

by which to discriminate between the two elements which must enter more or less into all prophecy. Here it seems the Divine and human can be separated, and the relation between them analysed with some degree of accuracy.

If this be true, an important question is raised. Can the principle be extended? Can the moral difficulties of the Old Testament and the results of psychology be used in conjunction in order to bring us nearer to the processes of revelation? The value of such a method needs no proof: for the more we define the human element in Holy Scripture, the more apparent will be the splendour of the Divine; and the stronger the evidence that the ethical obscurities which perplex us arise from man's imperfection, the greater will be our confidence in that pure truth which can only come from the perfection of God.

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ST. JAMES AND HIS EPISTLE.¹

"James . . . to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion."—Jas. i. 1.

THIS Epistle, although Luther stigmatized it as "an epistle of straw," has many claims on our regard, of which I will only for the present enumerate one or two.

It is the first Christian document that was given to the world, the earliest of all the New Testament Scriptures. It was probably written in less than twenty years after the crucifixion of our Lord, before any one of the Gospels which have come down to us, and even before any of the other inspired Epistles. If the New Testament were arranged in chronological order, *this* is what we should read first. And, for some reasons, it is to be regretted that

¹ A brief introduction to a set of expository lectures on the first chapter of the Epistle.

it does not stand first. For it is more like the writings of the *Old Testament* than any other contained in the New, and forms a natural and easy transition from the one to the other. To St. James the Gospel of Christ was simply the true Judaism, Judaism fulfilled and transfigured. It was the law of Moses, which St. Paul called "the law of bondage," transformed into "the law of liberty." It was the beautiful consummate flower of which the old œconomy was the bud, the perfect day of which that was the dawn.

1. The first special claim of the Epistle is, then, that it presents us with the earliest view of the truth as it is in Jesus which obtained in the Christian Church. And the second is, that it was written by that "brother of the Lord" who was the first bishop, *i.e.* the first chief pastor, of the first Christian Church, *viz.* the Church of Jerusalem. And this "James the brother of the Lord" had much, not of the mind only, but of the very manner of the Lord. That he had much of the mind of Christ we might perhaps infer from the fact that, in common with the other Apostles and apostolic men, he was inspired by the Spirit of Christ. But we are not left to inference. We have the words of Jesus, and we have the letter of James, and we may compare them for ourselves. Of all the discourses of the Lord Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount is the most characteristic and complete, that in which He most clearly laid down the laws of the kingdom He came to establish on earth. And the Epistle of St. James has been called, not without reason, "a mere commentary on the Sermon on the Mount." It handles the same practical themes. It contains many of the same turns of expression. It is pervaded by an undertone of reference to that Sermon even when it handles other themes or uses different terms. And the style of St. James is precisely that of his Divine "Brother," plain, simple, direct, pungent, and yet instinct with poetic imagination. The Sermon on the Mount con-

tains only one extended parable, that of the two builders, with which it closes; but it is full of those dramatic proverbs which are condensed parables, such as that of the salt which had lost its savour, the city set on a hill, the lamp put under a bushel or on a stand, the sun shining on the evil and the good, the rain falling on just and unjust, the trumpet sounded at the corners of the street, the two masters, the birds that build no barns, the lilies that neither toil nor spin, the mote and the beam, the pearls cast before swine, with many more. St. James abounds in similar proverbs. In the first chapter alone we have that of the wave, of the blade of grass, of sin the harlot, of the first-fruits, of the field over-run with foul and rank weeds, of the man gazing on his face in the glass. However we may account for this similarity of style, whether we attribute it to that similarity of mental gifts which often obtains among close kinsmen, or to the influence of constant intercourse and a common training, we cannot fail to be struck with it when once it has been pointed out; nor can we fail to feel that, as to the words of Christ Himself, so also to the words of James, this parabolic manner, this poetic style, lends an added grace and power.

The Epistle opens, as most of the apostolic letters open, by announcing the name of the writer and that of the person, or persons, to whom it was addressed: "*James . . . to the Dispersion.*" This was the ancient epistolary style in private as well as in public correspondence. We have many instances of it in the New Testament, as, for instance, in Acts xxiii. 26, "Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix." And though the opening sentence of St. James's letter may not sound very suggestive, it is nevertheless full of instructive matter. "James" had a history, and so had "the Dispersion"; and by his history he was marked out as the very man to write to the Jews who were scattered abroad.

James was a Jew at heart to the day of his death, though he was also a Christian Apostle. Who then so suitable as he to instruct men who, though Jews by birth and training and habit, had nevertheless embraced the Christian faith?

If we glance at his history and theirs, we shall read the whole Epistle with a deeper and more intelligent insight into its meaning.

James then (as I hold and shall assume, after a careful study of the various theories propounded about him, into which however I shall not here enter) was the son of Alphæus, otherwise called Clopas, and of his wife, the sister of the Virgin Mary.¹ James was probably their eldest son, and grew up to be a conspicuously sturdy little man. Because of his short stature he was called "*James the Little*," not, as the Greek epithet has often been rendered, "*James the Less*." Among his brothers were Simon, *i.e.* Simeon; Jude, *i.e.* Judah; Joses, *i.e.* Joseph; and Levi the publican, afterwards Matthew the Apostle. All these men were named after great Jews of the ancient time. James after Jacob,² the others after four of Jacob's sons—Levi, Joseph, Judah, and Simeon. From the names given to the children we might reasonably infer that the household of Alphæus was a strictly pious household, after the austere Hebrew type. And the inference is confirmed by what we afterwards learn of the five sons of the household. Two of them were so markedly devout after the way of their fathers, that they were called "*James the Just*" and *Joses the Just*"—"just" being the most flattering religious epithet among the

¹ Those who care to examine the controversy for themselves will find an admirable summary of it in Dean Plumptre's commentary on this Epistle, published in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools*.

² "The name of Jacobus or Jacob, after passing through various changes and changes of form, Spanish *Jago*, and Portuguese *Xayme* (pronounced *Hayme*), and Italian *Giacomo*, and French *Jacques* and *Jamè*, and Scotch *Hamish*, has at last dwindled into our monosyllabic *James*."—*Dean Plumptre*.

Jews, since they held "justice," or "righteousness," to be the very flower and crown of all virtues. Other two, Simon and Jude, were distinguished as "Zealots," and the Zealots were a faction pledged to risk their lives at any moment for the honour of the law or the freedom of their country; while the fifth, Matthew, as we learn from his Gospel, was a profound student of the Hebrew Scriptures. We may fairly conclude therefore, that the whole family was trained in the severest forms of Hebrew piety, that they walked—save Levi, indeed, during his lapse from the family "righteousness"—in all the ordinances and commandments blameless. This inference, again, is confirmed by the most ancient histories of the Church, which assure us that, not content with observing the manifold and minutest precepts of the law of Moses, they voluntarily added to these the still more austere habits of the Nazarite and the Rechabite sects, drinking no wine, eating no flesh.

But, whatever their zeal for law and tradition, they were not blind and narrow bigots, like many of their neighbours similarly trained. While they stood on the old ways, they could look for the new. Alphæus and his wife seem early to have recognised, in their nephew Jesus, the promised and long-expected Messiah. James the Little and Simon the Zealot were enrolled among the Apostles. Joses and Jude, after the resurrection at least, joined the disciples, and rose to eminence in the infant Church. But, though they became Christians, they remained Jews. They still believed in circumcision, still kept the law, still observed sabbaths, still took part in the services of the temple. This strange blending of the old with the new seems to have characterized the whole family. We find it in the Epistles of James and Jude, and in the Gospel of Matthew.

We find it most clearly of all, I think, in the history, words, writings of St. James. After the death and resurrection of Christ he became the bishop and pillar of the

Church in Jerusalem—a church which was as much Hebrew as Christian; a church which shook its head doubtfully and distrustfully when it heard that Gentiles also were being baptized; a church from which there went forth the Judaizers who dogged St. Paul's steps wherever he went, hindered or undid his work, and kindled a tumult of grief and indignation in his heart. And these Judaizers carried with them "letters of commendation" from St. James, and were for ever citing the authority of "the Lord's brethren" against that of St. Paul. Sufficient attention has not even yet been directed to the great gulf which early opened in the Christian Church, a gulf compared with which all our schisms and separations are as nothing. On the one side stood the Christian Jews of Palestine, with James and his brothers at their head; on the other side stood the Gentile Churches, with St. Paul and his colleagues at their head; while Peter is to be found now on this side and now on that. The Jewish Church held the whole law of Moses, ceremonial as well as moral, to be binding on the whole world. If they could, they would have excluded from the Church all who gave up circumcision, sabbaths, the feasts, and the worship of the temple. The Gentile Church, on the other hand, claimed the right of being Christian without becoming Jewish, of worshipping on Sunday instead of on Saturday, of obeying the law of Christ without bending under Moses' yoke. All St. James's sympathies were with the Jewish Church; and though, for the sake of peace, he compromised with Paul, and agreed that the Gentiles should be bound only by "the precepts of Noah," instead of by the statutes of Moses, it is clear that he did not think the law of Christ sufficient, or why did he insist on the precepts of Noah? It may be doubted whether he ever really approved the manly and generous course St. Paul took. It is quite certain that, to the end of his life, he was as sincerely a Jew as he was a Christian. Till he

was put to death by them, the Jews, the very Pharisees, of Jerusalem respected and honoured *him*, although they hunted many of the Christians, and especially their leaders, to prison and the grave. Writing soon after James had passed away, an ecclesiastical historian tells us that he was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine nor strong drink, and no razor ever came on his head. He alone was allowed to go into the holy place of the temple, the shrine sacred to the priests. He was so long and often on his knees that they grew hard like a camel's. When a religious crisis arose, and the Pharisees heard that many were going astray after Jesus, they came to James of all men—the brother of Jesus and the bishop of the Church!—to beg that he would recall the people from their errors, so entirely did they regard him as one of themselves. On the feast-day they placed him on the front of the temple, and adjured him to tell the multitude, since many had gone astray after Jesus, what the true way of salvation was. They were thunderstruck when he gave testimony to the Son of man as the Lord and Christ foretold by the prophets; but, as soon as they could believe for wonder, they rushed upon him, crying, "Woe! woe! Even the Just One is deceived!" They cast him down from the temple, and beat out his brains with a club.

Surely nothing in his life became him like the leaving it. His testimony to Jesus as the Christ can hardly have been very zealous, instant in season and out of season, although he sincerely believed in Him, if the Pharisees regarded him as one of themselves, and put him forward to speak against the Son of man. The fact seems to be, that he never regarded Jesus as more than the Jewish Messiah, or the Gospel as more than the fulfilling of the law. He did not see that, when a law is fulfilled, it gives place to a higher law. But whatever the defects we may discover in St. James, it is obvious that these very defects adapted him

to be an Apostle to the Jews. Had Paul been bishop of Jerusalem, instead of James, how many months would he have lived? But James, a Jew at heart, was the very man to speak to Jews without driving them to an instant hostility. He may have quietly won many to the faith whom a man of a more generous and catholic spirit would have alienated and provoked. At least he could help to make the men of Jerusalem better Jews; and that, after all, was the most likely way to make them Christian.

2. But what sort of Jews were those to whom this letter was addressed, the Jews of "the Dispersion"? and wherein did they differ from the Jews of Jerusalem? The answer to that question is worth working out, for it throws light on many parts of the New Testament.

When the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon, they left behind them the great bulk of their race. Only a few poor thousands returned; hundreds of thousands preferred to remain in the lands in which they had been settled by their conquerors. As they multiplied and prospered they spread, until they were found in most of the great centres of commerce and learning in the ancient world. So too the Jews who had returned to Judæa also multiplied and grew, till the land became too strait for them. Their fathers had been farmers and wine-growers, each tilling his own acres or dressing his own vines. But the sons were compelled by their growing numbers to build cities, and to embark in manufacture and traffic. Meanwhile the great heathen empires—Persian, Syrian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman—had thrown the whole world open to them; and of this opening they were quick to avail themselves. Their own land was crowded. In trade they felt they had found their true vocation. And hence, in the two or three centuries immediately preceding the foundation of the Church, the Jews had migrated in vast numbers. Colonies of them were to be found in many

lands, in the cities which studded the highroads of Asia Minor, in the ports of Northern Africa and Europe, and in all the most renowned seats of learning. Of course these busy merchants and eager students, living remote from Palestine, visited Jerusalem infrequently, and seldom took part in the worship of the temple; but they took their synagogues and schools with them, and clung tenaciously to the faith of their fathers.

Nevertheless it was inevitable that travel and intercourse with many men of many races should widen their thoughts. They could not encounter so many new influences without being affected by them. The influence they most commonly met, and to which they yielded most, was that of Greek thought and culture. The Greeks, under Alexander the Great, had over-run and subdued the world. When Alexander died, his empire was divided among his victorious lieutenants, who, to a certain extent, carried on his work. They founded kingdoms and dynasties; and to these kingdoms the Greeks flocked in large numbers, soon establishing themselves, as the Jews did, in all the great centres of commerce and learning. Of these foreign Greeks the foreign Jews learned much. Though they retained the faith and the Scriptures of Moses, they read them in a more philosophical and cosmopolitan spirit. They even went so far as to adopt the Greek language, a language at least as common in all civilized lands then as French was some fifty years since, as English is now or soon will be, or as Latin was among all the scholars of Europe up to a century ago. They translated their Scriptures and conducted their worship in this alien tongue. From this adoption of the Greek, or Hellene, tongue, they were called Hellenists, or Hellenistic Jews, to distinguish them from their brethren in Palestine, who still used their ancestral tongue, at least in the worship of God. By thus throwing open the Scriptures of the Old Testament

to as many as could read Greek, the Hellenists won many of the more thoughtful and pious heathen to the Hebrew faith. These heathen converts were "the proselytes" so often mentioned in the New Testament. We can account for their numbers and influence only as we remember that the Jews of the Dispersion were to be found in all the chief cities and harbours of the world, that they mixed freely with the merchants of every land, that their schools stood side by side with those of Greece and Rome, and that their Scriptures were now, for the first time, accessible to all educated men.

Now if we picture these foreign Jews to ourselves—these "twelve tribes in the Dispersion," as St. James calls them, just as we might speak of "the greater Britain beyond the sea"—if we picture to ourselves these men, far from the land of their fathers, dwelling in busy, populous cities, where they were compelled to hold daily intercourse with men of other creeds and customs than their own, where, so to speak, a larger, freer current of air tended to disperse the mists of local or racial prejudice, we shall readily understand that they were more accessible to new ideas, and especially to any new ideas which came to them from the land of their fathers, than their brethren who remained at home, breathing the loaded atmosphere of their ancient city, into which the movements of the outside world could seldom penetrate. The *Christian* ideas, the good news that *He* was come for whom their fathers had looked, would be more impartially weighed by these Hellenized and foreign Jews than by the priests and Pharisees who dwelt under the shadow of the temple, and felt that, if Jesus should increase, they must decrease. Nor would the catholicity of the Christian faith, its appeal to men of every race, be so offensive to the tribes of the Dispersion as to the Jews of Judæa. In Judæa the Jews held every foreigner to be a stranger and an intruder, if not an enemy. In Europe, in

Africa, in the great towns and harbours of Asia Minor, the Jews themselves were foreigners, and would feel that other foreigners had no less right to be there than themselves. Among their heathen neighbours too they had found many who loathed the vices of the popular idolatries, who were wearily looking for some more substantial resting-place for their spirits than the thin and conflicting philosophies of their own sages, or who had joyfully accepted the God of Israel as the only true God.

When we remember how they were placed and influenced, we do not wonder that the teaching of the first Apostles and missionaries of the Cross found a far wider acceptance with these scattered and expatriated Jews than with the homebred homekeeping Jews of Palestine; we no longer wonder that in every city into which Paul entered he went straight to the synagogue, and made his first appeal to the Jews and proselytes who worshipped in it, and that he seldom made his appeal in vain, Jews and proselytes in every city yielding him his first converts and disciples.

These were the men to whom St. James wrote. And we may be very sure that the Christian Jews of every clime would joyfully welcome the letter of a Jew so just, so honoured and devout, as the bishop of Jerusalem, that sacred city to which their hearts still fondly turned; "the brother" of that Lord who had died to take away the sin of the whole world, and to throw open the kingdom of heaven to as many as put their trust in Him.

James the Jew was the very man to command a cordial and reverent hearing from "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion."

S. Cox.
