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### The Motive for the Christian Life According to the Epistle of James

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THE MOTIVE FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE  
ACCORDING TO THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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by

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March 1972

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CHAPTER I

PROPOSITION

This study of the epistle of James arose out of a pastoral concern that members of the Christian community live their Christian discipleship. James is written to warn for Christians living a holy life, at the same time it raises a problem. The problem is that

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It was discovered that before one could look for a Christian motive, one had first to establish the Christian character of the epistle. It seems that the author of James was an orator. As Cranfield states, "He says with the uncertainty to the Old Testament, especially the wisdom literature, to the writings of James and the Christian catechetical tradition, and to the Greek dialect." James scholars consider it to be simply a Jewish document lightly glossed by a Christian editor. The scope of the research was limited then to establishing the basis for

C. S. S. Cranfield, "The Message of James," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1963, 129-166.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study of the epistle of James arose out of a pastoral concern that members of the Christian community live their Christian discipleship. James is marked by its vigorous concern for Christians living a godly life; at the same time it raises a problem. The problem is that there is no motive immediately evident with which James encourages its readers to godly living--certainly nothing as evident as "by the mercies of God" (Rom. 12:1) or "if God so loved us" (1 John 4:11). The purpose of this study is to discover what the epistle's motive for Christian living is.

Originally the plan had been to compare the motive for Christian living in the epistles of James with the motive expressed in the first epistle of John. When the research began on the epistle of James, however, it was discovered that before one could look for a Christian motive, one had first to establish the Christian character of the epistle. It seems that the author of James was an eclectic. As Cranfield states, "We may trace his indebtedness to the Old Testament, especially the Wisdom literature, to the sayings of Jesus and the Christian catechetical tradition, and to the Greek diatribe."<sup>1</sup> Some scholars consider it to be simply a Jewish document lightly glossed by a Christian editor. The scope of the research was limited then to establishing the basis for

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<sup>1</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, "The Message of James," Scottish Journal of Theology, XVIII (1965), 185-186.



holding to the Christian character of James and thereafter to discovering the motive for godly living according to James.

Scholars find allusions in James to both Greek and Jewish thought and writings. The thesis first evaluates the presumed points of contact James has with Greek thought and literature. It then does the same for Jewish literature. There is ample evidence to show that the epistle's author was acquainted with Stoic philosophy and Jewish Wisdom literature.

The thesis next discusses the Christian character of the epistle and then turns to the motive for godly living according to the epistle. Finally the question was taken up whether the motive was Christian or bore the marks of Greek and Jewish thought.

The findings of the research indicate that the motive for godly living presented in the epistle of James is eschatologically oriented. The reader is encouraged to live his faith because the Lord is coming to judge and to save. This motivation cannot be discovered in either Greek or Jewish thought. There are similar elements of eschatology in Jewish thought, but they are not expressed in the same way or to the same degree as in James. However, the eschatological motivation in James can be found in other New Testament books. This motivation is, therefore, thoroughly Christian in character and can be used in the Christian community today.



## CHAPTER II

### PARALLELS TO THE EPISTLE IN GREEK AND JEWISH WRITINGS

#### Parallels in Greek Philosophy

As was mentioned in the introductory chapter, there is evidence in both the content and style of the epistle of James that its author was influenced by Greek and Jewish thought. The purpose of this chapter is to point out some of the parallels between the epistle and Greek and Jewish writings that seem to show that the author of the epistle was acquainted with these two systems of thought. Parallels with Greek philosophy will be noted first.

During the first and second centuries of the Christian era Stoicism was the most influential Greek philosophy in the thought and life of the Roman Empire. The epistle of James seems to bear evidence of this Stoic influence. Most of the commentators on James point out various passages which are paralleled in Greek philosophy. Mayor, for instance, lists points of contact with Chrysippus and Epictetus, both of whom were Stoic philosophers. Mayor compares the reference to the perfect keeping of the law (James 2:10) with Chrysippus' statement that a man to be good or virtuous must be completely good. If a man fails in one point, he is no longer good.<sup>1</sup> Another example which Mayor mentions is the comparable

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<sup>1</sup>In Plutarch, II, 1046 as cited in Joseph B. Mayor, The Epistle of St. James (Reprint of revised 3rd edition; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. cxxv.



use of the simile of the mirror in the epistle (1:23) and by Epictetus.<sup>2</sup>

Moffatt finds a parallel already at James 1:2. He says:

The call to joy here is the first of several proofs that James was familiar with the Stoic ethics of the age. Thus Seneca tells Lucilius to avoid hoping (James never speaks of "hope") and to "make this your chief business, learn to rejoice. . . . Believe me, real joy is a serious thing" (Epp. xxiii.), for it has to meet experiences like poverty, temptation, trials, and death. James baptizes this moral joy into religion.<sup>3</sup>

In the third chapter of James there are comparisons of the tongue with the bridle and bit and the rudder of a ship which also seem to have been fairly common among Greek philosophers.<sup>4</sup>

In his commentary on James Easton makes the judgment that the reference in 4:1-2 to the fighting of the passions within us is taken directly from "secular" Stoic-Cynic ethical sources.<sup>5</sup>

Blackman comments on the phrase "if the Lord wills" (James 4:15):

This and similar phrases were common enough among the Greeks and Romans, but apparently not among the Jews. It is really a mark of superstition rather than of true religion, and probably arose from a type of piety that was over-anxious lest divine caprice or vengeance should take umbrage at the confident planning of men. That is a heathen conception of God.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>In Epictetus, Diss. II, 14, Ibid., p. cxxvi.

<sup>3</sup>James Moffatt, The General Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1928), XV, 8.

<sup>4</sup>W. L. Knox, "The Epistle of St. James," The Journal of Theological Studies, XLVI (1945), 15.

<sup>5</sup>Burton Scott Easton, The Epistle of James in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), XII, 12.

<sup>6</sup>E. C. Blackman, The Epistle of James: Introduction and Commentary (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1957), p. 138.



Zeller points out the similarity between the Stoic idea of the relationship between the law of man's own nature and what is good. He makes this comment about Stoic philosophy:

The Good, in as far as it is based on the general arrangement of the world, to which the individual is subordinate, appears to man in the character of Law. Law being, however, the law of man's own nature, the Good becomes the natural object of man's desire, and meets his natural impulse. The conception of the Good as law was a view never unfamiliar to moral philosophy, but it was cultivated by the Stoics with peculiar zeal; and forms one of the points on which Stoicism subsequently came into contact, partly with Roman jurisprudence, partly with the ethics of the Jews and Christians.<sup>7</sup>

The epistle of James makes much of the place of the law and of good works (2:8-17).

According to the commentators mentioned thus far, there are definite points of contact to be found between the epistle of James and Stoic philosophy. Caution must be observed, however, in asserting that there are direct points of contact between the epistle and Stoicism. Greek philosophical thought had already exerted much influence on the Jewish writers of the Hellenistic period. Philo comes immediately to mind. Dibelius points out that many of the Hellenistic and Greek philosophical influences in James can be traced simply to the influence which these philosophies had had on Jewish writings before James.<sup>8</sup> But there can be no doubt that similarities between Greek Stoic philosophy and the epistle of James are present. It will be necessary, therefore, to determine whether the Stoic motive for ethics had any influence on the motive for

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<sup>7</sup> Eduard Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), p. 240.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Dibelius, Der Brief des Jakobus, edited by Heinrich Greeven (11th edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1964), p. 42.



the life-style described in the epistle of James. This will be discussed in the fourth chapter of the thesis.

#### Parallels in Jewish Writings

If there are some points of contact between James and Greek philosophy, there are many contacts with the Old Testament and later Jewish writing and thought. James betrays a deep debt to a Jewish heritage. When one glances through the references in the margin of the Nestle text,<sup>9</sup> the great number of references to the Old Testament cannot be missed. In fact, the frequent parallels to Jewish writings and thought has lead some commentators to suggest that James is based on an earlier Jewish writing. A more thorough discussion of this theory will come later in the chapter.

Parallels with the book of Proverbs are frequent. A few examples of such parallels are: God's gift of wisdom (James 1:5 and Prov. 2:3-6); God's grace to the humble (James 4:6 and the Septuagint form of Prov. 3:34); love covering a multitude of sins (James 5:20 and Prov. 10:12). The epistle's stirring pronouncements against the rich in chapter 5 remind one of the Old Testament prophets, even though there are not any direct quotations from these prophets in James (see particularly Amos and Micah).

James also seems to reflect the Old Testament notion of equating the poor with the people of God. God stands on the side of the widow and the orphan (Ex. 20:21-24). In the prophets God takes the part of the

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<sup>9</sup>Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, editors, Novum Testamentum Graece (25th edition; Stuttgart: Wörttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1963).



oppressed (Micah 2:2; 3:1-3; Is. 5:8; Jer. 5:26-28). Poverty and piety appear as parallel notions in some of the Psalms (Ps. 9:9-10; 86:1-4; 132:15-16). Dibelius notes that also in the epistle of James being poor coincides with being the people of God, Christians, in this instance. Dibelius refers especially to James 5:1-6 as coming out of this pietistic-patriarchal thought world about the poor.<sup>10</sup>

Other parallels with Old Testament are the comparison of men to flowers and grass which soon pass away (James 2:10-11 and Is. 40:6-8) and the command to love your neighbor as yourself (James 2:8 and Lev. 19:18). In addition to the parallels the following passages in James contain direct quotations from the Old Testament: 2:8; 2:23; and 4:6. These parallels and quotations indicate that the author of James was well acquainted with the thought world of Old Testament Judaism.

Further evidence of the epistle's debt to Jewish thought can be found in the parallels in thought and expression to the Jewish Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha. The most parallels are to be found in The Wisdom of Ben Sirach and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. There are no direct quotations from any of these writings, but some of the same thoughts are expressed. Both of these writings are pre-Christian and, therefore, could have had an influence on the epistle of James. For instance, when comparing James to the Wisdom of Ben Sirach<sup>11</sup> the following kinds of parallels can be observed: on testing and continuing steadfast (James 1:2 and Sirach 2:1-6); on the double heart (James 1:7-8 and

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<sup>10</sup>Dibelius, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup>The following translation was used: W. O. E. Desterley, The Wisdom of Ben Sira (London: SPCK, 1931).



Sirach 1:28); on being swift to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19 and Sirach 5:11); on temptation not coming from God (James 1:13 and Sirach 15:11-12); on helping the orphans and widows (James 1:27 and Sirach 4:10). Moffatt feels that it can be demonstrated plainly that the author of James was steeped in the teaching of The Wisdom of Ben Sirach and also, Moffatt says, the Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>12</sup>

According to Dibelius, the Jewish writing which has the next greatest number of parallels with the epistle after Sirach is the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.<sup>13</sup> In Testament of Joseph 2:7<sup>14</sup> testing, patience, and endurance are good for a man--an idea similar to that in James 2:2-4. Testament of Joseph 4:6 speaks of having a pure heart and being blameless much as James 1:27 does. Testament of Benjamin 6:5 says that the good mind does not have a tongue that blesses and curses, a thought which is similar to James 3:10. Testament of Naphtali 8:4 speaks of the devil fleeing from man, which is paralleled in James 4:7. In Testament of Judah 13:3 the reference to passions fighting within Judah is reminiscent of James 4:1. Testament of Judah 14:3 says that lust leads to sin, as James 1:15 also does. Mayor presents a substantial list of parallels in addition to the ones which have just been cited.<sup>15</sup> Even though there

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<sup>12</sup>Moffatt, XV, 4.

<sup>13</sup>Dibelius, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup>The following translation was used: R. H. Charles, translator and editor, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908).

<sup>15</sup>Mayor, pp. cxviii-cxxi.



are no direct quotations from these Jewish writings in the epistle of James, the thought parallels between them and James demonstrate that the material in the epistle is not strange to Judaism. In other words, the epistle of James has a distinct Judaic coloring.

#### Theories of a Jewish Original

Since much of the material in James has parallels in the Old Testament and/or in the Jewish writings of the intertestamental period, the theory has been set forth that the epistle of James was originally a Jewish writing. Two men who held this view were Friedrich Spitta and L. Massebieau. It is interesting to note that Luther is quoted as saying that "some Jew wrote it who probably heard about Christian people but never encountered any."<sup>16</sup> On no account would Luther ascribe the epistle to an apostle because it does not mention "the Passion, the resurrection, or the Spirit of Christ."<sup>17</sup>

The chief reason a theory of a Jewish original has been postulated is that the epistle is silent on the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ as Luther had noted. It also makes no reference to the Sacraments or any of the higher Christian doctrines. This brief presentation of Spitta's theory is taken chiefly from an article by Mayor.<sup>18</sup> Spitta's

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<sup>16</sup>Martin Luther, Table Talk, edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert, Vol. LIV of Luther's Works, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 424.

<sup>17</sup>Martin Luther, "Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude," Word and Sacrament I, edited by E. Theodore Bachmann, Vol. XXXV of Luther's Works, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 396.

<sup>18</sup>J. Mayor, "Authenticity of the Epistle of St. James Defended Against Harnack and Spitta," The Expositor, VI (1897), 1-14.



argument is based, first, on the theory that the name of Christ was interpolated at two places in the epistle (1:1 and 2:1) and, secondly, on the attempt to show that there is nothing in the epistle which could not have been said by a Jew.<sup>19</sup> The interpolation theory is based on the grammatical difficulties in James 2:1. The construction of tēs doxēs at the end of James 2:1 is difficult to explain, but the difficulty disappears if the phrase hēmōn Iēsou Christou is eliminated. Then there remains the simple phrase, "the faith of the Lord of glory."<sup>20</sup> The argument continues that if an interpolation can be shown here, then an interpolation can also be inferred at James 1:1 so that the verse would simply read, "James, the servant of God," as we find in Titus 1:1.<sup>21</sup> As to the second part of the argument for a Jewish original behind the epistle--the argument based on the many parallels between the epistle and Jewish writings--it must be conceded that Spitta and Massebieau are, at least, correct in noting the parallels.

The theory of these two men, however, is basically rejected by most scholars. Mayor suggests in his critique of Spitta's theory that if the name of Christ had been interpolated to give the writing a Christian color, it would have been done in more than just two places in the epistle. The Christian editor would not have been satisfied with just these two explicit references to Christ.<sup>22</sup> Further, as we shall attempt to show in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., VI, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., VI, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., VI, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., VI, 4.



the third chapter of this thesis, the epistle has other Christian characteristics besides the two references to Christ's name. Note also that some of the sayings in James are actually closer in form to the parallels in the Synoptic Gospels than to the parallels in the Jewish literature which has been cited.

The theory of Spitta and Massebieau was reworked and put into a more attractive form by A. Meyer.<sup>23</sup> Meyer's theory, in turn, has been taken up in more recent times by Easton in The Interpreter's Bible.<sup>24</sup> Easton agrees with Meyer that, in addition to the possible Christian interpolations at James 1:1 and 2:1, there may also be two interpolations by the Christian editor at James 5:12 and 5:14.<sup>25</sup> In James 5:12, where the Christian editor of the epistle discusses oaths, Easton suggests that the editor enlarged and emphasized the rabbinical teaching on oaths to bring it in closer relationship to the words of Jesus in Matt. 5:34-37. Easton feels that the extreme emphasis in the epistle of James on the sin of swearing points to a Christian editor at work on what normally would be a thoroughly Jewish teaching.<sup>26</sup> The same kind of suggestion is made concerning James 5:14, which speaks about praying for the sick. The Jews also taught the efficacy of prayer. There is nothing strange to Judaism in the context of this verse except for the verse's reference

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<sup>23</sup>Arnold Meyer, Das Rätsel des Jacobusbriefes (Gieszen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1930).

<sup>24</sup>Easton, XII, 10.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., XII, 9.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., XII, 69.



to elders and anointing with oil which is the work of the Christian editor.<sup>27</sup>

Easton also agrees with Meyer that behind the epistle of James there probably lies a "letter of Jacob to the twelve tribes in dispersion." The model for this type of writing would be in Genesis 49 where Jacob says his last words to his twelve sons. This model was used frequently in later Judaism and was developed elaborately, as in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.<sup>28</sup> Each of the tribes was equated with a virtue or vice and Meyer, as Easton points out, attempted to identify these virtues or vices in the epistle of James:

His major identifications are: 1:2-4: Isaac as "joy," Rebecca as "steadfastness," Jacob as "perfection through trials"; 1:9-11: Asher as "wordly rich man"; 1:12: Isaachar as "doer of good deeds"; 1:18: Reuben as "first fruits"; 1:19-20: Simeon as "anger"; 1:26-27: Levi as "religion"; 3:18: Naphtali as "peace"; 4:1-2: Gad as "wars and fightings"; 5:7: Dan as "waiting for salvation," "patience"; 5:17 (in part) - 18: Joseph as "prayer"; 5:20: Benjamin as "death and birth."<sup>29</sup>

Easton disagrees, however, that a "letter of Jacob" underlies the whole epistle as Meyer suggests. Easton sees evidence of such a letter in portions of the epistle of James, but states that the epistle was reworked much more thoroughly by the Christian editor than Meyer was willing to allow.<sup>30</sup> Hartwig Thyen's theory is quite similar to Easton's and suggests that James is the product of Jewish Diaspora preaching.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., XII, 71.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., XII, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., XII, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Hartwig Thyen, Der Stil der jüdisch-hellenistischen Homilie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1955), pp. 15-16.



The main purpose for briefly discussing these theories is not to agree or disagree with the theories but simply to point out that scholars do see a definite relationship between the epistle of James and Judaistic teachings.

### The Epistle as Midrash

Another interesting theory which stems from the assertion of the Jewish character of the epistle is the theory that the epistle is based on a midrashic homily. This is the theory of Gertner.<sup>32</sup> Gertner describes the following six techniques employed in midrash: (1) using a changed, or double reading of a word; (2) giving a different or twofold meaning to a word; (3) illuminating one passage of Scripture by another; (4) rearranging the chronological or contextual order of chapters in a book or parts in a passage; (5) changing the grammatical structure of a passage; (6) basing teachings on the homiletical interpretation of names.<sup>33</sup>

Gertner then comes to this conclusion:

The author of the Epistle, we maintain, has edited an extensive midrashic homily, of his own or another's making, on a certain O. T. text, eliminating both the biblical references and, of course, the midrashic techniques. As editor he aimed at producing a dissertation presenting the doctrinal essence of his midrash-Vorlage rather than compiling a homiletic commentary on a chapter of Scripture. This intended literary "Sitz im Leben" of his Epistle caused him to "de-midrashize" the original homily, that is, to produce a veiled paraphrase of it. But in so doing, in removing the visible thread of biblical verses binding the units of the sermon together he inevitably made the whole composition appear utterly incoherent.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>M. Gertner, "Midrashim in the New Testament," Journal of Semitic Studies, VII (1962), 267-292.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., VII, 270.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., VII, 284.



Gertner argues that the midrash-Vorlage of James is based on Psalm 12. The Psalm itself, he feels, is a paraphrastic reworking of Hosea 10:1-4.<sup>35</sup> Gertner holds that the epistle's author, following the style of midrash, took the Psalmist's 'emûnim' (12:2) in both possible meanings of faith (religious) and faithfulness (ethical). Or perhaps the hypothetical midrashic exposition of the Psalm had already done this. Gertner points to the references to faith in the epistle (1:3; 1:6; 2:1; 2:5; 2:14-26; and 5:15) to substantiate his claim.<sup>36</sup> Gertner also asserts that "the Psalmist's halagoth is likewise taken by James in its two meanings; as smooth, flattering speech ('respect of persons', ii. I), and as 'division' in all its possible aspects. . . ." <sup>37</sup> The epistle's author, according to Gertner's theory, centered his midrashic treatise around Hosea's notion of a divided heart (as the Psalmist understood it) that causes destruction. This prophetic sentence was built into the whole structure of the book.<sup>38</sup>

As was mentioned before, the purpose at this point is not to agree or disagree specifically with this theory, but simply to bring out how Jewish in coloring some scholars see James to be. There can be little doubt that the author of this epistle has drawn on Jewish thought, as is evidenced by the parallels between the sayings of Old Testament and inter-testamental literature and the sayings of the epistle. It will be

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., VII, 286.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., VII, 287.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., VII, 290.



necessary, therefore, also to examine the Jewish motives for life to determine whether these motives have had any influence on the motive for the life-style described in the epistle of James. This will be discussed in the fourth chapter of the thesis.

### Parallels in Style

A study of the epistle's style supports the evidence that there are similarities between James and the Greek and Jewish literature current at that time. One of the contributing factors to the dilemma over the origin and authorship of the epistle is the fact that it is written in excellent Greek. Furthermore, the section on faith and works in chapter two is written in the style of the Cynic-Stoic diatribe.<sup>39</sup> Diatribe is a Greek literary form. It copies the style of a speaker engaged in a lively oral debate with an opponent. The speaker interrupts the process of his own argument by quoting and refuting his opponent's arguments, and by addressing his opponent directly, often in depreciatory terms.

One can also find evidences of Greek and Hellenistic influences in the use of paranesis in the epistle. Paranesis is a form of moral teaching in which a collection of various moral instructions are phrased in the second person so that the instructions are addressed, either actually or as a literary device, to an individual or to a group. These moral instructions or sayings usually had little connection between thoughts; instead, catchwords were used to connect the various thoughts. Much of

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<sup>39</sup> Eduard Lohse, "Glaube und Werke. Zur Theologie des Jakobusbriefes," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLVIII (1957), 4.



James is written in the style of paranesis and Dibelius carefully demonstrates that James uses the catchword technique. In James 1:4 and 5 the catchword is leipō; in 1:12 and 13 the word is peirasmos; in 1:26 and 27 the word is thrēskeia; in 2:12 and 13 the word is krisis; in 3:17 and 18 the word is karpos. This technique of employing catchwords to connect various instructions was in current usage in Greek, Jewish and Christian paranesis.<sup>40</sup> Such evidence of Greek influence on the style of the epistle supports the evidence of Greek influence on the content of the epistle.

Definite characteristics of the Jewish style of writing can also be found in the epistle. Mussner has an excellent discussion with examples of Semitic style in the parallelism of thoughts or ideas and of Semitic syntax.<sup>41</sup> Schlatter simply says that the style which formed the style of James is the style of the Psalms and Proverbs.<sup>42</sup> Mullins also classifies James as Jewish wisdom literature because of "its use of proverbs and parables, its teachings of universally applicable moral truths, and its use of traditional Wisdom themes."<sup>43</sup>

It may well be that the Greek influence on the style of the epistle is there because the Greek had previously influenced the Jewish style of writing. The stylistic features of the diatribe and paranesis were not

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<sup>40</sup>Dibelius, p. 21.

<sup>41</sup>Franz Mussner, Der Jakobusbrief. in Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, edited by Alfred Wikenhauser and Anton Vögtle (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), XIII, Part I, 30-32.

<sup>42</sup>Adolph Schlatter, Der Brief des Jakobus (2nd edition; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1956), pp. 84-85.

<sup>43</sup>Terence Y. Mullins, "Jewish Wisdom Literature in the New Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVIII (1949), 339.



unique to Greek literature at this time. They were also employed by Jewish writers. Dibelius cites Tobit 4:5-19 and 12:6-10 as examples of Jewish paranesis.<sup>44</sup> Wifstrand points out similarities between the Greek style of James and that of Sirach and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. In these two Jewish writings, the Hebraic literary method of expressing a fact in two parallel members has swollen to expressing the fact in three or more parallel members. Furthermore, the parallelism is found not only in content but also in form, which more nearly approaches the Greek characteristic of building up parallel members. Much of what is attributed to the Greek style in the epistle, says Wifstrand, can be seen in late Jewish literature as well.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, in comparing the Greek style of the diatribe to that of the epistle of James, Wifstrand demonstrates that the two styles are similar and yet different. The Stoic Epictetus used imperatives, for instance, and in some places rather frequently; however, he averages less than half the number of imperatives used by James.<sup>46</sup> Again, Stoics such as Epictetus used metaphors quite often, but the Christian writers such as the author of James used metaphors even more often and closer together.<sup>47</sup> Examples of metaphors in James are: "the crown of life"; "the lust that conceives and brings forth sin"; "he who does not bridle

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<sup>44</sup>Dibelius, p. 17.

<sup>45</sup>Albert Wifstrand, "Stylistic Problems in the Epistles of James and Peter," Studia Theologica, I (1947), 178.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., I, 172.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.



his tongue"; "the tongue that is a fire"; and so on. It cannot be said that Greek style has been copied exactly by the author of the epistle of James.

In conclusion, in style both Greek and Jewish influences are to be found in the epistle. It is likely that the Greek influences were filtered into the epistle's style through the Greek style of the synagogue; otherwise it would be difficult to explain the Jewish characteristics in style. Knox states:

It must always be borne in mind that the distinction between "hebraic" and "hellenistic" in Jewish and early Christian literature can never be more than relative. The writer is inevitably basing his work on a larger stock of common piety derived from the Old Testament and the essential deposit of the Christian tradition, whether written or oral; hence a quite "hellenistic" writer may lapse into "hebraisms" of thought or language; on the other hand the mere fact that a writer uses the Greek language means that he is in some touch with Greek culture and may have come across some fragments of Greek thought.<sup>48</sup>

In both content and style parallels from both Greek and Jewish writings can be found to the epistle of James. Therefore, to discover the motive for the Christian life in James it will be necessary to examine the motives in Greek and Jewish ethical thought to see whether these motives have carried over into James. First, however, it will be necessary to deal with the fact that, even though there are Greek and Jewish influences in the epistle, there is also a definite Christian character to James. The Christian character of James is, then, the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>48</sup>W. L. Knox, "The Epistle of St. James," The Journal of Theological Studies, XLVI (1945), 12.



## CHAPTER III

### THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPISTLE

#### The Author of the Epistle

It has already been mentioned in the previous chapter that, even though there are strongly Jewish features in the epistle, James has been given a place in the New Testament canon because a Christian author or editor has given the epistle the shape it bears in the New Testament. The church, though it was slow to do so and remained somewhat hesitant, recognized James, the Lord's brother, as the author of the epistle. Oigen, who lived after 200 A.D., was the first Church Father to explicitly quote James as Scripture and ascribe it to James, the Lord's brother.<sup>1</sup>

In the epistle itself, however, the author does not identify himself as the Lord's brother. He calls himself "a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1). So he could possibly be one of the four other men called James in the New Testament: James, the son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19); James, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18); James, the younger (Mark 15:40); or James, the father of the Apostle Judas (Luke 6:16). However, the latter three are so little known that it would be unlikely for the author (if the author was not James himself) to claim the name of one of them to give authority to his epistle. James, the son of

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Ross, The Epistles of James and John in The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), p. 11.



Zebedee, was martyred early, in A.D. 44, most likely before the writing of the epistle. Unless the writer is a James not known elsewhere in the New Testament, the author must be James, the brother of Jesus and son of Mary and Joseph, the head of the Church at Jerusalem during the time of Paul's missionary journeys (Mark 6:3; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). He is most likely the James referred to in the epistle, because he was the most famous and prominent James in the early Church.

Tradition has also identified this James as the James of the epistle. Although the early Church, as well as contemporary scholars, did not accept the epistle of James or its authenticity wholeheartedly,<sup>2</sup> the fact that the epistle was included in the New Testament canon attests to the fact that the Church by the fourth century considered the epistle of James to have been authored by James, the brother of the Lord.

Modern scholarship on the whole agrees that a Christian author or editor has given the epistle its shape, but is sharply divided on the matter whether that Christian is James, the brother of the Lord. The epistle's late attestation and the opposition to its reception into the canon, the excellence of the Greek,<sup>3</sup> and the lack of references to James'

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<sup>2</sup>See the following for a summary discussion of Tradition and the epistle: Paul Feine, Johannes Behm, and Werner Georg Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, translated by A. J. Mattill, Jr. (14th revised edition; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 285.

<sup>3</sup>E. C. Blackman, The Epistle of James: Introduction and Commentary (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1957), pp. 25-26.



personal life<sup>4</sup> are seen as difficulties in the way of authorship by James, the Lord's brother.

On the other hand, Mayor and Kittel argue that the author was James, the brother of the Lord. Mayor concludes on the basis of his arguments:

I have argued above, pp. iii. foll., that the Epistle must have been written by St. James, (1) because of the resemblance which it bears to the speeches and circular of St. James recorded in the Acts; (2) because it exactly suits all that we know of him. It was his office to interpret Christianity to the Jews. He is the authority whom St. Paul's opponents profess to follow. Tradition even goes so far as to represent the unbelieving Jews as still doubting, at the end of his life, whether they might not look to him for a declaration against Christianity. (3) The extraordinary resemblance between our Epistle and the Sermon on the Mount and other discourses of Jesus is most easily accounted for, if we suppose it to have been written by the brother of the Lord (above, pp. lxi. foll.).<sup>5</sup>

Opponents of an authorship by James also point to the lack of reference to ritual as a difficulty in attributing the epistle to James.<sup>6</sup> However, as Kittel points out, the arguments for James' zealotry for the Jewish rituals are based on Gal. 2:11-13. In this section of Galatians St. Paul relates that he had to rebuke Peter for withdrawing from the Gentile Christians when men from James came to Antioch. Since James himself was not in Antioch, any arguments based on this occasion are, at best, only indirect arguments. Furthermore, according to Acts 21:17-18,

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<sup>4</sup>Bo Reicke, The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude in The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964) XXXVII, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph B. Mayor, The Epistle of St. James (Reprint of revised 3rd edition; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. cci.

<sup>6</sup>Kurt Aland, "Der Herrenbruder Jakobus und der Jakobusbrief," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXIX (1944), 100.



James welcomes Paul and his Gentile companions to Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> Mussner agrees that St. James appears in the New Testament as a strong, law-abiding Jewish Christian, but not as a fanatic ritualist.<sup>8</sup>

Other factors listed as supporting evidence for St. James as the epistle's author are the various farming expressions used<sup>9</sup> and the geographical and political picture<sup>10</sup> presented in the epistle. Among such factors are the references to the "scorching heat" (1:11), paid laborers (5:4), and "the early and the late rain" (5:7). These factors point to a Palestinian origin for the epistle which would, of course, be necessary if St. James was the author.

After all the evidence concerning the identity of the author of the epistle is weighed, it still, probably, cannot be decided one way or another whether the author can definitely be identified. To base too much argument, therefore, on St. James being the author of the epistle would not be persuasive in discovering the motive for the Christian life in the epistle. But that a Christian author or editor was at work with this epistle, as tradition quite generally has it, can scarcely be doubted.

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<sup>7</sup> Gerhard Kittel, "Die Stellung des Jakobus zu Judentum und Heidentum," Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XXX (1931), 154.

<sup>8</sup> Franz Mussner, Der Jakobusbrief in Herders Theologischer Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament edited by Alfred Wikenhauser and Anton Vogtle (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), XIII, Part I, 10.

<sup>9</sup> A. T. Cadoux, The Thought of St. James (London: James Clarke and Co., Ltd., 1944), pp. 30-31.

<sup>10</sup> Savas C. Agourides, "The Origin of the Epistle of St. James: Suggestions for a Fresh Approach," Greek Orthodox Theological Review, IX (1963-1964), 73.



The evidence in the epistle itself points to a Christian hand at work. The explicit mention of the name of Christ (James 1:1 and 2:1) certainly indicate that the author or editor was a Christian. The phrases "first-born of all creatures" (James 1:18) and "that honorable name" (James 2:7) are also hints of the author's Christian faith. And the section on faith and works (James 2:14-26) is a sign of Christian composition.<sup>11</sup> This sort of antithesis is inconceivable for a Jew. We must conclude that, at a minimum, the epistle was given its final form by a Christian. He may have been St. James, head of the Jerusalem Church.

#### The Intended Readers

The epistle is addressed simply to "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (James 1:1).<sup>12</sup> This can be interpreted in various ways. It could mean Jewish Christians wherever they are, Jewish Christians outside of Palestine, all Christendom symbolized by the sign of ancient Israel,<sup>13</sup> or, perhaps, simply all Jews. The only other New Testament epistle which has a greeting similar to this is the first epistle of Peter. However, the greeting in the first epistle of Peter more clearly identifies the readers as Christians and indicates the geographical area where they live.

It can safely be said that the epistle is addressed to Jews. The fact that there is nothing said of slaves, of family or sexual

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<sup>11</sup>Martin Dibelius, Der Brief des Jakobus, edited by Heinrich Greeven (11th edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1964), p. 39.

<sup>12</sup>James does not have the usual characteristics of a letter except for the opening verse, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greeting."

<sup>13</sup>Rachel Henderlite, "Epistle of James," Interpretation, III (1949), 463.



irregularities, or of idolatrous activities argue for readers who are not Gentiles, but Jews.<sup>14</sup> Mayor states:

The phrase "Lord of Sabaoth" (v. 4), the reference to Jewish oaths and to the Jewish propensity to curse and swear (iii.9, v. 12), the term "synagogue" used for their place of meeting (ii. 1), the high value attributed to the Law and to the confession of the Unity of God--all mark the Jewish nationality of the readers, and would be unmeaning or inappropriate if the Epistle were addressed to Gentiles.<sup>15</sup>

Schlatter, viewing the author of the epistle as an incurable realist, interprets the greeting to mean the Jews. James does not use the term allegorically.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, there are certain indications in the epistle that some of the Jews being addressed were Christians. The readers are described as regenerated, saved, by the word (1:18 and 21). Compare this to 1 Peter 1:23 that says we are born anew through the living and abiding word of God. The "honorable name" was called upon them (2:7), language which is reminiscent of baptism. In Acts 22:16 Ananias tells Paul "to call on his name" at his baptism. The readers are exhorted to wait for the parousia of the Lord (5:7), a Christian formulation. Paul prays that the Thessalonians may be kept blameless at the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:23). And they were to look for the crown of life promised to those who love Him (1:12), a formulation which is more closely paralleled in the New Testament book of The Revelation to John (Rev. 2:10) than in any Greek or Jewish literature.

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<sup>14</sup>Cadoux, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>Mayor, p. cxlii.

<sup>16</sup>Adolph Schlatter, Der Brief des Jakobus (2nd edition; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1956), p. 94.



Identifying the readers is, in this case, the least persuasive argument for showing the Christian character of the epistle, because we cannot be absolutely certain who the intended readers were. However, from the evidence, it seems that the readers intended by the author were Jewish Christians who lived outside of Palestine.<sup>17</sup>

### Parallels in the Synoptics

Commentators have pointed out the similarities between the epistle of James and the Synoptic Gospels, especially the Gospel according to St. Matthew. There is no actual quotation from any of the Gospel accounts, but there is a close connection of sentiment and even of language to them in various Jacobean passages.

There is a close relationship between the epistle and the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. For instance, both in James and in Jesus' instruction to the Jews God's promises play a prominent part: the promise of the kingdom of God for the poor (confer Matt. 5:3 and James 2:5 and 1:9); the promise for the merciful (confer Matt. 5:7 and James 2:13); the promise for the peacemakers (confer Matt. 5:9 and James 3:18); and the promise of the exaltation of the humble (confer Matt. 23:12 and James 4:10).<sup>18</sup>

Both the epistle and Jesus' words encourage the Jews to ask for God's help (confer Matt. 7:7-11; 21:22; Mark 11:24; and James 1:5-8; 4:1-3; and 5:13-18). Both contain woes against the rich (confer Matt. 19:23-24; Luke 6:24; 16:19-31; and James 1:10; 2:6-7; and 5:1-6). Jesus'

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<sup>17</sup>Blackman, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup>Schlatter, p. 10.



especially strong judgment on the Rabbis (Mark 12:40) corresponds to the epistle's judgment on teachers (James 3:1).

James asks whether "a fig tree can yield olives or a grapevine figs" as an example of knowing a man by what he says (James 3:12). Compare to this Jesus' words about knowing a tree by its fruit (Matt. 12:33). Or note the certainty of Jesus' coming expressed in similar words of the farmer planting and waiting for harvest (confer Mark 4:26-29 and James 5:7). Both Jesus and James encourage the disciples in their suffering by examples of the prophets who also suffered (confer Matt. 5:12 and James 5:10). Both contain an injunction against oaths (confer Matt. 5:34-37 and James 5:12). Both combine healing and forgiveness (confer Matt. 9:1-8 and James 5:15).<sup>19</sup>

Shepherd notes these additional parallels between James 3:1-12 and Matt. 12:36 (on the use of the tongue); between James 4:14 and Matt. 6:34 (do not be anxious for the morrow); James 5:2-3 and Matt. 6:19 (moth and rust consume).<sup>20</sup>

Of all the parallels between the Synoptic Gospels and the epistle of James commentators claim that the closest is the attitude toward swearing in James 5:12 and Matt. 5:33-37. Shepherd states:

It is generally considered that this parallel presents the strongest single case for the dependence of James upon the Gospel, despite the fact that James does not actually quote the Gospel and apparently reflects a more primitive tradition than the Gospel.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-14.

<sup>20</sup> Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., "The Epistle of James and the Gospel of Matthew," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXV (1956), 44-47.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., LXXV, 47.



The form of the saying in the epistle may well be the oldest and most authentic form of this saying. The Matthean form seems to be an expanded version of the original saying. In the prohibition against swearing Matthew adds the admonition not to swear by Jerusalem or by your head. And the reply "yes" and "no" has been doubled to "yes, yes" and "no, no," conceivably to add emphasis.

The many similarities between the epistle and the Synoptic Gospels have lead some commentators to see a direct connection between the epistle and the sayings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. Other scholars, however, deny that these similarities prove that the author of the epistle was familiar with the Gospels. Martin, for instance, suggests that the epistle may contain one of the earliest collections of Jesus' sayings combined with reminiscences of the earliest applications of these sayings to the thought and needs of the first disciples.<sup>22</sup>

Dibelius also grants a relationship between the words of Jesus and the sayings in the epistle because both are often in Spruchparanëse form which give the two a formal relationship. The style is similar in that both the epistle and Jesus' words use short imperatives and picture words such as "field" and "plants." Furthermore, both the epistle and Jesus' words have the aim of a rigorous ethic.<sup>23</sup> However, Dibelius does not regard this as definite proof that the epistle's author used the Gospels. He could just as well have been using oral tradition.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>G. Currie Martin, "The Epistle of James as a Storehouse of the Sayings of Jesus," The Expositor, III, Series VII (1907), 183.

<sup>23</sup>Dibelius, p. 45.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 46.



A factor that must be taken into account in discussing whether or not there is dependence of the epistle on the Gospel accounts is the date which is inferred for the writing of the epistle. If the epistle is thought to contain the earliest form of Jesus' words, then, of course, it is dated before the Gospels and must be said to be drawing on oral tradition. If it is claimed that the epistle is dependent on the Gospels, especially the Gospel according to St. Matthew, it must be given a later date than the writing of the Gospels.

At any rate, there are definite parallels between the epistle of James and the Synoptic Gospels giving evidence that the epistle contains teaching which is commensurate with Christian teaching and thought.

#### Parallels in Other New Testament Epistles

The epistle of James is not a unique creation in the New Testament, for parallels can also be found between James and some of the other epistles in the New Testament. Sayings grouped in a similar way as in James can be found in 1 Thess. 5:1-22, Rom. 12-13, Hebrews 13 and other places.<sup>25</sup>

Some of the clearer parallels between James and the Pauline epistles are: the teacher being judged by what he teaches and by how he practices his own teaching (Rom. 2:17-24 and James 3:1 and 13); the discussion of earthly wisdom (1 Cor. 2:14 and James 3:15); the concern about strife and envy between Christian brothers (2 Cor. 12:20 and James 3:14, 16 and

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<sup>25</sup> Burton Scott Easton, The Epistle of James in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), XII, 4.



4:11); liability to the whole law (Gal. 5:3 and James 2:10); and using Abraham as an example in their arguments (Rom. 4:1-5 and James 2:21-23).<sup>26</sup>

Another parallel might be drawn between the epistle's "law of freedom" formula and St. Paul when he speaks of the law of the Spirit giving him freedom from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2), or when he refers to the liberty of the Christian in eating or not eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 10:28).<sup>27</sup>

Even though Dibelius feels that the case for literary borrowing between the epistle of James and the first epistle of Peter is often overestimated,<sup>28</sup> there are some striking parallels of thought between these two epistles. Compare, for instance, the encouragement to rejoice in times of temptation (James 1:2 and 1 Peter 1:6) or the parallel thought of love covering a multitude of sins (James 5:20 and 1 Peter 4:8). The latter thought may well have been taken by both authors from Prov. 10:12--James from the Hebrew version and Peter from the Septuagint form.

Other parallels between these two epistles are: the address to the Dispersion (James 1:1 and 1 Peter 1:1); being begotten by the Father (James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:3); being begotten by the Word (James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23); the fleshly lusts that war in us (James 4:1 and 1 Peter 2:11); the reward which the Lord gives is a crown ("crown of life" in James 1:12 and "crown of glory" in 1 Peter 5:4).

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<sup>26</sup>Mayor, p. xcii.

<sup>27</sup>Karl-Gottfried Eckart, "Zur Terminologie des Jakobusbriefes," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXXIX (1964), 524.

<sup>28</sup>Dibelius, p. 48.



A significant fact is that James does not refer to the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In this respect James is quite different from the Pauline epistles. It would seem as though some reference might have been made to the redemptive work of Christ in connection with the discussion on faith and works and how a man is justified (James 2). We also miss a reference to the redemptive work of Christ in connection with healing the sick and forgiving sins (James 5:13-19). However, the parallels between James and other New Testament epistles mentioned in the previous paragraphs show that James is in line with Christian thought and life. Not all of the epistles in the New Testament make explicit reference to Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection (confer 2 Thessalonians; Philemon; 3 John).

#### Christian Baptism and the Epistle of James

Various commentators are convinced that Christian baptism underlies the content of the epistle of James. The chief verse which leads commentators to this conclusion is James 1:18, which says that "he [God] brought us forth by the word of truth." This can only come from the Christian tradition because there is nothing similar to it in Jewish thought.<sup>29</sup> The Word of God has creative power, of course, according to the Old Testament (Gen. 1:3), but the Old Testament has nothing quite like the "new birth" or "rebirth" idea in James 1:18 or in 1 Peter 1:23 (born anew . . . through the living and abiding word of God). The "word of truth" is surely the gospel (confer Eph. 1:13, "you have heard

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<sup>29</sup>Georg Braumann, "Der Theologische Hintergrund des Jakobusbriefes," Theologische Zeitschrift, XVIII (1962), 406.



the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"). In James 1:18 the epistle leaves the realm of the Jewish Wisdom tradition.

Closely tied to this verse is James 1:21, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." Bo Reicke comments about this verse:

In all likelihood the author of James had in mind recently baptized members when he uses the phrase, "putting away," and follows it up with the illustration of the "implanted word." vs. 21b. For in the thought of the early church "implanting" was a figure for baptism (cf. Rom vi 5), though in this passage the word is viewed as being implanted into the believers, not the other way around.<sup>30</sup>

The word for "implant" in James 1:21 is emphuton; and in Rom. 6:5 the word Paul uses for being united with Christ in his death and resurrection through baptism is sumphutoi. Both words come from the same root word.

The first epistle of Peter is viewed by many as essentially a baptism treatise. The thoughts of 1 Peter 2:1-3 which are paralleled in James 1:18 and 21--needing the word, having received the word, and putting off wickedness--support the suggestion that baptism also lies in the background of the epistle of James. Apothemenoi is the word for "putting off" used in both James 1:21 and 1 Peter 2:1. In 1 Peter 3:21 apothesis, a cognate word of apothemenoi, is used directly with baptism where it says, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal apothesis of dirt from the body . . ." Col. 3:8 also says that we are to "put off" wickedness, a parallel to James 1:21. This passage from Colossians is further support for the suggestion that baptism

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<sup>30</sup>Reicke, XXXVII, 21.



lies behind James because the Colossian reference is set in the context of baptism language and theology.

There are those, such as Cadoux,<sup>31</sup> who interpret James 1:18 as a reference to the creation of man. However, if we are to understand the epistle as a basically Jewish document, then we are hard pressed to find such a reference to creation in Jewish thought. The figure of begetting was not used for creation. The idea of divine begetting and entrance into Christian life has its roots in Greek thought. However, the Greek idea is not clearly parallel to James 1:18 either, because the Greek did not speak of being brought forth "by the word of truth."

It seems best to understand James 1:18 and 21 as a reference to the rebirth or entrance of a person into the Christian life which happened in his baptism. Baptism is the sacrament of "new birth" (John 3:5 and Titus 3:5). Assuming that baptism lies behind the reference to "being born anew" in 1 Peter 1:3 and 1:23, we would also be led to assume that baptism lies behind James 1:18, considering the parallels between James and 1 Peter.

#### The Honorable Name

In James 2:7 there is reference to "the honorable name" by which the epistle's readers are called. Some scholars regard this as a reference to baptism and also evidence of the Christian nature of the epistle. As with James 1:18, Braumann considers that this reference also is possible

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<sup>31</sup>Cadoux, pp. 23-24.



only in the Christian tradition and that the author is thinking of being baptized in Jesus' name.<sup>32</sup>

Seeberg makes the same claim in his discussion of primitive Christian catechisms.<sup>33</sup> He argues that the phrase epikaleisthai to onoma tou kuriou became a special term for the words of prayer or invoking spoken by the baptized at his baptism. Seeberg refers to Acts 22:16 where Ananias tells Paul "to call on his name" at his baptism; to Rom. 10:9-14 where Paul states that those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved; and to 1 Cor. 1:2 and Acts 9:14 where the Christians are described or addressed as people who "call on the name of the Lord."<sup>34</sup>

#### The Early Christian Catechism and the Epistle

Soon after the beginning of the Church on Pentecost a body of teaching was apparently developed in the Church which it used to acquire and instruct new converts to the Christian faith. Seeberg identifies in the Apostle Paul's teaching a body of ethical teaching which Seeberg calls "the Way." This, Seeberg claims, was the name for the Christian ethical teaching. He bases his claim on Paul's reference to it in his first epistle to the Corinthians (4:17).<sup>35</sup>

Blackman makes the same kind of assertion about the existence of an early body of teaching in which the new Christians were instructed.

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<sup>32</sup>Braumann, XVIII, 409.

<sup>33</sup>Alfred Seeberg, Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit (Reprint of 1903 edition; München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1966), p. 187.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Seeberg, pp. 6-7.



Blackman says in his discussion of the relationship of the epistle of James to the words of Jesus:

The Epistle of James does not quote any word of Jesus at all, and we are bound to enquire what its relation was to the tradition of the Lord's sayings. Can we speak of a teaching tradition of the Church which included words of Jesus, but which related them to the different circumstances of the growing communities of Christians and perhaps interspersed with them sayings from other sources, e.g. the Old Testament? There is every reason to assume this, and to speak of a general parenetic tradition, upon which not only Gospel-compilers, but all Church leaders in the instruction of their flocks, could draw; particularly the group of "teachers" to whom reference is often made, but whose activity is nowhere precisely defined (James 3:1; Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 1:11; Heb. 5:12).<sup>36</sup>

In the light of these kinds of conclusions about early Christian teaching, a scholar should be able to discover traces, at least, of this early body of teaching or catechism in some of the New Testament epistles. Perhaps this would seem particularly true of epistles that seem to be baptism treatises such as the first epistle of Peter. Just such an early catechism is what Carrington<sup>37</sup> and Selwyn<sup>38</sup> claim to have found in the first epistle of Peter, the epistle of James, and the epistle to the Ephesians.

Since this thesis is concerned with James, and, at this point, evidences in it of baptism teaching, the following is a summary only of Carrington's study of the epistle of James and the first epistle of Peter.

Baptism and ethical teaching are closely related in the New Testament as can be seen in Rom. 6:1-4 where Paul reminds his readers that

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<sup>36</sup>Blackman, pp. 14-15.

<sup>37</sup>Philip Carrington, The Primitive Christian Catechism (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940).

<sup>38</sup>Edward Gordon Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1946), pp. 363-466.



they are baptized and, therefore, should not continue to sin. We have already seen the close relationship of baptism and ethical teaching in Col. 2 and 3 and 1 Peter 1 and 2.

Carrington accepts the premise that the first epistle of Peter contains an exhortation to candidates for baptism. He points out the following parallels between the two epistles and notes that for the most part they occur in the same order:<sup>39</sup>

<u>James</u>	<u>1 Peter</u>
1:1	1:1
1:2	1:6
1:3	1:7
1:11	1:24
1:12	5:4
1:18	1:23
1:21	2:2 (1:9)
1:27	2:5
3:13	2:12
4:1	2:11
4:6	5:5b
4:7	5:5a
4:7	5:9
4:10	5:6

The best explanation for these parallels in thought and the similar sequence of discussion is that both authors were following the same system or oral teaching "which was so given that one formula tended to bring up the next one in the mind by association."<sup>40</sup> Carrington states further:

It is impossible to suppose that either author could have performed the literary feat of extracting the thought sequence from the other, and then giving it so new an expression. The difference is more

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<sup>39</sup>This is a summary of the table of parallels listed by Carrington, p. 28. The indentation of some of the 1 Peter references indicates that these passages are not in the same order as the James passages.

<sup>40</sup>Carrington, p. 28.



simply explained as the natural divergence of two living organisms derived from one stock, but developing separately.<sup>41</sup>

Carrington suggests that the stock from which the first epistle of Peter, the epistle of James, and the epistle to the Ephesians<sup>42</sup> draw is a pattern that revolves around four thoughts: "putting off" (Eph. 4:25; 1 Peter 2:1; James 1:21); "submit" (Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5-6; James 4:7 and 10); "watch" (Eph. 6:18; 1 Peter 5:8); "resist" (Eph. 6:11; 1 Peter 5:9; James 4:7).<sup>43</sup> Note that the epistle of James does not follow the pattern completely. It omits the exhortation to watch.

Another striking similarity between these three epistles is the command to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; Eph. 6:11). It is all the more striking when it is noted that this command comes in about the same place in the pattern suggested by Carrington and that this command occurs in no other place in the New Testament.<sup>44</sup>

In his study Carrington comes to the conclusion that in all likelihood the epistle of James is intended "to give a transcript of the baptismal tōrāh in the school of James the brother of the Lord."<sup>45</sup>

Selwyn picks up the study of Carrington and develops it even further. In his comparison of 1 Peter and James Selwyn makes the observation that in both epistles the rebirth which is the action of God (1 Peter 1:23;

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>42</sup>Carrington's references to Ephesians are included here to demonstrate his point better.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 78.



James 1:18) is the ground for "putting away" wickedness (1 Peter 2:1; James 1:21).<sup>46</sup> Selwyn then points out:

In 1 Peter and James we note that the Deponentes leads to a second allusion to the Word and its saving effects; and in all traditions alike, except Romans, it prepares the way for injunctions and teaching about worship. I conjecture that this last sequence of teaching was fundamental in the prinitime Church.<sup>47</sup>

Selwyn also suggests that the inevitability of persecution was a regular part of the Apostolic teaching from the beginning. He is of the opinion that this pattern can be observed in James (5:10) and other epistles (for example, 1 Peter 4:12) and that it rested on the words of Christ Himself (Matt. 5:12).<sup>48</sup>

In summary, there is evidence that James contains traces of an early Christian catechism. James follows a pattern of instruction which can also be demonstrated in 1 Peter. Since ethical teaching and baptism were closely related in the New Testament (as it is in 1 Peter), the evidence of an early Christian catechism in James further supports the probability that baptism underlies the epistle.

#### A Christian Message

On the basis of the author's own claim concerning his being a servant of Christ, the evidence that the readers were Christians, the ample parallels with other New Testament literature, and the evidences of Christian baptism and baptismal instruction underlying the epistle, one

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<sup>46</sup>Selwyn, p. 392.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 450.



can conclude that the author is presenting a Christian message. Perhaps the fact that one finds no direct references, but rather only allusions, to Greek and Jewish thought is in itself the first sign that the author has thoroughly reworked his material to present a Christian message.

Even though nothing is said about the life and work of Jesus, Jesus is placed on a pedestal equal with God by the author. The author calls himself a "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). In James 2:1 the author refers to Jesus as "our Lord Jesus Christ of glory." St. Paul uses the name "Lord of glory" when referring to Jesus in 1 Cor. 2:8. In the context in which this title occurs in 1 Corinthians St. Paul is pointing out that Christ is the "power of God and the wisdom of God" (1:24). He is the wisdom of God for our glorification. If men had understood this "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). A similar title is given to God in Ephesians 1:17 where "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" is called "the Father of glory." When the similar title "our Lord Jesus Christ of glory" is applied to Jesus in James 2:1, one begins to understand the high regard which the author held for Jesus.

This high regard for Christ befits the epistle's content, for, as Mussner points out, Jesus would underwrite every sentence of the epistle.<sup>49</sup> In Schlatter's judgment also, the epistle of James contains not simply words and theories, but the unconditional forgiveness, love, help and hope of the mind and teaching of the historical Jesus.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Mussner, XIII, 236.

<sup>50</sup>Schlatter, p. 19.



Much as been said and written about the section on faith and works (James 2:14-26)--that it either tries to correct a misunderstanding of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, or that there is no relationship between the two at all, or that the epistle of James completely misses the point of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith. However, faith is important for the epistle's author. Mayor suggests that in this epistle no less than in Paul's writings faith is regarded as the foundation of religion (James 1:6; 2:1; 5:15).<sup>51</sup> Eckart points out that in Jewish literature faith and works are not distinguished. Faith appears at best as the sum of works. However, in traditional Christian literature faith and works are distinguished as is done in the epistle of James.<sup>52</sup>

The stress of the epistle is on ethics but this is not unChristian. James offers a further contribution to the every day problem of living the Christian life. Even though there are allusions to Greek and Jewish writings, the message that comes through the epistle is definitely Christian in character.

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<sup>51</sup>Mayor, p. 35.

<sup>52</sup>Eckart, LXXXIX, 524.



## CHAPTER IV

### A CHRISTIAN MOTIVE FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

#### The Lord Is Coming

Having established that a Christian author was at work on the epistle of James, one would expect that the author was encouraging his readers to godly living with a Christian motive in mind. A theme that comes through quite strongly in the epistle is that the Lord is coming again to judge and to save; this theme appears to be the motive used by the author to encourage the correct way of life.

This motive is not so surprising in light of the baptismal theology which underlies the epistle. Eschatology was a part of early baptism theology. One needs only to refer to the baptism language of 1 Peter 1:3-4, "By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." St. Paul says, "if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). This present age is in its last days as the new age is ushered in through Christ. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). We become part of the new age by baptism through which we are united with Christ in his death to sin and are also united with Christ in his resurrection to a new life lived to God (Rom. 6:1-11).



James provides a hint of the eschatological motif in baptism, when, in connection with the baptism language of 1:18, he uses the word aparchēn. With this word James describes the baptized Christian as "a kind of first fruits" of God's creatures. The Christians are the new creation of God; in fact, they are its beginning. So also is Christ, who was raised from the dead, called "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep," because he is the beginning of the resurrection of the dead (1Cor. 15:20). In John's vision (Rev. 14:4) the Christians standing before the throne of God and the Lamb in His glorious kingdom are called the "first fruits."

Because the baptized Christians are the first fruits of God's new creation, the Christians are able to put away filthiness and do His word. The epistle builds on the eschatological motif already implicit in baptism to urge the Christians to meet its ethical demands.

The eschatological theme developed in the epistle can perhaps best be summarized in two similar sentences from the epistle itself. God has promised the crown of life to those who love Him (1:12) and He has promised the kingdom to those who love Him (2:5).<sup>1</sup> The opposite of the reward of life or the kingdom is the warning of judgment (5:9). The Lord is coming to judge and to save and those who love Him will have life.

The Christian life is encouraged in the epistle of James in this way. Life has its tests but those who endure the tests "receive the crown of life which God has promised" (1:12). Christians are not to show partiality, for the kingdom is not promised to the rich but to those

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<sup>1</sup>Adolph Schlatter, Der Brief des Jakobus (2nd edition; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1956), p. 37.



who love God (2:5). Faith and works are discussed in terms of what finally saves a man (2:14). Teachers will be judged with greater strictness than the learners (3:1). Remember not to grumble against each other and judge each other because "the Judge is standing at the doors" (5:9). Be patient, for the Lord is coming (5:8). Do not swear so that you do not "fall under condemnation" (5:12). The rich who have oppressed the poor are warned of the coming "day of slaughter" (5:1-5). Those who bring back "a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death" (5:20). Faith and life are directed to the eschatological future (2:5).

The future forms of the verbs also have an eschatological ring to them. In the light of the epistle's woe on the rich (5:1-5) the coming judgment is hinted at in the verbs pareleusetai (1:10) and maranthēsetai (1:11). He who is not just a hearer but a doer will be (estai) saved (1:25). Those who humble themselves before the Lord will be exalted (hupsōsei, 4:10). The form mellontes krinesthai (2:12) seems also to point to the future judgment.

An interesting suggestion is made by Warren Schmidt in his S.T.M. Thesis.<sup>2</sup> In his thesis he makes a comparison between James 1:1 and the reference in Acts 26:6-7 where St. Paul says that he held the hope of the twelve tribes, which hope was the hope of the resurrection (Acts 24:15). Perhaps the author of the epistle of James addressed his readers as the twelve tribes as another way to remind them of their eschatological hope<sup>3</sup> and spur them on to Christian living.

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<sup>2</sup>Warren Walter Schmidt, "A Comparison of the Ethics of the Qumran Scrolls and the Epistle of James" (unpublished S.T.M. thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1962).

<sup>3</sup>Schmidt, pp. 34-35.



According to James the whole life of the Christian is directed or affected by the eschatological goal, salvation or judgment. The outlook of the reader is directed to the future made possible by God, but the future is not to be anticipated in a way unrelated to the present. The Christian's hope for the future life is to be referred to the busy trials of his faith in this present life.<sup>4</sup> According to Braumann, the epistle of James describes life as being lived under the arch of the eschatological hope: from the implanting of the Word (1:21) and the beginning of faith (1:3), over the deed (1:22) to the parousia (5:7).<sup>5</sup> The interim time is the time of temptation (1:12), and those who endure the test receive the crown of life (1:12) and are saved from judgment (4:12; 5:10).<sup>6</sup>

#### Eschatological Teaching in Other New Testament Books

The eschatological motive used in James is a thoroughly New Testament motivation. The end time and the parousia is, of course, an event expected in the teaching of Jesus Himself (for example, Matt. 24:29-31). The epistle of James speaks of the certainty of Jesus' coming in terms of a farmer planting and waiting for harvest (5:7), which is similar to Jesus' own words (Mark 4:26-29). The epistle's reference to a day of slaughter (5:5) is comparable to Jesus' words in Matt. 7:13; 21:41; 24:2 and 21.

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<sup>4</sup>Franz Mussner, Der Jakobusbrief in Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, edited by Alfred Wikenhauser and Anton Vögtle (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), XIII, Part I, 208.

<sup>5</sup>Georg Braumann, "Der Theologische Hintergrund des Jakobusbriefes," Theologische Zeitschrift, XVIII (1962), 404.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



Jesus' eschatological teaching was also linked to living a God-pleasing life (for example, Matt. 25:31-46).

The parousia is also an expected event in the teaching of St. Paul. St. Paul encourages the Christian to a godly life in the light of the Lord's coming (1 Thess. 5:1-11). He makes the same point in Rom. 13:11-14. In 1 Cor. 6:1-11 the eschatological future qualifies already, here in time, the present.<sup>7</sup>

These are only some of the examples in the New Testament of eschatological teaching connected with practical Christian living, but they are sufficient to demonstrate that the epistle of James is not unique in the New Testament in using eschatology as a motive for Christian living.

#### A Motive for Primitive Christianity

The promise of Jesus' coming as a motive for Christian living would be especially understandable if an early date for the composition of the epistle could be established. Since the early Christians expected Jesus' coming to be very soon, it would seem logical for an epistle speaking to members of the early Church to use Jesus' coming as a motive for Christian living.

There are several indications in the epistle of James which suggest an early date for its composition. There is an absence of warnings against false teaching, warnings which are present in other New Testament epistles (Phil. 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:20; Titus 1:10-11; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1). The best explanation for this absence seems to be that

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<sup>7</sup>Erich Dinkler, "Zum Problem der Ethik bei Paulus," Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche, XLIX (1952), 187.



the epistle was written before the Church had a serious problem with false teachers.

As has already been noted, the epistle of James views the parousia as an imminent event. This may suggest that the epistle was written before the time of the writing of the Didache. In the last chapter of the Didache the Christians are encouraged to be ready because they do not know when the Lord is coming. In the final days there will be false prophets and increase of iniquity, and so forth, but there is nothing of the urgency expressed in James 5:9 (the Judge is standing at the doors). In the Didache the last day remains in the future while in the epistle of James the readers already stand in the last day.<sup>8</sup>

Another indication of an early date for the composition of James is its silence about the existence of Gentile Christians, which would seem strange if the epistle had been written at a late date. The same view accounts for the lack of any established theology around the figure of Jesus. Henderlite makes this latter point among others that lead her to the conclusion that the epistle of James is one of the first writings in the New Testament:

One is the fact that the writing is not self-conscious. There is no attempt to argue for the point of view. There is no attempt to retell the gospel story, which must have been startlingly familiar to all the group. There is no attempt to establish a systematic theology around the figure of Jesus. As many students of the Epistle have pointed out, James speaks as Jesus speaks rather than about Jesus.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Kittel, "Der Jakobusbrief und die Apostolischen Väter," Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLIII (1950-1951), 69.

<sup>9</sup> Rachel Henderlite, "Epistle of James," Interpretation, III (1949), 470.



It must be noted, however, that the points just mentioned may also be used by those who argue that James is merely a Jewish writing and that these points say little about the date of authorship. However, as was demonstrated in the third chapter of this thesis, the epistle of James has a definite Christian character; and, therefore, the lack of reference to Gentiles and the primitive form of Christian theology would seem to have some significance in establishing the date of the epistle.

On the other hand, there does not seem to be a single clear reference to the epistle of James in any other New Testament epistle; this argues against an early date for the epistle of James rather than for it. The earliest book that can be mentioned as seeming to echo some of James is The Shepherd of Hermas which is dated between 100 and 150 A.D.<sup>10</sup>

One other major area of discussion which may be helpful in establishing a date for James is the relationship between the epistle of James and St. Paul. Both make statements about faith and works which seem to oppose each other. Can it be established that one author is writing with the other in mind, and, if so, which author came first?

The argument that James was written after St. Paul can be summed up with this statement from Jeremias:

There can be no doubt that James 2,24 presupposes Paul, for the thesis ek pisteōs monon which James contradicts is nowhere met with in the whole literature of Judaism and of the earliest Christianity except only in Paul.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Alexander Ross, The Epistles of James and John in The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), pp. 11-12.

<sup>11</sup>J. Jeremias, "Paul and James," The Expository Times, LXVI (1954-1955), 368.



On the other hand, this may not be too helpful in establishing dates, because, as Jeremias himself points out, the epistle of James is fighting in a different field of battle than Paul.<sup>12</sup> The epistle of James knows no opposition of faith and works of the law as Paul does, but a separation, and this is the battle ground for the epistle of James.

At any rate, if the epistle of James was written after St. Paul and controverts the misunderstanding of St. Paul, it does not mean that James must have been written at a considerable time after St. Paul. The author does not seem to have known the epistle to the Romans itself, but only the arguments that were involved in the battle about faith without works, such as the example of Abraham. It seems that if the author had known St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, he would have alluded or referred to it. This fact Mussner takes as a decisive objection to a late dating for the epistle of James. The date which he suggests is 60 A.D.<sup>13</sup>

If it is true that James was written at least as early as 60 A.D., if not earlier as suggested by Kittel,<sup>14</sup> then it can be understood more clearly why the coming of Jesus is such a strong motive for Christian living in the epistle of James. We must be careful, however, not to give the arguments for the early dating of James more weight than they deserve. Neither should the matter of dating influence the reader as to whether or not eschatology is the motive used in the epistle. This fact is clearly

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., LXVI, 370.

<sup>13</sup>Mussner, XIII, 18-19.

<sup>14</sup>Gerhard Kittel, "Der geschichtliche Ort des Jakobusbriefes," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXI (1942), 71.



established in the content of the epistle itself apart from the matter of dating.

#### Absence of Greek Influence on the Motive

There still is the question brought up by the elements of Greek and Jewish thought in the epistle of James. Do either of these two elements play a part in forming James' motive for the Christian life? The answer seems to be negative.

In the first place there is nothing comparable in Stoic ethics to baptism and the role that baptism plays in Christian ethics. Stoicism finds no need for a man to have a rebirth through the creative working of God before he can do what is good.

Secondly, belief in God and the role of God in judging and saving plays a prominent part in James. For the Stoic philosophers, however, even though some of the later Stoics did tend toward a belief in a personal God, the standard position was that of a pantheistic determinism. Ultimate reason controlled all existence.<sup>15</sup>

Thirdly, for the Stoic the motive for life was found in the natural teaching of perfection. For the Stoic there was only one good, virtue, and only one evil, vice. Everything else was morally indifferent.<sup>16</sup> The rational man's desire and pursuit was to be virtuous or morally good. Hicks quotes from Diogenes Laertius, VII, 85:

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<sup>15</sup>Gordon H. Clark, Selections from Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1940), pp. 58-59.

<sup>16</sup>J. M. Rist, Stoic Philosophy (Cambridge: The University Press, 1969), p. 97.



Virtue is a disposition conformable to reason, desirable in and for itself and not because of any hope or fear or any external motive. And well-being depends on virtue, on virtue alone, since the virtuous soul is adapted to secure harmony in the whole of life.<sup>17</sup>

Zeller points out in a summary statement that "the principle of the Stoic morality might therefore be briefly expressed in the sentence: Only virtue is good, and happiness consists exclusively in virtue."<sup>18</sup>

There is nothing in these statements about Stoic ethics which would seem at all comparable to the eschatological motive expressed in the epistle of James. One might point to the reference to "wisdom" (James 3:13-17) as resembling "reason" in the Stoics, but the two are not the same. The fruits of wisdom in James are not urged because wisdom is a good, whereas in Stoic philosophy "reason" and "virtue" go hand in hand.<sup>19</sup>

The Stoic motive for ethics was bound to man's life in the present. As Hicks points out, eschatological motives play no part in Stoic ethics:

In the view of the Stoics a rational life, in conformity with the general course of the world, is the highest good. Virtue alone is good and welfare or happiness consists exclusively in virtuous action. Virtue is the fountain or source from which particular actions flow. . . . Such a condition of soul is to be chosen for its own sake and not from the expectation of good or fear of evil, for no external results following upon it could possibly increase or diminish its absolute and unconditional value. Hence Chrysippus ridiculed the Platonic myths of rewards and punishments in a future life as bugbears intended to frighten children.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>R. D. Hicks, Stoic and Epicurean (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), p. 79.

<sup>18</sup>Eduard Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), p. 229.

<sup>19</sup>See Rist, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup>Hicks, p. 85.



It must be concluded then that the author of the epistle of James did not take his eschatological motives for a godly life from Greek Stoic philosophy. Borrowing from Stoic ethics has not influenced the author's formation of his motive for ethics.

#### Absence of Jewish Influence on the Motive

The same conclusion must be drawn when comparing the Jewish motive for a godly life with the motive expressed in James. An examination of The Wisdom of Ben Sirach and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs does not produce eschatological motives comparable to the motive in James. For instance, in the Twelve Testaments a justification by works is taught. Good works store up treasures in heaven. Hughes quotes from Testament of Levi 13:5, "work righteousness, therefore, my children, upon the earth, That ye may have (it) as a treasure in heaven."<sup>21</sup> It may be argued that this quotation does point to a future reward; however, not to a future with the same imminence as in James where the future is "at the doors." Neither is the future reward given in the epistle of James as a direct result of works, rather it is based in God's promise (1:12; 2:5).

In The Wisdom of Ben Sirach love toward God is expressed as an incentive for godly living (2:15). At the same time, as in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, doing good gains its rewards. For instance, in Sirach 3:3-4, "He that honoureth [his] father maketh atonement for sins, and he that giveth glory to his mother is as one that layeth up

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<sup>21</sup>H. Maldwyn Hughes, The Ethics of Jewish Apocryphal Literature (London: Robert Culley, n.d.), p. 55.



treasure." Again in Sirach 29:11-12, "Lay up thy treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, And it shall profit thee more than gold. Store up alms in treasure chambers, And it shall deliver thee from all affliction." Good works deliver a man from affliction and judgment.

Neither the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs or The Wisdom of Ben Sirach use the coming of the Lord as a motive as James does. Judgment and reward are not expressed in the same way as in James, neither are judgment and reward joined to the last times. In Jewish thought the present and personal happiness of a man was much more stressed than the future reward. Umen states this about Jewish ethics:

The wise men rightly assumed that a controlling motive in man's mind is and ought to be his desire for personal happiness. Therefore, they strove by all sorts of approaches to inculcate in the pupil the conviction that the individual most concerned in his choice between good and evil was himself.<sup>22</sup>

Wikenhauser also points out the difference between the epistle of James and Jewish thought in the matter of reward:

In contrast to the Jewish approach to ethics, James ignores the motive of a material reward. In spite of his harsh attitude to the rich and the threats of divine judgment (5,1-6), he is far from the (authentically) Jewish idea that at the end the poor will be able to avenge themselves on their rich oppressors.<sup>23</sup>

The eschatological viewpoint was not emphasized in Jewish Wisdom literature as it was in primitive Christianity, including the epistle of James, where eschatology was vigorously stressed.

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<sup>22</sup>Samuel Umen, Links Between Judaism and Christianity (New York: Philosophical Library, 1966), p. 11.

<sup>23</sup>Alfred Wikenhauser, New Testament Introduction, translated by Joseph Cunningham from the German 2nd edition, 1956 (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1958), p. 479.



Even though Jewish ethics have found their way into the epistle of James, Jewish thought, like Stoic philosophy, does not seem to have influenced the epistle's motive for ethics. There are similar elements perhaps between Jewish eschatology and the eschatology of the epistle of James; however, the eschatological motive of James is much more at home in the thought of Jesus as expressed in the Synoptic Gospels than it is in the thought of Jewish wisdom literature.

There are even more points of contact between Jewish literature and James. Most of the parallels are in Jewish wisdom literature, particularly the book of Proverbs, The Wisdom of Ben Sira, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. In fact, the parallels are so numerous that it led a number of scholars to the conclusion that James was originally a Jewish writer, which was slightly altered with Christianity.

In spite of the fact that there are numerous parallels in James with Greek and Jewish thought, both in content and style, the epistle bears a definite Christian character. It was pointed out that the author or final editor was definitely a Christian by evidence from the epistle itself. Furthermore, there are strong resemblances between James and the Synoptic Gospels, especially the Gospel according to St. Matthew. There is also quite strong evidence that Christian baptism and baptismal instruction are basic to the content of the epistle as the studies by Carrington and Selwyn show. All of this evidence suggests that the materials which the author of James used were thoroughly reworked to present a Christian message.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

As was pointed out, there are various points of contact that Greek Stoic philosophy and Jewish Wisdom literature have with the epistle of James. For instance, the epistle's use of the diatribe, paranesis, and word pictures common to the Greek philosophers point out the influence of Greek philosophy on the epistle of James.

There are even more points of contact between Jewish literature and James. Most of the parallels are in Jewish Wisdom literature, particularly the book of Proverbs, The Wisdom of Ben Sirach, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. In fact, the parallels are so numerous that it led a number of scholars to the conclusion that James was originally a Jewish writing which was slightly coated with Christianity.

In spite of the fact that there are numerous parallels in James with Greek and Jewish thought, both in content and style, the epistle bears a definite Christian character. It was pointed out that the author or final editor was definitely a Christian by evidence from the epistle itself. Furthermore, there are strong resemblances between James and the Synoptics, especially the Gospel according to St. Matthew. There is also quite strong evidence that Christian baptism and baptism instruction are basic to the content of the epistle as the studies by Carrington and Selwyn show. All of this evidence suggests that the materials which the author of James used were thoroughly reworked to present a Christian message.



The conclusion was then drawn that since the epistle is thoroughly Christian in character, the motive, if any was expressed, would also be Christian in nature. The motive which the epistle uses to encourage its readers to godly living is the Lord's promise that He is coming soon. He is coming to judge and to save and His coming is "at the doors." The eschatological motif is already present in the baptism theology which underlies the epistle.

This motive is not found in Greek philosophy nor in Jewish literature, at least, not in the same way. The last times were not as vigorously stressed in Jewish Wisdom literature as in James. Neither are the motives of perfection for personal happiness in Greek philosophy or the motives of work righteousness in Jewish literature present in the epistle of James.

The eschatological motive expressed in James is not unique, however, to Christian thought. It can be found both in the Synoptics and in other New Testament epistles. Perhaps the encouragement to live in a godly way because the Lord is coming soon to judge and to save was more striking to the early Christians who expected the Lord to come again at any moment; but considering the signs of the present time, this motive may well be used with profit to encourage twentieth century Christians to work the fruits of faith, being not only hearers but also doers.



## APPENDIX

The transliterations in the thesis follow the scheme used in  
The Interpreter's Bible.

### Greek Transliterations

$\alpha$ = a	$\epsilon$ = e	$\iota$ = i	$\nu$ = n	$\rho$ = r	$\phi$ = ph
$\beta$ = b	$\zeta$ = z	$\kappa$ = k	$\xi$ = x	$\sigma$ = s	$\chi$ = ch
$\gamma$ = g	$\eta$ = ē	$\lambda$ = l	$\omicron$ = o	$\tau$ = t	$\psi$ = ps
$\delta$ = d	$\theta$ = th	$\mu$ = m	$\pi$ = p	$\upsilon$ = u, y	$\omega$ = ō
Rough breathing = h					

### Hebrew Transliterations

#### I. Hebrew Alphabet

$\aleph$ = ' (aleph)	$\aleph$ = h	$\varkappa$ = t	$\beth$ = m	$\beth$ = p, ph	$\lsh$ = s, sh
$\beth$ = b, bh	$\daleth$ = w	$\daleth$ = y	$\lsh$ = n	$\daleth$ = c	$\daleth$ = t, th
$\gamma$ = g, gh	$\daleth$ = z	$\aleph$ = k, kh	$\daleth$ = s	$\daleth$ = q	
$\daleth$ = d, dh	$\daleth$ = b	$\daleth$ = l	$\daleth$ = ' (sheva)	$\daleth$ = r	

#### II. Masoretic Pointing

Pure-long	Tone-long	Short	Composite sh <sup>e</sup> wa
$\hat{a}$	$\bar{a}$	$\overset{\cdot}{a}$ = a	$\overset{\cdot}{a}$ = a
$\hat{e}$	$\bar{e}$	$\overset{\cdot}{e}$ = e	$\overset{\cdot}{e}$ = e
$\hat{i}$	$\bar{i}$	$\overset{\cdot}{i}$ = i	$\overset{\cdot}{i}$ = i
$\hat{o}$	$\bar{o}$	$\overset{\cdot}{o}$ = o	$\overset{\cdot}{o}$ = o
$\hat{u}$		$\overset{\cdot}{u}$ = u	$\overset{\cdot}{u}$ = u

Note: (a) the pathah furtive is transliterated as a hateph-pathah. (b) The simple sh<sup>e</sup>wa, when vocal, is transliterated <sup>e</sup>. (c) The tonic accent, which is indicated only when it occurs on a syllable other than the last, is transliterated by an acute accent over the vowel.



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