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A table of contents for *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology*
can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_caribbean-journal-theology_01.php

James 2: 14-26: Justification As Orthopraxy

By

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I heard somebody telling somebody that the purpose of education was to improve the lot of mankind, and I was reminded of another definition, which was given several centuries ago by the most materialistic and down-to-earth philosopher, Francis Bacon. He said that education was to glorify God and to improve the lot of mankind. If, while I'm improving the lot of mankind, we forget to glorify God, then we are lost and our children are lost (Claude Levi-Strauss).

Undoubtedly, James would have agreed wholeheartedly with the above. But who was this 1st century philanthropist, Christian educator (cf. Waltke 2004, 126-133) and servant-writer of the Most High? Was he the son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19); the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18); the brother of Jude (v.1) and the offspring of the craftsman mentioned in Mark 6:3 (Schmoller 1982, 241; Holman 2004, 183-184)? This last individual has been traditionally accepted as the writer of the epistle (Elliot-Binns 1962, 1022; Laws 1999, 621-622; Gilman 1999, 620-621; Johnson 1999, 560-562; Painter 2001, 10-65; cf. Van Unnik 1983, 195). If this is correct, then Joseph *bar* Jacob (Mt.1: 16) is the father of Jacob¹ *ben* Joseph (Mt.

¹Ιάκωβος in James 1:1. Of course, there are better Matthean links than that suggested above in terms of James' Christological echoes in passages like 1:22, 25 (Mt. 7:26); 3:12 (Mt. 7:16); 4:13 (Mt. 6:34) (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 356); 1:2 (Mt. 5: 10-12); 1:5; 4:2 (Mt. 7:7-8); 1:17 (Mt. 7:9-11); 2:10 (Mt. 5: 19); 2:13 (Mt. 5: 7; 18:33-35); 3:12 (Mt. 7: 15-20); 3:18 (Mt. 5:9); and 4:4, 13-15 (Mt. 6:24) (Stott and Motyer 1994, 125).

13:55), yielding “what we could call a chiasmus *in distance*” (DiMarco 1993, 484; his italics):

A (Joseph)

B (Jacob)

B' (Jacob)

A' (Joseph)

The date of the epistle has also seen its fair share of debate among New Testament scholars, with suggestions ranging from AD 45 to AD 62 and even beyond (Robinson 1976, 118–138; Blue 1983, 815).² One interesting question here is whether or not James wrote after the epistle to the Romans was written and circulated (Martin 1978, 362). This will no doubt influence one’s understanding of the purpose of the Jacobean letter. But since there is no certainty in regards to the question to date, perhaps it is best to outline the purpose of James quite apart from looking at its bearing on the epistle to the Romans.

The purpose of the epistle, according to Morris (1981, 163), is to urge Jewish Christians living outside of Palestine to make certain adjustments in their lives. The changes desired can be seen from an analysis of the book. This introduces yet another problem in James.

Gundry (1970, 345; cf. Moo 2000, 7; Ropes 1916, 14) feels that the difficulty in outlining the book of James is severe, because it “shares the rambling and moralistic style of Proverbs and other wisdom literature . . . [and] the precepts are delivered in fashion of a fiery prophetic sermon.” In reading the epistle one cannot doubt this forcefulness of style and moral

Yet ‘To be assigned . . . James in a book on Christology is a bit like the task several Catholic friends undertook, after Vatican II, to honor a colleague on his appointment to a traditional office. They presented him with a monograph on “The Scriptural Origins of the Office of Domestic Prelate”—an elegant title page and ninety-eight blank sheets!’ (Reumann 1999, 128). Reumann did however find Jesus in James in places like 1:1; 2:7, etc. Marshall (2004, 633 n. 9) sees six clear references to Jesus as κύριος (“Lord”) in 1:1; 2:15; 5:7, 8, 14, 15.

² These and other questions make ἡ λεγομένη Ιακώβου a disputed book in more ways than one (Eusebius 1926, 256–257).

thrust. However, it is not at all convincing that the book lacks logical structure.

One who has attempted to show that James arranged his work around a single motif is Hiebert (1978, 221-231).³ James, according to him, wrote to remind his audience that saving faith is a living faith, demonstrating itself by active service. In keeping with this basic purpose, the epistle is to be seen as a practical document presenting “a series of tests whereby his readers can determine the genuineness of their faith.” This, says Hiebert, is the unifying theme of the epistle (cf. Westermann 1969, 148-149)⁴. A survey of James, then, reveals the following literary structure.

The Word (1:19-27).⁵ The experience of the new birth has its foundation in the Word of God (1:18). Therefore, James urges a threefold initial response to divine revelation: 1) Eagerness; 2) restraint; and 3) control of emotions (1:19-21). Believers must also complete their response to God’s word by persistent obedience in areas such as a social engagement and personal piety (1:22-27)

Worship (2:1-13). Here James comes out quite strongly against favouritism shown in the worship experience of his readers. The inspired writer points out that such partiality is not in keeping with Christian vocation, because it is contradictory to the command of love - a fundamental Christian tenet (2:1-13).

Works (2:14-26). This section underscores the inter-relationship between faith and works, which will be explored below.

Words (3:1-12). In this pericope the writer argues that faithfulness in the use of the tongue constitutes a means whereby the genuineness of

³In his 1979 commentary, there is an expanded analysis.

⁴Westermann (1969, 148) describes the genre as a hortatory composition (parenthesis). . . . Sandy (1991, 58) sees James’ work as a treatise or a homily bracketed with epistolary features. Watson (1993, 100) classifies chapter 2 as “deliberative rhetoric . . . intended to dissuade the audience from a particular course of action” and also to persuade said audience to demonstrate love through good deeds. See also brief but valuable discussions in Bailey and Vander Broek (1992, 195-198) and Pearson and Porter (1997, 154-155).

⁵The headings and expansions are adapted from Hiebert.

one's confidence in God may be evaluated. The impropriety of an uncontrolled tongue is richly illustrated from the natural realm.

Wisdom (3:13-18). These verses discuss the two basic types of wisdom available to mankind -- divine wisdom and demonic wisdom. Both have their own spheres of influence as well as their distinctive consequences. What is instructive is that the believing community is not immune to the destructive effects of the "wisdom from below".

World (4:1-5-5:12). In this extended section, James warns of the allurements of the present age. The fundamental threat of worldliness, he seems to point out, is that it clouds the believer's vision of the only proper object of faith, causing her or him to look to another god. According to Hiebert, the threat of worldliness finds expression in at least four areas: 1) strife and faction (4:1-12); 2) presumptuous planning (4:13-17); 3) a wrong reaction to injustice (5:1-11); and 4) self-serving oaths (5:12).

Waiting (5:13-18). "James brings his tests of a living faith to a logical conclusion by insisting the Christian faith finds its centre and power in a vital relationship with God in prayer in all the experiences of life" (5:13). Waiting on God in prayer "constitutes the very heart of a vital Christian faith" (Hiebert 1978, 230). It is the "Works" section of the epistle that will be the focus of our attention.

A more recent proposal⁶ (Campbell 2004, 234) regarding the structure of James posits a chiastic arrangement for the entire letter as follows:

A Responding to troubles 1: 2-18

B The need for patience 1: 19-27

C The dangers of Wealth 2:1-26⁷

D The misuse of the tongue 3:1-12

E True and false wisdom 3: 13-4:10

⁶Davids (1982, 24) recognised that 'The major blocks of material in the book take up the themes in reverse order, giving a chiastic effect' but made no effort to set this out.

⁷ Following Davids, Marshall (2004, 630 n. 4) entitles this section 'Poverty and riches; faith and deeds'; an improvement on Campbell's since it better reflects the concerns of 2: 14ff. Campbell's 'C' section tacitly identifies James' interlocutor as a plutocrat.

D' The misuse of the tongue 4:11-12

C' The dangers of wealth 4: 13-5:6 *

B' The need for patience 5: 7-12

A' Responding to troubles 5: 7-12

The two proposals (Campbell's and Hiebert's) are by no means mutually exclusive. They complement each other. For example, Hiebert draws attention to an *inclusio* embracing the prologue and epilogue, which is the 'A' sections in Campbell's scheme. And both have James' discussion of wisdom at the centre of their respective pentateuchs⁸ frameworks⁸. There may be, however, a difficulty in integrating Campbell's 'C' section with the pericope on "Works".

Faith Discredited by Someone in the Conversation: *The Plutocrat?* (14-19)

*No church for me/Preacher standin on his pulpit/
Pulping out your mind/ perverting, crucifying u
Raping your soul telling you to die again
Money for the preacher . . . / Selling your soul to who? (Mutabaruka
2005, 44)*

As is indicated by the broad structure outlined above, the test of faith that is treated in this pericope is that of the production of good deeds. For this vital discussion on faith, we need to recognise three participants, namely: James (the writer), the original readers of the epistle and an "objector" (a recalcitrant rich?) to James' orthodox position on the matter (Davids 1982, 120). The problem could be framed this way: Is there a necessary connection between faith on the one hand and fruitfulness on the other? Having previously pointed out in verses 12-13 that deeds of mercy will be taken into account at the judgement, the question takes on added significance.

⁸Was James consciously echoing the five-fold structure of the Torah here, and did Matthew later follow him (cf., the discussion in Allison and Davies 1988, 59-60; 429-430)?

The opening verse⁹ in our pericope contains two rhetorical questions and at least three key terms. These are “faith” (*πίστις*), “works” (*ἔργα*) and “save” (*σῶσαι*). Since the verse establishes the theme of this portion, it is important to look at the meanings of these three words. However, it is to be borne in mind that their meanings here are not informed by mere lexical data, important though they are, but by the entire context of the pericope and also one’s theological understanding of the issues at hand.

“Faith” (*πίστις*) in these verses, at least as James argues, is genuine confidence in God, which manifests itself in faithful acts. It is, from the point of view of the writer, the kind of faith that receives God’s approbation (cf. Heb. 11:6). The term (*πίστις* and its cognates) occurs approximately fourteen times in our paragraph and about four of these occurrences bear the pregnant sense that James intends. The other occurrences, which are sometimes found on the lips of James’ “antagonist,” are that of a spurious species -- a mere mental assent (Gingrich 1965, 173; see also n. 8 below). The issue, then, with respect to *πίστις*, is that of a serious faith on the one hand and a spurious kind, on the other. However, it is to be noted that whenever the “antagonist” uses “faith” he has in mind the serious type. But James is about to prove “him” wrong.

According to Adamson (1976, 36), *ἔργα* (works), the next key term in our verse, is better rendered “duty” in this context. It is the visible manifestation (Bauer et al 1979, 307-308) of invisible faith. *σῶσαι* (save), on the other hand, generally carries the idea of “deliverance,” but the precise nature of the deliverance is not immediately evident from the context. In arriving at a decision, it is helpful to bear in mind that *σῶσαι*

⁹ The articular *πίστις* in v. 14 is in all likelihood emphatic (“that faith”; Blass et al [1961, 131] and Cranfield [1965, 338], though Moule [1959, 111] doubts this).

“Why should ‘faith’ be translated the same in Romans 1:17 and James 2: [14], 26, when almost all interpreters are of the opinion that ‘faith’ as Paul uses it is quite different from the way James understands it” (Archeia 2001, 241; see also Poythress 1979, 113)? Cf. Luther (1954, 65-71) and Haacker 2003, 142). Of course, *πίστις* (142 times in the NT) is the vital link between *θεός* (548x) and *Χριστός* (379x) on the one hand, and *ἄνθρωπος* (126x), on the other (Yorke 1991, 24).

... is conceived by New Testament writers in three distinct stages of accomplishments. ... 1. A past experience of release ... 2 ... A present and prolonged experience, which can be called sanctification ... [and] 3. A future experience of salvation ... (Turner 1980, 391-392; cf. Caird 1994, 118-135).

So is James talking about salvation from the penalty of sin in the past, power of sin in the present, or presence of sin in the eschaton? Adamson says “the aorist signifies ‘achieve salvation for him’ not merely ‘promote it’” (1976, 121). If Adamson has an unbeliever in mind, the entire context and tenor of the passage seem to argue that James is not just talking about how that unbeliever may obtain salvation but how a believer may maintain and promote it in a practical way.

As the verse is summarised, attention can now be given to the two rhetorical questions and their import. James certainly does not expect his first question to be answered in the affirmative. Using a substantive which occurs only in this chapter and once elsewhere (1 Cor. 15:32), James asks, “What benefit (*όφελος*; also v.16) it is for someone to claim the possession of faith without a corresponding faithful lifestyle”? The second question is even more emphatic in its negation, judging from its construction: “Can this kind of faith effect salvation?”

James continues his provocative discussion in verse 15, which, according to Motyer (1985, 108), also begins a chiastic arrangement embracing the rest of the chapter. With slight adaptation, the structure is reproduced below:

A (vv. 15-17)

- (a) Spurious faith examined horizontally (15-16)
- (b) Summary statement: This faith is dead (17)

B. (vv. 18-20)

- (a) Spurious faith examined vertically (18-19)
- (b) Summary statement: This faith is fruitless (20)

B'. (vv. 21-24)

- (a) Serious faith explored vertically (21-23)
- (b) Summary statement: This faith is fruitful (24)

A'. (vv. 25-26)

- (a) Serious faith explored horizontally (25)
- (b) Summary statement: This faith is dynamic (26)

The chiasm provides a four-step definition of genuine faith both by way of affirmation and negation. Here Motyer's insightful comment is in order: "The two B-sections lie at the centre of a circle; they are the heart of the matter—what we are in relation to God. The two A-sections are the circumference of the circle, the interface where our life with God meets with the watching world and interacts with it" (Motyer 1986, 109). So faith and works, according to James, are to be viewed in the closest possible relation.

In verses 15 and 16 James begins to demonstrate the uselessness of faith without works by citing a hypothetical situation: a member of the believing community is in need of basic necessities of life ($\tauῆς \epsilon\phi\eta\mu\epsilon\rho\omega$ τροφῆς;¹⁰ cf. 1 Tim. 6:8), and s/he is dismissed with pious words—even a benediction, "go in peace, and may you be warmed and receive your fill." A scenario like this, insists James, benefits no one and betrays the true character of the faith in question ("For out of the exuberance of the heart one brings forth evil things" [Gos. Thom. 45: 1-4; Robinson et al 2002, 89]). Moving from illustration to conclusion, James summarizes his point by stating categorically that faith by itself ($\kappa\alpha\theta' \epsilon\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\nu$), that is, faith without works is as useless as a corpse ($\nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}$; Bauer et al 1979, 534-535).

The case for genuine faith is advanced in verse 18 as James confronts an objection. Now while the gist of the verse is plain, there is a difficulty that is not easily resolved. The problem has to do with the identity of the objector at this point. Hodges and Farstad (1982, 681) give a punctuation to the verse which suggests that it is the faith of the writer that is called into question. Another plausible suggestion is that of Adamson (1976, 125), who posits that the objector may be "a supporter of James' view at least on this point. . ." Motyer (1985, 112), on the other hand, sees the

¹⁰ The phrase is an NT hapax (Bauer et al 1979, 827), but it does appear to have any affinity to Mt. 6:11.

“someone” ($\tauις$) as an imaginary interlocutor¹¹ who is not necessarily on James’ side but just one in need of clarification. However, Davids (1982, 120) questions the very need of trying to find another person in the dialogue. The fact that no one solution has proven satisfactory to date is one of the main reasons Davids has come to that conclusion. But, as was noted above, the main contention of the objector is clear. It is this: there is no necessary connection between works and faith. Viewed in this way, we have the response of the writer in the second half of verse 18, beginning with $\deltaει\xi\zeta\omega\nu$ (show). In reality James here issues a stern challenge, which of course he knows cannot be met successfully. If we imagine James to be Moses in the courts of Pharaoh, and the objector to be an Egyptian magician, then the rod of former, cast down, would become a living serpent, while the latter at best could only produce a dead snake, or worst, just the lifeless rod with which he began. Such would be power of James’ proof.

In verse 19, James continues to press home his case against his “antagonist.” First he commends him ($\kappa\alpha\lambda\omega\varsigma\ pοi\epsilon\varsigma$ /you do well) for his basic orthodoxy, his adherence to the Jewish monotheistic confession found in Deuteronomy 6:4. But even in this there is a subtle exposure of the inadequate faith against which our author inveighs, because 14ff is “a natural sequel to the theme of religious self-deception that James began to develop in 1: 22, 25-26” (Fanning 1994, 426).

This is seen in the construction $\sigma\bar{v}\ pιστεύεις\ \delta\tau\iota$ (you believe that; v19a), which differs from the phrase generally used to indicate an obedient faith (so Davids, 1982, 125; cf. Thompson 2003, xiii-xii, on the *Shema*). In other words, a confession of Deuteronomy 6:4 is, to say the least, quite shallow if there is not a corresponding commitment to the following verse (Deut. 6:5; and one might add Leviticus 19:18, which James has already cited in verse 8). Such utterance, says our writer, is demonic in its confession (cf. the kind of wisdom which is demonic in its expression; 3:15).

¹¹ “A merely sophistic objection which (James) contrives in order to develop his own argument” (Dibelius 1976, 156, n.36).

Faith Demonstrated by Someone Within the Covenant: The Patriarch (20-23)

Doubted, believed, and worshipped/Held in awe by all (Lee 2005, 46)

After pointing out in no uncertain terms that faith without works is dead and that there is a necessary connection between the former and the latter, James now launches into his final lines of evidence drawn from the Old Testament Scripture, before resting his case. With a skilful blend of politeness (Robertson 1934, 878, on Θέλεις δὲ γνῶναι/Do you wish to know), firmness (Davids 1982, 126, on ὁ ἄνθρωπε κενέ/mindless man), and no little passion (BDF; 81), James volunteers to offer more proof in support of his point (v. 20). He wants to show that faith apart from works is useless (ἀργή; Zerwick 1988, 695; Louw & Nida 1989, 625).¹²

Verse 21 introduces us to James' primary example from the Old Testament Scripture. The illustration involves the great patriarch, Abraham, and the incident in his life that best exemplifies the author's point is carefully chosen. With a powerful rhetorical device, James asks concerning the "justification" of Abraham. The construction of the question anticipates a definite affirmative, "so one should read it as a statement" (Davids 1982, 127).

The theologically problematic part of the question has to do with the justification of the Patriarch *by works* (ἐξ ἔργων). We (and possibly the original readers) naturally expect "faith" as the object of the preposition. But is it not more natural for James to have laid emphasis on "works," since that has been his contention in this pericope all along? So what meaning, then, should be given to the crucial term ἐδικαιώθη (justified)? What does James mean when he says that works justified the patriarch? Is this not contradicting the assertion of Romans that Abraham was justified

¹² Hodges and Farstad (1982, 681; cf. Darby 1889) have νεκρά instead of ἀργή (Aland et al 1994); νεκρά is deemed to be a secondary reading by Metzger (1994, 610). Either reading makes sense in the context but the strong possibility of the use of paronomasia here makes the reading of ἀργή ("Lit., 'without work,' *a + erga*" [Johnson 1998, 198]) more attractive than the rhetorically "lifeless" νεκρά at this juncture.

by faith alone? But before the key term (έδικαιώθη) is examined, we take a look at the “works” which “justified” Abraham, who became the friend of God (v. 23b; on ἐκλήθη/was called, see Winer 1872, 615; on the analogical nature of James’ argument in v. 23a, Walton 2001, 432).

According to Davids (1982, 127), the term “works” in verse 21 refers to deeds of mercy in James. Therefore one is not to confuse James’ use of this term with that of Paul’s, which sometimes focuses attention on legalistic acts.¹³ However, Moo (1985, 101-102) has since questioned the validity of this conclusion. For Moo,

... both Paul and James are operating with an understanding of works that is basically similar. . . . The difference between Paul and James consists in the *sequence* of works [his emphasis] and conversion: Paul denied any efficacy to pre-conversion works, but James is pleading for the *absolute necessity of post-conversion works* (my italics).

But despite his sound judgement on “works”, Moo seems to miss the mark with respect to the meaning of “justified” (έδικαιώθη) in verse 21. Instead of giving the term a demonstrative sense (Thayer 1977, 150; Lust et al 1992, 115; cf. Oliver 1997, 31-44), he opts for a declarative signification (Moo 1985, 109). The way James brings together Genesis 15:6 and 22:9, 12 seems to favour the demonstrative idea. All this appears to militate against Moo’s “final declaration” (Moo 2000, 140). In any case, one cannot successfully posit a contradiction between the two biblical writers, since

One can say that ‘James, like Paul, is repeating what Jesus said. Paul repeats Mt. 5:3, James repeats Mt 7: 21-7. Paul representing the beginning, whereas James is representing the end of the Sermon on the Mount’ . . .” (Riesner 2001, 1260; see also Balla 1997, 196; Carson 1999, 5/10; Jenkins 2002: 62-78).

¹³ Of course, the apostle also employs “works” quite positively as that which evidences genuine faith (McGrath 1998, 380). For a competent treatment of the importance of “works” in two of Paul’s letters, see (Rapa 2001); cf. Grieb (2002, 54).

Whatever may be said of the writer's use of Genesis 22 here, it has to be conceded that he thought that the offering of Isaac best substantiated his claim at this point. This is confirmed by verse 22 as the writer attempts to show the nexus between faith and works in the story. Like the overall framework,

The verse is structured as a chiasm which functions to amplify by repetition:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) ἡ πίστις συνήργει | (b) τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ |
| (b) καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων | (a) ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη |
| | (Watson 1993, 115). |
| [(a) Faith co-operates | (b) with his works |
| (b) and out of works | (a) this faith is completed] |

Like a husband and wife team, the author appears to be saying, faith and works are joined together-- the former co-operates (*συνήργει*; Bauer et al 1979, 787) with the latter, and the latter completes the former (*ἐτελειώθη*; Bauer et al 1979, 809). To take some familiar words out of context, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mt. 19:6; NKJV).

James now applies Genesis 15:6 to his case that faith and works go together hand in glove. What took place in Genesis 22, says, our writer, is a fulfilment (*ἐπληρώθη*) of Genesis 15:6.¹⁴ How are we to understand this "fulfilment"? Oesterley (1912, 448) is certain that James is playing fast and loose with the Scripture at this point. Says he, ". . . there is no connection between the quotation from Gen. xv. 6 and the offering-up of

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Macc. 2:52 (at least a century before James): Αβραὰμ οὐχὶ ἐν πειρασμῷ εὑρέθη πιστός καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην; was not Abraham in his ordeal found faithful and it was credited to him for righteousness? (Rahlfs 1979) and comments in Boring et al (1995, 325). The Hebrew text of Gen. 15:6, according to Chisholm (1998, 129), is emphatic : "אֶתְּנָא אַתָּה תִּתְּהֻנֵּן בְּמַעֲדָה, 'And he believed the LORD, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.'" (His emphases); but James does not underscore this.

Isaac. This manipulation of Scripture is 'strongly characteristic of Jewish methods of exegesis.' But a study of a crucial term in verse 23 renders this judgement premature. The verb πληρόω (fulfil) seems to be the key here. The standard lexica (Bauer et al 1979, 672; Louw and Nida 1989, 1: 199; cf. Liddell and Scott 1997, 202) list a number of senses the word can bear in various contexts, and only two of them, in my judgement, could possibly convey the sense that James intended: (1) to bring something to completion, finish something already begun, and (2) to bring to full expression, showing forth its true meaning. Some (e.g., Morris 1984) favour the former definition, but I think the latter is marginally preferable. Either way, the patriarch is seen as the "friend of God."¹⁵

The patriarch's contribution to James' argument is now summarised and given a wider application in verse 24 (notice the plural form ὄποτε¹⁶ [you see] and the generic ἄνθρωπος [person]). The main thrust of the argument is that a person is justified not by a naked faith but by a faith clothed in works. An orthodox claim to faith without works is never enough. Genuine faith must be evidenced by good works, for "Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone" (Wallace 1996, 219).

Faith Displayed by Someone without the Covenant: The Prostitute (25-26)

To serve, sustain, enrich/ This is our covenant (Earle 2000, 19)

I know how to labour for good (Vermes 1997, 398)

On a few occasions James' Lord would use a Gentile and/or a woman to underscore and illustrate the kind of faith which gains God's approval (e.g. Mt. 15:21ff). In verse 25, James appears to follow that tradition by calling upon Rahab as his final witness (D' Angelo 2000, 142). His point here is that the prostitute was vindicated in the same way as the patriarch (δύοιώς δὲ καὶ Ῥαβὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη . . . ; / Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works . . . ?).

¹⁵ An allusion to Is. 41: 8, according to Aland et al (1983, 907).

¹⁶ V. 22 has the singular; on this see Bratcher (1984, 31).

Considering James' background and his audience, this is a particularly strong claim. Although

The example of Rehab takes only one verse (2:25), . . . it is noteworthy first of all because it provides a straightforward female exemplar from Torah--a woman who is to be imitated for her own behaviour and not because of her relationship to a patriarch (Johnson 1998, 199).

Johnson also attempts to defend James' "unelaborated" mention of the paradigmatic matriarch by linking the writer's "odd" use of the plural ἔργων (works) with the patriarch's singular deed (vv. 21-22). Since from a midrashic perspective "both figures were renowned above all for their hospitality",¹⁷ James may have intended his Jewish-Christian audience to make not only the historical connection, but also the intra-textual linkage with the marginalized poor of verses 1-4, as well as with the brother/sister motif established earlier in verses 14-16. And

It is significant that whereas James portrays the "wicked judges" (vv. 2-4) as speaking, the callous believers (vv. 15-16) as speaking, and the dense interlocutor as speaking, Abraham and Rehab do not speak. Their faith is shown in *action* (Johnson 1998, 199).

The closing verse of the chapter is the summary of the entire pericope (2:14-25). A comparison is drawn between a corpse and a claim: the former is useless without its vital life principle and the latter, without works, is equally invalid.

¹⁷ Cf. 1 Clement XII. 1(1912, 26): Διά πιστὸν καὶ Φιλοξενίᾳν ἐσώθη Ραβὴ ή πόρνη/Rahab . . . was saved on account of fidelity and hospitality.

Conclusion

*How long shall they kill our prophets/While we stand aside and look?
Some say it's just a part of it /We've got to fulfil the Book (Marley 1993, 156)*

Beginning with reason (14-19), James argues strongly that a faith that does not manifest itself in the performance of good deeds is a spurious one. James' chief support, however, comes from revelation (20-24).¹⁸ Using the examples of Abraham and Rahab, James is able to show the cogency of his argument.

It is to be observed that while the argument of James becomes progressively shorter, the claim he makes increases in strength. There are at least two reasons for this: 1) the substantiation from Scripture for James and his original readers carried greater weight, and 2) his choice of examples, and the order in which he discussed them (first the patriarch, then the prostitute) become at once a powerful way in which to clinch his case. James ends the pericope with a somewhat negative note ("faith apart from works is dead") that is certainly meant to supplement the three positive assertions made earlier.

Chapter 2: 14-26, then, expresses James' *orthopraxy*—"the ongoing relationship between action . . . and reflection . . . between theological constructs and practical social experience" (Kritzinger 2004, 140). The pericope demonstrates "concern for integrity [and] consistency, between theory and practice" (Tamez 2002, 54). Once this concern¹⁹ is properly grasped, then people of means in particular within the Messianic community will not yield to the temptation of mouthing an orthodox creed without a corresponding social engagement (vv. 1-19). Neither will the poor within the community give deference to the rich and despise those

¹⁸ On the general nature of the application in v. 24, see Fanning (1990, 1982).

¹⁹ For inspiring accounts of two of those whose lives were an outworking of solid Jacobean theology, see Coke (2000) and Linton (2001).

who are “rich in faith” (cf. 2:5; Prov. 14: 20²⁰; see also Waltke 2004, 598-599).

Instead, they and everyone else will adopt a posture of charity,²¹ which manifests itself “only in concrete action” (Gutiérrez 1973, 199; cf. Rose 1985, 29-45; Beck 2003, 142-153; Ama 2004, 97-102). This alone is true religion (1: 19-26)—a religion which interprets faith as philanthropic engagement with the poor “to whom the good news is addressed as a way of understanding the hoped-for horizon of God’s new creation” (Russell 1985, 18).²²

²⁰ Standing in the sapiential tradition (Schweizer 1992, 109; Aune 2003, 41), a verse like this may very well have been at the back of James’ mind. The echo is most certainly in his text.

²¹ Cf. 1 Cor. 13: 4-7 (AV). ‘Once again it is clear that the deeds approved are not technical observances, but *acts of love*’ (Reicke 1964, 32; italics added). The offering of Isaac (Gen. 22) and the rescue of Lot (Gen. 14) both demonstrate ‘how great was the love of Abraham our father’ (*pirke aboth* 5:3 [Danby 1933, 455])—for God and man respectively. Cf. John 14:15. For another eulogy of this 21st century BC ‘Iraqi’, see Philo (1993, 1661-1662).

²² Cited in Murrell (1988, 343) as part of his critique of what he perceives to be James Barr’s truncated hermeneutical agenda and theology.

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