian peasant, clinging to the Name of Christ. Therefore, let "the rich" rejoice "in that he is made low;" for what seems his self-humiliation in the eyes of a false world, viz. his light esteeming of things that are but paltry and vain, this is his true exaltation, "which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. iii. 3, 4).

May it be ours to possess, and duly to prize, "the exceeding riches of his grace, through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7)! Amen.—T. F. L.

Vers. 12—18.—*Temptation and its history.* We are carried back by the first word to our Lord's pronouncement of the Beatitudes in the sermon on the mount. And here, as there, we are confronted with paradox. The words of the earlier Beatitudes had doubtless come with a shock of astonishment to many, who listened for statements that

should accord with their carnal life. "Blessed are"—the proud, the strong, the conquering? Nay; but "the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the merciful ones." So now. Not, "How blessed are they that escape the multiplied ills of life!" but, "Blessed is the man that endureth." Here, of course, is a return to the strange "greeting" with which the Epistle opened.

I. THE ENDURANCE OF TEMPTATION. The word must be taken in the broad, generic sense of "testing." Of this there are two forms—enticement to sin, and afflictions of righteousness. It enters into the very essence of a moral universe that there should be testing, and certainly into the moral recovery of a fallen world that the processes of the testing should be intensified. For in a world of innocence, if innocence is to develop into an established holiness, there must be such possibilities of a fall into sin as the very fact of freedom implies; and the resistance of "temptation" (as we specifically call it) involves such self-denial as makes well-doing difficult; or, in other words, positive "trials" (as we call them) are necessarily bound up with the righteousness which pursues its way in spite of "temptations" to unrighteousness, and both together constitute the test (*πειρασμός*) of character. And if all this be true of a world of innocence, how much more of a world into which sin has already come! Both the temptations to sin and the trials of righteousness are intensified now, the heart itself being so prone to evil, and the world an evil world. Hence the immense difficulties of salvation from sin. We have an index to this in the intensity of temptation to even a Sinless One in a world of sin, as shown in the conflicts of the Son of man. View the wrestling in the desert, and the agony in the garden! And how much more to us, whose nature is so responsive to the influence of the world! But his conquest is the pledge of ours, if we do but put our trust in him (John xvi. 33; 1 John v. 4). And the beatitude? We cannot write "blessed" over the fierce wrestling in the desert, nor over the agony of blood. But we *can* over the victorious result. And so with ourselves; not, "Blessed is the man that is tossed and troubled;" but, "Blessed is the man *that endureth*." For what is the result of the enduring? *Δόκιμος γινόμενος*: we can hardly give the force of these words, save by periphrasis, in our tongue. "Having acquired the quality of triedness;" i.e. having been put to the test, having borne the test, and being now certified as true. Like gold in the fire. And the prize? "The crown of life." Figurative expression as regards the word "crown;" so 1 Pet. v. 4 and 2 Tim. iv. 8. Familiar thought of contention for a reward. But, dropping the figure, let us ask what is the "life" itself that is set forth as the crown of our rejoicing? And, for the answer, compare some words of Christ: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God;" "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;" "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him;" "And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Matt. v. 8; John xvii. 3; xiv. 21, 23). Such the life; the full fruition of God, which is possible only to a pure soul.

II. TEMPTATION NOT OF GOD. Now as to the source of the temptation, the endurance of which results in blessed life. A right and a left, a good and an evil, are possible alternatives always, and to free creatures that which is possible may become actual. God cannot constrain them to well-doing, or they would cease to be free. In the case, then, of allowing for temptation in the very constitution of a moral world, God may be said to be its source, its author. But how readily men push the responsibility of their actual sin away from themselves to God! They are placed in such and such circumstances by God, therefore God is the author of the sin to which those circumstances lead. So they argue with their own hearts. But illustrate: a position of trust, with its involved temptations. Does the employer *tempt* the trusted servant to wrong-doing? Nay, verily. So man is placed in a post of trust by God, and the trust necessarily involves the possibility of a betrayal of trust; but may we therefore say that God *tempts* us to do wrong? The very thought is blasphemy! Only an evil being can tempt to evil; on the other hand, an essentially holy Being must seek to work out holiness. This is the true genesis of sin: man's will yielding to his desire, not resisting it. The result is the presence of an actual power of sin; for sin is no longer a mere possibility to us, but a positive entity. And again, when the will weds itself to this positive power of sin, as before to the mere desire, the result is death. Just as the fruition of God is the life of a pure soul, so a godless desolation is the death of the soul

that has permanently espoused itself to sin. Such the dark pedigree set forth by James.

III. EVERY GOOD GIFT FROM GOD. The negative has been stated in regard to the goodness of God; now we have the positive. The very suzerainty of temptation itself is in love, that the highest good of a created universe may be wrought out. And this love is God's essential nature. He cannot, then, work harm in any way. God the author of sin? a good God work this unutterable evil? Nay; "God is Light," and a shadow can only be cast by the resisting will. And in this he is unchangeably the same; there is no parallax in these heavens. And therefore the great pledge and proof of his eternal good will of holy love towards us consists in the fact that he has already begotten us to the new life. He would not lift us from sin to holiness that then he might cast us down to sin again. No; we are "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 13, 14). And so our new creation is, as it were, the firstfruits of the new creation of all things.

Our danger still is this, that we are tempted to think God is making it hard for us to be good. Our safety is in holding fast to the eternal truth that "God is love;" and that, as the Good One, and Father of all good, he can so control our troublous circumstances and troubled nature, that, if we are only willing to do his will, all things shall work together for our good (see whole of Rom. viii.).—T. F. L.

Vers. 19—27.—*The law of the new life.* "Ye know this, my beloved brethren;" viz. that ye have been begotten again by God. But now, from this vantage-ground, he presses the necessity of a consistent life. They have espoused, by God's grace, a new ideal of character and conduct; let their whole life show forth its power. This is the topic of the whole passage, and it divides itself very naturally into the related subjects of—meekness, self-knowledge, and practical religion (see Punchard, in Bishop Ellicott's 'Commentary').

I. MEEKNESS. There is evidently a reference, in vers. 19—21, to the deportment of the Jews in their religious gatherings, to which we have more direct reference in ver. 23 and in ch. ii. 1—13. And the words of warning are aimed at one of their most besetting sins; they were clamorous, accusing, wrathful. What examples we have of this spirit, as manifested at their public gatherings for worship, in the accounts of our Lord's first proclamation of his mission in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke iv. 28, 29), and of the first setting-forth of the gospel by Paul in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 45)! So perhaps it was also at the Jewish-Christian gatherings; they would contradict, and accuse. Yes; they were impatient of hearing, eager to speak, wrathful in speech; rebutting what seemed the blow of the truth against themselves, turning that blow against others, perhaps against the speaker. What a Babel of confusion! And all this in the thought that they were doing God service! As opposed to this spirit of censorious anger, James urges a quiet, gentle humility in the hearing of the Word. 1. For what was this Word? It was God's Word, his message to the heart. Yes, with whatever of human alloy it might sometimes be mixed, through the infirmity of the speaker, there it was, a thing Divine! There should be, then, in its presence, a certain awe of silence: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." And as this Word was the searching Word of the living God (Heb. iv. 12), there should be the meekness which hears for one's self, not for others—Is there any wrong in me? For this Word was "able to save:" with what solemn gladness should they welcome its healing, cleansing power! 2. Oh, how opposed to all the intended influence of the Word of God was the spirit of passionate assertion and accusation! How it defiled the nature, as with filthiness, making it an utterly unfit receptacle for God's holy truth! And how the "overflowing of wickedness" bore back the living germ of the truth, which being implanted in the heart would save unto the uttermost! Yes, man's wrath, so far from working God's righteousness, utterly hindered that working. The truth was "able to save," but only if the conditions of true humility in the hearer were fulfilled.

II. SELF-KNOWLEDGE. But the very hearing may become a snare: we hear the Word, we "feel" its power, and delude ourselves with the notion that therefore the Word is ours. 1. What is this, but a mere transient sentiment? Like the man with the mirror, beholding a while, then going away and forgetting; so we may gaze into the marvellous mirror of the Word, which shows us so wondrously the fair ideal of truth, the beauty of holiness,

and, in contrast, the deformity, the unholiness of our real self. But so likewise, being charmed with the ideal beauty, and equally loathing our sin, we yet may go away and forget what manner of men we are. 2. What is required of us is an abiding practice of the perfect law, that can only result from a continued gazing into its excellence of beauty and consequent knowledge of our own distance from its perfectness. So Ps. i. 2, which sets forth the Law of God as the very element of the good man's life. For it is a Law which is a living power, evermore working its perfection into our imperfect life. A Law, therefore, of liberty, making us free from sin, as being a law of holiness; and free from servile fear, as being a law of perfect love. Well may the man who abides in the doing of such a Law be designated blest! For while merely to hear the Word and feel its power, and then to go away and forget, is to be drugged as with an opiate that makes us insensible to our danger; on the other hand, to hear and to do, and to abide in the doing, is to realize the bounding gladness of the full flow of living health (see also the beatitude of Ps. i.).

III. PRACTICAL RELIGION. There is an easy transition, in vers. 26 and 27, from the hearing of the Word to all the cult of worship. For just as some of these Christian Jews might be satisfied with the mere hearing of the truth as distinct from its practical realization in the daily life, so many of them might rest satisfied at least with the ceremonial cleanness and "service" on which their old training had led them to set such exaggerated value. They were "very religious" because of their multiplied religious observances, their *θρησκεία*, their ritual of service; and this "religion" was pure, undefiled, no taint of ceremonial pollution attaching to its performance. And yet the filthy wickedness (ver. 21) of the unbridled tongue? Vain, indeed, is the religiousness of such a one! Nay; the cult of Christianity is the religion of the life, and the ceremonial cleanness is cleanness of conduct and heart. 1. *The ritual*. Doing good. So Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 16. A concrete instance is given here, viz. the visiting of the fatherless and widows in their affliction, but only as an instance of the ritual of the law of love. And notice the immense significance of the words, "before our God and Father." Such as he is we must be, viz. "pitiful, and of very tender mercy" (see ch. v. 11). 2. *The cleanness*. "Unspotted from the world." An evil world, the evil of which was so exhibited by these "clean" men in their clamorous evil-speaking. Would they be really clean? There are no works like works of love to hush the anger of the heart. We learn for ourselves, in this age, that no ritual of religion is of any worth as such. Collective "worship" truly is good, as a means to an end, viz. the replenishment of our life-power, and maintenance of loving relationship with the Father. But as for any cult, as such, Christianity knows none, save that of a holy and loving life. Your ritualism, as Christians? Doing good!

In conclusion, the faith that humbly receives God's saving Word, the faith that abides in the knowledge of that Word day and night, the faith that works itself out in the religiousness of a holy love—this is the sum of the whole matter, this is the very essence of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, evermore give us this faith!—T. F. L.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-13.—WARNING AGAINST RESPECT OF PERSONS.

Ver. 1.—The translation is doubtful, two renderings being possible. (1) That of the A.V. and R.V., "Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." (2) That of the R.V. margin and Westcott and Hort, "Do ye, in accepting persons, hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory?" According to this view, the section commences with a question, as does the following one, ver. 14. According to the former

view, which is on the whole preferable, it is parallel to ch. iii. 1. The faith of our Lord. "The faith" here may be either (1) objective (*fides quæ creditur*), as in the Epistle of St. Jude, 3, 20; or (2) subjective (*fides quæ creditur*), "Have the faith which believes in," etc. (cf. Mark xi. 22). Our Lord Jesus Christ. Exactly the same title occurs in Acts xv. 26, in the letter written from the Apostolic Council to the Syrian Churches—a letter which was probably drawn up by St. James himself. The Lord of glory. The same title is given to our Lord in 1 Cor. ii. 8, and seems to be founded on Ps. xxiv. 7, etc. The genitive, τῆς δόξης, must depend

on Κυρίου, in spite of the intervening Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Similar trajections occur elsewhere; e.g. Heb. xii. 11, where δικαισόντες depend, on καρπὸν, and, according to a possible view, Luke ii. 14 (see Hort's 'Greek Testament,' vol. ii., appendix, p. 56). Bengel's view, that τῆς δόξης is in apposition with Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ can scarcely be maintained, in the absence of any parallel expression elsewhere. **Respect of persons** (ἐν προσωποληψίαις); literally, *reception of faces*. The substantive is found here and three times in St. Paul's Epistles—Rom. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25; the verb (προσωποληπτεῖν) only here in ver. 9; προσωπολήπτης in Acts x. 34. None of them occur in the LXX., where, however, we find πρόσωπον λαμβάνειν in Lev. xix. 15; Mal. ii. 9, etc. (cf. Luke xx. 21), for the Hebrew נָפַח נָפֶחַ. Bishop Lightfoot has pointed out ('Galatians,' p. 108) that, in the Old Testament, the expression is a neutral one, not necessarily involving any idea of partiality, and more often used in a good than in a bad sense. "When it becomes an independent Greek phrase, however, the bad sense attaches to it, owing to the secondary meaning of πρόσωπον as 'a mask,' so that πρόσωπον λαμβάνειν signifies 'to regard the external circumstances of a man'—his rank, wealth, etc.—as opposed to his real intrinsic character. Thus in the New Testament it has always a bad sense." It is exactly this regard to external circumstances against which St. James is warning his readers; and the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ had himself been known, when on earth, as no respecter of persons (Luke xx. 21), would give point to his warning. The plural (ἐν προσωποληψίαις) is perhaps used to include the different kinds of manifestations of the sin.

Vers. 2—4.—Proof that they were guilty of respect of persons. Observe the insight which this passage gives us into the character of the assemblies of the early Christians, showing (1) that the entrance of a rich man was not entirely unknown, but (2) that it was probably exceptional, because so much was made of him. Notice (3) συναγωγὴ used here, and here only in the New Testament, of a Christian assembly for worship (cf. Ignatius, 'Ad Polyc.' c. iv., Πυκνότερον συναγωγῇ γνώσθωσαν). (On the distinction between συναγωγὴ and ἐκκλησία, and the history of the terms and their use, see an interesting section in Trench's 'Synonymus,' p. 1.)

Ver. 2.—A man with a gold ring (ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος). The word is found here only. The English Versions (both A.V. and R.V.) needlessly limit its meaning. The man was probably bedecked with a number of rings, and had not one only.

In goodly apparel. The same phrase is rendering "gay clothing" in ver. 3. The variation is quite unnecessary, the Greek being identical in both places, and rightly rendered by R.V. "fine clothing." It is curious to find a similar needless variation in the Vulgate, which has *in veste candida* in ver. 2, and *veste præclara* in ver. 3.

Ver. 4.—The copula (καί) of the Received Text is certainly spurious. It is found in K, L, but is wanting in κ, A, B, C, Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic. B also omits the negative οὐ (so Westcott and Hort margin). If this manuscript is followed, the sentence must be read as a direct statement, and not as interrogative. But if (with most manuscripts and editions) the interrogative be retained, the translation is still doubtful. Διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς may mean: (1) "Are ye not divided in your own mind?" so the Syriac and R.V., which would imply that this respect of persons showed that they were halting between God and the world—in fact, double-minded. (2) "Do ye not make distinctions among yourselves?" R.V. margin; this gives an excellent sense, but is wanting in authority, as there appears to be no other instance forthcoming of the passive with this meaning. (3) "Did you not doubt among yourselves?" this (doubt) is the almost invariable meaning of διεκρίνομαι in the New Testament, and the word has already been used in this sense by St. James (i. 6). Hence this rendering is to be preferred. So Huther, Plumptre, and Farrar, the latter of whom explains the passage as follows: "It shows *doubt* to act as though Christ had never promised his kingdom to the poor, rich in faith; and *wicked reasonings* to argue mentally that the poor *must* be less worthy of honour than the rich." Judges of evil thoughts (κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν); sc. their own (thoughts), which caused them to respect persons. Thus the phrase is equivalent to "evil-thinking judges." (On the genitive, see Winer, 'Gram. of N. T. Greek,' p. 233; and cf. ch. i. 25, ἀκρόατης ἐπιλησμονής.)

Vers. 5—9.—Proof of the sinfulness of respect of persons.

Ver. 5.—Hearken (ἀκούσατε). This has been noticed as a coincidence with the speech of St. James in Acts xv. 13. It is, however, too slight to be worth much (cf. Acts vii. 2; xiii. 16; xxii. 1). For τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, read τῷ κόσμῳ (κ, A, B¹, C¹), "poor as to the world;" perhaps "in the estimation of the world." These God chose (to be) rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, etc. **The kingdom**; mentioned here only by St. James (and even here, κ¹, A read ἐπαγγελίας); cf. νόμον βασιλικόν in ver. 8. Which he hath promised. As Dean Plumptre has pointed out, "it is scarcely possible

to exclude a direct reference to the words of Christ, as in Luke vi. 20; xii. 31, 32; and so we get indirect proof of a current knowledge, at the early period at which St. James wrote, of teaching which was afterwards recorded in the written Gospels."

Ver. 6.—You have dishonoured by your treatment the poor man, whom God chose; while those rich men to whom ye pay such honour are just the very persons who (1) oppress you and (2) blaspheme God and Christ. **Poor . . . rich.** In the Old Testament we occasionally find the term "poor" parallel to "righteous" (Amos ii. 6; v. 12); and "rich" to "wicked" (Isa. liii. 9). St. James's use here is somewhat similar (see on ch. i. 9, etc.). "Christiani multi ex pauperibus erant: pauci ex divitibus" (Bengel). The "rich men" here alluded to are evidently such as was the Apostle Paul before his conversion. (1) They dragged the poor Christians before the judgment-seat (ἐλκον-σιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια). So Saul, "haling (σύρων) men and women, committed them to prison" (Acts viii. 3). (2) They blasphemed the honourable Name by which Christians were called. So Saul thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, and strove to make them blaspheme (Acts xxvi. 9—11). (3) All this they did *in person* (αὐτοί); "themselves," just as Saul did. No difficulty need be felt about the presence of these rich men in the synagogues of the Christians (see Introduction, p. viii.). It will be noticed that St. James *never* calls them "brethren." Further, it must be remembered that, at this early date, the Church had not yet learnt by bitter experience the need for that secrecy with which in later days she shrouded her worship. At this time the Christian assemblies were open to any who chose to find their way in. All were welcome, as we see from 1 Cor. xiv. 23, etc., where the chance entry of "men unlearned or unbelieving" is contemplated as likely to happen. Hence there is no sort of difficulty in the presence of the "rich man" here, who might be eagerly welcomed, and repay his welcome by dragging them to the judgment-seat. **Draw you before the judgment-seats.** The account given by Josephus of the death of St. James himself affords a good illustration of the manner in which Christians were liable to this (see Introduction, p. vi.). But the tribunals need not be confined to Jewish ones. Other instances of similar treatment, illustrating the thoughts and language of the passage before us, may be found in Acts xvi. 19; xvii. 6; xviii. 12. Litigation of an entirely different character between Christians themselves is alluded to and condemned by St. Paul in 1 Cor. vi.

Ver. 7.—That worthy Name (τὸ καλὸν

ὄνομα); the honourable Name; probably the Name of Christ, by which the disciples were known (Acts xi. 26), and for which they suffered (Acts v. 41; 1 Pet. v. 14—16). **By the which ye are called;** literally, *which was called upon you* (τὸ ἐπικληθέν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς). A similar expression is found in St. James's speech in Acts xv. 17, in a quotation from Amos ix. 12.

Ver. 8.—What is the connection with the foregoing? *Μέντοι* is ignored altogether by the A.V. Translate, with R.V., *howbeit if ye fulfil*, etc.; Vulgate, *tamen*. According to Huther, St. James here meets the attempt which his readers might, perhaps, make to justify their conduct towards the rich with the law of love; whilst he grants to them that the fulfilment of that law is something excellent, he designates *προσωποληπτειν* directly as a transgression of the law. Alford thinks that the apostle is simply guarding his own argument from misconstruction—a view which is simpler and perhaps more natural. The royal law. Why is the law of love thus styled? (The Syriac has simply "the law of God.") (1) As being the most excellent of all laws; as we might call it the sovereign principle of our conduct (cf. Plato 'Min.,' p. 317, c, τὸ ὀρθὸν νόμος ἐστὶ βασιλικός). Such an expression is natural enough in a Greek writer; but it is strange in a Jew like St. James (in the LXX. *βασιλικός* is always used in its literal meaning); and as the "kingdom" has been spoken of just before (ver. 5), it is better (2) to take the expression as literal here—"the law of the kingdom" (cf. Plumptre, *in loc.*). **Thou shalt love**, etc. (Lev. xix. 18). The law had received the sanction of the King himself (Matt. xxii. 39; Luke x. 26—28).

Ver. 9.—And are convinced, etc.; better, with R.V., *being convicted by the law* (ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου). The Law of Moses directly forbade all respect of persons; see Lev. xix. 15 (three verses above the passage just quoted by St. James), Οὐ λήψῃ πρόσωπον πτωχοῦ οὐδὲ μὴ θαυμάσης πρόσωπον δυνάστητος).

Ver. 10.—In this verse the subjunctives *τηρήσῃ, πταίσῃ*, are rightly read by the Revisers, with A, B, C. The Law was express on the need of keeping *all* the commandments; see Lev. xix. 37 (the same chapter to which St. James has already referred), **Καὶ φυλάξεσθε πάντα τὸν νόμον μου, καὶ πάντα τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ ποιήσετε αὐτά.** **He is guilty of all.** The very same thought is found in rabbinical writers (Talmud, 'Schabbath,' fol. 70); a saying of R. Johanan: "Quodsi faciat omnia unum vero omittet omnium est singulorum reus." Other passages to the same effect may be seen in Schöttgen, 'Horæ Hebræicae,' vol. i. p. 1017, etc.; and cf. 'Pirqe Aboth,' iv. 15. Was it a

false inference from St. James's teaching in this verse that led the Judaizers of Acts xv. to lay down the law "Except ye be circumcised after the customs of Moses ye cannot be saved"? "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," might seem to suggest such an inference: "To whom," says St. James himself, "we gave no commandment" (Acts xv. 24). (On the teaching of this tenth verse there is an interesting letter of Augustine's to Jerome, which well repays study: 'Ep.' clxvii.)

Ver. 11.—Do not commit adultery . . . do not kill. The order of the commandments is remarkable; what is now the seventh is placed before the sixth. This appears to have been the usual order at that time. In this order our Lord quotes them in Luke xviii. 20, and St. Paul in Rom. xiii. 9. Philo also has the same order, and expressly comments on it, drawing from it an argument for the heinousness of adultery ('Dec.' xii. 24). In the Vatican Manuscript of the LXX. in Exod. xx. 13-15 the order is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not kill." But the Alexandrian Manuscript has the usual order, which is also found in Matt. xix. 18 and Mark x. 19 (according to the correct reading).

Vers. 12, 13.—Conclusion of the subject: νόμος ελευθερίας (cf. ch. i. 25).

Ver. 13.—A clear reminiscence of our Lord's teaching in the sermon on the mount (Matt. vii. 1, etc.; v. 7): Μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται. Ἀνέλεος is certainly the right form of the word (κ, A, B, C, K), not ἀνέλεως (Receptus with L), and the καὶ of the Textus Receptus is entirely wanting in manuscript authority, and should be deleted. The subject is ended by the abrupt declaration, almost like a cry of triumph, "Mercy glorieth against judgment."

Vers. 14-26.—WARNING AGAINST RESTING CONTENT WITH A MERE BARREN ORTHODOXY.

Preliminary note: This is the famous passage which led to Luther's depreciation of the whole Epistle, which he termed a "right strawy" one. At first sight it appears, indeed, diametrically opposed to the teaching of St. Paul; for: (1) St. Paul says (Rom. iii. 28), "We conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from (χωρὶς) works of Law," whereas St. James asserts (ver. 26) that "faith without (χωρὶς) works is dead," and that man is "justified by works and not by faith only" (ver. 24). (2) St. Paul speaks of Abraham as justified by faith (Rom. iv.; cf. Gal. iii. 6, etc.); St. James says that he was justified by works (ver. 21). (3) St. Paul, or the Pauline author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, appeals to the case of Rahab as an instance of faith (Heb. xi. 31);

St. James refers to her as an example of justification by works (ver. 25). The opposition, however, is only apparent; for: (1) The two apostles use the word ἔργα in different senses. In St. Paul it always has a depreciatory sense, unless qualified by the adjective καλὰ or ἀγαθὰ. The works which he denies to have any share in justification are "legal works," not those which he elsewhere denominates the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. v. 22), which are the "works" of which St. James speaks. (2) The word πίστις is also used in different senses. In St. Paul it is πίστις δι' ἀγαπῆς ἐνεργουμένη (Gal. v. 6); in St. James it is simply an orthodox creed, "Even the devils πιστεύουσιν" (ver. 19): it may, therefore, be barren of works of charity. (3) The apostles are writing against different errors and tendencies: St. Paul against that of those who would impose the Jewish Law and the rite of circumcision upon Gentile believers; St. James against "the self-complacent orthodoxy of the Pharisaic Christian, who, satisfied with the possession of a pure monotheism and vaunting his descent from Abraham, needed to be reminded not to neglect the still weightier matters of a self-denying love" (Lightfoot on 'Galatians,' p. 370). [The tendency of the Jews to rely on their claim as "Abraham's children" is rebuked by the Baptist (Matt. iii. 9) and by our Lord (John viii. 39). So Justin Martyr speaks of the Jews of his day: Οἱ λέγουσιν ὅτι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ὄντι, θεὸν δὲ γνώσκουσιν, οὐ μὴ λογιῶνται αὐτοῖς ἁμαρτάν (Dial., § 141).] (4) The apostles regarded the new dispensation from different standpoints. With St. Paul it is the negation of law: "Ye are not under Law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 14). With St. James it is the perfection of Law. But, as Bishop Lightfoot has pointed out, "the ideas underlying these contradictory forms of expression need not be essentially different." The mere ritual has no value for St. James. Apart from anything higher it is sternly denounced by him (ch. i. 26, etc.). The gospel is in his view a Law, but it is no mere system of rules, "Touch not, taste not, handle not;" it is no hard bondage, for it is a law of liberty, which is in exact accordance with the teaching of St. Paul, that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17). But: (5) The question now arises. Granting that St. James does not contradict the doctrine of St. Paul, is he not opposing Antinomian perversions of it, and writing with conscious reference to the teaching of the apostle of the Gentiles, and the misuse which some had made of it? To this question different answers have been returned. "So long as our range of view is confined to the apostolic

writings, it seems scarcely possible to resist the impression that St. James is attacking the teaching, if not of St. Paul himself, at least of those who exaggerated and perverted it. But when we realize the fact that the passage in Genesis was a common thesis in the schools of the day, that the meaning of faith was variously explained by the disputants, that diverse lessons were drawn from it—then the case is altered. The Gentile apostle and the Pharisaic rabbi might both maintain the supremacy of faith as the means of salvation; but faith with St. Paul was a very different thing from faith with Maimonides, for instance. With the one its prominent idea is a *spiritual life*, with the other an *orthodox creed*; with the one the guiding principle is the individual conscience, with the other an external rule of ordinances; with the one faith is allied to liberty, with the other to bondage. Thus it becomes a question whether St. James's protest against reliance on faith alone has any reference direct or indirect to St. Paul's language and teaching. Whether, in fact, it is not aimed against an entirely different type of religious feeling, against the Pharisaic spirit which rested satisfied with a barren orthodox fruitless in works of charity" (Lightfoot on 'Galatians,' p. 164; the whole essay should be carefully studied). In favour of this view of the entire independence of the two writers, to which he inclines, Bishop Lightfoot urges: (a) That the object of the much-vaunted faith of those against whom St. James writes is "the fundamental maxim of the Law," "Thou believest that God is one" (Deut. vi. 4); not "the fundamental fact of the gospel," "Thou believest that God raised Christ from the dead" (Rom. x. 9). (b) That the whole tone of the Epistle recalls our Lord's denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, and seems directed against a kindred spirit. To these we may add: (c) That the teaching of St. Paul and St. James is combined by St. Clement of Rome ('Ep. ad Cor.,' c. xii.) in a manner which is conclusive as to the fact that he was unaware of any divergence of view between them, whether real or apparent. We conclude, then, that the teaching of St. James has no direct relation to that of St. Paul, and may well have been anterior in time to his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. (For the opposite view, see Farrar's 'Early Days of Christianity,' vol. ii. p. 79, where an able discussion of the subject may be found.)

Vers. 14-17.—(1) *First point*: Faith without works is equivalent to profession without practice, and is therefore dead.

Ver. 14.—Omit the article (with B, C'), and read *τι ὁφείλος*; so also in ver. 16. Can

faith save him? rather, with R.V., *that faith* (*ἡ πίστις*); the faith in question.

Vers. 15, 16.—Observe the *practical* character of the illustration chosen, from works of mercy (cf. ch. i. 27). Ὅτι in ver. 15 should be deleted (omitted by B, C, K); also the disjunctive particle δὲ at the commencement of the verse (with κ, B).

Ver. 16.—Depart in peace (*ἐπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ*); cf. Acts xvi. 36. This is something quite different from the fulness of our Lord's benediction, "Go into peace (*ἔπαγε εἰς εἰρήνῃ*)" (Mark v. 34; cf. Luke vii. 50; viii. 48).

Ver. 17.—Being alone (*καθ' ἑαυτὴν*); R.V., *in itself*. But the rendering of the A.V. appears to be justified by the LXX. in Gen. xliii. 31, *Παρέθηκεν αὐτῷ μόνῃ καὶ αὐτοῖς καθ' ἑαυτοῦς, κ.τ.λ.*

Vers. 18, 19.—(2) *Second point*: Even the devils believe (*πιστεύουσι*). How worthless, then, must be faith (*πίστις*) alone!

Ver. 18.—Yea, a man may say (*ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις*). The objection in 1 Cor. xv. 35 is introduced by precisely the same words. It is somewhat difficult to see their drift here, as what follows cannot be an objection, for it is just the position which St. James himself adopts. The formula must, therefore, be taken as introducing the perfectly fair retort to which the man who gives utterance to the sentiments of ver. 16 lays himself open. Without thy works. Instead of *χωρίς* (N, A, B, C, Latt., Syriac, Coptic), the Received Text has the manifestly erroneous reading *ἐκ* (K, L), in which it is happily not followed by the A.V.

Ver. 19.—(1) "Thou believest that God is one," R.V., reading "Ὅτι εἰς ὁ θεὸς ἐστίν:" or (2) "Thou believest that there is one God," A.V. and R.V. margin, reading "Ὅτι εἰς θεὸς ἐστίν." The reading, and by consequence the translation, must be considered somewhat doubtful, as scarcely any two uncials read the words in precisely the same order. The illustration is taken from the central command of the Old Testament (Deut. vi. 4), indicating that the case of Jews is under consideration. The following quotations from the Talmud will show the importance attached by the Jews to this command (Farrar, 'Early Days,' etc., p. 53). It is said ('Berachoth,' fol. 13, 6) that whoever in repeating it "prolongs the utterance of the word 'One,' shall have his days and years prolonged to him." Again we are told that when Rabbi Akibah was martyred he died uttering this word "One;" and then came a Bath Kol, which said, "Blessed art thou, Rabbi Akibah, for thy soul and the word 'One' left thy body together."

Vers. 20-24.—(3) *Third point*: Proof from the example of Abraham that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.

In Gen. xv. 6 we read of Abraham that "he believed in the Lord; and he accounted it to him for righteousness" (LXX., 'Ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραὰμ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην', quoted by St. Paul in Rom. iv. 3; Gal. iii. 6). But years after this we find that God "tested Abraham" (Gen. xxii. 1). To this trial St. James refers as that by which Abraham's faith was "perfected" (τελειώθη), and by which the saying of earlier years found a more complete realization (cf. Eccles. xlv. 20, 21, "Abraham . . . kept the Law of the Most High, and was in covenant with him . . . and when he was proved, he was found faithful. Therefore he assured him by an oath, that he would bless the nations in his seed," etc.).

Ver. 20.—**Faith without works is dead.** The Received Text, followed by the A.V., reads νεκρά, with α, A, C¹, K, L, Syriac, Vulgate (Clementine). The Revisers, following B, C¹, ff, read ἀργή, "barren" (so Vulgate Amiat. by a correction, *otiosa*).

Ver. 23.—**And he was called the Friend of God.** The expression comes from Isa. xli. 8; 2 Chron. xx. 7 (in the Hebrew, אֲרִיכָה, אֲרִיכָה; LXX., ὁν ἡγάπησα, τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ σου). The same title, φίλος Θεοῦ, is given to Abraham

by Clement of Rome ('Ad Cor.,' x.; xvii.), and was evidently a standing one among the Jews. Philo actually in one instance quotes Gen. xviii. 17 as Ἀβραὰμ τοῦ φίλου μου instead of τοῦ παιδός μου. Illustrations from later rabbinical writers may be found in Wetstein, and cf. Bishop Lightfoot on 'Clement of Rome,' p. 61. To this day it is said that Abraham is known among the Arabs as *El Khalil*, equivalent to "the Friend."

Ver. 25.—(4) **Fourth point:** Proof from the case of Rahab the harlot of justification by works (cf. Josh. ii.; vi. 25). Rahab is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament in Heb. xi. 31, where she also appears as *Ῥαββὴ ἡ πόρνη*, and is spoken of as having "received the spies," δεξαμένη τοὺς κατασκοπεύους: cf. ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους here. There, however, she is regarded as an instance of *faith* (see above in preliminary note). The only other place where her name occurs is in the genealogy of our Lord, in Matt. i. 5, "Salmon begat Booz of Rahab (ἐκ τῆς Ῥαββὴ)." *Ῥαββὴ*.

Ver. 26.—**Conclusion of the whole matter:** "As the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-13.—1. *Respect of persons is inconsistent with the first principles of Christianity.* 1. One great function of Christianity was to create a sphere in which there should be neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor barbarian, bond nor free. "All equal are within the Church's gate" is true, not only of the material building, but equally of the spiritual fabric of the Catholic Church, which, like her Divine Head, is no respecter of persons. Bengel well remarks that the *equality* of Christians, indicated by the name "brethren" (ver. 1), is the foundation of the admonition with which the chapter opens. 2. St. James gives but one instance of the kind of respect of persons which is forbidden, viz. the respect shown to the rich in assemblies of Christians for worship. Other forms of the same sin are common enough and are equally reprehensible, e.g. the homage paid to a man in society because he is rich, without regard to his character and moral worth. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that Christianity accepts as a fact class distinctions, and that we are bidden to give "honour to whom honour is due." "The Christian religion allows not that contempt for even earthly dignities affected by some of her followers, but springing more from envy and unruliness than aught besides. True reverence and submission are in no way condemned by this Scripture, but their excess and gross extreme, the preference for vulgar wealth, the adulation of success, the worship, in short, of some new golden calf" (Punchard). 3. *Respect of persons, regard to outward appearances, the gold ring and the gay clothing, evince not merely evil thinking but want of faith* (ver. 4); i.e. a halting between God, who is no respecter of persons, and the world, which judges only by that which is external. How foolish also to regard the persons of *men*, when the object of our faith is *the Lord of glory himself*!

Ver. 5.—*Worldly poverty is by no means inconsistent with true riches: rather it is often accompanied by them, for "God chose the poor as to the world to be rich in faith;" not as if poverty were necessarily accompanied by goodness, or as if all the rich were rejected.* But "not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" while "the poor," as a class, "have the gospel preached to them." It has been

well said that "the temptations of riches assumed in that age very gross forms of sensuality or of greed; but do they become less dangerous by losing a portion of their grossness?"

Ver. 10.—*The obedience which God requires is absolute.* "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Why, since the breach of but one command is certainly not as sinful as the breach of all? Because (1) "the principle of duty and of obedience to all the commandments is one; so that if we choose for ourselves nine commandments to keep, and one to break, we are not doing God's will, but our own; (2) all the precepts are alike expressions of one Divine will, and rest on one authority; (3) all the precepts are manifestations of *love at work*—love first to God, and then to our neighbour; and each particular failure shows defect in this" (Dean Scott). "A garment is torn, though you only take away one piece of it; a harmony in music is spoiled if only one voice be out of tune" (Starke). The perfect figure of the circle is marred by a flaw in any one part of it. So to break one command out of all is to violate the whole principle of obedience. Thus men have no right to pick and choose which commandments they will keep, or to

"Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to."

As Christians, we are not entitled to bow down in the house of Rimmon, nor does the strictest obedience to one command give us a dispensation to break another; e.g. spotless chastity on the part of the unfallen will not atone for Pharisaism and harshness to the fallen, for "if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law." (On this verse see a sermon in Dr. Pusey's 'Parochial Sermons,' vol. iii. p. 70.)

Ver. 13.—*The character of mercy.* The most suggestive commentary on this verse may be found in Shakespeare's lines—

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the heart of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice."

('Merchant of Venice,' act iv. sc. 1.)

Vers. 14—26.—*Faith and works.* I. THE HOLLOWNESS OF PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE; of a mere orthodox creed without the deeds of love, which are as the fruits by which the tree is known. There is no reason to think that the Pharisee of the one parable was unorthodox, or that Dives in another was a heretic; but the faith of each of these was worthless, because not a "faith which worketh by love." The good Samaritan was a stranger and an alien, but did by nature the deeds of the Law; and thus (although "salvation is of the Jews") is held up for an example. The barren fig tree stands forth as the type of profession without practice—a great show of foliage, the ordinary sign that marked the presence of fruit, but after all "nothing but leaves." So is the man who says to his destitute brother, "Depart in peace, get warmed and filled," but gives him none of those things which be needful for the body; and the fate of the fig tree is a warning to all ages of the danger in which such stand.

II. THE NEED OF WORKS. 1. In the case of Abraham his faith was perfected by his obedience. 2. Rahab the harlot was justified by works. Works are necessary for all Christians, wherever they are possible, (1) as the fruits of faith, and (2) as the evidences

that the faith is genuine. Hence *judgment by works* is expressly taught in the New Testament. So in the Athanasian Creed, "They that have *done* good shall go into life everlasting," etc.

III. On the apparent difference between the teaching of St. James and of St. Paul, see Farrar's 'Early Days of Christianity,' vol. ii. p. 99. "We may thank God that the truth has been revealed to us under many lights; and that by a diversity of gifts the Spirit ministered to each apostle severally as he would, inspiring the one to deepen our spiritual life by the solemn truth that works cannot justify apart from faith, and the other to stimulate our efforts after a holy life by the no less solemn truth that faith cannot justify us unless it be the living faith which is shown by works. There is in the diversity a deeper unity. The Church, thank God, is '*Circumamicta varietatibus*'—clothed in raiment of many hues. St. Paul had dwelt prominently on faith; St. Peter dwells much on hope; St. John insists most of all on love. But the Christian life is the synthesis of these Divine graces, and the works of which St. James so vehemently impresses the necessity, are works which are the combined result of operative faith, of constraining love, and of purifying hope."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Respect of persons.* In the closing sentences of the preceding chapter James has been speaking of the true *cultus* or ritual of the Church; and here he warns his readers against a violation of it which they were in danger of committing, and of which indeed they had been already guilty, even when assembled for public worship.

I. **THE EVIL HERE CONDEMNED.** (Ver. 1.) It is that of Pharisaic contempt of the poor. The apostle does not, of course, mean that social distinctions are nowhere to be recognized by God's people. The Scriptures teach no such doctrine. Rather they enjoin Christians to "render honour to whom honour is due" (Rom. xiii. 7). In ordinary society we are to act with manly deference towards our superiors, whether they be such in age, rank, office, knowledge, wealth, or influence. The apostle refers in this exhortation to the spiritual sphere. He urges that within the sacred circle of our Church life respect is to be paid to religious character, and not to material wealth. A true pure faith in "the Lord of glory" is incompatible with the entire spirit of snobbery, and especially with the maintenance of unchristian distinctions of caste within the Church. The British Churches of the nineteenth century unhappily need the warning of this passage almost as much as the congregations of the Dispersion in the apostolic age (see Kitto's 'Daily Bible Illustrations,' vol. i. twelfth week, first day).

II. **A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE EVIL.** (Vers. 2, 3.) The case supposed is in all respects an extreme one; yet how correctly it depicts human nature! It presents the thought of "the influences of clothes," or that "society is founded upon cloth" (Carlyle). The deference paid to the gold-ringed man in presence of the congregation is described with dramatic realism. A cordial welcome greets him when he enters, and he is conducted fussily to a principal seat; while the poor man in the squalid clothing is coldly pointed to a place where he may stand, or at most is permitted to sit in an uncomfortable corner. The apostle's graphic picture suggests to the thoughtful reader other examples of the same sin. We shall mention only one or two. The arrangements for seating a congregation amongst ourselves sometimes show "respect of persons," as in the case of an elevated and luxurious pew for the lord of the manor. Ministers in the pulpit are tempted to avoid enforcing practical duties too pointedly, lest their exhortations and reproofs should be unpalatable to influential families. (Yet how many examples of ministerial fidelity may be readily recalled! Numerous cases are historical: Elijah, Micaiah, John the Baptist, Knox, Howe, Massillon, etc.) Church courts are sometimes prone to mete out different measures to different classes of offenders. Congregations have been known to elect men of substance to spiritual office, rather than those who possessed the requisite qualifications of mind and character; and, on the other hand, members of Churches are sometimes actuated by mean jealousy of a wealthy fellow-worshipper, even to such an extent that they would fain,

were it possible, abridge his liberty in the exercise of his ordinary rights as a member of the congregation. In these and many other ways Christian people have often shown themselves to be "evil-thinking judges," and have thereby entailed upon the Church much mischief and damage.

III. THE GROUNDS OF THE CONDEMNATION. The apostle's reproof is faithful, but it is also affectionately tender (vers. 1, 5). He indicates from various points of view the wrongfulness of the partiality which he is denouncing. 1. *Mere earthly distinctions should be indiscernible in the presence of "the Lord of glory."* (Ver. 1.) There is an argument in the very use here of this great title. Worldly distinctions of wealth and rank should be dwarfed into nothingness before our minds when we realize that those who assemble in the house of God are the guests of "the Lord of glory." 2. *Respect of persons is inconsistent with sound Christian principle.* (Ver. 4.) The believer "looks at the things which are not seen;" and he ought not to do so with a wavering mind or a vacillating will. Ecclesiastical servility towards the rich is a form of mammon-worship; while the one power which the Church should exalt is that of character. 3. *"God is no respecter of persons."* (Ver. 5.) The New Testament rings with declarations of this truth. "The Lord of glory," when he lived on earth, was no sycophant of the rich. He was himself a poor man. He chose the poor rather than the rich to possess spiritual means in his kingdom. In "dishonouring the poor man," therefore, the Church was despising one for whom Christ died, and a possible heir of the heavenly glory. 4. *The rich as a class had been the enemies both of Christ and his people.* (Vers. 6, 7.) With a few noble exceptions, the upper classes persecuted the Christians in the days of the apostles. They harassed them with lawsuits. They slandered them before the judges. They cursed the blessed Name of Christ which it is the mission of the Church to exalt. It was, therefore, contrary to "the spirit of a sound mind" to court the rich. To do so showed a deficiency of common sense. It indicated a lack of self-respect. And, above all, it was disloyal to the blessed Name.—O. J.

Vers. 8—11.—*Stumbling in one point.* In these verses James takes the high ground that "respect of persons" is a transgression of the law by which we are to be judged; and one which, like every other, involves the guilt of breaking the whole law.

I. TO RESPECT PERSONS IS TO COMMIT SIN. (Vers. 8, 9.) It involves disobedience to "the royal law." This is a noticeable expression. Any Divine commandment may be described as "royal," seeing that it emanates from the supreme Sovereign of the universe. Rather, however, may the moral law receive this epithet because it is regal in its own character. God's law is the law of love; and love is kingly. The Divine nature itself is the foundation of virtue; and "God is love." Hence the Divine law is the eternal rule and final standard of rectitude. It possesses supreme excellence and supreme authority. Every other system of legislation, and all other rules of duty, ought to be subordinate to "the royal law." This law, we know, cannot be unjust; for it is a transcript of the moral perfection of the Divine nature, and is therefore the Alpha and Omega of all laws. The royal law is to be fulfilled "according to the Scripture;" for, while its ultimate source is in the nature of God, the one authoritative record of it to which sinful men have access is to be found in the Bible. We must consult "the law and the testimony" if we would ascertain the edicts of the great King, and learn the "newness of the spirit" in which these are to be obeyed. God's Word lays bare before us our half-buried and forgotten moral convictions; it restores the weather-worn inscriptions upon the gravestones of our sin-dead hearts. The apostle cites, as the great precept which forbids respect of persons, the words of Lev. xix. 18, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—the same precept which our Lord had employed as his summary of the principle underlying the last six commandments. We are to love our neighbour, i.e. any one to whom we have it within our power to become helpful, even although he may be a stranger and a Samaritan. Those who discharge this duty aright "do well." But, enlightened love for one's neighbour is inconsistent with respect of persons. We may not limit the precept either to our wealthy neighbour or to our poor neighbour. Indeed, to show partiality is not so much to limit the precept as to discard it altogether. Favouritism is the outcome of selfishness, rather than of the love that "seeketh not its own." Those, therefore, who

practise it are not guilty of a trifling impropriety, but of direct and palpable sin, both against the Old Testament law and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

II. TO TRANSGRESS IN ONE POINT IS TO TRANSGRESS THE WHOLE LAW. (Vers. 10, 11.) Let no one plead that respect of persons in the Church is so trivial a fault that it ought to be overlooked, especially in view of the social and pecuniary benefits which may be expected to result from it. The apostle assures us that partiality is a sin, and that he who indulges in it disobeys the whole moral law. To unthinking minds this latter assertion may sound very doubtful doctrine, leading them to ask—Is this statement of the nature of casuistry, or is it sober truth in the form of paradox? Does it not seem contrary to true moral perspective to affirm that a man who is noted for his blameless life "becomes guilty of all" when he "stumbles in one point"? Do not some sins, like some diseases, shut out the possibility of others which lie in an opposite direction? But a little consideration will reveal the deep moral truth of this saying. For: 1. *The Lawgiver is one.* (Ver. 11.) Every precept of the law possesses the same Divine authority. The sixth commandment is invested with the same solemn sanctions as the seventh. "God spake all these words." To disregard any one precept, therefore, is to violate the entire authority by which the whole Law has been ordained. It follows from this that: 2. *The Law itself is one.* How immeasurably "the royal law" is exalted, in its grand essential unity, above human systems of jurisprudence! The common law of England has to submit to have its defects supplied, and its rigours mitigated, by equity; but how very far yet are our common law and equity and statute law from coalescing into a unity! But the Divine legislation forms a perfect code; for it is a perfect reflection and expression of the mind of God. The Bible jurisprudence knows no distinction between law and equity. It is independent of glosses and commentaries. It abhors legal fictions. Having for its Author the God of love, its vital unity is found in the principle of loving obedience. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10). So, to "stumble in one point" is to break the whole law. For, as has been said, the law is a seamless robe, which is torn although only a part be torn; or a musical harmony, which is marred if one voice be singing out of tune; or a necklace of pearls, from which a single pearl cannot be dropped without breaking the string upon which the others hang, and letting them fall to the ground. 3. *The spirit of obedience is one.* True reverence for the law is inspired by love to the Lawgiver; and therefore obedience is impartial, and strives to be perfect. Our first parents, in eating the forbidden fruit, fell from the spirit of obedience, and dishonoured the whole law. In like manner, the man who habitually breaks one of the commandments shows that in principle he is disloyal, and that he would transgress any other precept were he exposed to similar temptation to do so.

CONCLUSION. We should not be able to contemplate this subject without being impressed with such considerations as these: 1. The obligation which rests upon us to render perfect obedience to the law of God. 2. The impossibility of our doing so in our own strength, or during the present life. 3. The necessity of clothing ourselves with the righteousness of Christ.—C. J.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Law and judgment.* In these weighty words James reminds his readers that they are on their way to a dread tribunal where they shall be judged according to their works, and where with what measure they mete it shall be measured to themselves.

I. THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT. The apostle takes the fact for granted. This certainty is attested by: 1. *Human nature.* Man possesses intuitively the conviction of his moral responsibility. Conscience anticipates even now the sentence which shall proceed from the bar of God. If he be not our Judge, the deepest dictates of morality are illusions. 2. *Divine providence.* While there is abundant evidence that the world is under moral government, it is also plain that there are many inequalities which require adjustment. The world is full of unredressed wrongs and undiscovered crimes. Providence itself, therefore, points to a day of rectifications. 3. *The Word of God.* The Bible everywhere represents the Eternal as a moral Governor; and the New Testament in particular describes the final judgment as a definite future event which is to take place at the second advent of Christ.

II. THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT. The poor heathen, since they sin without law,

shall be judged without law. Those who possess the Bible shall be tried by the higher standard of that written revelation. Believers in Christ, however, shall be "judged by a law of liberty" (ver. 12). This law is, of course, just the moral law viewed in the light of gospel privilege. In the Decalogue, the form which the law assumes is one of outward constraint. As proclaimed from Sinai, it constituted really "an indictment against the human race;" and it was surrounded there with most terrible sanctions. But now, to the Christian, the law comes bound up with the gospel; and the power of gospel grace within the heart places him on the side of the law, and makes it the longer the more delightful for him to obey it. In the believer's ear the law no longer thunders, "Thou shalt not." To him "love is the fulfilment of the law." The commandments, being written now upon his heart, are no longer "grievous" (1 John v. 3). The law has become to him "a law of liberty."

III. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF JUDGMENT. "So speak ye, and so do" (ver. 12). The standard will be applied to our words and to our actions. The apostle has already touched upon the government of the tongue in ch. i. 19, 26; and he has dealt with practical conduct in the intervening verses. His teaching here is an echo of that of the Lord Jesus upon the same theme (Matt. xii. 34—37; vii. 21—23). A man's habits of speech and action are always a true index of his moral state. If we compare human character to a tree, words correspond to its leaves, deeds to its fruit, and thoughts to its root underground. Words and actions will be judged in connection with "the counsels of the hearts" of which they are the exponents.

IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF JUDGMENT. (Ver. 13.) This doctrine of merciless judgment to the unmerciful is enunciated in many parts of Scripture. It receives especial prominence in the teaching of our Lord (Matt. v. 7; vi. 12, 14, 15; vii. 1; xviii. 23—35). We can never, of course, merit eternal life by cherishing a compassionate spirit. But, since mercy or love is the supreme element in the character of God, it is plain that those who do not manifest active pity towards others have not themselves been renewed into his image, and are therefore unsaved. The purpose of the gospel is to restore man's likeness to God, who "is love;" so that the man who exhibits no love shows that he has not allowed the gospel to exercise its sanctifying power within him, and he shall therefore be condemned for rejecting it. But the medal has another side; for the apostle adds, "Mercy glorieth against judgment." This seems to mean that the tender-hearted and actively compassionate follower of Christ need not fear the final judgment. His mercifulness is an evidence that he is himself a partaker of the mercy of God in Christ. He shall lift up his head with joy when he stands before the bar of Heaven (Matt. xxv. 34—40). His Judge will be the Lord Jesus, over whose cradle and at whose cross mercy and judgment met together. God himself, in order to effect our redemption, sheathed the sword of justice in the heart of mercy; and his redeemed people, in their intercourse with their fellow-men, learn to imitate him by cultivating the spirit of tenderness and forgiveness. Thus it is an axiom in the world of grace, acted on both by God and by his people, that "mercy glorieth against judgment."—C. J.

Vers. 14—19.—*Works the test of faith.* God has joined faith and works together; but perverse human nature will insist upon putting them asunder. In the apostolic age, Paul met with many people who made works everything, to the neglect of faith; and James met with others who made faith everything, to the neglect of works. In our time, too, multitudes outside the Church are saying that good conduct is the one thing needful, while orthodoxy of creed is comparatively unimportant.

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right"

(Pope.)

Within the Church, on the other hand, many are clinging to a lifeless formal faith—a faith which assents to theological propositions, but which does not influence dispositions. This latter error the apostle here exposes and refutes.

I. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF A BARREN FAITH. (Ver. 14.) The case supposed is not that of a hypocrite, but of a self-deceiver. The man has faith, of a sort; but it is only the cold assent of the intellect. It does not purify his heart, or renew his will, or revolutionize his moral nature, as saving faith always does. Its weakness is seen in the

fact that it is unproductive. It does not stir up its possessor to any habit of self-denial or of sympathetic benevolence. This faith coexists, perhaps, with respect of persons (vers. 1—13); or with an unbridled tongue, or a passionate temper, or a disposition to decline accepting the blame of one's own sins (ch. i.). How many persons who "say they have faith" by assuming the responsibilities of Church membership, yet "have not works"! How many do not observe family prayer, or impart religious instruction to their children, or make any real sacrifice of their means for Christ's cause, or devote themselves to any personal effort to advance his kingdom! James asks concerning such inoperative faith—*Cui bono?* And the answer is, that no good use can be made of it. A faith which does not fill one's heart with love to God, and which does not produce practical sympathy towards one's fellow-men, is a spurious, worthless, bastard faith. Such a faith not only leaves its possessor unsaved, but increases the moral deterioration which shall make him the longer the less worth saving.

II. EVIDENCE ADDUCED TO SHOW THIS INSUFFICIENCY. (Vers. 15—19.) 1. *An illustrative case.* (Vers. 15—17.) It is the bitterest mockery for a man who is himself living in ease and comfort to say to his shivering starving brother, when he sends him away empty-handed, "Depart in peace; do not give way to despondency; God has said he will never forsake his people; he shall give his angels charge concerning you; and I myself will pray for you." Sentimental professions of sympathy which have no outcome of practical help do not "profit" either person. They tempt the destitute man to become a misanthrope; and they ruin the moral health of the false sympathizer (1 John iii. 16—18). Mere lip-charity is not true charity; and a professed faith which is palpably barren of good works "is dead in itself." 2. *A direct challenge.* (Ver. 18.) This challenge is represented as offered by a true and consistent believer. He defies the professing Christian who divorces faith from practice, to exhibit his faith apart from works. He says in effect, "A believer is to 'let his light shine.' Well, I point to the new life which I am living as the appropriate manifestation of my faith; but, since you neglect good works, it is for you to indicate how you can manifest your faith otherwise." A faith which produces no works is unable to show itself; therefore it is not true faith at all. 3. *An actual example.* (Ver. 19.) Should any professing Christian of "the Dispersion" have been pluming himself upon his correct theology and his notional faith, here was a solemn warning to him. Should he have been resting satisfied with the thought that, living in the midst of polytheism, he was holding fast by the Hebrew doctrine of the unity of God, this verse would remind him of the profitlessness of such a conviction, unless it expanded into the blossoms and fruits of holiness. "The demons believe," and yet they remain demons. The unclean spirits whom Jesus exorcised had plenty of head-knowledge and head-faith about both God and Christ; but their faith was of a kind that made them "shudder" with terror when they realized the great verities. Being a merely intellectual credence, it could not cleanse the soul; it could only produce the "fear" which "hath punishment."

Learn, in conclusion, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." True saving faith not only asks, with Paul, "Who art thou, Lord?" but with him also passes from that question to this other, "What shall I do, Lord?"—C. J.

Vers. 20—26.—*Justification by faith and works.* The meaning of this notable passage has been much contested, because its teaching seems to many minds to contradict the doctrine of justification by faith. It was this apparent antagonism which led Martin Luther for a time to denounce the whole Epistle of James as a mere handful of "straw." Since his day, however, good men have been coming more and more to see that Paul and James, so far from opposing one another, are in reality presenting different sides of the same great truth. Paul, in Romans and Galatians, fights against self-righteousness; James, in this Epistle, contends against formalism and licentiousness. James's "faith without works" is not the justifying faith of Rom. iii. 28—"working through love;" it is rather the useless faith without love of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor. xiii. The two apostles, as we understand the matter, both treat of the same justification, but they do not contemplate it from the same point of view. Paul looks at justification metaphysically, in its essence as meaning acceptance with God on the ground of the righteousness of Christ; while James views it practically, in its vital connection with sanctification, and its efflorescence in a holy life. The "works" of

James are just the "faith" of Paul developed in action. In the verses before us, James continues his illustration of the operative fruit-bearing nature of justifying faith. He adduces two examples from the Old Testament Scriptures.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM. (Vers. 21—23.) It is remarkable that Paul employs the same illustration in setting forth the doctrine of justification by faith alone; and that he appeals also to the identical Old Testament statement (Gen. xv. 6) here quoted respecting Abraham's acceptance (Rom. iv.; Gal. iii. 6, 7). Paul says that Abraham was justified by faith before Isaac was born; while James says that he was "justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar" (ver. 21). But James is careful to add, that in this crowning manifestation of his piety the patriarch's faith co-operated with his works. The confidence which Abraham had reposed in God for so many years was the very life of his obedience to the dreadful command to kill his only son; and the reflex influence of his victorious passage through such an awful ordeal was that his strong trust in God was still further strengthened and "made perfect" (ver. 22). Abraham's faith alone had been "reckoned unto him for righteousness" ever since the day when he first "went out, not knowing whither he went;" but the longer that he persevered in believing, and kept adding practical virtues to his faith, his original justification was the more confirmed. So, as good works are vitally connected with saving faith—being, in fact, wrapped up within it in germ from the beginning—Abraham may be said to have been "justified by works." The faith which saved him was a works-producing faith. And he was so greatly distinguished for the fruitfulness of his faith that he became known in Hebrew history as "the friend of God."

II. THE EXAMPLE OF RAHAB. (Ver. 25.) Her case seems to have been selected because it was so unlike the preceding. Abraham was a Jew, and the father of the chosen nation; Rahab was a heathen woman. Abraham had for many years received a special training in the school of faith; Rahab had enjoyed no training at all. Abraham was a good and pure man; Rahab had lived a loose and sensual life. Yet this degraded Canaanite obtained "like precious faith" with the illustrious patriarch. The same two Old Testament examples are cited also in Heb. xi.; and certainly they take rank as the two extreme cases selected for special mention in that chapter. The contrast is useful as showing that, invariably, good works are found flowing from a living faith. The object of Rahab's belief is expressed in her own words in Josh. ii. 9—11; and her strenuous exertions for the safety of the two spies, made at the risk of her life, bring her faith into prominence, as "working with her works."

CONCLUSION. In ver. 20 the apostle begins the paragraph with a restatement of his thesis; and in vers. 24 and 26, after presenting the scriptural examples respectively, he introduces a triumphant "Q.E.D." He has shown that the faith which lies only in the cold assent of the intellect to a system of divinity is more like a lifeless corpse than a living man (ver. 26). Truly saving faith consists in such a warm personal trust of the heart as will manifest itself in a life of holy obedience. So the ethical in religion ought never to be divorced from the evangelical. Every Christian minister should preach many sermons on distinctively moral subjects, taking care, however, that such discourses are informed with gospel motives. And every member of the Church should practise in the market-place and the workshop the morality of the Sermon on the Mount—not simply because a holy life is the appropriate evidence of faith, but rather because it is the great end in order to which the believer's faith is reckoned for righteousness.—C. J.

Vers. 1—13.—*Respect of persons.* Amongst the other evils of which these Christian Jews were guilty, was the gross evil of respect of persons. James presents the scene graphically, according to his wont. There is the synagogue, with the worshippers gathering for worship, some taking the good places, as it were the chancel-seats, near to the ark with the roll of the Law, and to the table of the Lord; some the lower seats, away from the speaker and the Word. When, lo, a rich man enters, some stranger to the place, blazing in Tyrian purple, all embroidered o'er with gold, and heavily laden with jewelled rings. And him the officious ministrants conduct with ostentatious honour to the stalls in the chief part of the synagogue. A poor man enters, likewise a stranger, in squalid garb, and with some contempt of gesture or of tone the deacon

points him to a remote place in the building, or bids him sit below the rich man's footstool on the ground. So did the Christian Church do homage to the pomp and wealth of the world, and despise the poor. Against this practice James levels his rebuke, and shows the inconsistency and the sin of such respect of persons.

I. THE INCONSISTENCY. He points out the inconsistency of such conduct: 1. *With their faith.* (Vers. 1, 4.) The faith of Christians is precisely that faculty of their nature by which they discern and espouse spiritual things as distinguished from the things of the world. And in virtue of this faith they are supposed to be raised above the tyranny of world-attractions. The glory of earth does not dazzle them, for their faith has caught the vision of a higher glory, even a heavenly, of which Jesus Christ is Lord. They sit in heavenly places with him. And in virtue of this faith they must estimate a man according to his relation to the invisible world, his relation to Christ and God. There is to them a citizenship, a brotherhood, which takes precedence of all other social claims. How, then, with such a faith, the faith of the Lord of glory, could they be caught with the glitter of rings and of cloth of gold? And how ignore the equal relationships to the spiritual kingdom of God? Their conduct was in utter inconsistency with their belief, their faith; they were double-minded, evil-thoughted judges. 2. Also, *with their world-relationships themselves.* (Vers. 6, 7.) For they were in the world, though properly not of it. And what were their relations to the several classes of the world as such? Their relation to the rich was unquestionably that of persecuted and persecutors, of oppressed and oppressors (ver. 6). And to such would they cringe and pay homage; to men of such a class? To those likewise who not only oppressed them, but blasphemed the name by which they were called (ver. 7)? The inconsistency of their conduct, then, was sufficiently glaring: they were inconsistent with their professed faith, double-minded, trimming between the world and God; and they were inconsistent with their own relation to the world, for they did reverence to that very power which was often turned against themselves, and against the holy Name they bore.

II. THE SIN. All inconsistency may with truth be charged home upon the inconsistent man as being essentially sinful. But the inconsistent conduct of these Jews was more directly and immediately open to that charge, as being a breach of the royal law, the law of love. 1. The specific sin, *i.e.* the particular aspect which the sin of uncharity assumed in this special case. (1) Want of regard for the spiritual interests of the poor. They were brothers in their common need, but these had not treated them as such. The most commanding claim of one on the love and help of another, that of spiritual necessity, had been almost ignored. (2) Want of considerate tenderness for their special lowliness of estate. The greater their want, the greater should be the regard of Christians for them. So God's special regard for them (ver. 5). So God in Christ (Matt. xi. 5). 2. The generic sin, *i.e.* its general nature, as uncharity, apart from this special manifestation. (1) Transgression of the law of a King—his will disregarded. (2) Transgression of a kingly law—the sway of the principle destroyed. Viewed either way, it loses its character of isolated transgression, of a particular fault, and runs up into the dark character of *sin*! And all sin is essentially one. As has been said, it is "only accident, or fear, or the absence of temptation, that prevents our transgressing" other commandments also (Plumptre); potentially, when one is broken all are broken. Yes; adultery, murder, and all other deadly evil. "Guilty of all."

The conclusion of all is, "With what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again." A law of liberty, but not of liberty to sin. And if we disregard the law that should make us free, for us there is, not love, but judgment. A merciless judgment, if we have been merciless. But if, on the other hand, our hearts have been loving, and our lives merciful, through the faith of Christ, then judgment shall be disarmed, and we shall learn what those words mean, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."—T. F. L.

Vers. 14—26.—*Faith and works.* The supposed antagonism between Paul and James. Misapprehension. Paul's great argument is that, not by seeking to fulfil an impossible righteousness do we make ourselves just before God, but by acknowledging our sin and accepting his salvation. James's argument is, that the very faith which saves us is a faith which brings forth after-fruits, or it is not true faith at all. So, then,

the "works" to which the one refers are works done with a view to salvation, that God's favour may be won by them; the works to which the other refers are works springing out of salvation, because God's favour has been so freely and graciously bestowed. Let us study James's presentation of this truth—faith as a mere profession; faith as a practical principle.

I. FAITH AS A MERE PROFESSION. All profession which is mere profession is vain, and worse than vain. This needs no proving, and therefore James, in his usual graphic style, illustrates rather than proves the truth. 1. *The faith of mere profession is a mockery.* (Vers. 15, 16.) Picture the scene which he supposes: "If a brother or sister be naked," etc. What mockery! So is it possible for our "faith" to be a consummate caricature of the truths we profess to hold. Take, e.g., the central creed of our religion: "I believe in God the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost." What does this mean to us? That we live to God as our Father, by the grace of his salvation, and through the power of his Spirit? Or are these mere names to us? The world knows. And better no professed faith at all than a faith which is belied by all our life. 2. *The faith of mere profession is but the dead semblance of the living thing.* (Vers. 17, 20, 26.) Take the living man, and you have spirit, expressing itself in body, and actuating the body in all the active movements of the outer life. But mere body? A ghastly, pseudo-expression, not real; and no movement, no life. The spirit, the living principle, is gone! The analogy: what the spirit is to the expression of the spirit in the bodily form, and to the movements of active life which are carried on through the bodily instrumentality, that faith is to the profession of faith which shows it forth to men, and to the works by which it lives and moves in the world. But mere profession? Corpse-like! For there is no quickening principle there, and consequently no movement of life. So our creeds may be dead bodies, not instinct with any quickening principle, not bringing forth any fruits. 3. *The faith of mere profession may consist with the deepest damnation.* (Ver. 19.) Orthodoxy? You have it there! But to what result? A shuddering! Oh, let us learn this: a truth that is not wrought into the life is no truth to us; nay, it may but ensure our speedier and more dreadful ruin! Who are the atheists of the present day? Who the Christless ones? To whom was it said, "Thou, which art exalted unto heaven," etc. (Matt. xi. 23)? Let us learn, that the belief which now we trifle with, and glibly profess, may one day make us shudder!

II. FAITH AS A PRACTICAL PRINCIPLE. "Can that faith save him?" No, indeed; impossible *per se*! For whatever saves us must change us; and therefore the faith must be, not mere profession, but vital principle. True faith is trust; what we believe we live by. And faith in Christ, being a trustful surrender to Christ, is essentially operative. It *must* work; if it have not the "promise and potency" of work, it is not faith at all. 1. *Faith manifested by works.* (Ver. 18.) So far as there are true works, there is *virtually* true faith in the *Christ of the heart*, with whatever error mingled. We are warranted by Christ's own words in saying this: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii. 16—20). So, then, true works are an evidence to all of the true faith from which alone they can spring. But the converse is true: a lack of works is sure proof of a lack of faith. 2. *Faith justifying by works.* (Vers. 21, 23, 24, 25.) Only in so far as the faith is vital and operative does it justify, though the works themselves are really the outcome of the faith, or, more strictly, the result of the salvation of which the faith lays hold. James does not use the phrase, "justified by works," with metaphysical precision, but rather for broad, popular effect; and what he really means is, "justified by a working faith." Mingled with this, there may be likewise the idea in his mind, according to ver. 18 (see above), "accredited to the world as a justified man." So Abraham; so Rahab. 3. *Faith perfected by works.* (Ver. 22.) (1) Perfected as a principle by coming to a practical issue—for this the true natural history of all principles of action. Compare the passing of a law and its ultimate application. (2) Perfected as a principle in itself, by the reaction upon it of its own exercise. For this the law of all exercise: the muscle, the brain. So faith itself the stronger for the very works which it originates and sustains. Abraham again.

All which, being translated into perhaps more experimental language, means, "Christ in you;" and the Christ within must live and work (Gal. ii. 20). May the faith that appropriates such a life be ours!—T. F. L.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1—12.—WARNING AGAINST OVER-READINESS TO TEACH, LEADING TO A DISCOURSE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

Ver. 1.—(1) *Warning.* Be not many teachers. The warning is parallel to that of our Lord in Matt. xxiii. 8, *seq.*, “Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Teacher [διδάσκαλος, and not, as Textus Receptus, καθηγητής], and all ye are brethren.” Comp. also ‘Pirqe Aboth,’ i. 11, “Shemai said, Love work and hate lordship (רבונו).” The readiness of the Jews to take upon them the office of teachers and to set up as “guides of the blind, teachers of babes” etc., is alluded to by St. Paul in Rom. ii. 17, *seq.*, and such a passage as 1 Cor. xiv. 26, *seq.*, denotes not merely the presence of a similar tendency among Christians, but also the opportunity given for its exercise in the Church. (2) *Reason for the warning.* Knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment (ληψόμεθα). By the use of the first person, St. James includes himself, thus giving a remarkable proof of humility. (The Vulgate, missing this, has wrongly *umilis*.) Comp. vers. 2, 9, where also he uses the first person, with great delicacy of feeling not separating himself from those whose conduct he denounces. *Μεῖζον κρίμα*. The form of expression recalls our Lord’s saying of the Pharisees, “These shall receive greater condemnation (περισσότερον κρίμα)” (Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47).

Ver. 2.—*Gap* gives the reason for this *κρίμα*. We shall be judged because in many things we all stumble, and it is implied that teachers are in danger of greater condemnation, because it is almost impossible to govern the tongue completely. With the thought comp. Eccles. vii. 20, “There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” *Πολλά* is adverbial, as in Matt. ix. 14, and may be either (1) “in many things,” or (2) “oft.” *ἅπαντες*. “Ne se ipsos quidem excipiunt apostoli” (Bengel). If any stumbleth not in word (R.V.). “Control of speech is named, not as in itself constituting perfection, but as a crucial test indicating whether the man has or has not attained unto it” (Plumptre). *Τέλειος* (see ch. i. 4). *Χαλκωγαργεῖν* (cf. ch. i. 26). It is only found in these two passages; never in the LXX.

Ver. 3.—*Illustration of the last statement of ver. 2.* The bit in the horse’s mouth enables us to turn about the whole body. So the man who can govern his tongue has the mastery over the whole body. A remarkable parallel is afforded by Sophocles,

‘Antigone,’ l. 470, *Σιμπρὸν χαλκὸν δ’ εἶδα τοὺς θυμουμένους ἵππους καταρτυθέντας*. So also Philo, ‘De Op. Mundi,’ p. 19, *τὸ θυμικώτατον ζῶον ἵππος ῥάβδῳ ἐγεται χαλκωθεὶς*. The manuscript authority is overwhelming in favour of *εἰ δὲ* (A, B, K, L; *κ*, *εἰδε γάρ*, etc.; and Vulgate, *si autem*) instead of *ἵδού* of the Received Text (O has *ἵδε*, and the Syriac *ecce*): thus the apodosis is contained in the words, *καὶ ὅλον, κ.τ.λ.* Translate, with R.V., *now if we put the horses’ bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also*. (For a similar correction of *ἵδέ* to *εἰ δέ*, see Rom. ii. 17.)

Ver. 4.—*Second illustration, showing the importance of the tongue and its government.* The rudder is a very small thing, but it enables the steersman to guide the ship wherever he will, in spite of the storm. Whithersoever the governor listeth (ὅπου ἡ ὁρμὴ τοῦ εὐθυνontos βούλεται, *κ*, B); *whither the impulse of the steersman willeth* (R.V.); Vulgate, *impetus dirigentis*.

Ver. 5.—(1) *Application of illustration.* The tongue is only a little member, but it boasts great things. The true reading appears to be *μεγάλα αὐχεῖ* (A, B, C). The compound verb of the Textus Receptus, *μεγαλυνεῖν*, is found in the LXX. (Ezek. xvi. 50; Zeph. iii. 11; 2 Macc. xv. 32; Eccles. xlviii. 18). (2) *Third illustration.* A very small fire may kindle a very large forest. *Ἥλιον* (*κ*, *Δ*, B, C, Vulgate) should be read instead of *ὀλίγον* (A, *Ω*, K, L, *ff*). It is equivalent to *quantulus* as well as *quantus*. A somewhat similar thought to the one before us is found in Eccles. xi. 32, “Of a spark of fire a heap of coals is kindled.” *ῥῆλ*. “Matter,” A.V.; “wood,” R.V. The word is only found here in the New Testament. In the LXX. it is used for a “matter” of judgment in Job xix. 29; “matter” in the philosophical sense in Wisd. xi. 18. (cf. xv. 13); the “matter” of a book in 2 Macc. ii. 24; the “matter” of a fire in Eccles. xxviii. 10 (the whole passage, vers. 8—12, is worth comparing with the one before us); and for “forest” in Job xxxviii. 40; Isa. x. 17. It is most natural to take it in this sense here (so Syriac and Vulgate, *silva*). “The literal meaning is certainly to be preferred to the philosophical” (Lightfoot on Revision, p. 140). Forest fires are frequently referred to by the ancients. Virgil’s description of one (‘Georgica,’ ii. 303) is well known; so also Homer’s (‘Iiad,’ xi. 155).

Ver. 6.—*Application of illustration.* The translation is doubtful, *ὅπως* of the Received Text must certainly be deleted. It is wanting in *κ*, A, B, C, K, Latt., Syriac. Three renderings are then possible. (1) “And the

tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the wheel of nature." (2) "And the tongue is a fire, that world of iniquity: the tongue is among our members that which defileth the whole body," etc.: so Vulgate. (3) "And the tongue is a fire: that world of iniquity, the tongue, is among our members that which defileth the whole body," etc. Of these, the first, which is that of the Revisers, appears to be preferable. A fourth rendering, which is wholly untenable, deserves notice for its antiquity, viz. that of the Syriac, "The tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity (is the forest)." The world of iniquity (*ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας*). The tongue is thus characterized, because it leads to and embraces all kinds of wickednesses. As Bishop Wordsworth points out, it contains within itself the elements of all mischief. A somewhat similar use of *κόσμος* is found in the LXX. of Prov. xvii. 6, *Τοῦ πτωχοῦ ὅλος ὁ κόσμος τῶν χρημάτων, τοῦ δὲ ἀριστοῦ οὐδὲ βέλους*, "The whole world of wealth is for the faithful: for the faithless not a penny." *Καθίσταται*: "is set" or "has its place," and so simply "is." The tongue (1) defiles the whole body, and (2) sets on fire *τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως*, "the wheel of birth" or "of nature"—a very strange expression, and one almost without parallel. (*Τροχός* only here in the New Testament. There is, however, no doubt about its meaning "wheel." The A.V., which took it as *τροχός*, equivalent to "course," is universally given up (see Winer, 'Gram. of N. T.,' p. 62). For *γένεσις*, comp. ch. i. 23. The Vulgate has *rotam natiuitatis nostræ*.) Alford translates the phrase, "the orb of the creation," and in favour of this the use of the word *τροχός* in Ps. lxxvii. (lxxvi.) 19 may be appealed to. But more natural is the interpretation of Dean Plumptre, who takes it as "a figure for the whole of life from birth, the wheel which then begins to roll on its course and continues rolling until death." So Huther and Dean Scott in the 'Speaker's Commentary.' This view has the support of the Syriac Version: "The course of our generations which run as a wheel;" and is implied in the (false) reading of *κ*, *τῆς γενέσεως ἡμῶν* (compare the Vulgate). It should also be noticed that life is compared to a wheel in Eccles. xii. 6 (LXX., *τροχός*). And is set on fire. The tongue has already been called a fire. It is now shown how that fire is kindled—from beneath, from Gehenna. A similar expression is found in the Targum on Ps. cxx. 2, "Lingua dolosa . . . cum carbonibus juniperi, qui incensui sunt in Gehenna inferne." Gehenna, here personified, is mentioned also in Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke xii. 5. Thus the pas-

sage before us is the *only one* in the New Testament where the word is used except by our Lord himself. The word itself is simply a Græcised form of עֵינֵי הַיָּם, "valley of Hinnom," or fully, "valley of the sons of Hinnom" (variously rendered by the LXX. *φάραγξ Ἐννὸν* or *υἱὸς Ἐννὸν* or *Γαῖννα*, Josh. xviii. 16). This valley, from its associations, became a type of hell; and hence its name was taken by the Jews to denote the place of torment. In this sense it occurs in the New Testament, and frequently in Jewish writings (see Buxtorf, 'Lexicon,' *sub verb.* עֵינֵי הַיָּם), and it is said that the later rabbis actually fixed upon this valley as the mouth of hell.

Ver. 7.—*Fourth illustration*, involving a proof of the terrible power of the tongue for evil. All kinds of wild animals, etc., can be tamed and have been tamed: the tongue cannot be. What a deadly power for evil must it therefore be! The famous chorus in Sophocles, 'Antigone,' l. 332, seq., *Πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοῦδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει*, is quoted by nearly all commentators, and affords a remarkable parallel to this passage. Every kind of beasts, etc.; literally, every nature (*φύσις*) of beasts . . . hath been tamed by man's nature (*τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ*); Vulgate, *omnis enim natura bestiarum . . . domita sunt a natura humana*. (On the dative *τῇ φύσει*, see Winer, 'Gram. of N. T.,' p. 275.) With this fourfold enumeration of the brute creation ("beasts . . . birds . . . serpents . . . things in the sea"), cf. Gen. ix. 2, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts (*θῆρια*) of the earth, upon all the fowls (*πέτελα*) of the heavens, and upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea." *Serpents* (*ἐρπετά*) would be better rendered, as R.V., *creeping things*.

Ver. 8.—It is an *unruly* evil; rather, *restless*, reading *ἀκατάστατον* (*κ*, A, B) for *ἀκατάσχετον* of Textus Receptus (C, K, L); Vulgate, *inquietum malum* (cf. ch. i. 8). The nominatives in this verse should be noticed: "The last words are to be regarded as a kind of exclamation, and are therefore appended in an independent construction" (Winer, p. 668). A restless evil! Full of deadly poison! Compare the abrupt nominative in Phil. iii. 19 with Bishop Lightfoot's note. *Deadly* (*θανατηφόρος*); here only in the New Testament. In the LXX. it is found in Num. xviii. 22; Job xxxiii. 23; 4 Macc. viii. 17, 24; xv. 23. For the figure, cf. Ps. cxi. 3, "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips."

Vers. 9, 10.—Examples of the *restless* character of the tongue: "With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it too we curse men who are made in his image." In the first clause we should read *Κύριον*

(N. A. B. C. Coptic, Syriac, ff. and some manuscripts of the Vulgate) for *θεόν* (Receptus, with K. L. and Vulgate). Made after the similitude of God; better, *likeness* (*ὁμοίωσις*). The words, which are taken from Gen. i. 26 (*καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Θεὸς ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν*), are added to show the greatness of the sin. Theologically they are important, as showing that the "likeness of God" in man (in whatever it may consist) was not entirely obliterated by the Fall. St. James's words would be meaningless if only Adam had been created in the image and likeness of God. So St. Paul speaks of fallen man as still "the image (*εἰκών*) and glory of God" (1 Cor. xi. 7; and cf. Gen. ix. 6).

Vers. 11, 12.—*Illustrations* showing the absurdity of the conduct reprobated. From one principle opposite things cannot be produced. Nothing can bring forth that which is not corresponding to its nature. (1) The same fountain cannot give both sweet and bitter water. (2) A fig tree cannot yield olives, nor a vine figs. (3) Salt water cannot yield sweet. How, then, can the tongue yield both blessing and cursing? It will be seen that the thought in (2) is different from that in Matt. vii. 16, to which it bears a superficial resemblance. *There* the thought is that a *good* tree cannot yield *bad* fruit. Here it is that a tree must yield that which corresponds to its nature; a fig tree must yield figs and not olives, etc. So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. The Received Text, which the A.V. follows, is wrong here. Read, *οὐτε ἀλὺκὸν γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ* (A, B, C, and *κ*, except that it reads *οὐδὲ*), and translate, *neither can salt water yield sweet*; Vulgate, *sic neque salsa dulcem potest facere aquam*; Syriac, "Thus also salt waters cannot be made sweet." The construction, it will be seen, is suddenly changed in the middle of the verse, and St. James ends as if the previous clause had been *οὐτε δύναται σκῆ ἁλίας, κατ' α*. (cf. Winer, p. 619, Grimm's 'Lexicon of N. T. Greek,' p. 324).

Vers. 13—18.—*WARNING AGAINST JEALOUSY AND FACTION*. Ver. 13 contains the *positive* exhortation to meekness; ver. 14 the *negative* warning against jealousy and party spirit; and then the following verses place side by side the portraits of the earthly and the heavenly wisdom.

Ver. 13.—*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?* (*τίς σοφὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμων ἐν ὑμῖν*;); better, *who is wise and understanding among you?* *Ἐπιστήμων* is found here only in the New Testament. In the LXX. it is joined with *σοφὸς* (as here) in Deut. i. 13; iv. 6. "The *ἐπιστήμων* is one who understands and knows; the *σοφὸς* is one who carries out his knowledge into

his life" (Dr. Farrar, who aptly quotes Tennyson's line, "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers"). Out of a good conversation (*ἐκ τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς*); better, as R.V., *by his good life*. "Conversation" is unfortunate, because of its modern meaning. Meekness (*πραΐτης*); cf. ch. i. 21.

Ver. 14.—*Bitter envying*. *Ζῆλος* in itself may be either good or bad, and therefore *πικρόν* is added to characterize it. Bishop Lightfoot (on Gal. v. 20) points out that "as it is the tendency of Christian teaching to exalt the gentler qualities and to depress their opposites, *ζῆλος* falls in the scale of Christian ethics (see Clem. Rom., §§ 4—6), while *ταπεινότης*, for instance, rises." It may, perhaps, be an incidental mark of early date that St. James finds it necessary to characterize *ζῆλος* as *πικρόν*. Where St. Paul joins it with *ἐριθείαι* and *ἐρις*, there is no qualifying adjective (Rom. xiii. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 20; Gal. v. 20). (On the distinction between *ζῆλος* and *φθόνος*, both of which are used by St. James, see Archbishop Trench on 'Synonyms,' § xxvi.) *Strife* (*ἐριθείαι*); better, *party spirit*, or *faction* (cf. Rom. ii. 8; 2 Cor. xii. 20; Gal. v. 20; Phil. i. 17; ii. 3). The A.V. "strife" comes from a wrong derivation, as if *ἐριθείαι* were connected with *ἐρις*, whereas it really comes from *ἐριθος*, a hired labourer, and so signifies (1) working for hire; (2) the canvassing of hired partisans; and (3) factiousness in general (see Lightfoot on Gal. v. 20). Glory not; i.e. glory not of your wisdom, a boast to which your whole conduct thus gives the lie.

Vers. 15—18.—*Contrast between the earthly and the heavenly wisdom*: (1) the earthly (vers. 15, 16); (2) the heavenly (vers. 17, 18).

Ver. 15.—"This wisdom [of which you boast] is not a wisdom which cometh down from above." Vulgate, *non est enim ista sapientia desursum descendens*. But is earthly, sensual, devilish. Dr. Farrar well says that this wisdom is "earthly because it avariciously cares for the goods of earth (Phil. iii. 19); animal, because it is under the sway of animal lusts (1 Cor. ii. 14); demon-like, because full of pride, egotism, malignity, and ambition, which are the works of the devil (1 Tim. iv. 1)." *Sensual* (*ψυχικῆ*); Vulgate, *animalis*; R.V. margin, *natural or animal*. The position of the word is remarkable, occurring between *ἐπίγειος* and *δαμονιάδης*. It is never found in the LXX., nor (apparently) in the apostolic Fathers. In the New Testament it occurs six times—three times of the "natural" body, which is contrasted with the *σῶμα πνευματικόν* (1 Cor. xv. 44 (twice), 46); and three times with a moral emphasis resting upon it, "and in every instance a

most depreciatory" (see 1 Cor. ii. 14), "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," and Jude 19, *ψυχικοί, πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες*. The *ψυχή* in general in the New Testament is that which is common to man with the brute creation, including the passions, appetites, etc.; and therefore, by the use of this word *ψυχικός* to describe the wisdom which cometh not from above, but is "earthly, sensual [or, 'animal'], devilish," we are reminded of the contrast between the spirit of man which goeth upward and the spirit of a beast which goeth downward (Eccles. iii. 21). The "animal" man, then, is one who is ruled entirely by the *ψυχή* in the lower sense of the word; and by the depreciatory sense given to the adjective we are strongly reminded that "nature" is nothing without the aid of grace. See further Archbishop Trench's 'Synonyms of the N. T.,' § lxxi., and for the later history of the word (it was applied by the Montanists to the orthodox), Suicer's 'Thesaurus,' vol. ii. p. 1589.

Ver. 16 substantiates the assertion just made in ver. 15. Render, as in ver. 14, *jealousy and faction*. Ἀκαταστασία: confusion, of which God is not the author (1 Cor. xiv. 33).

Ver. 17.—The wisdom which is from above; ἡ ἐκθεὸν σοφία, equivalent to חכמה עליונה—an expression not unknown among rabbinical writers (see Schöttgen, 'Horæ Hebraicæ,' vol. i. p. 1026). First pure, then peaceable. "The sequence is that of thought, not of time" (Plumptre). Purity must be

secured, even at the expense of peace. Gentle, and easy to be entreated (ἐπιεικής εὐπειθής). The former of these two terms signifies "forbearing under provocation" (cf. 1 Tim. iii. 3; Titus iii. 2; 1 Pet. ii. 18); the latter is found only here. Vulgate, *suauditibus*; Syriac, "obedient;" R.V. as A.V., "easy to be entreated," i.e. ready to forgive. Thus the conjunction of the two terms ἐπιεικής and εὐπειθής reminds us of the Jewish saying in 'Pirqe Aboth,' v. 17, describing four characters in dispositions, in which the man who is "hard to provoke and easily pacified" is set down as pious. Without partiality (ἀδιςκριτος); here only in the New Testament. The word is used in the LXX. in Prov. xiv. 1; and by Ignatius (Eph. 3; Magn. 15; Trall. 1), but none of these passages throw light on its meaning. It may be either (1) without variance, or (2) without doubtfulness, or (3) without partiality; probably (1) as R.V. text. Without hypocrisy; ἀνυπόκριτος applied to πῖστις in 1 Tim. i. 5; 2 Tim. i. 5; to ἀγάπη in Rom. xii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 6; and to φιλαδελφία in 1 Pet. ii. 22.

Ver. 18.—The fruit of righteousness; an expression taken from the Old Testament; e.g. Prov. xi. 30; Amos vi. 12; and occurring also in Phil. i. 11. Of them that make peace. Τοῖς ποιοῦσιν εἰρήνην may be either (1) "for them," or (2) "by them that make peace." This verse gives us St. James's version of the beatitude, "Blessed are the peace-makers (μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί)" (Matt. v. 9).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-12.—*Speech*. I. THE GREAT RESPONSIBILITY OF TEACHERS. This is forcibly shown by St. Paul in 1 Cor. iii. 15, etc. Even of those who have built upon the right foundation the work is to be tested by fire, and "if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." What, then, must be the "greater condemnation" in store for others whose very foundation was faulty? In a commentary especially designed for teachers of others, a strong recommendation may be permitted of Bishop Bull's noble sermon on the text, "Be not many masters:" 'Concerning the Great Difficulty and Danger of the Priestly Office' (Bull's 'Works,' vol. i. sermon vi.).

II. IMPORTANCE OF MASTERY OF THE TONGUE. Without a bit in the horse's mouth it is impossible for the rider to have command over his steed. So, without a bridle on the tongue, no man can govern himself aright. David felt this, and said, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me" (Ps. xxxix. 1). Even Moses, the meekest of men, was shut out of the land of promise because he "spake unadvisedly with his lips." And with regard to the one sin, of which we read that it "hath never forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come," it is clear that it is a sin of the tongue, for it is always spoken of as "blasphemy," and never in general terms as "sin against the Holy Ghost." "We rule irrational animals with a bit; how much more ought we to be able to govern ourselves!" (Wordsworth).

III. THE VARIED CHARACTER OF SINS OF SPEECH. 1. Sins directly against God; e.g. blasphemy, the mockery of holy things, swearing. 2. Sins against our neighbour; e.g.

evil-speaking, lying, and slandering. 3. Sins against ourselves, infringing sobriety, discretion, or modesty. (See Barrow's 'Sermons,' vol. i. sermon xiii.)

IV. IMPORTANCE OF LITTLE THINGS. The bridle is a very little thing, but the rider cannot do without it. The rudder is very small, but it enables the steersman to guide a very large vessel. A tiny spark may set on fire a huge forest. So the size of a battle-field is quite disproportionate to the extent of country won and lost upon it. The tongue is a very little member, but a victory over it will save the whole man; on the contrary, a failure to rule the tongue involves far more than the sin of the moment; for, small as it is, the tongue "boasts great things, and defiles the whole body," and so leads to the ruin of the whole man.

V. THE TONGUE IS A FIRE. The apostle is speaking of the tongue as an instrument of ruin, destruction, and devastation. As such it is kindled from beneath—"set on fire of hell" (ver. 6). But there is another sense in which the tongue is a fire, kindled from above, cheering and warming and gladdening men's hearts, and if its power for evil is great, so also is its power for good. "The fire of man's wrath is kindled from beneath, as the fire that cleanses is kindled from above. Bearing in our minds the wonder of the day of Pentecost, it is hardly too bold to say that we have to choose whether our tongue shall be purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit or defiled by that of Gehenna" (Plumptre).

VI. THE GUILT OF SLANDER. 1. The slanderer *injures himself*. "The tongue . . . defiles the whole body." 2. Slander is *uncontrollable*. "The tongue can no man tame." It "sets on fire the wheel of birth;" that wheel "which catches fire as it goes, and burns with a fiercer conflagration as its own speed increases. . . . You may tame the wild beast; the conflagration of the American forest will cease when all the timber and the dry underwood is consumed; but you cannot arrest the progress of that cruel word which you uttered carelessly; . . . that will go on slaying, poisoning, burning, beyond your own control, now and for ever." 3. Slander is *unnatural*. "These things ought not so to be." It is a contradiction to nature, as much as for a fig tree to bear olives, or for a fountain to produce both fresh and salt water. 4. Slander is *diabolical in character*. "The tongue . . . is set on fire of hell." The very name of Satan is "the slanderer." (See Robertson's 'Sermons,' vol. iii. sermon i.)

Vers. 13—18.—*Wisdom*. I. WISDOM SHOWN BY ITS FRUITS IN HEART AND LIFE. The following are some of the fruits of the heavenly wisdom: (1) purity; (2) peacefulness; (3) forbearance under provocation, i.e. slowness in taking offence; (4) placability, i.e. readiness to forgive an offence actually committed. "By their fruits ye shall know them;" and therefore the presence or absence of such qualities as these form *tests* by which every one may recognize the presence or absence in his own heart of the wisdom which is from above.

II. THE SINFULNESS OF PARTY SPIRIT. A sin which is not always recognized, especially in religious circles, as being a sin. Its true character, however, may be seen by a consideration of (1) *its source*, which is not from above, but from beneath (ver. 15); and (2) *its results*. It leads to "confusion and every evil work" (ver. 16).

III. THE CHARACTER OF THE NATURAL MAN. The meaning of "animal" or "natural" (*ψυχικός*) in Scripture requires careful consideration. The fact that wherever a moral emphasis rests upon this word it is *always* depreciatory, and that here (ver. 15) it stands between "earthly" and "devilish," forms one of the clearest indications of the *absolute need of grace*. Scripture has nothing but condemnation for the man who is ruled by the *ψυχή*. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Mere *good nature* will never save a man. It is not enough to be "*well disposed*." Esau was all this. He stands out in Holy Scripture as the type of the natural man, ruled only by the *ψυχή*—good-natured, generous, brave, and kindly, *but* "not having the Spirit;" no *grace*, and therefore, by the verdict of an inspired writer, his character is stamped as that of "a profane person" (Heb. xii. 16).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*A dissuasive from ambition to teach*. Throughout this chapter the apostle sounds a loud note of warning against sins of the tongue. The opening

exhortation directs our thoughts to the responsibilities and dangers of the religious teacher. No one is under more constant temptation to sin with his lips; for it is the daily work of his life to speak regarding the most solemn themes.

I. THE CAUTION. "Be not many teachers, my brethren" (ver. 1). It would appear that the Pharisaic Jews of the time of the apostles vied with one another for distinction as teachers. At Church meetings it often happened that the time for free conference was consumed by those who had least to say which was likely to be profitable. So James counsels the members of the Church to be "swift to hear" and "slow to speak" in the religious assembly. While the office of the spiritual teacher is highly honourable, it is difficult to sustain it with honour. To do so demands superior intellectual power, keen spiritual insight, intimate acquaintance with Scripture, accurate knowledge of human nature, and a variety of other aptitudes which few possess. This dissuasive is needed by the modern Church little less than by the congregations of "the Dispersion." Our young men who aspire to the pulpit should consider well whether they have received a heavenly call thither. They should ponder the wise advice of an experienced pastor to a young student: "Do not enter the ministry *if you can help it*;" i.e. unless you have a burning desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ as a preacher. This dissuasive reminds us also of Paul's rule: "Not a novice" (1 Tim. iii. 6). How often is the young convert, especially in times of feverish revivalism, encouraged to narrate his "experience," and to address large religious meetings, greatly to his own spiritual detriment, and to the damage of the cause of Christ! James's counsel has a relation also to the pew. In its spirit it enjoins those who "hear the Word" to cultivate a docile and teachable frame of mind. Nothing hinders edification more than habits of pert and paltry criticism of the accidents of preaching.

II. ITS GROUND. (Vers. 1, 2.) How weighty is the responsibility of the religious teacher! He undertakes to perform the most important of all kinds of work, and by the use of means which involve the most difficult of all attainments, even to a godly man. The minister of the gospel is especially tried as regards the government of the tongue; and, alas! the most experienced pastors, even James and his fellow-apostles, —often "stumble in word." Teachers who are habitually unfaithful are guilty of peculiarly heinous sin; they shall be indicted at the bar of God for blood-guiltiness. Since the pastor is like a city set on a hill, his errors work more mischief in society than those of an ordinary member of the Church. The lowest deep of perdition shall be occupied by unconverted preachers of the gospel.

LESSONS. 1. *To Christian teachers.* Let us labour and pray, with heart and mind, and with books and pen, so that our pulpit utterances shall not be hasty or unguarded, and that we may be "pure from the blood of all men." 2. *To the members of the Church.* Give your minister your loving sympathy, and do not continually advertise and bewail his infirmities. Seeing that his work is so arduous, maintain the habit of constantly "helping" him with your prayers.—C. J.

Vers. 2-6.—*The power of the tongue.* Passing from the peculiar responsibility which attaches to teachers of religion, James proceeds to speak generally of the enormous influence of the faculty of speech, especially upon the speaker himself, and of the abuse to which it is liable.

I. A DIRECT STATEMENT OF THIS POWER. "If any stumbleth not in word, the same," etc. (ver. 2). In most cases, the capacity to control one's utterances indicates the measure of one's attainment as regards the keeping of his heart. Sins of the tongue form so large a portion of our multitudinous "stumbings"—they so frequently help to seduce us into other sins—and they afford such a searching test of character, that any one who has learned to avoid falling into them may without exaggeration be described as "a perfect man." Of course, no person lives in this world of whom it can be affirmed that he never errs in word. James has just remarked that "in many things we all stumble." But he is now suggesting an ideal case—that of a man who is perfectly free from lip-sins; and he asserts that such a person would be found to be both blameless and morally strong over the whole area of his character. The power which can bridle the tongue can control the entire nature. So great is the influence of human speech!

II. SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS POWER. (Vers. 3-6.) The apostle here compares the tongue first to two familiar mechanical appliances, and then to one of the mighty

forces of nature. In all the three selected cases very insignificant-looking means suffice to accomplish great results. The illustrations are extremely graphic; each is more telling than the preceding. They together show that James, the apostle of practical Christianity, possessed the perceptions and the instincts of a poet. 1. *The horse-bridle.* (Ver. 3.) The first illustration only emphasizes the thought which underlies the word "bridle" in ver. 2, and in ch. i. 26. The wild horses that roam at will over the American prairies seem quite unsheddable. Yet how complete is the control which man acquires over the tame horse! By means of the bit—the part of the bridle which the animal bites—he is kept completely under command. The horse is controlled literally by the tongue. Now, in like manner, a man may "turn about his whole body" by subjecting his speech to firm self-government. The spirited steed of this verse may be regarded as a symbol of the *flesh*, with its lusts and passions. But the man who uses his tongue aright will find its influence very powerful in helping him to subdue his depraved carnal nature. 2. *The ship's rudder.* (Ver. 4.) Both romance and poetry gather round the idea of a ship. Even the old "galley with oars" was a "gallant" spectacle; and in our time there is no sight more picturesque than that of a sailing-vessel.

"Behold! upon the murmuring waves
A glorious shape appearing!
A broad-winged vessel, through the shower
Of glimmering lustre steering!

"She seems to hold her home in view,
And sails as if the path she knew;
So calm and stately in her motion
Across the unfathomed, trackless ocean."

(John Wilson.)

The merchantmen of the ancients were of considerable size (Acts xxvii., xxviii.); but in our day naval architecture works on a colossal scale of which the ancients never dreamed. And what is it that directs the largest vessel so steadily on its course, and enables it to persevere even in spite of furious storms? It is simply that little tongue, or rudder, at the stern. The steering apparatus is "very small" in proportion to the bulk of the ship; but how wonderfully great its influence! It not only "turns about" the body of the vessel itself; its action is also powerful enough to counteract the driving force of "rough winds." Now, the faculty of speech is the rudder of human nature. The tongue "boasteth great things;" and well it may, for "death and life are in its power" (Prov. xviii. 21). If the spirited horse is a symbol of the flesh, the "rough winds" which beat upon the ship are suggestive of the world. The rudder of speech, rightly directed, will help us to continue straight on our heavenward course, despite the fierce gusts and gales of external temptation. 3. *The little fire.* (Vers. 5, 6.) What a terrific power there is in fire! One tiny neglected spark may kindle a conflagration that will consume a city. The great fire of 1666 in London, which began in a little wooden shop near London Bridge, burned down every building between the Tower and the Temple. And how terrible are the seas of fire, kindled often by some casual spark, which roll along the prairies of North America! The power of a little tongue of flame is simply stupendous; and thus it is a most apposite illustration of the destructive energy of human speech. For "the tongue is a fire." Sometimes this tremendous power is exerted for good; indeed, the "tongue of fire" is the appropriate emblem of Christianity as the dispensation of the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 3). More usually, however, fire is contemplated as an instrument of evil. So "the tongue is a fire" as regards its intense energy. Unsanctified speech scorches and consumes. The liar scatters firebrands; the slanderer kindles lambent flames; the profane swearer spits the fire of hell into the face of God. "The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue;" i.e. a whole microcosm of evil resides within the sphere of its operation. It "defileth the whole body;" just as fire soils with its smoke, the tongue stirs up the heart's corruption, and uses it to stain one's own life and character. It "setteth on fire the wheel of nature;"—for the whole circle of an unsanctified life, from birth onwards, is kept burning by the evil tongue. And it "is set on fire by hell;" for the ultimate inspiration of this destructive agency is of infernal origin. This fire is devil-

lighted, hell-kindled. Satan loaded the human tongue at the Fall with dynamite; and every day he ignites the treacherous magazine from the unquenchable fire. Thus, as the spirited horse represents the flesh, and the fierce winds the world, the raging fire leads us to think of *the devil*—the power of “the evil one.”

CONCLUSION. Let us earnestly seek the grace of God, to deliver our tongue from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Let us guard the portals of our lips, so that no uncharitable or slanderous words may issue from them. Let us welcome the Pentecostal “tongue of fire,” that it may purify us from the evil tongue which is “set on fire by hell.”—O. J.

Vers. 7—12.—*The tongue ungovernable and inconsistent.* At first the apostle had reminded his readers that speech may be made a great power for good (vers. 2—4). Then he went on to say that in actual fact it is employed by most men as an engine of evil (vers. 5, 6). He proceeds now to justify his strong language on this point.

I. THE UNTAMABLENESS OF THE TONGUE. (Vers. 7, 8.) We have here a fourfold classification of the inferior creatures. God gave man dominion over them at the creation, and intimated his supremacy anew after the Flood. There is no variety of brute nature that has not yielded in the past, and that does not continue to yield, to the lordship of human nature. The horse, the dog, the elephant, the lion, the leopard, the tiger, the hyena; the partridge, the falcon, the eagle; the asp, the cobra; the crocodile;—these names suggest ample evidence of man's power to tame the most diverse species of wild animals. But, says James, there is one little creature which human nature, in its own strength, finds it impossible to domesticate. The tongue of man is fiercer than the most ferocious beast. The rebellion of our race against good is far more inveterate than any insubordination of the brutes. Indeed, the revolt of the lower creatures against the authority of man is only the shadow and symbol of man's revolt against the authority of God. Year by year man is subduing the earth and extending his dominion over it; but his natural power to govern the tongue remains as feeble as it was in the days of Cain. This “little member” reveals the appalling depths of human corruption. “It is a restless evil;” unstable, fickle, versatile; ever stirring about from one form of unrighteousness to another; assuming Protean shapes and chameleon hues; its words sometimes filthy, sometimes slanderous, sometimes profane, sometimes angry, sometimes idle. And the untamed tongue “is full of deadly poison.” It is a worse poison-bag than that of the most hurtful serpent. The words of a false tongue are fangs of moral venom, for which no human skill can supply an antidote. Is not calumny just a foul virus injected into the social body, which kills character, happiness, and sometimes even life? Its venom spreads far and wide, and man is powerless to destroy it.

II. THE INCONSISTENCY OF THE TONGUE. (Vers. 9—12.) The same person may just now put the faculty of speech to its highest use; and, almost immediately afterwards, wickedly abuse it. The tongue has been given us that therewith we may “bless the Lord and Father;” and to utter the Divine praise is the most ennobling exercise of human speech. The Christian calls him “Lord,” and adores him for his eternal Godhead; he also calls him “Father,” and blesses him for his adopting grace. Then, with melancholy inconsistency, the same mouth which has been praising God may be heard invoking evil upon men. How often do those who profess godliness speak passionate and spiteful words! Do not Christians who belong to the same congregation sometimes backbite one another? Do not believers of different communions often, out of mere sectarian rivalry, denounce one another's Churches? Even godly men sometimes cherish the spirit which would “forbid” others to work the work of the Lord, simply because these are not of their company. Now, such inconsistency is seen in all its aggravation when we consider the fact that truly to bless God forbids the cursing of any man. “The Lord” is the “Father” of all men, for men “are made after the likeness of God.” In his princely intellect, and his hungering heart, and even in his uneasy conscience, man reflects the image of his Maker. God and he are so close of kin to each other—by nature, and through Christ's incarnation—that real reverence for God requires that we “honour all men.” How inconsistent, then, for the same mouth to bless the Father and to curse the children! The inconsistency appears on the very face of the English word “curse.” To *curse* means primarily “to invoke evil

upon one, by the sign of the cross." The cross is the symbol of the highest blessing to the world; and yet those who enjoy the blessedness which it brings have used it as an instrument of cursing. We bless God for the cross; and then we curse men in the name of the cross. Such inconsistency, the apostle adds, is flagrantly unnatural (vers. 11, 12). None such is to be met with in the physical world. A spring of water cannot transgress the law of its nature. A fruit tree can only bear fruit according to its kind. How unnatural, then, that in the moral world the same fountain of speech should emit just now a rill of clear sweet praise, and soon afterwards a torrent of bitter slander, or a stream of brackish minced oaths! Where a true believer falls into this sinful inconsistency, it is because the fountain of the old nature within his heart has not yet been closed up. He needs to have the accursed tree on which Jesus died cast into the bitter stream within him, to sweeten it, and to make it a river of living water. In the case of a soul that has experienced the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, this unnatural inconsistency of speech not only "ought not so to be," but does not need to be.—C. J.

Vers. 13—16.—*False wisdom.* The apostle suggests here that those who aspired too hastily to become Christian teachers (ver. 1) showed themselves to be sadly deficient in wisdom. They were unwise at once in their estimate of their own powers, and in their judgment as to the kind of public discussions which would be profitable for the Church. The cause of gospel truth could never be advanced by dogmatic disputations or bitter personal wrangling. Attend, therefore, says James in ver. 13, to a description first of *false wisdom* (vers. 14—16), and then of *true* (vers. 17, 18). Many members of the Churches of "the Dispersion" desired to appear "wise" (ver. 13), but only some were really so. Many might even be "knowing," or "endued with knowledge," who were not wise.

"Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have oftentimes no connection."

(Cowper.)

Knowledge is only a hewer of wood, while wisdom is the architect and builder. A man may possess a large library, or even amass vast stores of knowledge, and yet be "a motley fool." Indeed, no fool is so great as a knowing fool. The wise man is he who can use his knowledge for the largest moral and spiritual good. And the true wisdom is bound up with the life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Job xxviii. 28; 2 Tim. iii. 15). It makes the will of God its rule, and his glory its end. So the man who lives without God should be thought of as the impersonation of stupidity, and Satan as the supreme fool of the universe. But, if a man be "wise unto salvation," how will his wisdom appear? 1. *By "his good life."* (Ver. 13.) The quiet even flow of one's daily occupation will furnish an ample sphere for it. Even the heathen philosopher, Seneca, has said, "Wisdom does not show itself so much in precept as in life—in a firmness of mind and a mastery of appetite. It teaches us to do, as well as to talk; and to make our words and actions all of a colour." The weighty 'Essays' of Lord Bacon "come home to men's business and bosoms;" yet their author cannot justly be called "the wisest," if he was in his own life "the meanest of mankind." 2. *By "his works in meekness of wisdom."* Character is perceived not only by its subtle aroma, but in connection with individual actions. Wisdom shows itself in acts of holiness. And these acts are done "in meekness," which is one of wisdom's inseparable attributes. True wisdom is mild and calm, patient and self-restraining. And yet a meek spirit is not a mean spirit. The "poor in spirit" are not the poor-spirited. The "meekness of wisdom" consists with the greatest courage and the most ardent zeal. An old commentator says, "Moses was very meek in his own cause, but as hot as fire in the cause of God." And the Man Christ Jesus was mild, just because he was strong and brave. There was no fierceness, no fanaticism, no sourness, about him. He is our perfect Pattern of the "meekness of wisdom" (1 Pet. ii. 22, 23; Matt. xxvii. 12—14). The spirit of strife and wrangling is not the spirit of Christ. James now proceeds to a statement of principles regarding false or earthly wisdom (vers. 14—16).

1. ITS NATURE. (Ver. 14.) The spurious wisdom of the "many teachers" carried in it not so much burning zeal as "bitter zeal." Its spirit was factious, arrogant, bigoted. Its roots lay in the angry passions of the heart. Its aim was personal victory

rather than the triumph of the truth. While it may be sometimes dutiful to contend earnestly in defence of the gospel, the love of controversy for its own sake, and the cherishing of a contentious spirit towards brethren, is always sinful, much less a ground for "glorying." A professing Christian who lives to foster either doctrinal wranglings or social quarrels presents to the world a caricature of Christianity, and is himself a living lie "against the truth."

II. ITS ORIGIN. (Ver. 15.) 1. "*Earthly*." Every good gift is from above; but this so-called wisdom is of earthly origin, and busies itself about earthly things. Those cultivate it whose souls are wholly immersed in worldly pursuits. 2. "*Sensual*;" i.e. psychical or natural, as opposed to spiritual. It originates in the lower sphere of man's intellectual nature; it is the wisdom of his unspiritual mind and his unsanctified heart. Until the human spirit becomes possessed by the Spirit of God, its works will be "the works of the flesh." 3. "*Devilish*." The false wisdom is demoniacal in source, as it is in character. The envious heart, like the evil tongue, "is set on fire by hell" (ver. 6). Implicitly followed, this wisdom will tend to make a man "half-beast, half-devil." These three adjectives correspond to our three great spiritual enemies. Earthly wisdom has its origin in the world; natural wisdom, in the flesh; demoniacal wisdom, in the devil. And, recognizing this, our prayer should be, "From all such deceits, good Lord, deliver us."

III. ITS RESULTS. (Ver. 16.) Where there are "bitter zeal and faction" in the heart, these may be expected to produce commotion and wretchedness in society. What misery has not the spirit of strife and self-seeking wrought in the midst of families, and in the bosom of Churches! It is a fruitful source of heart-burnings and of lifelong alienations. It sows tares among the wheat. And the harvest of "this wisdom" shall be "a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow."

LESSONS. 1. Loathe the vile spirit of strife. 2. Covet earnestly the gift of holy wisdom. 3. Remember that the climax of the true wisdom consists in meekness.—C. J.

Vers. 17, 18.—*True wisdom*. These two verses exhibit, with much terseness and beauty, the features of the true or heavenly wisdom, i.e. the characteristic qualities of the state of mind which is produced by a sincere reception of saving truth. The picture here presented forms a direct contrast to the description of false or earthly wisdom given in vers. 14—16.

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE WISDOM. (Ver. 17.) In origin it is "from above." It is not the product of self-culture, but altogether supernatural and gracious. And, being a gift of God, it is "good" and "perfect" in all its characteristics (ch. i. 5, 17). James here represents the heavenly wisdom as possessed of seven great excellences. Seven was the perfect number among the Jews; and there are, so to speak, seven notes in the harmony of Christian character; or seven colours in the rainbow of the Christian life, which, when blended, form its pure white sunlight. Of these seven, the first is marked off from the others, because it refers to what a man is within his own heart; while the other six deal with the qualities shown by true wisdom in connection with one's deportment towards his fellow-men. 1. *In respect of a man himself*. Here true wisdom is "*pure*." This word means chaste, unsullied, holy. Purity is the fundamental characteristic of everything that is "from above." Righteousness lies at the foundation of all that is beautiful in character. Christian wisdom leads a man "to keep himself unspotted from the world," and to "cleanse himself from all defilement of flesh and spirit." Every person, therefore, who lives a sensual, selfish, or openly sinful life, shows himself to be destitute of the heavenly wisdom. For its chief element is holiness—that purity which is obtained through the blood of Christ and by the indwelling of his Spirit. 2. *In respect of his demeanour towards his fellow-men*. The expressions, "first," and "then," do not imply that the wise man must be perfectly "pure" before he begins to be "peaceable." They indicate the logical order, and not merely the order of time. The phrase, "first pure, then peaceable," has often been sadly abused in the interests of the "bitter jealousy and faction" which belong to false wisdom. But surely, even in doctrinal matters, we are to be peaceable with a view to purity, as well as pure for the sake of peace. "*Peaceable*;" indisposed to conflict or dissension. "Jealousy and faction" are characteristics of earthly wisdom. The heavenly wisdom deprecates disputatious debate, and labours to quench animosities. "*Gentle*;"

forbearing, courteous, considerate. Gentleness is just the outward aspect of the grace of peaceableness, the vesture in which the peaceable spirit should be clothed. "*Easy to be entreated*;" accessible, compliant, open to conviction, and willing to listen to remonstrance. The wise man thinks more about his duties than his rights. "*Full of mercy and good fruits*;" overflowing with feelings of kindness and compassion, and finding a healthy outlet for these in acts of practical beneficence. "*Without variance*;" steady, persistent, unmistakable, never "divided in its own mind" (ch. ii. 4; i. 6), and therefore never halting in the fulfilment of its mission. "*Without hypocrisy*;" perfectly sincere, always really being what it seems and professes. Wisdom's ways are not tortuous. It knows that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points.

II. THE RESULTS OF TRUE WISDOM. (Ver. 18.) The fruit of the earthly wisdom is "confusion and every vile deed" (ver. 16), but the fruit of the heavenly wisdom consists in "righteousness." "Peace" is the congenial soil in which this wisdom takes root and grows; the seed "sown" is the precious Word of God; they "that make peace" are the spiritual farmers who scatter it in hope; and "righteousness" is the blessed harvest which shall reward their toil. The eternal recompense of the righteous shall be their righteousness itself. The heavenly wisdom shall be its own reward in heaven.

LESSONS. 1. The harmony between this doctrine and the teaching of our Lord in the Beatitudes (Matt. v. 3-12), as well as that of Paul in his portraiture of love (1 Cor. xiii.). 2. The excellency and attractiveness of the true wisdom. 3. The rarity of its acquisition, especially as regards its choicest features, even on the part of professing Christians. 4. The necessity of asking this wisdom from God himself. 5. The character of Jesus Christ our Model in our endeavours after it.—C. J.

Vers. 1-12.—*The ethics of speech.* In these verses is dealt a rebuke against the craving for authority, which, as he reminds them, involves "heavier judgment." How? Partly as coming under judgment itself (see Matt. xxiii. 8-10); partly as involving increased responsibility. And responsibility and judgment are very near akin. More especially, in these words of warning, he has in view that confused assembly of theirs, in which all vied together in attempts to speak. How great the danger of "stumbling" in such speech! A stirring up of impatience, rancour, strife. This leads to thoughts on the power of the tongue, for good and for harm; with practical conclusions as to the inconsistency of unbridled speech.

I. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE. 1. *For good.* (Vers. 2-5.) Speech? It is the quick, instinctive, volatile expression of the man. A subtle effluence, showing the inner life. And as the inner life is agitated and stirred, tossing first this way, then that, how readily may the words also be committed to the impulses of the heart! And as those impulses may so easily be, for the moment, wrong impulses, how easily may wrong words be spoken! And so the transient feeling has fixed itself in a word that bites, and is not forgotten. And the feeling itself is fixed by the word that has uttered it; the man is committed to what otherwise he might have been glad to forget. James's first meaning, then, in the statement that the man who stumbles not in words is "a perfect man," is perhaps this: that one who has attained to mastery over so subtle and delicate an activity of the nature as speech, is perforce a man who has mastered all the more tangible and more controllable activities. The "whole body," all conduct, is brought into subjection, if this element of life is rightly swayed. Is it not so? Your experience will tell you that this is the last, the most intractable of the activities which you are called on to subdue. But there is another meaning in the words than this. The man who schools himself to such restraint as absolute mastery over speech implies, has not merely learned perfection of self-control in the matter of other and more tangible activities, but is learning a better perfection than that—even the self-restraint of his whole interior nature. To restrain conduct is much; but to restrain thought, purpose, passion! to lay a firm, a mastering control on all the complex desires and impulses of our nature! Oh, surely that is a perfection of self-restraint indeed! And the bridling of the tongue means thus the bridling of the unruly passions of the heart. *The restraint of expression is the restraint of the impulse that seeks to express itself* (see for converse of this law the former exposition, where we have noticed how the exercise of a faculty perfects the faculty that is exercised; ch. ii. 22). Do you not

know this also from your experience? Let loose the word, and you have let loose the feeling; conquer the word, and you have conquered the feeling. So, then, the illustrations: the bridle, the helm. And the tongue, a little member, boasteth great things. 2. *For harm.* (Vers. 5-8.) The remarks under this head have been partly anticipated above. Let loose the word, and you have let loose the passions. An unbridled tongue is an unbridled nature. Unchecked speech is unchecked wickedness. Yes; the activities of the man and the interior impulses are alike let loose for harm if the tongue be uncontrolled. Illustrations: fire among wood. So the "world of iniquity," defiling the body, setting on fire the wheel of nature, and itself set on fire of hell! And then? Tame the tongue, and tame the nature, who may! Even ravenous and noxious creatures are not unobtainable as that is; a restless evil; full of deadly poison. So the psalmist (cxl. 3). And your experience? A subtle, insinuating poison, which works its way into your whole nature, and infects all social joy.

II. THE INCONSISTENCY OF UNBRIDLED SPEECH. Picture their quarrelsome assemblies again; their invectives against one another, their common virulence towards the Gentile Christian Churches. And withal hymns to God! That is, hate and love in the same heart together, and all essentially towards God himself (ver. 9)! The inconsistency (ver. 10). So illustrations: fountain, tree (vers. 11, 12). These contrarieties, impossible in nature, *can* exist in us! And yet in truth they cannot. For ours is one nature. Can salt water yield fresh (ver. 12)? Neither can a cursing nature bless, or a hating nature love. And so our very praise is vitiated, and our worship becomes blasphemy. Oh, what are our dangers daily in this matter of speech! And perhaps, to shun them, we say we will hold our peace, even from good (Ps. xxxix.). Nay, but we must rather learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart. And so our speech shall be pure as his was, and our turbulent nature shall find rest.—T. F. L.

Vers. 13-18.—*Wisdom, true and false.* The temptation to be "teachers" (ver. 1) arose from the notion that they possessed wisdom. How shall they show this wisdom, how shall they even use it, if they may not teach? The life is to be at once the practice and the manifestation of a wisdom that is true (ver. 13). James here reverts to his earlier theme (ch. i. 5); and we have for our consideration—The false wisdom and the true, in their origin, nature, and fruits.

I. THE FALSE WISDOM. 1. *What was the nature of the false wisdom which prompted them to much speaking?* It was nothing other than the spirit of faction and jealousy—competing with one another for precedence; envying one another. And this was a lying against the truth! What truth? Their brotherhood in Christ, and the love which such brotherhood required. Such false wisdom was: (1) *Earthly*: it pertained altogether to the corrupt ways of this world. (2) *Sensual*: it was prompted, not by the spirit which God had made his home, but by the passions (see critical notes). (3) *Devilish*: they were as demoniacs, in their ungoverned rage and wild clamourings. 2. *What were the fruits of such wisdom as this?* "Confusion." Think of their assemblies, with the wrangling, cursing, and swearing! so also confusion in all the relations of social life. "And every vile deed;" for what would not men descend to, to further their base, party aims? 3. *What was the origin of such wisdom?* "Not from above:" no, indeed, but rather "set on fire of hell"!

II. THE TRUE WISDOM. 1. *Its nature.* "First pure:" for at any cost, even at the cost of peaceableness, a Christian must be true. So Christ, even though it involved the "woes" of Matt. xxiii.; even though it involved the cross! And his followers likewise (Matt. x. 34). "Then peaceable," as against the jarrings and discords of the false wisdom; "gentle," as against faction and jealousy; "easy to be entreated," as against the sullen resentments shown by those who imagine themselves to be offended; "without variance," i.e. fickleness of purpose; and "without hypocrisy," to which double-mindedness so easily leads. 2. *Its fruits.* Peace, as opposed to confusion; and the good fruits of mercy, as opposed to vile deeds. 3. *Its origin.* "From above:" yes, from the Father of lights (ch. i. 17). So the tongues of fire (Acts ii. 3).

Who is a wise man? Alas, who! But let us ask of God, who giveth liberally; remembering that "he that *winneth* souls is wise," and that "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and . . . as the stars for ever and ever" (Prov. xi. 30; Dan. xii. 3).—T. F. L.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1-12.—REBUKE OF QUARRELS ARISING FROM PRIDE AND GREED. A terribly sudden transition from the "peace" with which ch. iii. closed.

Ver. 1.—Whence wars and whence fightings among you? The second "whence" (*πθεν*) is omitted in the Received Text, after K, L, Syriac, and Vulgate; but it is supported by A, A, B, C, the Coptic, and Old Latin. **Wars . . . fightings** (*πόλεμοι . . . μάχαι*). To what is the reference? *Μάχαι* occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 2 Cor. vii. 5, "Without were fightings, within were fears;" and 2 Tim. ii. 23; Titus iii. 9, in both of which passages it refers to disputes and questions. It is easy, therefore, to give it the same meaning here. *Πόλεμοι*, elsewhere in the New Testament, as in the LXX., is always used of actual warfare. In behalf of its secondary meaning, "contention," Grimm ('Lexicon of New Testament Greek') appeals to Sophocles, 'Electra,' l. 219, and Plato, 'Phæd.,' p. 66, c. But it is better justified by Clement of Rome, § xlv., "ἵνα τί εἶπες καὶ θυμὸς καὶ διχοστασία καὶ σχίσματα πόλεμος τε ἐν ὑμῖν—a passage which has almost the nature of a commentary upon St. James's language. There is then no need to seek an explanation of the passage in the outbreaks and insurrections which were so painfully common among the Jews. **Lusts** (*ἡδονῶν*); R.V., "pleasures." "An unusual sense of *ἡδοναί*, hardly distinguishable from *ἐπιθυμίας*, in fact taken up by *ἐπιθυμείτε*" (Alford). With the expression, "that war in your members," comp. 1 Pet. ii. 11, "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

Ver. 2 gives us an insight into the terrible difficulties with which the apostles had to contend. Those to whom St. James was writing were guilty of lust, which actually led to murder. So the charge in 1 Pet. iv. 15 evidently presupposes the possibility of a professing Christian suffering as a murderer or thief. **Ye kill.** The marginal rendering "envy" supplies a remarkable instance of a false reading once widely adopted, although resting simply on conjecture. There is no variation in the manuscripts or ancient versions. All alike have *φονεύετε*. But, owing to the startling character of the expression in an address to Christians, Erasmus suggested that perhaps *φθονεῖτε*, "ye envy," was the original reading, and actually inserted it in the second edition of his Greek Testament (1519). In his third edition (1522) he wisely returned to the true reading, although, strangely enough, he retained the false one, "invidetis," in his Latin version,

whence it passed into that of Beza and others. The Greek *φθονεῖτε* appears, however, in a few later editions, e.g. three editions published at Basle, 1524 (Bebelius), 1546 (Herwagius), and 1553 (Beyling), in that of Henry Stephens, 1576; and even so late as 1705 is found in an edition of Oritius. In England the reading obtained a wide currency, being actually adopted in all the versions in general use previous to that of 1611, viz. those of Tyndale, Coverdale, Taverner, the Bishops' Bible, and the Geneva Version. The Authorized Version relegated it to the margin, from which it has been happily excluded by the Revisers, and thus, it is to be hoped, it has finally disappeared. **Ye kill, and desire to have.** The combination is certainly strange. Dean Scott sees in the terms a possible allusion to "the well-known politico-religious party of the zealots," and suggests the rendering, "ye play the murderers and zealots." It is, perhaps, more probable that *ζηλοῦτε* simply refers to covetousness; cf. the use of the word (although with a better meaning) in 1 Cor. xii. 31; xiv. 1, 39.

Ver. 3.—An evident allusion to the sermon on the mount, Matt. vii. 7, "Ask, and it shall be given to you . . . for every one that asketh receiveth." And yet St. James says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss;" for our Lord elsewhere limits his teaching, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing," etc. (Matt. xxi. 22). *Ἀίτετε . . . αἰτεσθε*. The active and middle voices are similarly interchanged in 1 John v. 15, on which Dr. Westcott writes as follows: "The distinction between the middle and the active is not so sharply drawn; but generally the personal reference is suggested by the middle, while the request is left wholly undefined as to its destination by the active." That ye may consume it upon your lusts; render, with R.V., *that ye may spend it in your pleasures*; *ἡδοναί*, as in ver. 1.

Ver. 4.—Ye adulterers and adulteresses. Omit *μοιχοί καὶ*, with A, A, B. The Vulgate has simply *adulteri*; the Old Latin (ff), *fornicatores*. Similarly the Syriac. Very strange is this sudden exclamation, "ye adulteresses!" and very difficult to explain. The same word (*μοιχαλὶς*) is used as a feminine adjective by our Lord in the expression, "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matt. xii. 39; xvi. 4; Mark viii. 38); and in this possibly lies the explanation of St. James's use of the term. More probably, however, it should be accounted for as a reminiscence of Ezek. xxiii. 45, where we read of Samaria and Jerusalem under the

titulos of Aholah and Aholibah: "The righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shod blood; *because they are adulteresses*, and blood is in their hands." It is remarkable too that in Mal. iii. 5 the LXX. has *μοιχαλίδες*, although the Hebrew has the masculine, and *men* are evidently referred to. If, then, in the Old Testament the Jewish communities were personified as adulteresses, it is not unnatural for St. James to transfer the epithet to those Judæo-Christian communities to which he was writing; and the word should probably be taken, just as in the Old Testament, of spiritual fornication, i.e. apostasy from God, shown in this case, not by actual idolatry, but by that "friendship of the world" which is "enmity with God," and by "covetousness which is idolatry." *φιλία*. The word occurs here only in the New Testament. With the thought of this verse, compare our Lord's words in John xv. 18, 19.

Vers. 5, 6.—The difficulty of the passage is well shown by the hesitation of the Revisers. The first clause is rendered, "Or think ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain?" but as an alternative there is suggested in the margin, "Or think ye that the Scripture saith in vain?" as if the following clause were a quotation from Scripture. And of this following clause three possible renderings are suggested. (1) *In the text*: "Doth the Spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore the Scripture saith," etc. (2) *Margin 1*: "The Spirit which he made to dwell in us he yearneth for even unto jealous envy. But he giveth," etc. (3) *Margin 2*: "That Spirit which he made to dwell in us yearneth for us even unto jealous envy. But he giveth," etc. Further, it is noted in the margin that some ancient authorities read "dwelleth in us," i.e. *κατώκησεν*, which is the reading of the Received Text, and so of the A.V. resting upon K, L; *κ* and B being the primary authorities for *κατώκειν*. With regard to the first clause, the rendering of the R.V., "speaketh," may be justified by Heb. ix. 5. It is possible that St. James was intending to quote Prov. iii. 34 immediately, but after the introductory formula, *ἡ δοκιμασία* *ὅτι* *κενὼς ἡ γραφή λέγει*, he interposes the emphatic question, "Is it to *envy*," etc.? and does not arrive at the quotation till ver. 6, when he introduces it with a fresh formula of quotation, *ὃς δὲ λέγει*, a looseness of construction which is quite natural in a Hebrew. Other views, for which it is believed there is less to be urged, are the following: (1) that the words, *πρὸς φθονόν*, *κ.τ.λ.*, are a quotation from some (now lost) early Christian writing. On this view the passage is parallel to Eph. v. 14, where a

portion of a Christian hymn is introduced by the words, *ὃς δὲ λέγει*. (2) That St. James is referring to the general drift rather than to the exact words of several passages of the Old Testament; e.g. Gen. vi. 3—5; Deut. xxxii. 10, 19, etc. (3) That the allusion is to some passage of the New Testament, either Gal. v. 17 or 1 Pet. ii. 1, etc. Passing on to the translation of the second clause, *πρὸς φθονόν*, *κ.τ.λ.*, it must be noted that *φθονός* is never used elsewhere in the New Testament or in the LXX. (Wisd. vi. 25; 1 Macc. viii. 16) or in the apostolic Fathers except in a bad sense. True that Exod. xx. 5 teaches us that God is a "jealous God," but there the LXX. renders *αἶψ* by the far nobler word *ζηλωτής*: cf. Wolf, 'Curæ Phil. Crit.,' p. 64, where it is noted that, while *ζηλος* is a *vox media*, the same cannot be said of *φθονός*, which is always *vitiōsa*, and is never used by the LXX. *ubi vox Hebraica* *אֲנִי* *ad Deum vel homines relatus exprimens est*. This seems to be a fatal objection to the marginal readings of the Revised Version, and to compel us to rest content with that adopted in the text, "Doth the Spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?" or rather, "Is it to *envying* that the Spirit . . . longs?" *πρὸς φθονόν* being placed for emphasis at the beginning of the sentence.

Ver. 6.—*God resisteth the proud*. The connection of this with ver. 4 is very close, and is favourable to the view taken above as to the meaning of the first clause of ver. 5, as the words appear to be cited in support of the statement that whosoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. The quotation is from Prov. iii. 34, LXX., *Κύριος ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσι χάριν*. St. James's version agrees with this exactly, except that it has *ὁ Θεός* instead of *Κύριος* (the Hebrew has simply "he," *אֲנִי*). The passage is also quoted in precisely the same form by St. Peter (1 Pet. v. 5), and with *Θεός* instead of *ὁ Θεός* by St. Clement of Rome. In St. Peter the quotation is followed by the injunction, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. . . . Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: *whom withstand* (*φ᾽ ἀντιστήτε*) steadfast in the faith." There is clearly a connection between this passage and the one before us in St. James, which proceeds, "Be subject therefore unto God; but *resist the devil* (*ἀντιστήτε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ*), and he will flee from you." This passage, it will be felt, is the simpler, and therefore, probably, the earlier of the two (cf. ch. i. 3).

Vers. 7—10.—*Exhortation based on the preceding*, quite in the style of a prophet of the Old Testament.

Ver. 7.—Read, *but resist*, etc. (ἀντιστήτε δέ), κ, A, B, Coptic, Vulgate.

Ver. 8.—**Draw nigh to God** (ἐγγίσατε τῷ Θεῷ). A phrase used of approach to God under the old covenant (see Exod. xix. 22; xxxiv. 30; Lev. x. 3). Equally necessary under the new covenant is it for those who draw near to God to have “clean hands and a pure heart” (Ps. xxiv. 4). Hence the following injunction: “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.”

Ver. 9.—St. James's version of “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matt. v. 4). **Be afflicted**. Ταλαιπωρήσατε: only here in the New Testament, occasionally in the LXX. **Heaviness**. Καθήφεια: another ἀπαῖς λεγόμενον, apparently never found in the LXX. or in the apostolic Fathers; it is, however, used by Josephus and Philo. It is equivalent to “dejection,” and “exactly describes the attitude of the publican, who would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, Luke xviii. 13” (Plumptre).

Ver. 10.—**Humble yourselves**, etc. A further parallel with our Lord's teaching, St. James's words being perhaps suggested by the saying recorded in Matt. xxiii. 12, “Whosoever shall *humble* himself shall be *exalted*” (ὀψωθήσεται, as here, “He shall lift you up,” ὕψώσει). In the sight of the Lord (ἐνώπιον Κυρίου). The article (τοῦ) in the Received Text is certainly wrong. It is wanting in κ, A, B, K. The anarthrous Κύριος is used by St. James here and in ch. v. 4, 10 (with which contrast ver. 14), and 11, as equivalent to the “Jehovah” of the Old Testament, which is represented in the LXX. by Κύριος without the article.

Vers. 11, 12.—**Warning against censorious depreciation of others.**

Ver. 11.—**Speak not evil**. Καταλαλεῖν: only here and 1 Pet. ii. 12; iii. 16. Vulgate, *detrahere*. But the context shows that the writer is thinking rather of harsh censorious judging. R.V., “Speak not one against another.” And **judgeth**; rather, *or judgeth*; ἢ (κ, A, B, Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic) for καὶ of the Textus Receptus. **Speaketh evil of the law**. What law? According to Dean Plumptre, “the royal law of Christ, which forbids judging (Matt. vii. 1—5).” Alford: “The law of Christian life: the old moral Law, glorified and amplified by Christ: the νόμος βασιλικός of ch. ii. 8; νόμος τῆς ἐλευθερίας of ch. i. 25.” Huther: “the law of Christian life which, according to its contents, is none other than the law of love.”

Ver. 12.—To play the part of a censor is to assume the office of a judge. But this is an office which belongs to God and not to man (cf. Rom. xiv. 3, 4). The first words of the verse should be rendered as follows:

“One only is the Lawgiver and Judge:” the last words, καὶ κριτής, omitted in the Received Text, being found in κ, A, B, and most versions, the Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. In the last clause also the Received Text requires correction. Read, *ὅδὲ τίς ἐστι* (insert δέ, κ, A, B, L, K, Latin, Syriac, Coptic) *ὁ κρίνων τὸν πλῆσιον* (κ, A, B).

Vers. 13—17.—**DENUNCIATION OF OVER-WEENING CONFIDENCE IN OUR OWN PLANS AND OUR ABILITY TO PERFORM THEM.**

Ver. 13.—**Go to**; ἄγε, properly, the imperative, but here used adverbially, a usage common in Greek prose, and found again in ch. v. 1. (For the word, comp. Judg. xix. 6; 2 Kings iv. 24; and for similar instances of the singular where more than one person is referred to, see Wetstein, vol. ii. p. 676.) The Received Text (Stephens) requires some correction in this verse. Read, *σήμερον ἢ αὔριον* with κ, B; the futures πορεύσομεθα, ποιήσομεν, ἐμπορευσόμεθα and κερδήσομεν (B, Latt., Syriac) instead of the subjunctives; and omit *ἐνα* after *ἐνιαυτόν*, with κ, B, Latt., Coptic. **Continue there a year**; rather, *spend a year there*, ἐνιαυτόν being the object of the verb and not the accusative of duration. For *ποιεῖν*, used of time, cf. Acts xv. 33; xviii. 23; xx. 3; 2 Cor. xi. 25. The Latins use *facio* in the same way; e.g. Cicero, ‘Ad Attic.’ v. xx, ‘Apamea quinque dies morati . . . Iconii decem fecimus.’

Ver. 14 fortifies the rebuke of ver. 13 by showing the folly of their action; cf. Prov. xxvii. 1, “Boast not thyself of to-morrow (τὰ εἰς αὔριον), for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” **Whereas ye know not**; rather, *seeing that, or, inasmuch as ye know not*, etc. (ὅτινες οὐκ ἐπίστασθε). The text in this verse again in a somewhat disorganized condition, but the general drift is clear. We should probably read, *ὅτινες οὐκ ἐπίστασθε τὸ τῆς αὔριον ποῖα ἢ ζωὴ ὑμῶν*; ἀτμὶς γὰρ ἐστε ἢ πρὸς ὄλιγον φαινόμενην ἔπειτα καὶ φανιζομένην, R. V., “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.”

Ver. 15.—**For that ye ought to say** (ἀντὶ τοῦ λέγειν); literally, *instead of your saying*; ἀντὶ τοῦ, with the infinitive, “sæpe apud Græcos” (Grimm). This verse follows in thought on ver. 13, ver. 14 having been parenthetical. “Go to now, ye that say . . . instead of your saying (as ye ought), If the Lord will,” etc. Once more the text requires correction, as the futures *ῥήσομεν* and *ποιήσομεν* should be read (with κ, A, B), instead of the subjunctives of the Received Text. It is generally agreed now that the verse should be rendered, “If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that.” But it is possible to divide it differently, and to render as follows: “If the Lord will,

and we live, we shall also do this or that." Vulgate, *et Dominus voluerit et si* [omit *et*, Codex Amiat.] *vixerimus, faciemus*, etc. (cf. Winer, 'Grammar of N.T. Greek,' p. 357).

Ver. 16.—But now. As is actually the case, "ye glory in your vauntings." Ἀλαζονεία: only here and in 1 John ii. 16; in the LXX., in 2 Mac. ix. 8 and Wisd. v. 8. It is a favourite word with St. Clement of Rome. On its meaning and distinction from υπερηφανία and other kindred words, see Trench on 'Synonyms,' p. 95; and cf. Westcott on the 'Epistles of St. John,' p. 64. The vice of the ἀλάζων "centres in self and is consummated in his absolute self-exaltation, while the υπερήφανος shows his character by his overweening treatment of others. The ἀλάζων sins most against truth; the υπερ-

ήφανος sins most against love." This extract will serve to show the fitness of ἀλαζονεία rather than υπερηφανία in the passage before us. The verse should be rendered, as in R.V., "But now ye glory (καυχᾶσθε) in your vauntings; all such glorying (καύχησις) is evil." Καύχησις is the act, not the matter (καύχημα), of glorying.

Ver. 17.—*Conclusion of the section.* "Some have supposed a direct reference to Rom. xiv. 23, 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' We can scarcely assume so much; but the correspondence is very remarkable, and St. James supplements St. Paul. It is sin to doubt whether a thing be right, and yet do it. It is also sin to know that a thing is right, and yet to leave it undone" (Dean Scott, in the 'Speaker's Commentary').

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The origin of strife and conflict to be sought in selfish lust.* Our "members" are the field of battle in which, or rather the instruments with which, the conflict is fought; and all the while they are really warring against the soul (1 Pet. ii. 11). The conflict, therefore, is a suicidal one.

Vers. 2, 3.—"*Ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it on your pleasures.*" Prayer is not to be selfish, or for the satisfaction of corrupt appetites; and where the spirit of prayer is absent there is no promise to prayer. "Incredible as it might seem that men plundering and murdering, as the previous verses represent them, should have been in any sense men who prayed, the history of Christendom presents but too many instances of like anomalies. Cornish wreckers going from church to their accursed work; Italian brigands propitiating their patron saint before attacking a company of travellers; slave-traders, such as John Newton once was, recording piously God's blessing on their traffic of the year;—these may serve to show how soon conscience may be seared, and its warning voice come to give but an uncertain sound (Plumtre).

Ver. 4.—"*The friendship of the world is enmity with God.*" And yet men still strive to retain the friendship of both; to "make the best of both worlds;" to serve God and mammon. Holy Scripture steadily sets its face throughout against *compromise* in matters of principle, against that spirit of "give and take" which is often the world's highest wisdom, and in which the worldly politician is prone not merely to acquiesce but to delight. God's claims are absolute, and admit no rival. Whoever hankers after the friendship of the world is *ipso facto* (καθ'αυτῶν) God's enemy. Nay, more; such a sin in one who has given his heart to God becomes the sin of the unfaithful wife looking away from her husband, and casting longing eyes on a stranger; and those who are guilty of it are therefore branded with the name and fame of *adulteresses*.

Ver. 8.—"*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*" A truth to which all experience bears witness, and a most important one in teaching the doctrine of repentance. God not only tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, but he also makes the path easy to the returning sinner and meets him half-way. The prodigal arose and came to his father, but while he was yet a great way off the father saw him and ran to meet him. It is the *first step* in repentance which is the difficult one, and yet even this is not taken without Divine assistance. It is God who first supplies the impulse to draw nigh to him, and then himself comes to meet the sinner who yields to the impulse. His spirit stirs the sinner to cry to him, and then himself listens to the cry, according to the psalmist's saying, "Thou preparest their heart, and thine ear hearkeneth thereto."

Ver. 10.—“*Humble yourselves in the sight of God, and he shall lift you up.*” “As a tree must strike root deep downwards that it may grow upwards, so a man’s spirit must be rooted in humility, or he is only lifted up to his own hurt” (Augustine).

Vers. 11, 12.—*The sin of detraction.* Observe how this differs from slander. Slander involves an imputation of falsehood. Detraction may be couched in truth and clothed in fair language. It is that tendency to disparage good actions, to look for blemishes and defects in them, using care and artifice to pervert or misrepresent things for that purpose. It is a poison often infused in sweet liquor and administered in a golden cup. On the nature and character of this sin, see a good sermon by Isaac Barrow (from which the above is taken), ‘Works,’ vol. ii. sermon xix. By the addition of the word “brethren”—“Speak not evil of one another, brethren”—St. James enforces the precept by a strong argument; for brethren, who are members one of another, are bound to love each other, and should be the last to deny the merit or destroy the reputation of each other.

Vers. 13—17.—*The uncertainty of human plans and schemes.* Best illustrated by the parable of the rich fool, boasting of his “much goods” laid up for “many years” on the very night on which his soul was required of him. It is such a spirit as his that St. James denounces so sternly; not the careful forethought and providence which Holy Scripture never condemns, but the forming plans and designs without the slightest reference in word or thought to that overruling will on which all depends. It is not the mere looking forward that is forbidden, but the looking forward without the recollection that while “man proposes, God disposes.” The whole of human history forms a comment on these verses. Alexander seized with mortal illness just at the moment when the world is at his feet; Arius “taken away” the very night before he was to be forced into communion with the Church; the statesman struck down by the knife of the assassin just when his country seems to need him most;—all these show the truth of the words which St. James had probably read, and which may well be compared with his own: “Our life shall pass away as a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof” (Wisd. ii. 4). The vanity of human schemes is well shown by the old epitaph—

“The earth goeth on the earth glistening with gold;
The earth goeth from the earth not when it wold;
The earth buildeth on the earth castles and towers;”

But—

“The earth saith to the earth, ‘These shall be ours.’”

Ver. 17.—*The greatness of sins of omission.* It is not only sinful to do wrong; it is also sinful to lose an opportunity of doing good. God means us not only to be harmless, but also to be useful; not only to be innocent, but to be followers of that which is good. How miserable is the satisfied acquiescence in the thought, “I never did anybody any harm”—a thought which is falsely used as a consolation at many a death-bed! The slothful servant who hid the talent in a napkin did no wrong with it, but nevertheless he was condemned. He had failed to do good. So God claims from all of us, not merely that we should “cease to do evil,” but also that we should “learn to do well;” for “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Wars and fightings.* Gazing upon the fair portraiture of the heavenly wisdom with which ch. iii. closes, we perhaps feel as if we could make tabernacles for ourselves in its peaceful presence, that we might continue always to contemplate its beauty. Immediately, however, James brings us down again from the holy mount into the quarrelsome and murderous world. He points us to the “wars” and “fightings” that rage throughout the human family. He returns to the “bitter jealousy and faction” that eat like a gangrene into the heart of the Christian Church. For the congregations which the apostles themselves formed were tainted with the same impurities which cling to the Church in our own time.

I. THE PREVALENCE OF STRIFE AMONG CHRISTIANS. (Ver. 1.) In the believing communities of "the Dispersion" there were many elements of discord. The time was one of political agitation and of social turbulence. Within the Churches there were sometimes bitter theological disputes (ch. iii.). And in private life these Jewish Christians were largely giving themselves up to the besetting sin, not only of Hebrew nature, but of human nature; they struggled for material self-aggrandizement, and in doing so fell into violent mutual conflict. But do not quarrels and controversies of the same kind rage still? Christian nations go to war with one another. Employers and workmen array themselves against each other in hostile camps. Churches cherish within their bosoms the viper of sectarianism. Fellow-believers belonging to the same congregation cease to be on speaking terms with one another, and perhaps indulge in mutual backbiting. How sad to contemplate the long "wars" waged in hearts which should love as brethren, and to witness those outward "fightings" which are their inevitable outcome!

II. THE ORIGIN OF STRIFE. (Vers. 1, 2.) "Whence" comes it? asks James; and he appeals in his answer to the consciences of his readers. The source of strife is in the evil desires of the heart. Usually, it is true, all wars and fightings are traced no further than to some outward cause. One nation attacks another professedly to maintain the country's honour, or perhaps to rectify an unscientific frontier. Trade strikes and locks-out are to be explained by an unsatisfactory condition of the labour market. Ecclesiastical contentions are all alike justified by some assumed necessity in the interests of truth, and sometimes also by a misinterpretation of the words, "first pure, then peaceable" (ch. iii. 17). And the personal quarrels that break out among individual Christians are sure to be ascribed to severe and gratuitous provocation. But here, true to his character as the apostle of reality, James sweeps away these excuses as so many dusty cobwebs. He drags out into the blaze of gospel light the one true origin of strife. "Wars" and "fightings" have their fountain within the soul, and not without. They come "of your pleasures," i.e. of the cravings of your carnal hearts. It is royal pride, or the lust of power, or sometimes the mischievous impatience of an idle army, that "lets slip the dogs of war" between nations. It is avarice and envy that foment the social strife between capital and labour. It is the spirit of Diotrephes that produces the evils of sectarianism. It is the wild and selfish passions of the natural heart that stir up the animosities and conflicts of private life. These passions "war in your members;" issuing from the citadel of "Mansoul," they pitch their camp in the organs of sense and action. There they not only "war against" the regenerated nature (1 Pet. ii. 11), and against one another, but against one's neighbour,—clamouring for gratification at the expense of his rights and his welfare. This truth is further expanded in ver. 2, and in a way which recalls ch. i. 14, 15; or which suggests the analysis of sin given by Thomas à Kempis: "Primo occurrit menti simplex cogitatio; deinde fortis imaginatio; postea delectatio et motus pravus et assensio." The first stage is that of unreasonably desiring something which we have not. The second is that of murderously envying those whose possessions we covet—cherishing such feelings as David did towards Uriah the Hittite, or Ahab towards Naboth. The third stage is that of open contention and discord—"ye fight and war." But common to all the stages is the consciousness of want; and at the end of each, as ver. 2 reminds us, this consciousness becomes further intensified. Ye "have not;" "cannot obtain;" "ye have not,"—even after all your fierce strivings. The war-spirit, therefore, is generated by that unrest of the soul which only the God of peace can remove. It has its source in that devouring hunger of the heart which only the bread of God can appease. And to cure it we must ascertain what the great nature of man needs, in order to make him restful and happy.

III. THE REMEDY FOR STRIFE. (Vers. 2, 3.) It lies in *prayer*. If we would have our nature restored to restfulness, we must realize our dependence upon God. To struggle after the world in our own strength will tend only to foster the war-spirit within us. Perhaps we have not hitherto directly consulted the Lord about our worldly affairs. If not, let us begin to do so now. Or perhaps we have "asked amiss," in praying chiefly for what would gratify only the lower elements of our nature, or requesting blessings with a view to certain uses of them which would not bear to be mentioned before his throne. We cannot e.g. expect God to answer the prayer that

our worldly business may prosper, if we secretly resolve to employ what success he sends in catering for self-glorification. The things that we ask must be what we need for the Lord's service; and we must honestly purpose so to use them. The cultivation of the true spirit of devotion is the way to contentment with our lot in life. We shall secure peace among the powers and passions of the heart, if we "seek first our Father's kingdom and his righteousness." Regular soul-converse with God will exorcise the demons of discord, and call into exercise the gracious affections of faith, submission, gratitude, and peace.

LESSONS. 1. The wickedness of the war-spirit. 2. The defilement and degradation which result from allowing selfish motives to govern the heart. 3. The blessedness of making God our Portion, and of resting contented with our allotted share of temporal good. 4. The duty of forgiving our enemies, and of promoting peace in the Church and in society.—C. J.

Vers. 4—6.—*Worldliness enmity with God.* Here the apostle follows up the words of rebuke and warning with which the chapter opened. The doctrine which he enunciates is uncompromising; and his language startling, as well as solemn.

I. THE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE LOVE OF THE WORLD AND THE LOVE OF GOD. (Ver. 4.) This painful epithet, "Ye adulteresses," is the key-note of the chord which James strikes in his appeal. God is the rightful spiritual Husband of every professing Christian; and thus, if such a one embraces the world, he or she resembles a woman who turns away from her lawful husband to follow other lovers. The world is an evil world, alien in its principles and pursuits from the will and glory of God; and therefore "the friendship of the world" is incompatible with the love of him. But what precisely is this "friendship"? It does not lie (1) in habits of friendly intercourse with worldly men; or (2) in the diligent pursuit of one's daily occupation; or (3) in an appreciation of creature comforts and innocent pleasures. Worldliness does not depend upon outward acts or habits. It is a state of the heart. The word denotes the spirit and guiding disposition of the unbeliever's life—the *will* to "be a friend of the world." Since, accordingly, this friendship represents direct opposition to the Divine will, every man who seeks it first and most declares himself by that very act "an enemy of God."

II. CONFIRMATION OF THIS TRUTH. (Vers. 5, 6.) We accept as accurate the Greek reading of ver. 5 which has been adopted by the Revisers, together with their translation: "Or think ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the Spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?" The apostle, accordingly, confirms his representation regarding the antagonism between the love of the world and the love of God by: 1. *The tenor of Scripture teaching.* The sacred writers with one consent take up an attitude of protest against worldliness. They uniformly assume that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." They urge the duty of moderation in one's desires, and of contentment with the allotments of Providence. The worldly disposition, which shows itself in covetousness and envy and strife, is opposed both to the letter and the spirit of Holy Scripture. And the moral teaching of God's Word on this subject is not "in vain." The Bible means what it says. In all its utterances it is solemnly earnest. 2. *The consciousness of the renewed heart.* "Doth the Spirit [*i.e.* the Holy Spirit] which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?" If the Holy Ghost, speaking in the written Word, condemns the spirit of envy, he does so also in the law which he writes upon the hearts of Christ's people. Some of those to whom this Epistle was addressed had "bitter jealousy and faction in their hearts" (ch. iii. 14) it was seen in their worldly "wars" and "fightings." But the apostle appeals to their consciences to confess whether such a state of mind was not due to their walking "after the flesh" instead of "after the Spirit." They knew well that the power of the Holy Ghost within their souls, in so far as they yielded themselves to it, produced always very different fruit from that of envy and strife (Gal. v. 19—23; ch. iii. 14—18). 3. *The substance of the Divine promises.* (Ver. 6.) "Grace" is the name for the influence which the Holy Spirit exerts upon the heart in order to its regeneration and sanctification. And how does grace operate, but just by killing the love of the world within the soul, and breathing into it the love of God? He, by his Spirit, gives to his believing people "more grace," *i.e.* supplies of grace greater in force and

volume than the strength of their depravity, or the temptations against which they have to contend. Not only so, but those who employ well the grace which they already possess, shall receive more in ever-increasing measure (Matt. xxv. 29). And "the humble," who realize most deeply that they do not deserve any grace at all, are those upon whom God has always bestowed the most copious supplies. The further we depart from pride, which is the fruitful mother of envy and strife, the more freely and abundantly shall we receive that supernatural energy which will drive the love of the world out of our hearts (Prov. iii. 34).

CONCLUSION. Let us impress upon our minds the intensity with which God abhors pride. All history echoes the truth that "he setteth himself in array against the proud." Take the case of Pharaoh, of Nebuchadnezzar, of Haman, of Wolsey, of Napoleon. For ourselves, therefore, let us "fling away ambition" in every form. Especially let us crucify spiritual pride. "Many labouring men have got good estates in the Valley of Humiliation;" and if we go there "in the summer-time" of prosperity we shall learn the song of the shepherd boy—

"He that is down needs fear no fall;

He that is low no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his Guide."

(Bunyan.)

C. J.

Vers. 7—10.—Submission to God. This passage is a powerful and heart-stirring appeal to those professing Christians whose hearts had been full of worldly "pleasures" (ver. 3), and whose hands had been occupied with "wars" and "fightings." Within these four verses there are no fewer than ten verbs in the imperative mood; but the cardinal precept of the whole paragraph is the exhortation to submission, with which it both opens and closes. The other counsels in vers. 7—9 have reference to elements of conduct which are included in subjection to the Divine will.

I. THE DUTY OF SUBMISSION TO GOD. (Vers. 7, 10.) The immediate connection of "therefore" in ver. 7 is with the quotation at the close of ver. 6. "God sets himself in array against the proud; therefore, be subject unto God." You must either willingly humble yourselves, or be precipitately humbled by Divine Providence. "God giveth grace to the humble; therefore, be subject unto God." Clothe yourselves with humility, that you may enjoy this "grace." "Be subject" to the Captain of your salvation, as a good soldier is to his commander. Subjection to God includes: 1. *Acquiescence in his plan of salvation.* These Christian Jews of the Dispersion were to avoid the sin of the Hebrew nation generally, in "not subjecting themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 3). And we "sinners of the Gentiles" must throw away that pride of self-righteousness which tempts us also to reject a method of redemption from which all boasting is excluded. We must make the blood of Jesus our only plea, and surrender our hearts to the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. 2. *Obedience to his law.* If we submit ourselves to the righteousness of God in the gospel, we shall begin to reverence and admire and obey the moral law. We shall be willing that God should reign over us and rule within us. We shall allow him to control us in body and mind, in intellect and conscience, in heart and will, in act and habit. We shall forsake our sins. We shall long and labour to be holy. 3. *Acceptance of his dealings in providence.* We are to be contented with the lot in life which God has assigned to us. We are to be willing to receive evil as well as good at his hand. We must bear affliction patiently, not because it is useless to murmur, but because it is wrong to do so. In our times of sorrow we must not challenge God's sovereignty, or impugn his justice, or arraign his wisdom, or distrust his love. The spirit of Christian submission says, "Let us also rejoice in our tribulations" (Rom. v. 3).

II. ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER WHICH ENTER INTO THIS SUBMISSION. These are set forth in the body of the passage (vers. 7—9). 1. *We must resist Satan.* (Ver. 7.) To "be subject unto God" necessarily involves resistance to God's great enemy. Human nature has in it the element of combativeness; and the greater any man's force of character, he is likely to be the more thorough a hater. But the Christian should not "fight and war" with his fellow-believers; his quarrel is to be with Satan, and with Satan's works,

We are to "resist" the devil; we must not dispute or parley with him. We must not "give place" to him (Eph. iv. 27) by cherishing covetousness or envy; for, if we allow him any place at all, he may speedily take possession of the entire area of the heart. If, on the contrary, we "stand up against" Satan, "he will flee" from us. The power of the truth, the power of faith, the power of prayer, will silence his artillery. There is no giant temptation which may not be overcome with some small stone out of the brook of Holy Scripture, if we hurl it from the sling of faith, and with an arm guided by the Holy Spirit. 2. *We must come near to God.* (Ver. 8.) The design of all Satan's assaults is to prevent us from doing so; and the best way in which to "resist" him is resolutely to "draw nigh." What a blessed privilege to us sinners to be allowed to approach to the holy, just, and merciful Jehovah! He has opened for us a new and living way of access by the blood of Jesus. We draw near (1) when we pray, for prayer is just the converse of the soul with God; (2) when our deepest soul-longings go out towards him, who alone can be our Portion; and (3) when, along with our supplications and our heart-yearnings, we live a pure and godly life. Nor shall any man who truly seeks God seek him in vain. God will be propitious to him, and visit him, and take up his abode with him. 3. *We must put away our sins.* (Vers. 8, 9.) For we cannot really "draw nigh" to God if we persist in hugging them. The act of coming near involves repentance; it carries with it resolutions and endeavours after amendment. We must "cleanse our hands" from the open sins of which our neighbours may be cognizant, and "purify our hearts" from those secret faults which are known only to God. Self-loathing should possess us when we realize our covetousness and double-mindedness, our divided affections and unstable spiritual purposes. Our repentance must be such as to involve us in misery; and we must cry out to God for pardon. Does any one object that we have in this a somewhat gloomy picture of the religious life? The answer is, that such is only a representation of it upon one side. Here we see the shadows of the life of grace; but its shadows are only the reflection of its joys. It is a blessed mourning of which the text speaks; and they that mourn thus "shall be comforted." Godly repentance is the true humility; and it conduces to the highest exaltation. "He shall exalt you" (ver. 10), giving you always "more grace" in this life, and a rich reversion of glory in the life to come.—C. J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Evil-speaking and evil-judging.* Here James still continues his warning against the spirit of selfishness and worldliness. In these two verses he issues a solemn interdict against the habit of calumny and unjust censure of brethren. For evil-speaking is one of the most familiar manifestations of that spirit of strife which he has already rebuked.

I. THE PROHIBITION. (Ver. 11.) 1. Fundamentally it is directed against *evil-judging*. The apostle's words are to be interpreted according to their spirit. He does not condemn all judging. God has implanted within us the critical faculty, the judgment; and we cannot avoid using it. Indeed, it is a Christian duty to pronounce upon conduct and character. We require to do so within our own breasts for our own moral guidance; while to judge publicly is a function of the civil magistrate and of Church rulers. What James condemns here is *evil-judging*—all judging that is censorious or calumnious. We are not to judge rashly, harshly, uncharitably. Even good Christians are tempted to transgress in this matter in many ways: e.g. from listening to mere rumour, from trusting to our own first impressions, from narrow-mindedness, from self-conceit, from mistaken views of the sufferings of others, from forgetting that we cannot look into our neighbours' hearts. In forming our judgments of conduct and character we should have regard to such principles as these: (1) We have no right to come to an unfavourable conclusion unless we possess full knowledge of all the facts. (2) We ought to guard against undue severity of judgment. (3) We must not allow bad motives to warp our decisions. (4) When acts are capable either of a favourable or an unfavourable construction, we are bound in charity to take the favourable view. 2. But the prohibition refers also to the expression of our judgments. It forbids *evil-speaking*. The vilest form of this sin consists in the wilful creation of false reports against brethren. To originate such is literally diabolical. True Christians may seldom fall into this lowest and guiltiest form of calumny; but how readily do some of us yield ourselves to the circulation of slanders which have been poured into our ears!

How frequently do we "take up a reproach against our neighbour" (Ps. xv. 3)! We find it lying in our way, and we pick it up and pass it on, whereas we ought to allow it to remain where it is. Alas! even in Christian circles a small and slight rumour will sometimes expand speedily into a huge inflated calumny, which will scatter mischief and misery along its path. And even mere idle speaking degenerates into evil-speaking. Gossip soon becomes backbiting; scandal grows out of tittle-tattle. It is so much easier to talk of persons than of principles, that our dinner and tea parties, instead of being occupied with profitable subjects of conversation, are sometimes largely given over to the retail of scandal. We should ever bear in mind such principles as the following for our guidance in the expression of our judgments concerning others: (1) The end of speech is to bless and serve God, while evil-speaking is work done for Satan. (2) We should direct attention to the excellences rather than to the defects of our neighbour's character. (3) When we require in private life to use the language of condemnation, we ought to condemn principles rather than persons. (4) We should tell his fault to the erring brother himself rather than to others.

II. THE GROUNDS OF THE PROHIBITION. One strong argument is introduced incidentally, in the use of the words "brethren" and "brother." Depreciatory and calumnious language towards one another is subversive of the whole idea of *brotherhood*. It is inconsistent with the recognition of the common brotherhood of the race, and tenfold more so in relation to the special spiritual brotherhood of believers. The apostle, however, submits expressly two grounds for his condemnation. To judge and speak evil is: 1. *To condemn the Divine Law.* (Ver. 11.) "The law" refers to the moral code which was given by Moses, and fulfilled and made honourable by Jesus Christ. It is the same which James has spoken of in ch. i. as "the law of liberty." Of this law the second great commandment is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—a precept which embraces within it the "judge not" of the Lord Jesus (Matt. vii. 1). But the man who speaks evil of his brother virtually condemns the New Testament ethics as unsound, and pronounces the moral law to be unworthy of obedience. 2. *To usurp the functions of the Divine Judge.* (Vers. 11, 12.) Our proper place and work as Christians is that of humble submission to the authority of the law. If, however, we speak evil regarding our fellows, we in so doing withdraw altogether from the attitude of subjection. In "judging our brother" we climb up to the judicial bench; we usurp the seat of him who administers the law, and who is not himself under it. But how frightful the impiety that is involved in such usurpation! "One only is the Lawgiver and Judge;" he alone pronounces infallible judgments, and possesses power to execute them. His sentences are spoken for doom; yet he loves to "save," and it gives him "no pleasure" to "destroy."

LESSONS. 1. The presumptuousness of evil-judging. "Who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?" Man lacks the requisite knowledge and wisdom and purity. 2. The duty of cultivating love of the brethren. 3. The importance of copying in our lives the perfect character of the godly man, as mirrored in Ps. xv. 4. The reasonableness of fearing God, as the one true and final Judge.—C. J.

Vers. 13—17.—"*Man proposes, but God disposes.*" The subject here is another prevalent manifestation of pride and worldliness; namely, the propensity to indulge in presumptuous self-reliance in relation to the future.

I. THE SPIRIT OF VAIN CONFIDENCE WHICH THE APOSTLE REBUKES. (Ver. 13.) He appeals directly to worldly-minded merchants and money-makers. The Jews, like ourselves, have been a nation of shopkeepers. In these early times many of them carried the products of one country to the commercial centres of another. The same trader might be found one year at Antioch, the next at Alexandria, the following year at Damascus, and the fourth perhaps at Corinth. Now, the apostle solemnly rebukes those who formed their business plans without taking into account the providence of God, or even the uncertainty of human life. He is very far from stigmatizing commercial enterprise as a form of worldliness. He does not censure the formation of business schemes even for long years to come, provided such be contemplated in subordination to the Divine will, and be not allowed to interfere with spiritual consecration to his service. What he condemns is the spirit of self-sufficiency in regard to the continuance of life and activity and success (Ps. xlix. 11; Isa. lvi. 12; Luke xii. 19). He rebukes the

practical atheism which would shut out God from business arrangements. And his "Go to now" is quite as much needed among us Gentiles of the nineteenth century as it was among the Jews of the first. In presence of the innumerable business interests of our time, and amidst the wasting anxieties of competition, how prone men are to ignore the eternal laws, and exclude from their calculations the sovereign will of the great Disposer! How apt busy men are to act as if they were the lords of their own lives! When we allow the spirit of worldliness to steal over our souls like a creeping paralysis, then we begin to "boast ourselves of to-morrow."

II. THE GROUNDS OF THE REBUKE. (Vers. 14—17.) The apostle reminds his readers that this confident expectation of a successful future betrays: 1. *A foolish and irrational spirit.* (Ver. 14.) Although man is endowed with reason, he often neglects to use his reason. These merchant Jews of "the Dispersion" knew thoroughly well the brevity and frailty of human life, but were in danger of allowing their proud thoughts to efface from their consciousness so commonplace a truth. They forgot that we "know not what shall be on the morrow." In the political world "the unexpected generally happens." In the commercial world what startling surprises occur!—poor men raised to affluence, and rich men reduced to sudden poverty. And the duration of our lives is as uncertain as any other event. "For," asks James, "what is your life?" What is it like? What is its most prominent outward characteristic? "Ye are a vapour;" human life is like the morning mists that mantle the mountain. It spreads itself out, indeed, as vapour does; for it is manifold in its schemes and cares and toils; but, like vapour, it is frail and transient. We know this to be true, but how little do we realize it! We form plans about our business and family affairs, plans about our houses and fields, plans to improve our social status; and we forget that all these are dependent upon an unknown quantity—our continuance in life and health, our possession of the future, and of property in it. Now, in all this, do not we act quite irrationally? How can our calculations be correct, when we leave out the factor of the frailty of life? This thought should be uppermost in our minds. It is the part of a wise man often to reflect that he will soon be in eternity. Again, this vain confidence reveals: 2. *An impious and wicked spirit.* (Vers. 15—17.) It is impious to forget to carry the will of the supreme Disposer into all our calculations, and to neglect to qualify our plans by a reference to that will. It is wicked for a finite and sinful man to cherish the proud confidence that he may map out the future of his life at his own pleasure. To act as if the keys of time were in one's own keeping, and as if one could ensure life and health, like papers locked up in a fire-resisting safe, involves an arrogance which has in it the essence of all sin. "All such glorying is evil;" for it originates in pride, which is the fountain-head of sin. It is the spirit which makes an idol of self, and which would practically thrust out God from his own world. The apostle concludes with a general moral statement on the subject of the relation between knowledge and responsibility. Our guilt will be the greater if we do not practice what we clearly know (ver. 17). But every professing Christian knows perfectly well the uncertainty of life. How aggravated, then, is our sin, when we "boast ourselves of to-morrow"!

III. THE DUTY OF REALIZING OUR DEPENDENCE ON THE LORD'S WILL. (Ver. 15.) We should always remember that our times are in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and be ready upon every fitting occasion to acknowledge it, not only with submission, but with confidence and joy. Some good men habitually say or write "D.V.," while others equally in their hearts recognize the Lord's will, although they do not often refer to it after such fashion. The great matter is for every one really to permeate his business life with religion, and to live up to the measure of his spiritual knowledge. Thomas Fuller's remarks on this subject are excellent in spirit: "Lord, when in any writing I have occasion to insert these passages, 'God willing,' 'God lending me life,' etc., I observe, Lord, that I can scarce hold my hand from encircling these words in a parenthesis, as if they were not essential to the sentence, but may as well be left out as put in. Whereas, indeed, they are not only of the commission at large, but so of the quorum, that without them all the rest is nothing; therefore hereafter I will write those words fully and fairly, without any enclosure about them. Let critics censure me for bad grammar, I am sure it is good divinity" ('Good Thoughts in Bad Times').—C. J.

Vers. 1—10.—*War or peace?* He has just been speaking of peace. But this leads

him to survey the actual state of things: disputes, strifes, murders. (For condition of Jewish society at this time, see Plumptre's notes: "rife with atrocities.") And he will ascend to the origin of them. Whence come they? They proceed from the restlessness of the unregenerate nature, seeking, but seeking in vain, its satisfaction in the world. These two topics, then, are introduced to us: dissatisfaction with the world; satisfaction in God.

I. DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WORLD. Man's nature consists of higher and lower, spiritual and physical, the one designed by God to govern and regulate the other. But without such governance the desires of the lower life are riotous and rampant, and the members of the ungoverned man are the battle-ground for base cravings. And from the man himself the battle is projected into the world. 1. *But what is the result of this unbridled craving for the world?* A nature that is never satisfied. (1) Baffled desires and efforts towards the world. Ever more and more inflamed, for there is a certain infiniteness in man's cravings; ever more and more disappointed, for there is a palling finiteness in the world towards which man's infinite cravings go forth. (2) The non-existence of desires towards God, who alone can satisfy. "Ye ask not" (ver. 2); or, "Ye ask amiss;" not sincerely for God's blessing itself, but merely for the selfish gratification of worldly desires (ver. 3). 2. *And what the guilt of this condition?* The guilt of absolute ungodliness! (1) The world-desires themselves, unbridled and lawless as they are, are evidence of divorce from God (ver. 4). (2) The spirit of envy which they provoke is absolutely opposed to God (ver. 5). Yes, it is from below.

II. SATISFACTION IN GOD. But, it may be said, we are naturally so prone to sin; we covet, we envy, as being to the manner born. Yes, truly; and only God's grace can suffice. But God's grace can suffice, and it is abundantly given (ver. 6). 1. Let us notice the terms upon which this grace is given. (1) Towards God: humility (ver. 10), and submission (ver. 7). (2) Towards the tempter: resistance (ver. 7). (3) Towards sin: repentance (a) of the will—cleansing the hands and purifying the heart (ver. 8); (b) of the feelings (ver. 9). (4) Towards God, again: drawing nigh, as to a Refuge (ver. 8). 2. And the results of this craving after God? (1) God's nearness to man (ver. 8; so John i. 51; xvii. 22, 23). (2) Man's exaltation to God (ver. 10). So, virtually, in the ascension of Christ; so actually by-and-by (John xiv. 3).

The same old war in the members, from the beginning until now. It must be put down by a more righteous war. A war which demands all the abounding grace of God. Let us learn, then, sternness towards sin; strong trust towards God. And so he will give the victory.—F. F. L.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Judgment, human and Divine.* The besetting sin of the Jews; the besetting sin of man: evil-speaking. But to speak evil, is to judge; and who are we, that we should judge? One is the Judge, even God.

I. THE JUDGMENT OF MAN. In some cases, where great public ends are to be served, man seems to be justified in exercising a power of delegated judgment; so the magistrate, the minister, the historian. But even here the power is qualified; the judgment of motives is not absolute. The besetting sin, however, is to judge of motives where only the act is known; and, which generally accompanies the former, to conjecture the act where little is definitely known. So in the world; so, alas, in the Church! But why is this judgment, why is this evil-speaking, wrong? There is a law against which it sins—the law of love. Indicated in "the Law" (Gal. vi. 2); also in the word "brother." Yes, a law which has said, "Judge not" (see Matt. vii. 1). But such judgment has a more uniquely evil relation to law than this. 1. *False relation to law:* "Speaketh against the law, judgeth the law." What a subtle hypocrisy is this! When we think we are championing the law by our censorious speaking, we are in reality blaming it, condemning it; for we are virtually denying its right to teach us charity! So do we sit in judgment, forsooth, on the law itself. 2. *True relation to law.* "A doer." By charity, we recognize the validity and rectitude of the great law of charity, and ourselves obey its precepts. This law, let us remember, is impersonated in Christ. If, then, we do not bow to its sway, we do not receive Christ; and, not receiving Christ, we have no salvation.

II. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. The great principle is here stated that, ultimately and

absolutely, there is one Lawgiver, one Judge. 1. *The legislative authority of God*: rooted in his very nature, as God. And the special law of love rooted in this, that "God is love." 2. *The judicial authority of God*. He discerns infallibly the sin of the creature. (1) As being himself perfectly good: an essential requisite. 'The mirror and the breath. So that infinite holiness! (2) As being the One to whom all sin is adversely related. Whatever its exact bearings directly, it is essentially hostile to God. And as in him we live and move and have our being, its hostility is immediately known by God. 3. *The executive authority of God*. "Able to save, and to destroy." (1) To save: taking into blessed fellowship with himself, as having affinity. (2) To destroy: casting off from himself, as being alien (see 2 Thess. i. 9). So there is nothing arbitrary in the judgment of God, from first to last. The legislative, the judicial, the executive functions are all rooted in his nature, and in the essential relation of that nature to us.

"Who," then, "art thou that judgest thy neighbour?" Actually judging, not thy neighbour, but the law; nay, not the law, but the great God from whom all law springs, and to whom it all returns! May God save us from this!—T. F. L.

Vers. 13—17.—"*What is your life?*" The life of the savage is characterized by an almost total lack of true foresight; no calculations of the future. True civilization, on the contrary, is largely built up on the principle of far-seeing prudence. Yet there may be a false use of a true principle. And so it may come to pass that we manifest an unchristian reliance on the future, and an absorbed engrossment in plans for its direction. It is this which James condemns. He sets forth the false glorying, and, over against the false, the true.

I. *THE FALSE GLORYING*. 1. *A false love of the world*. "Trade, and get gain." So the parable of the rich fool (Luke xii. 16—21). And the essence of such sinful worldliness is this: "Layeth up treasure *for himself*." But the gains on which men's hearts are set may be other than these material ones: position, power, fame, intellectual achievements. It matters not what they are, if they be sought covetously and selfishly, they come under the condemnation of a false love of the world. 2. *A false view of life*. "Spend a year there." So the parable, as above. Really? (1) The transiency of life in itself. "A vapour." As compared with the ages of history. How that dwindles our little day! As compared with the life of God (Ps. xc. 4; xxxix. 5). (2) The permanence of its spiritual results: left for inference, how immensely important every moment now! So Ps. xc. 12; xxxix. 13. The glorying is evil, then, whether of speech or of heart. For the principle is not one of words. A man may talk piously of the brevity of life and of the will of God, while really his heart is as essentially worldly as that of the man who makes no pretensions to better things.

II. *THE TRUE GLORYING*. So also the contrasted glorying, "If the Lord will," etc., is not one of words—"D.V.," and the like. Use of words not unimportant as regards practical results; but it is really the attitude of the heart which God regards, and which constitutes us what we are. So, then, "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. i. 31). 1. *A true view of life*. "If the Lord will, we shall live." (1) His governance of human vicissitudes: "The Lord reigneth." Fate, chance, human wilfulness—all governed by his will. (2) His regard for human destiny: educating us. That mighty future, shall we be made ready for it? Yes; for "he that spared not," etc. (Rom. viii. 32). 2. *A true love of the world*. "Do this or that." A living will runs through all these things, and it is given to us to blend our wills with it, and so help to work out God's design.

"If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find"—

that is the secret of a true, a godly love of the world.

We have knowledge of these things, for we have "tasted the powers of the world to come" (Heb. vi. 5). Therefore, what shall be our sin, if still our glorying is in the world (see John ix. 41)? Oh, to us, as from heaven, the warning comes: "Ye Christians, arouse yourselves, and live for heaven and God!"—T. F. L.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1—6.—DENUNCIATION OF THE RICH FOR (1) GRINDING DOWN THE POOR AND KEEPING BACK THEIR WAGES; (2) LUXURY; (3) MURDER. The whole section resembles nothing so much as an utterance of one of the old Jewish prophets. It might almost be a leaf torn out of the Old Testament.

Ver. 1.—Go to now (see on ch. iv. 13). The Vulgate there has *ecce*; here, *agile*. Ye rich men (see on ch. ii. 6). Weep and howl, etc.; cf. ch. iv. 9, but note the difference of tone; there, more of exhortation; here, more of denunciation. Ὁλοῦζοντες: only here in the New Testament, but several times in the LXX., in passages of which the one before us reminds us; e.g. Isa. x. 10; xiii. 6; xiv. 31; xv. 2; xxiii. 1, 6, 14. Miseries. Ταλαιπωρία: only again in Rom. iii. 16 (equivalent to Isa. lix. 7); frequent in the LXX.

Ver. 2.—Description of the miseries that are coming upon them. The perfects (σέσηπε . . . γέγονεν) are probably to be explained as "prophetic," in accordance with a common Hebrew idiom (see Driver on the 'Tenses of the Hebrew Verb,' § 14; and cf. Winer, 'Grammar of New Testament Greek,' p. 342: "The perfect does not stand for a present or future, but the case indicated by the apostle in ταλαιπωρία ὑμῶν ταῖς ἐπερχομέναις is viewed as already present, and consequently the σέσηπε of the riches as already completed"). For an instance of the prophetic perfect, used as here after ὀλοῦζειν, see Isa. xlii. 1, 14, "Howl, . . . for your stronghold has been wasted." The miseries coming upon the rich are thus announced to be the destruction of everything in virtue of which they were styled rich. Their costly garments, in a great store of which the wealth of an Eastern largely consists, should become moth-eaten. Their gold and silver should be rusted. Bengel notes on this passage: "Scripta hæc sunt paucis annis ante obsidionem Hierosolymorum;" and certainly the best commentary upon it is to be found in the terrible account given by Josephus of the sufferings and miseries which came upon the Jews during the war and siege of Jerusalem. The Jewish historian has become the unconscious witness to the fulfilment of the prophecies of our Lord and his apostle. Σέσηπε: only here in the New Testament; in the LXX., Job xvi. 7. Σπρόβρωτα is also an ἑπᾶξ λεγόμενον in the New Testament; in LXX., used also of garments in Job xiii. 28.

Ver. 3.—With this and the preceding verse contrast our Lord's words of treasure laid up in heaven, "where moth and rust

do not corrupt" (Matt. vi. 19). Cankered (κατλωραί); better, *ruined*. Only here in the New Testament; never in the LXX. except Ecclus. xii. 11. The rust of them. ῥίς: used here for "rust" as in the LXX. in Ezekiel's parable of the boiling pot (Ezek. xxiv. 6, etc.)—a passage which (according to one interpretation) may have suggested the following clause, "and shall eat your flesh," etc. (see vers. 9—12). Shall be a witness against you (εἰς μαρτύριον ὑμῶν). The rendering of the A.V. is quite defensible (see Winer, p. 265), but it is equally possible to take the words as the R.V. margin, "for a testimony unto you." "The rust of them," says Alford, "is a token of what shall happen to yourselves; in the consuming of your wealth you see depicted your own." Two interpretations of the latter part of the verse are possible, depending on the punctuation adopted. (1) As the A.V. and R.V., putting the stop after πῦρ: "Their rust . . . shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days." The "fire," if this rendering be adopted, may be explained from Ezek. xxiv. 9, etc. (2) Putting the stop after ὑμῶν and before ὡς πῦρ: "Their rust . . . shall eat your flesh. Ye have heaped up as it were fire in the last days." This has the support of the Syriac ("Ye have gathered fire for you for the last days"), and is adopted by Drs. Westcott and Hort. The "fire" will, of course, be the fire of judgment; and the expression, ὡς πῦρ ἐθησαυρίσατε, may easily have been suggested by Prov. xvi. 27, Ἀνὴρ ἄφρων ὀρύσσει ἐαυτῷ κακά, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἐαυτοῦ χειλέων θησαυρίζει πῦρ. The whole form of expression also reminds us of St. Paul's "treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath" (Rom. ii. 5), to which it is exactly parallel, the "wrath in the day of wrath" there answering to the "fire in the last days" here. (The rendering of the Vulgate is evidently influenced by this parallel, as it has the *thesaurizastis iram*.) For the last days; rather, *in the last days* (ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις); cf. 2 Tim. iii. 1. If the words are connected with πῦρ as suggested above, there is no difficulty in them. If the punctuation of the A.V. be retained, we must suppose that the writer is speaking from the point of view of the last day of all. "When the end came it found them heaping up treasures which they could never use" (Deau Scott). But the other view, though not so generally adopted, seems far preferable.

Ver. 4 accounts for the miseries that are coming upon them. Their sins are the cause. The language is modelled upon the Old Testament, and the special sin denounced is one that is expressly forbidden

in the Law (see Deut. xxiv. 14, 15, "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy. . . . At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it: for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee;" cf. Mal. iii. 5, "I will be a swift witness . . . against those that oppress the hireling in his wages (LXX., ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀποστεροῦντας μισθὸν μισθωτοῦ)." Later allusions to the same sin are found in Tobit iv. 14; Eccles. xxxiv. 22. Which is of you kept back by fraud, or theft. For ἀπεστερημένος of the Received Text, read ἀφυστερημένος (κ, B). It is possible to join the words ἀφ' ὧν with κράζει, but it is more natural to take them as the A.V. with ἀφυστερημένος. Reaped . . . reaped (ἀμνησάντων . . . θερίσαντων); R.V., "mowed . . . reaped." But it would seem that the words should have been reversed, as, judging by Old Testament usage, ἀμάω is always used of corn (Lev. xxv. 11; Deut. xxiv. 19; Isa. xvii. 5; xxxvii. 30; Micah vi. 15); while θερίζειν is the wider word, including all "harvesting," and used of χέρτος in Ps. cxxviii. (cxxxvii.) 7; Jer. ix. 22. Into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. These words are adopted from Isa. v. 9. Κύριος Σαβαώθ, a Grecized form of the Hebrew כְּבוֹד שָׁמַיִם, frequent in the LXX. Found in the New Testament only here and Rom. ix. 29 (in a quotation); elsewhere, e.g. in the Apocalypse, it is represented by παντοκράτωρ (Rev. i. 8, etc.); so also in 2 Cor. vi. 18 (equivalent to 2 Sam. vii. 8).

Ver. 5.—Further description of their sin. Ye have lived in pleasure (ἐν τρυφῇ, here only) on the earth, and been wanton (ἐπαλατῆσατε, only here and 1 Tim. v. 6); ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. The ὥς of the Received Text ("as in a day," etc., A.V.) is quite wrong; it is wanting in κ, A, B, Latt., Memphitic. The clause seems to imply that they were like brute beasts, feeding securely on the very day of their slaughter. Vulgate (Clem.), in die occisionis; but Codex Amiat., in diem occisionis. The actual expression, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγῆς, may have been suggested by Jer. xii. 3, "Prepare them for the day of slaughter (LXX., εἰς ἡμέραν σφαγῆς αὐτῶν)."

Ver. 6.—The climax of their sin. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one. Does this allude to the death of our Lord? At first sight it may well seem so. Compare St. Peter's words in Acts iii. 14, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just (δικαίον);" St. Stephen's in Acts vii. 52, "the coming of the Just One (τοῦ δικαίου);" and St. Paul's in Acts xxii. 14, "to see the Just One (τὸν δικαίον)." But this view is dispelled when we remember how throughout this whole passage the ideas and expressions are borrowed

from the Old Testament, and when we find that in Isa. iii. 10 (LXX.) the wicked are represented as saying, Δῆσάμεν τὸν δικαίον διὰ δύσχευτος ἡμῶν ἐστὶ—a passage which lies at the root of the remarkable section in Wisd. ii., "Let us oppress the poor righteous man. . . . Let us condemn him with a shameful death." It is probable, then, that passages such as these were in St. James's mind, and suggested the words, and thus that there is no direct allusion to the Crucifixion (which, indeed, could scarcely be laid to the charge of his readers), but that the singular τὸν δικαίον is used to denote the class collectively (cf. Amos ii. 6; v. 12). It is a remarkable coincidence, pointed out by most commentators, that he who wrote these verses, himself styled δ δίκαιος by the Jews, suffered death at their hands a very few years afterwards. He doth not resist you. According to the view commonly adopted, St. James simply means to say that the righteous man suffered this evil at their hands without resistance. Another interpretation seems more possible, taking the clause as interrogative, "Does he not resist you?" the subject, implied but not expressed, being God; as if he would say, "Is not God against you?"—that God of whom it has already been said that he resists (ἀντιτάσσεται) the proud (comp. Hos. i. 6, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away (LXX., ἀλλ' ἢ ἀντιτασσόμενος ἀντιτάξομαι αὐτοῖς)").

Vers. 7—20.—CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS (1) TO PATIENCE (vers. 7—11); (2) AGAINST SWEARING (ver. 12); (3) TO PRACTICAL CONDUCT IN HEALTH AND IN SICKNESS (ver. 13, etc.).

Vers. 7—11.—Exhortation to patience.

Ver. 7.—Be patient therefore. In his concluding remarks St. James reverts to the point from which he started (comp. ch. i. 3, 4). Μακροθυμεῖν is here given a wider meaning than that which generally attaches to it. As was pointed out in the notes on ch. i. 3, it ordinarily refers to patience in respect of persons. Here, however, it certainly includes endurance in respect of things, so that the husbandman is said μακροθυμεῖν where we should rather have expected ὑπομενεῖν (cf. Lightfoot on Col. i. 11). Unto the coming of the Lord (ἐως τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ Κυρίου); Vulgate, usque ad adventum Domini. The word παρουσία had been used by our Lord himself of his return to judge, in Matt. xxiv. 3, 27, 37, 39. It is also found in St. Paul's writings, only, however (in this sense), in Thessalonians (1 Thess. ii. 19; iii. 13; iv. 15; v. 23; 2 Thess. ii. 1, 8) and 1 Cor. xv. 23. St. Peter uses it in his Second Epistle (i. 16; iii. 4, 12), as does St. John (1 John ii. 28). Behold, the husbandman, etc. Consideration, exhorting to

patience, drawn from an example before the eyes of all. Until he receive; better, taking *ἄ* as the subject of the verb, *until it receive*. The early and the latter rain. "Τὸν of the Received Text has the authority of A, K, L, and the Syriac Versions; *κ* (with which agree the Coptic and Old Latin ff), *καρὸν*. B and the Vulgate omit the substantive altogether. In this they are followed by most critical editors (e.g. Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort), but not by the Revisers; and as the expression, *πρόμιον καὶ ὕμνον*, without the substantive, is never found in the LXX., it is safer to follow A and the Syriac in retaining *ἑρὸν* here. (For "the early and the latter rain," comp. Deut. xi. 14; Jer. v. 24; Joel ii. 23; Zech. x. 1.) "The first showers of autumn which revived the parched and thirsty soil and prepared it for the seed; and the later showers of spring which continued to refresh and forward both the ripening crops and the vernal products of the field" (Robinson, quoted in 'Dictionary of the Bible,' ii. 994).

Ver. 8.—*Application of illustration*, repeating the exhortation of ver. 7, and supporting it by the assurance that "the coming of the Lord," till which they are to endure, "is at hand." *Stablish your hearts* (comp. 1 Thess. iii. 13, "To the end he may *stablish your hearts* unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints"). The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. So Isaiah had announced (xlii. 6), "The day of the Lord is near (*ἐγγὺς ἡμέρα Κυρίου*)."

Ver. 9.—*Grudge not, brethren*; better, with R.V., *murmur not*—a meaning which "grudge" had in the seventeenth century; cf. Ps. lix. 15 (Prayer-book version), "They will run here and there for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied." What is the connection of this verse with the preceding? "Murmuring" implies sitting in judgment upon others, which has been expressly forbidden by the Lord himself. It is also the opposite to that *μακροθυμία* to which St. James has been exhorting his readers. *Lest ye be condemned*; rather, *that ye be not judged*. "ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε, as in Matt. vii. 1. *Κατακριθῆτε* of the Received Text has absolutely no authority, nor has the omission of the article before *κριτής* in the following clause. Behold, the Judge, etc. The nearness of the judgment is expressed by saying that the Judge is actually standing "before the doors (*πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν*)."¹ So also our Lord, in his great discourse on the judgment, says (Matt. xxiv. 33), "When ye see all these things, know that he is nigh, *even at the doors* (*ἐγγὺς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τῶν θυρῶν*);" and comp. Rev. iii. 20, where he says, "Behold, I stand at the door (*ἔστηκα ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν*), and knock."

Ver. 10.—The injunction is further strengthened by an appeal to the example of the prophets of the old covenant, an "example of suffering and of patience." Read *ἐν τῷ ὄνόματι*, with *κ*, B, and observe the anarthrous *Κυρίου* (cf. on ch. iv. 10). *Suffering affliction*. *Τῆς κακοπαθείας*: here only; in the LXX., Mal. i. 13; 2 Macc. ii. 26.

Ver. 11.—Behold, we count them happy. *Μακάριον*: only here and Luke i. 48 (comp. ch. i. 12, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation;" Dan. xii. 12, "Blessed is he that waiteth"). Which endure; rather, *which endured*, reading *ὑπομέναντας*, with *κ*, A, B, Syriac, Latt. (*qui sustinerunt*). Ye have heard of the patience of Job. A book very rarely referred to in the New Testament; only here and in 1 Cor. iii. 19, where Job v. 13 is quoted. And have seen the end of the Lord. "Ἰδере" ("see") is found in A, B², L, but *εἶδере* of the Received Text has the support of *κ*, B¹, K, Vulgate (*vidistis*), and is now generally adopted. The "end of the Lord (*τὸ τέλος Κυρίου*)" cannot possibly be interpreted of the death and resurrection of our Saviour. The whole context is against this, and *Κυρίου* would certainly require the article. The Syriac Version rightly interprets the clause, "the end which the Lord wrought for him." It clearly refers to the end which God brought about in the case of Job, whose "latter end the Lord blessed more than his beginning" (Job xlii. 12; cf. Winer, 'Grammar of New Testament Greek,' p. 309). That the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. *Πολύσπλαγχνος*: here only; never in the LXX, but equivalent to Hebrew *רחם רב*; cf. Ps. ciii. (cii.), 8; cxi. (cx.), 4, which may have suggested the phrase to St. James. *Οικτιρῶν*: only here and Luke vi. 36; several times in the LXX. 'O *Κύριος* is omitted entirely in K, L, and some manuscripts of the Vulgate; the article is also wanting in B.

Ver. 12.—*Exhortation against swearing*, founded on our Lord's teaching in the sermon on the mount, Matt. v. 33—37—a passage which was evidently present to St. James's thoughts. He, like his Master, "lays down rules and maxims and principles without specifying the limitations and exceptions." The sermon on the mount, as interpreted by our Lord's own actions, is a clear witness that this formed his method of teaching. If, then, his words do not touch the case of oaths solemnly tendered to men in a court of justice (and his own acceptance of an adjuration on his trial shows that they do not), no more do St. James's. Both our Lord and his apostle had probably in view "only those profane adjurations with which men who have no deep-seated fear of God garnish their common talk" (see Sadler's 'Commentary on St. Matthew,' p. 66). The

special oaths mentioned were those in vogue among the Jews, and just the very ones which our Lord himself had specified (comp. Lightfoot's 'Horræ Hebraicæ,' vol. ii. p. 127, edit. Gandell). On the need of such teaching as this, see Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' p. 190: "This people are fearfully profane. Everybody curses and swears when in a passion. No people that I have ever known can compare with these Orientals for profaneness in the use of the names and attributes of God. The civil habit seems inveterate and universal. When Peter, therefore, 'began to curse and to swear' on that dismal night of temptation, we are not to suppose that it was something foreign to his former habits. He merely relapsed, under high excitement, into what, as a sailor and a fisherman, he had been accustomed to all his life. The people now use the very same sort of oaths that are mentioned and condemned by our Lord. They swear by the head, by their life, by heaven, by the temple, or what is in its place, the church. The forms of cursing and swearing, however, are almost infinite, and fall on the pained ear all day long." So, too, Aben Ezra speaks of the 'practice of swearing as almost universal in his day, so that he says, "men swear daily countless times, and then swear that they have not sworn!" With regard to the translation of the verse, two renderings are possible: (1) that of the A.V. and of the R.V. (text), "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." (2) That of the R.V. margin, "Let yours be the yea, yea, and the nay, nay;" viz. those enjoined by our Lord (Matt. v. 37), "Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." On behalf of this latter rendering, may be pleaded (a) the clearness of the reference to our Lord's teaching; and (b) the fact that this is the interpretation given to the clause in the two leading versions of antiquity, the Syriac and the Vulgate, both of which have exactly the same words here and in St. Matthew. Vulgate, *Sic autem sermo vester est est, non non. Lest ye fall into condemnation.* Happily the A.V. here follows the text of the Elzevirs, ὑπὸ κρίου (N, A, B, Latt., Syriac, Coptic), and so avoids the erroneous reading of Stephens, εἰς ὑπόκρισιν (K, L).

Vers. 13—20.—*Exhortations with respect to practical conduct in health and sickness.*

Ver. 13.—(1) *Is any among you suffering? let him pray.* (2) *Is any cheerful? let him sing praise.* Prayer in the narrower sense of *petition* is rather for sufferers, who need to have their wants supplied and their sorrows removed. Praise, the highest form of prayer, is to spring up from the grateful heart of the cheerful. ψάλλειν (cf. Rom. xv. 9; 1 Cor. xiv. 15; Eph. v. 19).

Vers. 14, 15.—*Directions in case of sickness.* Let him call for the elders of the Church. Of the original creation of the presbyterate no account is given, but elders appear as already existing in Judæa in Acts xi. 30; and from Acts xiv. 23 we find that St. Paul and St. Barnabas "appointed elders in every Church" which they had founded on their first missionary journey. Nothing, therefore, can be concluded with regard to the date of the Epistle from this notice of elders. The elders were to be summoned for a twofold purpose: (1) that they might pray over the sick person (on the accusative ἐν αὐτῷ, see Winer, p. 508); and (2) that they might anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord. The result anticipated is also twofold: (1) "the prayer of faith shall save the sick" ("save," σώσει, here as in other passages, e.g. Matt. ix. 21, 22, etc., refers to bodily healing); and (2) "if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." (From the manner in which this last clause is introduced, it may fairly be inferred that the sins in question are presumed to have had some connection with the sickness, and to have been its cause. Vulgate, *Et si in peccatis sit dimittentur ei.*) Anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. By the omission of the last words, τοῦ Κυρίου, B has the striking reading, "anointing him with oil in the Name" (compare the use of τῷ ὀνόματι absolutely in Acts v. 41; 3 John 7). A similar use is also found in the Epistles of Ignatius. The Vatican Manuscript, however, appears to stand quite alone in this reading here. If the words, τοῦ Κυρίου, be admitted, they must be taken as referring to the Lord Jesus (contrast ver. 10, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Κυρίου). So also in ver. 15 the Lord (ὁ Κύριος) who shall raise him up is clearly the Lord Jesus. Had God the Father been alluded to we should probably have had the anarthrous Κύριος after the manner of the LXX. (see note on ch. iv. 10). Unction is mentioned in connection with the sick also in Mark vi. 13. The apostles "anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them;" and compare the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke x. 34), "pouring in wine and oil." "Josephus mentions that among the remedies employed in the case of Herod, he was put into a sort of oil bath. . . . The medicinal use of oil is also mentioned in the Mishna, which thus exhibits the Jewish practice of that day" ('Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. ii. p. 595; see Mishna, 'Shabbath,' xiii. 4; and compare Lightfoot, 'Horræ Hebraicæ,' vol. ii. p. 415). According to Tertullian, "the Christian Proculus, surnamed Torpacion, the steward of Eulodius, cured with oil Severus, the father of Antonine (i.e. Caracalla), who "in gratitude kept him in his palace till the day of his death."

Tertullian, 'Ad Scapulam,' c. iv. (see Oehler's notes on the passage). But in the case before us if, as in these other instances, the oil was used as an actual remedy, (1) why was it to be administered by the elders? and (2) why is the healing immediately afterwards attributed to "the prayer of faith"? These questions would seem to suggest that oil was enjoined by St. James rather as an outward symbol than as an actual remedy. A further question remains to which a few lines must be devoted. Is the apostle prescribing a rite for all times? On the one hand, we are told that the use of oil was connected with the miraculous powers of healing, and therefore ceased "when those powers ceased" (cf. Bishop Browne on the Articles, p. 589). On the other hand, the passage is appealed to as warranting the Roman Catholic sacrament of extreme unction. With regard to the practice of the early Church, there is a constant stream of testimony to the use of oil for purposes of healing; e.g. the case in Tertullian already quoted, and many others in the fourth and fifth centuries (see 'Dictionary of Christian Antiquities,' pp. 1455, 2004, 2013). But (1) as originally practised it was administered by laymen and even by women. (2) After the blessing of the oil was restricted to bishops it was still regarded as immaterial by whom the unction was performed. So Ps.-Innocent, 'Ep. ad Decent.,' § 8, "Being made by the bishop, it is lawful not for priests only, but for all Christians, to use it in anointing in their own need or in that of their friends." (3) Not till the middle of the ninth century do we meet with any express injunction to the priest to perform the unction himself. (4) "The restraint of the unction to the priest had momentous consequences. The original intention of it in relation to healing of the body was practically forgotten, and the rite came to be regarded as part of a Christian's immediate preparation for death. Hence in the twelfth century it acquired the name of 'the last unction,' *unctio extrema* (Peter Lombard, 'Sent.,' iv. 23), i.e. as the Catechism of Trent asserts ('Do Extr. Unct.,' 3), the last of those which a man received from the Church. In the thirteenth it was placed by the schoolmen among the seven rites to which they limited the application of the term sacrament" ('Dictionary of Christian Antiquities,' p. 2004). In the sixteenth century it was definitely laid down at the Council of Trent, (1) that it is a sacrament instituted by our Lord; (2) that by it grace is conferred, sin remitted, and the sick comforted, "sometimes also" the recovery of health is obtained; (3) that it should be given to those in danger of death, but if they recover they may receive it again (Session xiv. c. ix.). Further, the Catechism of the Council condemns as a

grievous error the practice of waiting to anoint the sick "until all hope of recovery being now lost, life begins to ebb, and the sick person to sink into lifeless insensibility." In spite of this, however, the common practice in the Roman Catholic Church at the present day appears to be to administer the rite only to persons *in extremis*. Turning now to the Eastern Church, we notice that a rite of unction has been continued there up till the present time. The service, which is a somewhat lengthy one, may be seen in Daniel's 'Codex Liturgicus,' bk. iv. c. v.; and cf. Neale's 'Holy Eastern Church,' Introd., vol. ii. p. 1035, where it is noted that it differs from the Western use in three points: (1) the oil is not previously consecrated by the bishop, but at the time by seven priests; (2) the unction is not conferred only *in extremis*, but in slighter illness, and if possible in the church; (3) it is not usually considered valid unless at least three priests are present to officiate. It has been thought well to give this slight historical sketch, as affording the best answer to the claims of Romanists by showing how they have gradually departed from the primitive custom and changed the character of the rite. But the sketch will also have shown that it is scarcely accurate to imply that unction ceased when the miraculous powers ceased. At the Reformation, when the English Church wisely rejected the mediæval service for extreme unction, she yet retained in the first English Prayer-book a simple form of unction, to be used "if the sick person desire it," consisting of (1) anointing, "upon the forehead or breast only," with the sign of the cross; and (2) prayer for the inward anointing of the soul with the Holy Ghost, and for restoration of bodily health and strength. Thus the service was entirely primitive in character, and it is hard to see what valid objection could be raised to it. It was, however, omitted from the second English Prayer-book of 1552, and has never been restored. The justification, I suppose, of this disuse of unction must be sought in the entire absence of evidence that the primitive Church understood the passage before us as instituting a religious rite to be permanently continued. All the earliest notices of unction refer simply to its use for healing purposes.

Ver. 16.—*Confess therefore your sins, etc.* The authority for the insertion of *ὁν* (omitted in the Received Text) is overwhelming (N, A, B, K, Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic), as is also that for the substitution of *τὰς ἀμαρτίας* for *τὰ παραπτώματα*, which includes the three oldest manuscripts, N, A, B, the two latter of which also read *προσέυχεσθε* for *εὐχέσθε*. It is difficult to know exactly what to make of this injunction to confess "one to another," which is stated in the

form of an inference from the preceding. The form of the expression, "one to another," and the perfectly general term, "a righteous man," forbid us to see in it a direct injunction to confess to the clergy, and to the clergy only. But on the other hand, it is unfair to lose sight of the fact that it is directly connected with the charge to send for the elders of the Church. Marshall, in his 'Penitential Discipline,' is perfectly justified in saying that St. James "hath plainly supposed the presence of the elders of the Church, and their intercession to God for the sick penitent, and then recommended the confession of his faults in that presence, where two or three assembled together in the Name of Christ might constitute a Church for that purpose" ('Penit. Discipline,' p. 80). We may, perhaps, be content with saying, with Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "When St. James exhorts all Christians to confess their sins one to another, certainly it is more agreeable to all spiritual ends that this be done rather to the curate of souls than to the ordinary brethren" ('Dissuasive from Popery,' II. i. 11; cf. Hooker, 'Eccles. Pol.,' VI. iv. 5, 7). The effectual fervent prayer, etc.; rather, *the petition of a righteous man availeth much in its working*. On the distinction between *δέσους* the narrower, and *προσευχή* the wider word, see Trench on 'Synonyms,' p. 179.

Vers. 17, 18.—Illustration of the last statement of ver. 16, from the case of Elijah, "a righteous man" under the old covenant, but one "of like passions with us," and therefore one from whose case it is lawful to argue to our own. Subject to like passions as we are. *Ὁμοιωσάμενος ἡμῖν*: simply "of like passions with us;" cf. Acts xiv. 15, where it is used in just the same way. In the LXX. only in Wisd. vii. 3. He prayed earnestly. *Προσευχῇ προσήγγιστο*: a Hebraism, not unfrequent in the New Testament (see Luke xxii. 15; John iii. 29; Acts iv. 17; v. 28; xxiii. 14), in imitation of the Hebrew absolute infinitive (cf. Winer, p. 584). For the incident alluded to by St. James, see 1 Kings xvii. 1; xviii. 1; but note (1) that we are never told that the famine was in consequence of Elijah's prayer; and (2) nothing is said of the duration of time (three years and a half) during which it rained not upon the earth. All we read is that "after many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year;" but there is no clear indication from what period this "third year" is dated. With regard to (1), it may have been St. James's own inference from the narrative, or may have been due to tradition. With regard to (2), the very same time is mentioned by our Lord in his allusion to the same incident (Luke iv. 25), "the heaven

was shut up three years and six months." And as the same period is said to be given in the Yalkut Shimeon on 1 Kings xvi. it was probably the time handed down by tradition, being taken by the Jews as a symbol of times of tribulation (cf. Dan. vii. 25; xii. 7; Rev. xi. 2).

Ver. 19.—*Final exhortation*; introduced, as was the opening one (ch. i. 2), by the emphatic "*my brethren*." The Received Text omits *μου*, but it is found in α , A, B, K, Vulgate.

Ver. 20.—*Let him know*. So α , A, K, L, Latt., Syriac. B has *γινώσκετε*, "know ye." After *ψυχῇ*, α , A, and Vulgate add *αὐτοῦ*. B has it after *θανάτου*. And shall cover a multitude of sins (*καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν*). The same expression occurs in 1 Pet. iv. 8, "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." It is founded on Prov. x. 12, *עֲשֵׂה לְךָ לֵב יָרֵךְ*, "Love covereth all sins," where the LXX. goes entirely astray: *πάντας δὲ τοὺς μὴ φιλονεικούντας καλύπτει φίλα*: but cf. Ps. xxxi. 1; lxxxiv. 3, in the LXX. It is difficult to believe that St. Peter and St. James independently hit upon the rendering *πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν* for the Hebrew *עֲשֵׂה לְךָ לֵב יָרֵךְ*, as there was nothing to suggest it, the LXX. never rendering *לב* by *πλῆθος*. Probably the one was consciously or unconsciously influenced by the other. The striking position which the words occupy *here*, as those with which the Epistle closes, would make them linger in the memory; and there is nothing to militate against the conclusion, which appeared probable on the occasion of previous coincidences between the two writers, that St. James is the earlier of the two (comp. on ch. iv. 6). The expression used by the apostle leaves it undetermined *whose* sins are thus "covered," whether (1) those of the man who is "converted from the error of his way," or (2) those of the man who wins him back, and through this good action obtains, by the grace of God, pardon for his own "multitude of sins." It has been well noticed that "there is a studied generality in the form of the teaching which seems to emphasize the wide blessedness of love. In the very act of seeking to convert one for whom we care we must turn to God ourselves, and in covering the past sins of another our own also are covered. In such an act love reaches its highest point, and that love includes the faith in God which is the condition of forgiveness" (Plumptre).

The Epistle ends abruptly, with no salvation and no doxology. In this it stands almost by itself in the New Testament; the First Epistle of St. John alone approaching it in the abruptness of its conclusion.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The judgment on selfishness.* Selfishness lay at the root of the sinfulness of the rich men, whose conduct is so sternly denounced. The sin (1) displayed itself mainly in heaping together treasures and living in pleasure upon the earth, as did Dives in the parable; but (2) it led them to injustice (ver. 4) and even murder (ver. 6). So now the selfishness of those who live in splendour and luxury, while they detain the money due to tradesmen, and neglect the payment of accounts rendered, is similar in character to this detaining the wages of the labourers of which the apostle speaks in such scathing terms. "Ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter." *The judgment falls when least expected.* In the days of Noah they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. The judgment on Sodom and Gomorrha, on Babylon in the night of Belshazzar's feast, when men were cherishing their hearts in the day of slaughter,—all these are well-known types of the suddenness of the judgment that is continually falling upon individuals now, when the Son of man comes to them as a thief in the night, and of that final judgment which shall fall upon the whole world at his last advent.

Vers. 7—11.—*Four considerations moving the Christian to patience.* 1. The example of the husbandman—an illustration from nature. If patience is needful in things of this life, is it not also in the world of grace? 2. The approach of the second advent. 3. The example of the prophets. 4. The example and experience of Job—an instance of one whose latter end the Lord blessed more than his beginning. *The nearness of the Lord's advent a reason for patience.* To most men the thought of the advent is a thought of warning and of judgment. St. James, following his Master's example, makes it a thought of consolation. "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Thus Christians may test their spiritual condition by considering whether the thought of its approach is to them one of consolation or of warning.

Ver. 12.—*Warning against the sin of swearing.* On this text see Barrow's great sermon, serm. xv., 'Against Rash and Vain Swearing,' in which is discussed (1) the nature of an oath—"an invocation of God as a faithful Witness of the truth of our words or the sincerity of our meaning;" (2) the lawful use of oaths, as showing our religious confidence in God, and as a service conducive to his glory; (3) the harm of rash and vain swearing (*a*) to society at large, and (*b*) to the person who is guilty of it; and (4) the folly and aggravation of the offence, in that it has no strong temptation alluring to it—it gratifies no sense, yields no profit, procures no honour; the vain swearer has not the common plea of human infirmity to excuse him.

Ver. 13.—*The power of Divine worship.* On this verse there is a striking sermon by J. H. Newman (vol. iii. No. xxiii.), 'Religious Worship a Remedy for Excitement.' "There is that in religious worship which supplies all our spiritual needs, which suits every mood of mind and every variety of circumstances, over and above the supernatural assistance which we are allowed to expect from it." Divine worship may thus be viewed as the proper antidote to excitement. In suffering, prayer; in joy, praise. These relieve the heart, and "keep the mind from running to waste; calming, soothing, sobering, steadying it; attuning it to the will of God and the mind of the Spirit, teaching it to love all men, to be cheerful and thankful, and to be resigned in all the dispensations of Providence towards us."

Vers. 14—18.—**I. THE POWER AND VALUE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER,** enforced by the instance of the effect of Elijah's prayers—the petitions of a man who was *of like passions with us*, and therefore one from whose case it is fair to argue to our own. Intercessory prayer may be viewed as a privilege and work in which all can have their share. While Joshua is down in the valley fighting with Amalek, Moses in the mount must lift up holy hands to God in prayer; and when Moses lifted up his hands, Joshua and

Israel prevailed. So with the Church's warfare against her spiritual foes. Those who shall intercede and cry unto God day and night are needed equally with those who will bear the burden and heat of the day in the forefront of the battle. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

II. THE NEED OF CONFESSION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SIN. This most necessary part of repentance is taught throughout the Bible. It is seen under the Law in the ordinances of the day of atonement (Lev. xvi. 21), and in the directions with regard to the sin offering (Lev. v. 1—5; cf. Numb. v. 6, 7). It is found in the ministry of the Baptist (Matt. iii. 6; Mark i. 5), and continued under the Christian dispensation (Acts xix. 18). How much of modern repentance is shallow and superficial, because men shrink from this! They excuse their sins, and content themselves with the general acknowledgment that they are sinners, instead of acknowledging the particular sins of which they are guilty, even to God in secret. In cases, too, where the fault has been against man, these confessions (sometimes the only reparation left) should be made to him who has been wronged; and in various sins we may say that "it is good to open the soul's grief to a wise and kind friend. The act humbles, it tests the penitence; a fairer judgment than one's own is gained, with the help of advice and prayers. If the need be felt great, or the soul's questions be hard, the burdened one will naturally go to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word," as the Prayer-book directs him (see the first exhortation in the Communion Service).

III. ELIJAH A MAN OF LIKE PASSIONS WITH US; and yet he was one of the greatest saints under the old covenant, and honoured in an especial way by exemption from the common lot of mortals, being taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Hence *in our own case*, too, holiness, even saintliness, is by God's grace attainable (cf. Goulburn's 'Pursuit of Holiness,' c. i.).

Vers. 19, 20.—The blessedness of winning back a single sinner from the error of his ways.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The judgments coming upon the wicked rich.* This apostrophe is so dreadful that we cannot imagine it to have been addressed to professing Christians. It would rather seem that the apostle here turns aside to glance at the godless rich Jews of his time, who were in the habit of persecuting the Church and defrauding the poor (ch. ii. 6, 7). His words regarding them are words of stern denunciation. Like one of the old Hebrew prophets, he curses them in the name of the Lord. His design in doing so, however, must have been in unison with his life-work as a Christian apostle, labouring in "the acceptable time;" he sought, by proclaiming the terrors of the Lord, to persuade to repentance and a holy life. The paragraph breaks naturally into three sections. Ver. 1 refers to the future; vers. 2, 3 to the present; vers. 4—6 mainly to the past. We shall consider these three sections in the inverse order.

I. THE CAUSES OF JUDGMENT IN THE PAST. (Vers. 4—6.) James mentions three. 1. *Heartless injustice.* (Ver. 4.) The humane Law of Moses forbade that the wages of the hired labourer be kept back even for a single night (Deut. xxiv. 14, 15); but these wicked men had paid no heed to that Law. They had grown rich by defrauding the poor. Instead of relieving the needy by a liberal charity, they had not even paid the lawful debts which they owed them. And does not this sin linger in the heart of Christendom? What was American slavery but just a crushing of the poor? What was villeinage in our own country but a defrauding of the labourers? It is not yet a century since the Scotch collier was attached by law to the coal-work where he had been born—the right to his services being bought and sold with the mine itself. In more recent times our poets have once and again given voice to great social wrongs in words that have rung like a tocsin through the land (e.g. Mrs. Browning's 'Cry of the Children,' and Hood's 'Song of the Shirt'). Or, to take the form of labour referred to in ver. 4, we may ask—Is the condition of the English ploughman even yet what it ought to be, and what our rich landlords ought to help to make it? James says that the robbing of the poor is a "crying" sin. The victims themselves cry; and even their wages, fraudulently withheld, "cry out" also from the coffers of the rich. But

there is One who has ears to ear, and a heart to resent, the injustice. "The Lord of hosts" will avenge the poor of the people who trust in him. 2. *Lavish luxuriousness.* (Ver. 5.) The wealthy, wicked Jews sinned, not only against righteousness, but against temperance. They were luxurious in their living, and prodigal in their expenditure. And this wasteful life of theirs was largely maintained at the expense of the poor whom they defrauded. It was "the hire of the labourers" that had built their magnificent palaces, and bought the beds of ivory upon which they lay. They did all this "on the earth," and as if they "should still live forever" (Ps. xlix. 9) here. They forgot that in their godless self-indulgence they were acting like "mere animals, born to be taken and destroyed" (2 Pet. ii. 12). Unconscious of impending ruin, they were still living voluptuously; like the fat ox, which continues to revel among the rich pastures on the very morning of the "day of slaughter." 3. *Murderous cruelty.* (Ver. 6.) By "the righteous," or "just," many understand the Lord Jesus Christ; this statement being a historic allusion to the scenes of Gabbatha and Calvary. And it is very probable that the murder of our Lord was in the apostle's mind. But we judge that the words are rather to be regarded as describing a prevalent practice of the wicked rich in every age. They apply to the death of Jesus Christ, but also to that of Stephen, and to that of James the brother of John; and they were soon to be illustrated again in the martyrdom of the writer himself. For our apostle, by reason of his integrity and purity, was surnamed "the Righteous;" and he was by-and-by condemned and killed by the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem. But why all this oppression of "the righteous"? It is inflicted simply because they are righteous. Every holy life is an offence to evil men. Because Christ was holy, he was crucified. Because Stephen was "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," he was stoned. Because James was truly righteous, he was thrown from the battlements of the temple, and killed with a fuller's club. Finally, the apostle adds, "He doth not resist you." The righteous man submits patiently to your persecuting violence. He endures your murderous cruelty with holy meekness. Jesus did so (Isa. liii. 7). Stephen did so (Acts vii. 60). James presently would do so: he is said to have offered the very prayer for his murderers which his crucified Master had done. Such patient endurance, however, only increases the guilt of the persecutors, and shall make their doom more awful.

II. *THE FIRST DROPPINGS OF JUDGMENT IN THE PRESENT.* (Vers. 2, 3.) The material for their punishment was being prepared, in accordance with the law of retribution, out of the very wealth on which they doated. "Of our pleasant vices" Divine Providence makes "instruments to plague us." "Your riches are corrupted;" that is, their treasures of grain and fruits were already rotting in the storehouses. Since these were not being used to feed the hungry, God's curse was upon them all. "Your garments are moth-eaten;" because these rich men did not clothe the naked out of their costly wardrobes, the moth was cutting up these with his remorseless little tooth. "Your gold and your silver are rusted;" that is, their money, not being used for doing good, lay in their treasure-chests morally cankered by the base avarice which kept it there. And that rust shall not only eat up the wealth itself; it shall also gnaw the conscience of its faithless possessor. It shall be a witness-bearer to his sin, and an executioner of his punishment. By-and-by, the remorseful thought of his unused riches shall torture his soul as with the touch of burning fire. (*Vide* T. Binney on 'Money,' p. 126.) These men had "laid up their treasure in the last days;" that is, immediately before the coming of the Lord in judgment to make an end of the entire Hebrew polity. And their wealth would avail them nothing in the presence of that great catastrophe. These corrupting treasures of theirs would corrupt still further into treasures of wrath. After the first droppings would come the deluge.

III. *THE FULL FLOOD OF JUDGMENT IN THE FUTURE.* (Ver. 1.) The "miseries" spoken of refer primarily to the sorrows connected with the impending siege and ruin of Jerusalem. These were to fall with especial severity upon the influential classes; and the Hebrews of the Dispersion, in whatsoever land they might be, were to share them. The wealthy men among the unbelieving Jews had sinned most; so they were to suffer most. Well, therefore, might they "weep" at the prospect, as only Orientals can weep; and "howl" as only brute beasts can do. But these words point onward further in history than to the destruction of Jerusalem. The full flood of "miseries" which providence is preparing shall overtake the ungodly rich only at the Lord's second

coming, when he shall appear to judge the whole world. The ruin of Jerusalem was but a faint foreshadowing of the "eternal destruction" of the wicked which shall begin at that day (Matt. xxiv.). These "miseries" suggest solemn thoughts of the doom of eternity.

LESSONS. 1. To remember the moral government of God, and to make ready to meet him in the judgment (vers. 1—6). 2. The sin of the wicked prepares its own punishment (vers. 2, 3). 3. One of the greatest social wants of our time is that of mutual sympathy between the capitalist and the labourer (ver. 4). 4. A Christian should avoid debt as he would avoid the devil (ver. 4). 5. The right use of wealth is not to spend it upon self-indulgence, but to do good with it (ver. 5). 6. A man has reason to suspect the purity of his own character, if no one ever persecutes him (ver. 6).—C. J.

Vers. 7, 8.—Long-suffering in view of Christ's coming. These words strike one of the leading chords of the Epistle. There is no grace which its readers are more earnestly exhorted to cultivate than that of patience. In the preceding verses James has been denouncing the rich ungodly Jews. The Epistle was not addressed to them, however, but to the Christian Jews who were suffering from their oppression and cruelty. So, the apostle here resumes the ordinary tenor of his letter. He exhorts the Church to continue patient and unresisting, like the ideal "righteous one" of ver. 6. He suggests the thought that the Lord's coming, while it would usher in the doom of the wicked rich, would also bring deliverance to his own people. The same event which their oppressors should contemplate with weeping and howling (ver. 1) would be to the righteous a joyful jubilee.

I. THE EXHORTATION. (Vers. 7, 8, first parts.) To *wait* constitutes a large portion of religious duty. Indeed, patience is not a segment merely of the Christian character; it is a spirit which is to pervade every fibre of it. In all ages spiritual wants and trials are the same; and believers, therefore, have always the same "need of patience." To "wait upon God" is a frequent exhortation of Scripture. The cultivation of this patience is perfectly consistent with holy activity. It springs from the same root of faith from which good works spring. We show our faith not only by our active "works," but also when we "endure, as seeing him who is invisible." Again, Christian patience is to coexist along with the fullest sensibility of suffering. "Long-suffering" necessarily involves the consciousness of suffering; and so does "patience," as the etymology of the word reminds us. Christian comfort does not come to us in connection with any incapability of sorrow; it comes as the result of the subjugation of the passions, and the cultivation of complete acquiescence in the Divine will. The apostle indicates the limit of this long-suffering—"until the coming of the Lord." What advent does this mean? To the early Hebrew Christians it meant mediately the impending destruction of Jerusalem. To us it means in like manner any interposition of Providence to deliver us from trouble, including our removal by death. But the ultimate reference, both for the early Church and for us, is doubtless to the Lord's final advent at the close of time. Then the Saviour shall appear as the Judge of all, and shall for ever put an end to tyranny and wrong. The thought of that great event is surely well fitted to "stablish our hearts," i.e. to strengthen them for patient endurance.

II. THE EXAMPLE. (Ver. 7, second part.) As an illustration of his subject, and in order to excite the grace of patience within the hearts of his readers, James introduces an allusion to the pursuits of husbandry. Think, he says, of the long-suffering of the farmer. His is a life of arduous toils and of anxious delays. He must wait for the "early rain" in the late autumn before he can sow his seed; and for the "latter rain" in April, upon which his crops depend for the filling of the ear before the harvest ripens. This patience is necessary. Although sometimes sorely tried, it is reasonable. The "fruit" which the farmer desires is "precious;" it is worth waiting for. And his long-suffering is also full of hope. It has been rewarded by the bounty of Providence in former years; and besides, if he be a pious man, he remembers the Divine assurance that "seed-time and harvest shall not cease." Now, says the apostle, afflicted Christians are to learn from this example a lesson of long-suffering. Trial and persecution are designed to yield an infinitely more "precious" harvest than that for which the husbandman waits. This harvest is "the fruit of righteousness"—"the

fruit of the Spirit." And spiritual fruit takes far longer time to mellow than the natural harvest does. So "it is good for a man quietly to wait" for it. We have the assurance that in spiritual husbandry the ultimate reward is never disappointing. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT. (Ver. 8, second part.) "The coming of the Lord is at hand." This implies, first of all, that the Lord is sure to come. While no farmer possesses an absolute certainty in reference to the harvest on his own particular farm, every one who in the spiritual sphere "sows to the Spirit" may rest assured that the day of an abundant and blessed ingathering will arrive. The Lord Jesus, who came to our world nearly nineteen centuries ago, is to come again. His second coming is the greatest event in the future of the Church. It is the pole-star of her hopes. When he appears, the spiritual harvest shall be reaped. We, accordingly, shall cherish the true spirit of long-suffering, only in so far as we "love his appearing," and realize that the purpose of it is to reward his people and take vengeance upon their enemies. It is a sign that our faith is weak, if we meditate seldom, and pray little, about our Lord's second coming. How different was it in this respect with the apostles and the early Church! But, if the final advent was near in the first century, it is still nearer now; and in the interval what arrears of vengeance have been accumulating! It should be our comfort in the time of trouble to reflect that "the coming of the Lord is at hand." The whole New Testament Church lies under the shadow of the second advent. It will be an event of infinite moment, and therefore it is never far away. To the view of God, with whom "one day is as a thousand years," this event is nigh; and the men of faith learn to see it from God's point of view. Compared, also, with the great eternity on the other side, the second advent seems "at hand." What an encouragement does this thought supply, in the direction of devout patience, both in working and in suffering! It should be at once a spur and an anodyne, to know that the Lord is already on his way. For, when he comes, he will reward all service, and right every wrong, and take his people home to himself.—C. J.

Vers. 9—11.—*Bear and forbear.* Here we have another exhortation to patience, with other examples of its exercise. In vers. 7, 8, however, the apostle has had in view the persecutions which believers suffer at the hands of the ungodly; while he now refers to the trial of patience which arises from collision of feeling among Christian brethren themselves.

I. A WARNING AGAINST IMPATIENCE WITH ONE ANOTHER. (Ver. 9.) "Murmur not, brethren," implies that believers are apt within their hearts, if not also openly, to complain of each other. Indeed, it sometimes requires greater patience to bear with composure the little frictions of feeling to which close contact with Christian brethren exposes, than to endure open and overt wrongs at the hands of persons who are not such. The warning has a lesson: 1. *For the family circle.* What a happy society is that of a well-ordered family, where love reigns between husband and wife, and where the parents enjoy the confidence and obedience of wisely trained children! But this fireside happiness can be enjoyed only in connection with constant mutual forbearance. How prone, sometimes, are even husband and wife to misunderstand each other! And how often are households made unhappy by envying and quarrelling among the children! Let us remember that the persons who live in the same house with us are in the very best position for appraising the value of our Christian profession. They know at least whether we are learning to bear kindly with the infirmities of our own relations, and to endure with patience petty discomforts in domestic life. The grace of God within the soul will enable us to "walk within our house with a perfect heart" (Ps. ci. 2). 2. *For the business circle.* How many offences arise among Christian men when engaged in the toil and strain of commercial competition! One brother grudges the worldly successes of his neighbour; and perhaps his heart harbours against him uncharitable accusations of dishonest dealing. But, as Abraham long ago was content that Lot should appropriate to himself the best of the land rather than that their herdmen should quarrel, so still it will do a Christian man less harm to make sometimes what is financially a bad bargain, than to soil his soul by cherishing evil thoughts regarding any brother believer. 3. *For the Church circle.* There is apt to be murmuring and grumbling in ecclesiastical life. Sometimes the spiritual office-bearers

of a congregation get but little thanks for the work which they do. Sometimes, also, the people forget that they ought to have large mutual patience with one another. The liberal progress-loving member is apt to groan over the attitude of his conservative let-things-alone brother; and the educated and cultured Christian may fail at times to forbear with the man of narrow and exclusive views. The exemplary Church member, while ready at all times to maintain and defend his own opinions, is yet willing gracefully to yield (wherever conscience does not forbid) to what the majority decide upon, that thereby he may promote the general peace and edification.

II. THE SANCTION BY WHICH THIS WARNING IS ENFORCED. (Ver. 9.) James employs a sweetly persuasive motive in the word "brethren." To complain of each other is to sin against the highest and most sacred brotherhood. This motive, however, is only lightly touched, in passing. The apostle backs up his warning with a solemn sanction. Echoing, as he does so often, his Master's words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vii. 1), he speaks of the bar of God, and of the Lord Christ the Judge. To refuse to forbear with brethren, he says, amounts virtually to an assumption of the judicial office, and will expose one's self to be "judged." For what right have we to judge our brethren? We lack the necessary discrimination; our own hearts are impure; and we shall very soon have ourselves to appear before the judgment-bar. Already, indeed, "the Judge standeth before the doors." He is near at hand, to discharge perfectly those functions which we are so prone to usurp; and, in doing so, to condemn all who may have been guilty of such usurpation.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT AFFORDED BY CERTAIN OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES. (Vers. 10, 11.) It should cheer us, under this and every other form of trial, to remember how the great seers and saints of old endured their afflictions. 1. *The example of the prophets.* (Ver. 10.) The Jewish Christians had a deep reverence for the memory of these noble men. The prophets had been the religious teachers of ancient Israel; through them the Divine Spirit himself had spoken. The influence which they exercised while they lived had sometimes been prodigious; indeed, their power was often greater than the power of the sovereign. Yet the lot of the prophets had been one of sore affliction. They were an example to the New Testament Church: (1) *Of suffering.* Their trials came upon them as the result of the fidelity with which they "spoke in the name of the Lord." It was so with Moses, Elijah, Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel. The Jews indeed were accustomed to confess that the prophets generally had been persecuted (Matt. xxiii. 30, 37; Acts vii. 52; Heb. xi. 36—38). No wonder, then, since trouble fell on these great men, that it should fall on us. We may be well contented to follow in the faith that has been trodden by "the goodly fellowship." (2) *Of long-suffering.* We are to think also of the meekness of the prophets when enduring their unparalleled afflictions. They were sorely tried by the murmurings of their "brethren," to whom they spoke the Word of God; yet how patiently they bore it all! They laid hold upon the Divine strength, and thus learned to bear and forbear. And so, despite their infirmities and occasional lapses from patience, of these men "the world was not worthy." 2. *The example of Job.* (Ver. 11.) Although the Book of Job is a poem, our apostle evidently believed it to have an underlying basis of veritable history. The man Job actually existed; and his proverbial patience is an example to the Church. Think of the dreadful distresses which came thick and fast upon him. By successive strokes he was deprived of property, family, health, reputation, and true sympathy. Yet Job left his sufferings with God. He learned to forbear with the bigotry and stupidity of his friends. He evinced at last, in spite of some serious failures, a spirit of perfect submission to the Divine will. He interceded for his misguided comforters; and God forgave them. Job's case, however, is introduced here chiefly with the view of pointing to "the end" or conclusion which the Lord gave to him (Job xlii. 12). His God, whom he feared, rewarded signally, even in this life, his wonderful patience. And the great lesson which we should learn from Job's career is "that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful." He is so in the very sending of trial, in the measure of it, in the grace which he gives to bear it, in the unravelling of its merciful purpose, and in the happy issues with which he rewards his people, when they "have been approved" (ch. i. 12). Trial is a goodly discipline intended to prepare for the "goodly heritage;" and thus they will be "blessed" who shall have "endured."—C. J.

Ver. 12.—*Against swearing.* The apostle has been exhorting to long-suffering under trials; and he now prohibits profanity. For impatience in the time of affliction may betray a man into speaking unadvisedly, and may even tempt him to take the Name of God in vain.

I. THE KIND OF SWEARING WHICH IS HERE PROHIBITED. We believe that James condemns only what is called profane swearing. He exhorts the brethren to abstain from hasty and frivolous oaths. Some commentators, indeed (as De Wette), some philosophers (as Bentham), some Fathers of the early Church (as Chrysostom and Augustine), and some Christian sects (as the Quakers), interpret this command, with that of our Lord in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 34—37), as an absolute condemnation of all kinds of swearing. The prevailing judgment of the Church, however, is that upon solemn occasions oaths may be not only lawful, but sometimes also dutiful. For what does an oath mean? It means, to call upon God to take notice of, and to ratify, some particular assertion. And Christian intelligence suggests that there can be nothing sinful in this, provided it be done only upon a solemn judicial occasion and in a reverent spirit. The words in the third commandment which are emphatic are evidently the words “in vain,” it being assumed that there is a lawful use of the Divine Name. Passages are to be found in the Old Testament in which God enjoins upon his people the taking of solemn oaths (Deut. vi. 13; x. 20; Jer. xii. 16); and it was ordained in the Law given from Sinai, that persons accused of certain offences might clear themselves by an adjuration (Exod. xxii. 10, 11). Prophets and apostles often attested their inspired messages with an oath: e.g. Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1), Micahiah (1 Kings xxii. 14), Paul (Gal. i. 20; 2 Cor. i. 23). The Lord Jesus Christ, when put upon his oath by the high priest, accepted the adjuration, although he had before been silent (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64). And, highest of all, Jehovah himself is represented as swearing (Ps. cx. 4; Heb. vi. 13). When, therefore, Jesus and James say, “Swear not,” they do not forbid solemn oaths, if used sparingly, upon appropriate occasions, and as an act of worship; but only such swearing as is passionate, purposeless, profane.

II. THE NEED THAT THERE IS FOR SUCH A PROHIBITION. Colloquial swearing was a clamant sin among the Hebrews, as it still is among the Orientals. The people generally were adepts in the use of profane expletives. Rabbinical casuistry had devised many subtle refinements with the view of permitting indulgence in the habit on all occasions (Matt. xxiii. 16—22). The scribes taught that while it was sinful to swear expressly by the Divine Name, it was allowable to do so by heaven, by the earth, by the prophets, by Jerusalem, by the temple, by the altar, by the blood of Abel, by one's own head, etc. The extreme commonness of this sin of careless swearing led our Lord, once and again, to rebuke it, and to point out the evil lying under it; and the Apostle James here catches up his spirit, and echoes his words. But we in this country require the apostle's warning perhaps as much as the Christian Jews of “the Dispersion.” The strong tendency of human nature to the use of profane language is a remarkable illustration of our depravity. How much profanity there is in the popular literature of the day, even in that section of it which is considered “high class,” and which is read by the cultured portion of the community! This objectionable element in many of our works of fiction is at once a symptom of much evil already existing, and a cause of more. How prevalent also is the sin of swearing in our public streets! It is distressing to overhear the most profane expressions coming sometimes from the lips of the merest children. And even persons who profess to fear God will allow themselves to use his Name—in some mutilated form, it may be—as a needless exclamation; or employ similarly the sacred word which expresses some Divine attribute; or swear by the dread realities of death and eternity. Christians ought to remember that all such forms of speech are an offence against the Majesty of heaven, and a grief to the heart of the Lord Jesus. In this region there should be a clear and wide separation between believers and unbelievers. Lips which use the first petition of the Lord's Prayer—“Hallowed be thy Name,” ought never to speak of God and of Divine things except in a spirit of reverent worship.

III. THE EARNESTNESS OF THE PROHIBITION. We have considered the matter of the apostle's counsel; let us look now to his manner in giving it. He writes with burning earnestness. “But above all things, my brethren, swear not;” i.e. guard yourselves with peculiar care against the sin of profanity. We should exercise this special watch-

fulness for many reasons; amongst these, because: 1. *Profane swearing is a great sin.* It is utterly opposed to the Christian patience and long-suffering which the apostle has been inculcating. No man dare insult a fellow-creature as many men every day insult the Majesty on high. The great Jehovah should be contemplated with the profoundest reverence; but to swear is to insult him to his face. 2. *This sin is very easily committed.* Our corrupt nature is prone to it. The temptations which beset us are abundant. Both round oaths and minced oaths are to be heard everywhere. So, James says, "Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay." The bare word of a Christian man should be enough. Even to say, "Upon my word," is to swear; such an asseveration is contrary to Christian simplicity. If one is strictly truthful, his simple "yes" or "no" will always be believed. 3. *Swearing is a ruinous sin.* James adds, "That ye fall not under judgment." A foul tongue is the index of a foul heart. Indeed, the two act and react upon one another. The profane man, therefore, is destroying his own soul. He who swears by hell in jest may well tremble lest he go to hell in earnest. The Lord our God will not suffer him to escape his righteous judgment (Deut. xxviii. 58, 59).

CONCLUSION. What need we have to tell the prayer of David—"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. cxli. 3)!—O. J.

Vers. 13—15.—*Prayer and praise as a medicine.* The previous exhortation was a dissuasive against profane swearing. In these verses the apostle suggests that the right use of the Divine Name is reverently to call upon it in all time of our tribulation, and in all time of our wealth. The most healthful relief for a heart surcharged with deep emotion is to engage in religious worship. James refers here to three different cases.

I. THE CASE OF THE AFFLICTED. (Ver. 13.) The believer must not allow his trials to exasperate him. Instead of swearing over them, he should pray over them. That is a graceless heart which, when under the rod, challenges God's sovereignty, or impugns his justice, or distrusts his goodness, or arraigns his wisdom. The child of God prays always, because he loves prayer; and especially when under trial, because then he has special need of it. He prays for a spirit of filial submission; for the improvement of his chastisement; and for the removal of it, if the Lord will. And only those who have proved the efficacy of prayer know how efficacious it is. Even to tell God of our trials helps to alleviate them. Prayer brings the soul near to him who bears upon his loving heart the burden of his people's sorrows. As we pray, our cares and trials pass into the Divine breast, and we are made of one will with our Father. But, besides this, our petitions will be directly and substantially answered. God will give us either the particular blessing which we ask, or, if that would not be good for us, something still better. When we crave relief from present suffering we may get instead, as Paul did (2 Cor. xii. 7—10), the power of higher moral endurance.

II. THE CASE OF THE LIGHT-HEARTED. (Ver. 13.) Sorrow and joy constantly meet in human life. There are many people who are "cheerful:" some, because they are in easy circumstances; others, because they are of a buoyant disposition. Now, a Christian ought to keep his hilarity from running to waste by expressing his gladness in praise. Cheerfulness naturally overflows into song. And the believer is to use as the vehicle of his joy, not the favourite ditties of the worldly man, which are often full of levity and sometimes tinged with profanity, but "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." This counsel reminds us that praise is a means of grace, not for the congregation and the family alone, but also for the individual believer. Praise is the art of adoration; and its outward attire is music, the most spiritual of the fine arts. To "psalm" with voice and instrumental accompaniment affords the best safety-valve for joyous emotion. Music

"Gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes."
(Tennyson.)

It "is the art of the prophets, the only art that can calm the agitation of the soul; one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us" (Luther). Those German hymn-writers did well who wrote hymns for young people, housekeepers, miners, etc., to sing, instead of the profane songs of the day. And how thankful we

should be for our treasures of sacred poetry—the grand old Hebrew psalms and our Christian hymns!

III. **THE CASE OF THE SICK.** (Vers. 14, 15.) The sick brother is to “call for the presbyters of the Church.” This implies that it belongs to the elders, or bishops, to visit the diseased and infirm. In early times they were to do so, not only to render spiritual aid, but to exercise such “gifts of healings” (1 Cor. xii. 9) as they might possess. It is enjoined, or rather taken for granted, that they would “anoint” the sick man “with oil.” Why so? Either because this was the accredited medical panacea in that age (Isa. i. 6; Luke x. 34), or because oil is a symbol of the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Healer (Mark vi. 13). If we judge that the anointing was medicinal, the lesson is that in sickness we are to have recourse both to “the prayer of faith” and to the prescriptions of an enlightened pharmacy. If, however, we regard it as symbolical—perhaps the better view—in that case it would remind all parties that the miraculous cures were effected only by the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord Jesus had given. And so the apostle expressly says that the anointing is to be done “in the Name of the Lord,” and that “the prayer of faith” which accompanied it would be followed by a cure. The gift of healing was granted to the apostles as a temporary aid in the work of founding the Christian Church. At first, before the gospel was sufficiently understood, signs and wonders were needed as helps to faith. This gift would cease with the death of the last person who had been endowed with it by the last of the apostles. The injunction to use oil as a symbol was, therefore, only temporary. Many, however, have judged otherwise. 1. Roman Catholics, who base their rite of extreme unction upon this Scripture. But that so-called sacrament differs entirely from the ordinance before us. Here, it is the elders; there, a priest. Here, it is a sick man who is to be restored to health; there, one who is about to die. Here, the object of the anointing is the recovery of the patient; there, it is to prepare him for death. 2. The “Peculiar People” in England, and the “Tunkers” in the United States, who in times of illness still rely upon this unction and prayer, rejecting all medical advice. At Männedorf, in Switzerland, Miss Dorothea Trüdel for many years superintended an establishment in which prayer was employed in preference to medicine for the cure even of the most serious diseases. And at Bad Boll, in Würtemberg, Pastor Blumhardt has prosecuted upon a large scale a similar enterprise. Hundreds of cures have been authenticated as having been wrought in these institutions. What, then, are we to say to this? First of all, that the promised recovery is doubtless connected in ver. 15, not with the anointing, but with the prayer, and with the faith which breathed in it. If there were faith on the part of the praying presbyter, and of the sick brother himself, his sickness would be healed; and his sins, of which perhaps his disease was a punishment, would be forgiven. But again, although we do not now look for evidently miraculous cures, “the prayer of faith” still pierces the supernatural; and thus it is as reasonable now as ever to pray for the recovery of the sick, provided also we diligently use, at the same time, the best physical means of cure. It is a Divine law, in every department of life, that we must employ the means if we would secure the blessing. During sickness, therefore, we must pray as if all depended upon prayer; and avail ourselves of medical skill as if we had no other resource than that. But what Christian can doubt the efficacy of prayer as a means of cure? If Jesus Christ and his apostles could heal the sick, may not our Father in heaven still, although in occult ways which medical skill cannot trace, touch the secret springs of human life? and may he not do so in answer to the prayers of his own people? Certainly diseases are under law. But even a medical man has some power to direct the action of the physical laws of disease. And is not the power of the Lawgiver greater still than that of the most eminent physician? Is it not literally omnipotent?

LESSONS. 1. Prayer, although by no means of the nature of a charm, is a real medicine for sickness. 2. While this is true, the supreme end of prayer is the attainment of spiritual blessing. 3. We should therefore ask more earnestly for the forgiveness of sins than for temporal mercies.—C. J.

Vers. 16—18.—*Mutual confession and prayer.* In the latter part of ver. 15 the apostle has hinted at the connection between sin and suffering. He proceeds now to urge upon the sick and the erring, on proper occasions to acknowledge to their brethren

the sins of which they may have been guilty, if they would be "healed" in body and soul, as a result of the intercessions offered on their behalf.

I. THE DUTY. (Ver. 16.) It is twofold. 1. *Mutual confession*. The subject here is not confession of sin to God, although that is an essential part of true penitence (Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 8—10). Neither is it auricular confession to a priest; although the Church of Rome bases her doctrine of the necessity of such mainly upon this passage. That Church, while recommending the confession of venial sins, makes the rehearsal of all mortal sins essential to salvation. But history testifies that the confessional, instead of proving a means of grace, has been to an unspeakable degree a school of wickedness. The confession here spoken of is occasional, not regular. It is particular, not indiscriminate. It is mutual, "one to another," and not on the one part only. It is in order to edification, and not for absolution. Christ has given his ministers no power to pardon sin. "The only true confessional is the Divine mercy-seat" (Wardlaw). The exhortation before us is addressed to the brethren generally, whether presbyters or ordinary members of the congregation. And it is only some sins which it is proper to confess to our fellow-men. There are many "secret faults" of impure thought and corrupt desire on which we should keep the lids closely down. But we ought to confess: (1) *Wrongs done to brethren*. If on any occasion we have acted unjustly by a brother, or calumniated him to others, we should, so soon as we come to ourselves, confess our fault, ask his forgiveness, and make all possible reparation. Our Saviour has enjoined this (Matt. v. 23, 24). It was a beautiful practice of the primitive Church to see that all quarrels among brethren were made up, in the spirit of Christian love, before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. And the Church of England has an earnest counsel to the same effect in her Communion Service. (2) *Scandalous sins*. A scandalous sin is one which, on account of its publicity, is a scandal, and is calculated to bring reproach upon religion. The discipline of the Church requires that such an offence be confessed openly. Discipline is an ordinance of Christ, and is intended to conserve the purity of the Church, as well as the spiritual profit of her members. A good man, therefore, when he has fallen into gross and open sin, should be willing to make public confession before the Church and to his fellow-members. (3) *Sins which deeply wound the conscience*. There are occasions when we may profitably speak of such to a pious pastor or to some prudent Christian friend. "Certainly they are then more capable to give us advice, and can the better apply the help of their counsel and prayers to our particular case, and are thereby moved to the more pity and commiseration; as beggars, to move the more, will not only represent their general want, but uncover their sores" (Manton). Happy is the man who has such a friend. If any persons in the world should confer with one another about matters of spiritual experience, it is surely husband and wife. If such never "confess their sins one to another," certainly they are not married in the Lord. 2. *Mutual prayer*. This is the main advantage to be derived from mutual confession. We should take our friends into our confidence about our sins, that we may induce them with intelligent sympathy to intercede for us. Not only are the spiritual officers of the Church to pray for the sick and the erring; this duty is incumbent upon the whole congregation. Any member who cherishes strong opinions about the remissness of the elders or of the pastor in sick-visitation, should labour as much as possible to supplement their deficiencies. We should all remember at the throne of grace the afflicted of our company, and those who have confessed sin to us. God wants us to pray "for all men," and "for all the saints." To pray for others will help to free us from spiritual selfishness; it will develop within us sympathy for brethren, and thus tend to knit the Church together in love.

II. AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO DISCHARGE THIS DUTY. It is an inestimable blessing to be able to engage on our behalf the spiritual sympathy and the earnest applications of our fellow-Christians. We have here: I. *A statement of the power of prayer*. (Ver. 16.) It "availeth much." The evolution of events is controlled by the living God, as the First Cause of all things; and prayer occupies the same place in his moral government that other second causes do. God is roused into action by the prayers of his people. Prayer is thus more than merely a wholesome spiritual discipline; it moves the arm of the Almighty, and virtually admits the believer who presents it to a share in the government of the world. The apostle recommends intercessory supplication as pecu-

liarily effectual. The petitioner, however, must be "a righteous man." He who would intercede successfully must himself have faith in Christ—that faith which is made perfect by holy deeds (Ps. lxxvi. 18; John ix. 31). "The supplication" of such a man "availeth much in its working," i.e. when energized by the Holy Spirit, who "maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 26). Mere routine prayer avails nothing. A form of sound words is not enough. We must put our heart's blood into our request. Indeed, what we desire must be begotten within us of "the spirit of grace and of supplications." 2. *An historical example of this power.* (Vers. 17, 18.) With such examples the pages of the Old Testament are thickly strewn; but the apostle selects one case only—that of Elijah. Although an extraordinary personage, and a very eminent prophet, Elijah was by no means a demigod: he was "a man of like passions [literally, 'homœopathic'] with us." He had the same human nature which we have—the same susceptibilities, dispositions, and infirmities. He, too, had his secret faults, and his presumptuous sins. But, being "a righteous man," he was a man of prayer; and his success as a suppliant should be an example to us. Two special petitions presented by this prophet are cited. (1) *A prayer for judgment.* (Ver. 17.) The Old Testament history does not mention the fact that the long drought which fell upon the land of Israel in the days of Ahab was sent in answer to the prayer of Elijah. It was so, however. The prophet had been brooding, among the uplands of Gilead, over the wickedness of the court and of the people; and at length he prayed by the Spirit that Jehovah, for his own glory and for the well-being of the nation, would send this drought upon the land. And God heard him, and closed the windows of heaven for three years and a half. (2) *A prayer for mercy.* (Ver. 18.) This request Elijah presented upon Mount Carmel, on the evening of that memorable day when God had answered by fire, and the prophets of Baal had been slain. God had intimated to Elijah at Zarephath that he was about to send rain; and now the prophet wrestled for the fulfilment of the promise, and sent his servant seven times to the mountain-top to watch for the visible answer. And soon "the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." Both of these chapters in Elijah's life illustrate vividly the power that there is in "the prayer of faith." And should any one ask, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" the answer is, that he is "with us" yet; and that prayer is still the golden key which opens the door of heaven, and brings us "in its working" salvation manifold.—C. J.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The conversion of a sinner.* With this emphatic sentence the Epistle closes. There are no personal references, Christian greetings, or notices of friends, such as Paul would have had. Perhaps James ends thus abruptly, because he desires to impress upon his readers' hearts this last thought, that every Christian should aim at being a soul-winner. We have here—

I. A BROTHER GOING ASTRAY. The case supposed is the apostasy of a professing Christian. We must notice, at the outset, the supreme importance which our apostle ascribes here, and throughout his Epistle (ch. i. 18, 21—23; iii. 14), to "the truth." He strikes as loyal a note as Paul does, regarding the necessity of "consenting" to sound doctrine if one would live the Christian life. He assumes that all backsliding is aberration from the truth. His words cover both forms which apostasy may take—errors of creed and of conduct. A brother may go astray: 1. *As regards doctrine.* Many in our times, alas! attach small importance to error of this kind. Libertines in practice are apt to be latitudinarians in opinion. Many "moral" men act as if they do not regard any of the doctrines of the creed as vital. Some really pious people seem to believe that the Christian life can be lived with equal success by men holding the most diverse views regarding the central facts of Christianity. But Scripture teaches that it is through the knowledge and faith of certain great truths alone that men's hearts will be imbued with Christian principle, and their lives become acceptable to God. Among the essential doctrines are those of human depravity and inability; the Divine inspiration of Holy Scripture; the supreme Deity of Jesus Christ; his substitutionary atonement; and man's dependence on the gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit. To deny any of these doctrines is to "err from the truth," and to "fall from grace." Among the causes of such doctrinal aberration are (1) pride of intellect; (2) giving one's self over to the guidance of speculation; (3) aversion of heart to evan-

gical truth; (4) the vanity of desiring to be thought independent; (5) neglect of the means of grace. Or, again, a brother may err: 2. *As regards practice.* He may turn his back upon the gospel without formally renouncing any of its doctrines. Immorality is a departure from the faith, no less than error in opinion. To "walk in the truth" is to follow holiness. The man, therefore, who professes zeal for orthodoxy, and all the while is wallowing in sin, or becoming entangled with the world, is really a heretic. Such a man is a living lie against the truth. But what temptations there are everywhere to leave the narrow way! And do not professing Christians in large numbers succumb to these? The masses of our home heathen are in a great measure composed of members of Churches who have finally lapsed into worldliness. It is a sure sign of spiritual declension to cease to find pleasure in public worship, and to allow one's place in the house of God to be empty.

II. **ANOTHER BROTHER CONVERTING THE ERRING BROTHER.** Usually the term "convert" is employed to describe that great moral revolution within the soul which is effected by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. And, doubtless, we may understand it here in this radical sense, as well as in its secondary meaning when applied to the reclamation of a backsliding believer. For there are members of the visible Church who are not true Christians. They make for some time a fair profession; but by-and-by they visibly fall away. Well, the counsels and prayers and pious example of a fellow-member of the congregation may be blessed to the real conversion of such. But, again, the erring one may be already a believer; and a brother believer may become instrumental in reclaiming him from his apostasy. This also is a conversion, although as such only supplementary to "the great change." Simon Peter was a truly godly man when he denied his Master; yet Jesus called his repentance after that foul sin his "conversion" (Luke xxii. 32). Some Christians are in this sense converted many times. Their religious life ebbs and flows; and each turn of the tide after a period of declension amounts to a fresh conversion. Of course, it is only God who can "convert a sinner" in either sense. But he employs believers as his instruments. The Holy Spirit bestows his grace in connection with human prayer and effort (Acts xxvi. 18; Luke i. 15, 16; 1 Cor. iv. 15; Philem. 19). And any Christian may become such an instrument. James does not say, "If any preacher, or pastor, or elder, convert him;" the work may be accomplished by the humblest member of the congregation. Even a servant-maid, or a little child, may be honoured to do it. Each member is bound to seek the spiritual good of every other member. For, we are our "brother's keeper."

III. **THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF SUCH CONVERSION.** The full flower of this glory shall bloom in eternity; but its bud appears just now in time. The ultimate result is the salvation of the soul; and the immediate result is the covering of many sins. But who can estimate the blessedness of such an experience? These last burning words of the Epistle remind us of the priceless value of the human spirit. Man is "the image and glory of God." Think of the high endowments of the soul, its lofty powers, its immortal destiny, the price paid for its redemption, and the dreadfulness of its ruin, should it continue unsaved. The unconverted sinner is an heir-apparent to eternal death; and the backsliding professor, if he be not restored, must slip down into the same undone eternity. Now, the glorious effect of conversion is to deliver from the power of sin in the future, and from its guilt in the present. The convert's sins are "a multitude," for every day has contributed to their number; but now they are covered with the Redeemer's merit. The blood-sprinkled mercy-seat hides the violated Law from Jehovah's eye. And what a joy to the sinner to be made the subject of such a conversion! "Blessed is he whose sin is covered" (Ps. xxxii. 1). Where past sin is thus hidden, much future sin is prevented. This, therefore, is the best "turn" which one can do to his neighbour—to "convert him from the error of his way."

IV. **THE ENCOURAGEMENT THUS SUPPLIED TO CHRISTIAN EFFORT.** "Let him know" (ver. 20). These animating words express the main thought in the text. The Christian worker must not forget that to restore an erring soul is one of the noblest of achievements. It is a far grander triumph than even to save a man's natural life. Let him remember this for his comfort in thinking of the work which he has already done, and for his encouragement in seeking to do more. It is inspiring to realize that one

has plucked brands from the everlasting burning, and helped to add new jewels to Immanuel's crown. God works for this end; and as often as it is gained, there is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels. For this the apostles laboured. For this the martyrs bled. For this evangelists toil. Who does not envy the life-work of men like Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, M'Cheyne, when viewed in the light of a Scripture like this? Yet there are many humble Christians who have tasted of this joy, and whose heaven shall be "two heavens," because they have "turned many to righteousness" (Dan. xii. 3).

LESSONS. 1. Let us beware of backsliding ourselves; and let us ask the Holy Spirit to "see if there be any wicked way in us." 2. Let us be concerned about our erring brethren, and labour to compass their conversion. 3. Let us take encouragement to missionary effort from the melting motive presented in this closing counsel.—C. J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The doom of misused wealth.* We have in these opening words an echo of ch. iv. 9; but with a difference. There, a call to repentance; here, a denunciation. The very word "howl" recalls old prophecies of doom (Isa. xiii. 6; xiv. 31; xv. 3). So here, the coming doom. The destruction of Jerusalem? Yes; but this only the "beginning of sorrows." The culminating judgments, and the second advent. These rich, these delicate-living and pleasure-taking ones? Yes, let them weep and howl; for their miseries are coming upon them!

I. THE SIN OF THE RICH. Professedly religious or not, they were great sinners, and as sinners alone does he regard them. And as sinners he denounces them. 1. *Indulgence.* "Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure." What is the law of the true life? A thankful acceptance of such joys as God gives, and increased service in the consecration of such joys. But they? Their pleasure was their all. They were pampering their lusts. Instead of making self a centre from which, under God, all blessing should radiate, they made it a centre to which all pleasure must converge. 2. *Luxury.* "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten." What is the law of property? A thankful use of such things as God gives, that we and the world may be the better for them. But they? They were guilty of a wanton accumulation of wealth, and so their very plenty was corrupting in its idleness. Like corn in a famine, heaped up and mouldering. 3. *Selfish oppression.* "The hire of the labourers," etc. What is the law of work? A mutual ministry of employers and employed, involving a recognition of the rights of labour. How spoke their Law on this matter, and the prophets (see Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; Jer. xxii. 13; Mal. iii. 5)? But they? The words suggest sufficient. So their indulgence and luxury were not merely selfish in themselves, but at others' expense. They, forsooth, were all in all, and others must work for them, and yet starve and be naked, while they heaped up their riches! Verily, they were thieves and robbers. 4. *Ruthless persecution.* "Ye have condemned, ye have killed," etc. The historical fact; probably judicial tyranny, these rich men refusing justice to the poor, when pleading against the fraud perpetrated towards them by their rich employers. But what was the essential fact? Him, the Just One, they had virtually condemned and killed! Yes, for so they were filling up the measure of their fathers (see Matt. xxiii. 32; xxvii. 25). For the spirit which actuated them was the selfsame spirit of unjust cruelty which had actuated those to whom Stephen spoke of the Just One—"of whom," he said, "ye have been the betrayers and murderers." So also James "the Just" was afterwards their victim.

II. THE DOOM OF THE RICH. Sin and judgment, in the ways of God, are ever closely joined. For

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all."

1. Thus their selfish indulgence was but indulgence for the slaughter; they were fattening themselves for the shambles. We are reminded of the time of the slaughter that came, when "the temple floors ran with blood, and the roofs raged in fire till all was utter desolation" (see Punchard, Ellicott's 'Commentary'). 2. The canker of their wealth was premonitory of the judgment of remorse, that should eat their flesh as fire (Luke xvi. 24). 3. Their oppression and fraud, likewise, were marked by one

eye, and the cries of the oppressed had entered the ears of the Lord of hosts. The Lord of hosts? Yes, power belonged unto him, and it had been written, "*He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper*" (Ps. lxxii. 12, etc.). 4. And their murder of *the Just One*, as it really was? "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. i. 7). Yes, judgment should come, swift and sure; "for as the lightning," etc. (Matt. xxiv. 27).

The great lesson is one of stewardship; let rich and poor alike learn this. And to all there is one Lord, and he cometh! yes, "to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity" (Ps. xcvi. 9).—T. F. L.

Vers. 7—11.—*The coming of the Lord.* Following the warnings for the rich, we have encouraging counsel for the poor. Yes, even the poor persecuted ones just spoken of in the previous verses. The coming of the Lord is set forth as being nigh at hand, and they are exhorted to a patient waiting till that coming be accomplished.

I. THE COMING OF THE LORD. 1. *Its nature.* (1) For mercy: "to them that look for him . . . unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). So here, "the end of the Lord," etc. The "end" towards which God always works for his people is their deliverance; so shall it be emphatically then. Nor is the deliverance a cold, deliberate putting-forth of power; he is "full of pity." So he saves out of the fulness of love that yearns towards the oppressed. But the pity and the deliverance are both alike "of grace," for we deserve them not; so we are reminded, in that he is "merciful." (2) For judgment: "to them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (Rom. ii. 8). So here, "the judge standeth," etc. The "end" towards which God is compelled to work, by the sins of men, is their judgment; so emphatically then. And the very pity of his heart becomes intenser indignation, when sin spurns his pity. And the judgment shall be one, therefore, of accumulating penalties; judgment because they "obey not the truth;" yet heavier judgment because they "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 8). 2. *Its nearness.* Certainly there is a seeming nearness in the apostolic days; how shall it be explained? (1) Actually, it was very near, the intervening time being compared with the vast æons of God's working; so 2 Pet. iii. 8. And even we, studying the history of the past, can view the lapse of ages somewhat according to the measurement of God. (2) Ideally, it was near indeed to those to whom it was the one burning, glowing hope. For illustration, the parting with a much-loved friend for a separation of many years: we dwell so fondly, in the lingering farewells, on the reunion time, that all the long interval is forgotten in the absorbing hope of that better day. So Christ, parting with his disciples: "I will come again" (John xiv. 3). So the disciples, looking for their Lord: his coming "draweth nigh." Yes, the high mountain-peak stood out so clear and beautiful against the distant sky, that it seemed nigh, almost as one might touch it even now! (3) Virtually, it was near. There might be many a climb before that mountain-peak should be gained, but each ascent of the intervening hills lessened the distance towards that high summit. So the successive "comings" of the Lord, through all the ages, are preparing for and bringing near that advent, which shall be, after all, but the culmination of the judgments and deliverances that are proceeding now. (4) Potentially, as has well been said, it might be even nearer than now, for the spiritual alertness of the Church, and the rapidity of the evangelization of the world, were the fulfilment of conditions upon which depends the "hasting" of "the coming of the day of God" (see 2 Pet. iii. 12, margin). So, then, in all these senses it might well be said, "the coming of the Lord is at hand;" "the Judge standeth before the doors."

II. THE PATIENT WAITING. But as yet they must wait, and be patient in their waiting. For when the ideal of their hopes burned feeble and dull, and the weary routine of common life was oppressive to their hearts, how distant, sometimes, might that coming seem! And, seeming distant, it would actually become more distant, for their faith and work would slacken, and so his way would not be prepared. Yes, there must be a looking for their Lord, that they might rightly do his will, and also that they might patiently wait for his appearing. So, then, as regards this patient waiting: 1. *Its character.* (1) Endurance of evil: one feature of the economy of redemption. Yes, "we call them blessed;" so ch. i. 2—4, 12. (2) Strength of heart:

evil without could not touch that inward strength. In this consists the "blessedness" of the enduring. Therefore "stablish your hearts." (3) Trust in God: a God with us now; a God working for our deliverance hereafter. Having him, we have all things; and hoping in him, we shall not be put to shame. 2. *Its encouragements.* (1) 'The processes of nature may teach us patience: "Behold, the husbandman waiteth," etc. (2) The prophets of grace teach the same patience: "Take, brethren, for an example," etc. And the patience manifested by them was that of men who can "suffer, and be strong;" an active patience—"spake." (3) The patience of Job is the typical example of God's dealings, so mysterious and yet so merciful; and of man's faith, so tossed and tried, yet cleaving to the God who, he is sure, will not forsake.

One penalty of impatience and unfaith is mutual discontent: "Murmur not one against another." As against this, the reward of patient trust in God is "the peace of God," which "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Therefore, for duty's sake, for society's sake, for your own hearts' sake, for Christ's sake, "be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord;" for "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37).—T. F. L.

Ver. 12.—*Simplicity of speech.* Why "above all things"? Unless that this was one of their chiefly besetting sins. But, indeed, the intrinsic importance of the subject itself is sufficient warrant for the use of such words. It is the great subject of verity—verity of speech. And, indeed, if the verities of speech be trifled with, soon all verity is gone; and if a man be not a true man, of what worth is he? "Swear not." We need not take these words as prohibiting the use of the oath on solemn public occasions. For our Lord himself was put on his oath by the high priest (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64), and accepted the position. Paul also (Rom. i. 9; 2 Cor. i. 23; Gal. i. 20; Phil. i. 8) several times in his public communications with the Churches substantiated his words with some solemn formula. No; the world being what it is, imperfect, and some being so far under the influence of higher realities that, when brought consciously into their presence, they will speak truly, through fear, whereas apart from such avowed appeal to God they might not speak truly, it does appear to be quite lawful for society to take advantage even of this lower religious motive to secure true testimony, as before magistrates. And, this being so, the man who needs no such constraint, who lives always as before God, and whose word is therefore as good as his oath, will yet conform to the usages of society for the sake of their general benefit. It is, then, not the use of solemn speech on such public and special occasions that is here prohibited, but artificial asseverations in the common intercourse between man and man. And we may profitably consider—simplicity of speech, and its reward.

I. SIMPLICITY OF SPEECH. 1. And first, as *opposed to duplicity.* For amongst the Jews certain ingenuities of oath-taking had become a veil for the most flagrant falseness. To the rabbis "the third commandment was simply a prohibition of perjury, as the sixth was of murder, or the seventh of adultery. They did not see that the holy Name might be profaned in other ways, even when it was not uttered; and they expressly or tacitly allowed many forms of oath in which it was not named, as with the view of guarding it from desecration. Lastly, out of the many forms thus sanctioned (as here—Matt. v. 33—37—and xxiii. 16—22) they selected some as binding and others as not binding, and thus, by a casuistry at once subtle, irrational, and dishonest, tampered with men's sense of truthfulness" (Plumptre, on Matt. v. 33—37, in Ellicott's 'Commentary'). Our Lord's words, in the sermon on the mount, and afterwards in Matt. xxiii., were intended to smite through all this sophistry of falsehood; and James, in echoing our Lord's words, "Swear not at all," doubtless has the same end in view. For whether they solemnly invoked God's holy Name, or used some seemingly less solemn formula, or used no formula at all, and yet were false, their lying was in reality lying against God, who is present everywhere, and without whom nothing is real and no speech is sacred. So, then, our Lord's words, and the words of James, smote all the duplicity of the Jews in those days. And does not the same condemnation smite all the prevarications of our day? Whether with or without false oaths, all speech which insinuates the wrong meaning, under whatever cover of seeming veracity, is false, and must for safety's sake be branded with its real name, lying—yes, lying against God! And so all shifty, misleading deeds; all transactions, whether of business or of political life, or in any other

sphere, which have for their aim to convey wrong impressions, are lying—lying against God! Oh, let us learn, “Thou God seest me;” and let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay! 2. Again, *as opposed to all flippant trifling*. Doubtless, then as now, oaths were bandied about lightly from mouth to mouth in irreverent wantonness. This was to trifle with the God to whom the oaths referred. And so still; we make light of him when we lightly use these sacred names! But all flippant speech, whether with or without oaths, is equally a sin against God, if we would rightly regard it. How many there are who can scarcely speak but to jest! to whom life seems one huge comedy! Ah, God is not real to us, when the life which God has given can be so frivolously treated! 3. And yet again, *as opposed to all artificial solemnities of common speech* for the purpose of attesting its veracity. This leads us back to the thought with which we started. A true character needs no vouchers. The man who protests his truth is almost certainly a false man; as, if certain coins out of a large number were marked “genuine,” we should at once suspect them to be spurious. Or, on the other hand, if they were ascertained to be genuine, we should naturally suspect the coins not so marked to be false; so a fortified manner of speech, if true itself, implies that speech when unfortified is not true. Yes, by our artificial asseverations we lay open our whole converse to suspicion. For all these reasons, then, let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay. Your speech—let it be simple, sacred, true.

II. ITS REWARD. 1. *The reward of social life*. Think of it—when every man may trust his neighbour! Each of us is contributing his part towards this consummation by simplicity of speech, helping to build up the truthfulness of the world. 2. *The reward of the man*. And this? The man’s own trueness. For, as we have seen (on ch. iii. 1—5), a man’s speech makes a man’s self; truth or falseness distils through all his nature from his words. And what better reward than this: a brave bearing towards men, a true faith in God?

Again, as a reminder, “that ye fall not under judgment.” Yes, every false asseveration, every false flippancy, every essentially false solemnity, he notes down; and the day of reckoning is at hand! Our untruth will eat our soul as doth a canker; and then?—our own cankered, hollow self for ever! Yes, that shall be our portion. For “all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.” Well may it be said, as was said once (Robertson’s ‘Sermons,’ first series, p. 291), “The first lesson of the Christian life is this—Be true; and the second this—Be true; and the third this—Be true.” But how? “I am the Truth.” Yes, thank God, this is our refuge. And so shall we “have boldness in the day of judgment; because, as he is, so are we in this world” (1 John iv. 17).—T. F. L.

Vers. 13—18.—*The life in God*. The guiding thought of these verses is the intimacy of connection between our life and God. And the Christian, above all, should realize this truth, so attested in the incarnation and ascension of our Lord. For heaven has come down to earth; nay, earth has been raised to heaven. So, then, according to these verses, our sorrowing and rejoicing are to be “in the Lord;” in sickness we are to seek our restoration from the Lord; at all times our effectual prayer is to be towards the Lord.

I. The thirteenth verse teaches us that the natural expression of all the Christian’s experiences should be Godward. “Is any among you suffering?” How readily we murmur against man, or in heart against God! For the natural effect of pain on the natural heart of man is to make it fretful and impatient. How must it be with the Christian? “Let him pray.” Yes; let him hide his suffering in the mighty love of God, like a troubled child flinging itself into its mother’s breast! “Is any cheerful?” How readily we vent our joy in levity and hilarious mirth! The true resource is thankful praise. Like the lark mounting up into the morning sky, so should we pour out our full heart to God. And so with all the manifold experiences of life, of which these are but two typical examples: all our life, waking and sleeping, work or rest, pleasure or pain, is to be a life in God. So will all our life run into worship; so shall we “pray without ceasing.” And so will those words be fulfilled to us—

“Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?”

II. Vers. 14 and 15 teach us that in sickness our faith should be in God. 1. In our Lord's public healing, prominence was given to the fact that all healing is of God, but there was the recognition likewise of the use of proper means. Symbolized in his miracles: thus, "looking up to heaven," he "touched his tongue," etc. (Mark vii. 33, 34). So in practice prescribed by James: recognition of fact that only God can heal, but also of fact that God uses human means for effecting his healing work—former in exhortation to prayer, latter in direction to anoint with oil, which was perhaps the great symbol of medical remedies (see Mark vi. 13; Luke x. 34; also Plumptre, *in loc.*; and notice the interpretation of these words now by Greek Church, Roman Church, and "Peculiar People"). What to us is the spirit of these directions now? Use the highest appliances of medical skill which God's providence has in these latter days supplied to the world; but in and through all recognize God's working. Pray to God for the exercise of his healing power, and if the sick one be raised up, know that "the Lord" hath raised him up. Yes, the Lord, the living Christ, who is the Healer still. 2. But what is the spiritual concomitant of the bodily healing? "If he have committed sins," etc. These words, as to confession, have been more sadly misinterpreted, and more fatally abused, than the former, as to healing. What is the natural interpretation, as suggested by the whole connection? The sick man *may* have brought his sickness upon himself as the result of some secret sin: shall the elders pray for him? Yes, they may; but it must not be as for a saint of God. If the intercession is to avail, it must not proceed upon a total misunderstanding of the case, the faith being thus misplaced. No, the sick man must see the righteousness of the chastisement, and own it to his brethren, acknowledging his sin; then may they make penitent confession on his behalf, and "it shall be forgiven him." If he desires their prayers, he must make at least some general acknowledgment of the character of the case. And with this thought another may be mingled. How much of quarrel and offence there is among Christian brethren, poisoning the life of Christian society, and corrupting its usefulness in the world! It was so then, as the chapters before have shown; it is so, alas! now. But when sickness comes, let this, at least, be a time for frank acknowledgment and mutual pardon. Such in part may be James's meaning when he says, "Confess therefore," etc. (ver. 16).

III. Then the general principle of prayer is enunciated, with an illustration (vers. 16—18). 1. *The operativeness of prayer.* "Availeth much." We know not how, as in the case of the rain, but the fact is sure. God does not violate his own laws, but works through them; and, working through them, he yet can answer our supplications. For he lays his hands on the innermost springs that move the forces of the world, and they obey. We see only the succession of second causes; behind all these is the great First Cause, the living God. 2. *The condition of availing prayer.* "Of a righteous man." Prayer is no talisman, operating with magic effect, but a child asking of a Father. Yes, this is the meaning of the word "righteous." Not faultless; for Elijah was of "like passions" with us. But one of the family, adopted through Christ into the household of God. And the prayer of such a one he heareth always.

So, then, the truth of all these verses, as we saw at the beginning, is the intimacy of union between our life and God. We see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Yes, and upon us his brethren (John i. 51). And the link, on our part? Prayer. Wherefore, "pray always."

"For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

T. F. L.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The salvation of a soul.* In the former verses he had supposed a possibly sinning man, when chastened, "sending" for the elders of the Church. Now the reverse side of the picture is presented, and we are taught that, not merely when transgressors send for us are we to visit them for their salvation, but unsolicited we are to seek them out, if by any means we may save. Of course the exact case here considered is that of one who has wandered, but the general principle enunciated is true in all its applications. Conversion—its nature, its agency, its results.

I. ITS NATURE. 1. *From falsehood to the truth.* All sin implies wilful self-deception.

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man." Hence the reasonableness of religion; the beauty of holiness. And so conversion presupposes the working of "conviction." Yes, a man must see and feel his mistake, and recognize the truth to which he has shut his eyes, before he can rightly come to God. 2. *From wrong to right.* For it is not enough to be convinced of error; mere knowledge of the truth can never save. This the mistake of Socrates, identifying virtue with knowledge, and vice with ignorance. No; not merely must the conscience be convinced, but the heart must be influenced, the will must be persuaded. "From the error," truly; but "the error of *his way*." He has been walking in a wrong way; the way of transgression, of ungodliness. But One says, "I am *the Way*." We must come to him, we must "walk in him" (Col. ii. 6). For this is the way of holiness, the way to the Father. Conversion is never true and complete conversion till the converted one can say, "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21).

II. ITS AGENCY. 1. *The power must be of God.* Conversion in all its parts is ascribed ultimately to God in Scripture. Do we receive knowledge of the truth? It is because "God is light." Do we receive the truth into our hearts, and live thereby? It is because "God is love." 2. *The instrumentality may be of men.* May be, not must be. For God can illumine the mind which is untaught of man, and influence the will which is unmoved by man. But the rule is, employment of human means. "*Go ye, and make disciples . . . teaching them*" (Matt. xxviii. 19). So here: "he which converteth . . . shall save." Our high honour; but our solemn responsibility. Yet a responsibility which we cannot shake off. How are we using it?

III. ITS RESULTS. 1. *The individual result.* "Save a soul from death." Death? Death of the Soul! Understanding darkened; affections corrupted and debased; will depraved; whole order of nature out of course; God gone! Think of it: such capabilities, and such a doom! Ah, this is death indeed; and from this a soul may be saved by us! Yes, recovered to light, purity, strength, goodness, God! Oh, what a joy to put our hands to such a blessed work! 2. *The general result.* "Cover a multitude of sins." Think of the dark blot on God's universe, the defilement of his ways, which is caused by sin. Think of the atonement of Christ, and the gift of the Spirit, God's own provision for the removal of the blot, the cleansing of the defilement. And then think of the special application of that rich provision of God's grace which we are privileged to make. The glorious result at which he aims shall be, in part at least, produced through us; that "multitude of sins" shall be done away! Yes, for our efforts, the universe shall be fairer, God's ways clearer, and the dawning of that day hastened, when "the Lord shall be to us an everlasting Light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended" (Isa. lx. 19, 20).

But the result upon ourselves? The work is a sympathetic work, and its influence must therefore react upon us. Yes, we must be, or become, like what we strive to do. And so our saving love, with its included faith in God through Christ, shall wash us white (1 Pet. iv. 8).—T. F. L.

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