

**“ THOU HAST FAITH AND I HAVE WORKS ”**

(JAMES II. 18).

THE writer of the Epistle of James in the latter part of his second chapter is engaged in impressing upon his readers (who, so far as what he says is concerned, might be any Christians anywhere) the obligation not to lie down in indolent reliance on their membership in the Christian Church, but to show the works of mercy and justice and a good life, without which justification and salvation cannot be hoped for. “ Faith without works,” he says, “ is dead.”

“ But,” he goes on, “ some one will say, Thou hast faith and I have works,” and to this he seems to reply, “ Show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works.” And so the argument proceeds with telling force against the lax believers who imagine that they can relinquish moral effort because they have once become Christians.

The main lines of the argument are clear enough ; and the only serious problems in the greater part of the passage are as to the circumstances which called out this earnest exhortation, and as to how much and what theological reflection and formulation on the subject of faith and justification had preceded it—in a word, as to the relation of the discussion to the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians.

But in verse 18, embedded in this argument, is to be found one of the most puzzling *crucis* of New Testament exegesis. ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις καὶ γὰρ ἔργα ἔχω, *But some one will say, Thou hast faith and I have works.* In the study of this sentence three main questions arise :

1. What kind of a person is meant by “ some one ” (τις) ?
2. What is this person driving at by the interjected remark which he is supposed to make, and how much of this

and the following verse ought to be assigned to his shadowy lips ?

3. Whom does he mean by "thou" and whom by "I" ?

In the exegesis there are various possible combinations of interrogative and positive sentences and parts of sentences. And, besides these, various exegetical theories have been propounded whereby the one important point which could alone make the sentence convey the writer's meaning is supposed to have been deliberately omitted; not to mention other theories, such as von Hofmann used to delight in, "rag-time hypotheses," as we might call them, which by putting the emphasis on the obviously unemphatic word try to extract from the text a meaning which it was clearly and evidently not meant to convey.

Perhaps, however, before looking at the verse more closely, two remarks on common errors may be permitted.

*First*, it is important to remember that James is not discussing or defining Faith. Many of the interpreters talk about him as if he were a scholastic theologian to whom faith was a *concept*, and who had been engaged all his life in whittling down that concept like a lead-pencil to just the right degree of symmetry and pointedness.

I cannot help thinking that the acute and sympathetic Professor Bacon is at least on the edge of falling into this condemnation in an interesting article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* for 1900. He there seems to represent the author, whom for convenience we may call James, as composing our passage in consequence of the impression produced on his mind by reading the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and as "aiming to correct a type of ultra-Paulinism to which Hebrews, unless wisely interpreted, would be likely to give aid and comfort" (p. 16), or, again, as "antagonizing" a "type of ultra-Pauline intellectualism" (p. 17).

Now the correctness of this representation of the method of thought and motive of the Epistle to the Hebrews is itself doubtful. We can hardly suppose that writer to have thought that he was defining Christian faith in any such sense as that in which a modern builder of theological systems defines his concepts. Faith was an objective fact. Paul had not invented it, the author to the Hebrews could not alter it, whether by enlargement or diminution. In its essence and kernel and inner reality it was as nearly the same for Paul, for him, and for James as their very different temperaments would allow any psychological experience to be. What Paul had done was to point out the implications and results and significance of faith, to signalize it as supreme, and to show how, if men will but use it, it will carry them on to heights of character and depths of divine experience that only those who are “in Christ Jesus” can know. What the writer to the Hebrews had done was to philosophize about this same faith, to try to show himself that it is the centre of a rational system, possible for a thinking man who stands at any rate on the verge of the high ground of contemporary philosophy. Having worked out for himself a coherent body of thought on the subject he uses that body of thought to portray the unique position of Christianity in the universe. His hymn to faith has not reduced Christian faith to mere “insight” and “enlightenment,” as is sometimes affirmed, but presents it as the crown and summit of all human faith, comprehensible just because it is not isolated but related. And this faith is not disparaged and made common, but is shown forth in its glorious uniqueness, by the long series of heroes of faith, the greatest and brightest of the past, who yet did not receive that better thing reserved for us, which is given through Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.

Considering the strong practical motive with which the author to the Hebrews wrote, it would surely have surprised

him to be told that any one could consider his homily an encouragement to moral laxity. He wrote, with an unrelaxing severity which is actually a stumbling-block to a theology built on the New Testament, of the irreparable loss of those who fall away, and of God as a consuming fire, and his tract is not deficient in specific moral precepts. That a church of pleasure-loving and easily discouraged people like those whom James has in mind could be drawn into an easy and careless life by the Epistle to the Hebrews is, to me at least, inconceivable.

For that is the type of man James has in mind,—people such as those whom we know nowadays, fair-weather Christians, whose idea of God is in danger of degenerating to hardly more than a good Santa Claus, and so stands them in little stead when trouble comes, believers who rely on church-membership to pull them through in the Day of Judgment, and are glad in the meantime to live in the world and of it, not doers but hearers and talkers, truckling to the rich and great, quarrelling over their supposed wisdom, making pleasure and not God their aim, and in consequence bringing themselves and their neighbours into every sort of conflict and petty warfare, aping the rich, who are not their true friends, forgetting that the grandest thing any man can do is to convert a sinner from the error of his way. All this is not founded on any theory of the nature of faith. It is doubtful whether anywhere or ever in the history of the world men who were serious enough to trouble themselves about a theory of the nature of faith were at the same time frivolous and profligate enough to take advantage of the moral licence to which a false theory might seem to entitle them. And James knew uncommonly well how to fit his argument to the practical needs of his readers.

We need then to avoid thinking that either verse 18 or the whole passage rests on any previous debate or reflection on

the nature of faith as a theological concept. The faith James means is just plain faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord. If a man believes that, he becomes a Christian, and may join the brotherhood of believers. James fails to see as necessarily involved in and resulting to the believer from this faith some things which Paul finds there, but the faith itself is the same thing.

*Secondly.* The second general remark can be made more briefly. We have in verse 18 a fragmentary dialogue. But it is not a real dialogue ; it is introduced by the author solely for his own purposes, and must be interpreted in such a way as to aid and not hinder the development of his main contention. Such fragmentary dialogues are very characteristic of Greek popular moral exhortation of this period. This is a point which is overlooked by many of the commentators, including, for instance, Weiss, who makes out that the words ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις introduce a decidedly disagreeable, not to say insulting, *argumentum ad hominem* addressed to the writer himself.

But we have delayed over long on preliminaries. Let us turn to our verse.

1. Who was τις ?

There are three chief theories on this point. Some hold that he was a defender of the persons addressed, whose defence is here stated clearly before it is met. This is the most natural explanation ; and 1 Corinthians xv. 35, “ But some one will say (ἀλλὰ ἐρεῖ τις), How are the dead raised ? ” presents a complete analogy, to which can be added Barnabas ix. 6 (ἀλλ' ἐρεῖς), 4 Maccabees ii. 24 (εἶποι τις ἄν), Romans ix. 19, xi. 19, and many other passages.

The only reason for doubting this explanation comes from the difficulty of understanding how such an opponent or defender could possibly be represented as saying to James, “ Thou hast faith and I have works.” The lack of works was

the very thing for which these people were blamed, and it is evident from what follows that this is no general denial of the allegation that the works are lacking.

Accordingly two other types of theory have been developed. One view holds that this mysterious  $\tau\iota\varsigma$  is an ally (or even a kind of double) of James himself, coming to the rescue of the author. This seems to be the meaning intended by the English versions (A.V. and R.V.), "Yea, a man may [R.V. will] say." What has been said above ought to have made it plain that this is highly unlikely.

The other theory is that the "some one" is an outside non-Christian—whether heathen or Jew—who is held up *in terrorem* before the luckless representatives of laxity. "If you keep on," says James, "your hostile neighbour will be able to say, 'You claim a mysterious something you call faith. It does not show in works; where is it? As for me, on the other hand,' the neighbour will go on to say, 'my conduct—my works—shows that I have all the faith a man needs.' And to this hostile neighbour," says James, "you, my reader, will have no reply to make whatever."

There is something concrete and vital and attractive in this view, which has lately been urged with force and conviction by Zahn, but the supposed utterance is too much like the excuses of the unchurched, moral man of to-day, and this explanation can hardly be right. It is further exposed to the fatal objection that such a non-Christian neighbour could not be supposed to claim "faith" in James's sense.

2. How much of what follows is governed by  $\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon\iota$  ?

The brief sentence of verse 18a, "Thou hast faith and I have works," is, if taken by itself, enigmatical, and hardly permits a decision as to the general drift of the interposed objection. If the rest of verse 18 is regarded as a part of the interjected utterance, the result is little better, so far as clearness is concerned; and there is the added difficulty

that verse 18*b* seems to challenge the correctness of “thou hast faith.” If, however, verse 18*b* is understood to be James’s reply to the objection of verse 18*a*, then James’s contention becomes clear. The words, “Show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith,” are plainly meant not to prove James’s faith, which nobody questions, but to affirm that faith and works are *inseparable*. “You cannot have a sincere faith that does not show itself in works, and if a Christian can show works no one may justly doubt his faith.”<sup>1</sup>

If this is true, the nature of the interjected remark also becomes plain. That must have been an affirmation, reflected in verse 18*b*, that faith and works are *separable*. And that it is. Just as Paul says (1 Cor. xii. 8 ff.) that to one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another *faith*, and to another gifts of healing, the same Spirit dividing to each one severally as He will, so here this interposed objector is made to say, “Each man has his specialty; you have faith, I have works. There is a division of gifts and of responsibility, and James’s harsh requirement that everybody shall have both faith and works is unjustified.”

3. This paraphrase may have already suggested the explanation I would give of the puzzle which still remains in an otherwise perfectly clear passage. If the interposed objection is thought of as addressed to James, it seems to be affirmed that James has faith while the objector has works; whereas we should expect, if anything, the opposite. But is it in that sense addressed to James? It seems to me that *σú* and *ἐγώ*, *thou* and *I*, are in all probability merely a more picturesque mode of indicating two persons—as we might have *εἷς*, *ἕτερος*, *one*, *another*. This seems a natural mode of expression, and it perfectly suits the context.

<sup>1</sup> It should be needless to point out that of course the works of a *heathen* cannot attest *Christian* faith.

This interpretation has been held by at least two commentators, but has attracted little attention. Pott, in the third edition (1816) of his commentary on James in Koppe's New Testament, adopts it, and so does a Dutch commentator, H. Bouman, 1865.

A good example of nearly the same usage can be adduced from one of that class of writings which present the nearest analogy that we have in Greek literature to the Epistle of James, the diatribes of the popular philosophers. The cynic philosophic preacher, Teles (*circa* 240 B.C.), quoting his predecessor Bion, is urging that every man must play the part that Fortune assigns him, and says: μή οὖν βούλου δευτερολόγος ὦν τὸ πρωτολόγου πρόσωπον· εἰ δὲ μή, ἀνάρμοστον τι ποιήσεις. σὺ μὲν ἄρχεις καλῶς, ἐγὼ δὲ ἄρχομαι, φησί (*sc. ὁ Βίων*), καὶ σὺ μὲν πολλῶν, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐνὸς τουτουῦ παιδαγωγὸς γενόμενος, καὰ σὺ μὲν εὖπορος γενόμενος δίδως ἐλευθερίως, ἐγὼ δὲ λαμβάνω εὐθαρσῶς παρὰ σοῦ οὐχ ὑποπίπτων οὐδὲ ἀγεννίζων οὐδὲ μεμφιμοιρῶν (*Teletis reliquiae*, ed. Hense, p. 3, from Stobæus, *Anthol.* iii. 1, 98 ([Meineke v. 67])).

"If, then, you are a second-class actor, don't envy the rôle of the first-class player. If you do, you will commit blunders. You are a ruler, I am a subject (he [*sc.* Bion] says); you have many under you, I, as a tutor, but this one; and you grow prosperous and give generously, while I cheerfully receive from you without fawning or lowering myself or complaining."

In the first sentence here quoted *σύ* is the man with the inferior actor's part. In the rest of the passage, on the other hand, *σύ* is the more prosperous man, in contrast to the speaker, who modestly presents himself as the representative of lesser worldly fortune. Somewhat similar is the way in which James (*v.* 18) fails to preserve strictly the rôles of the fragmentary dialogue.

This seems a more satisfactory explanation than the vio-

lent procedure of conjectural emendation (supported by one Latin manuscript)<sup>1</sup> which yields, “Thou hast works and I have faith.” Moreover, the resulting text of the emendation is unsatisfactory. For James’s own character and principles have not been brought into question in the discussion, and yet to represent the supposed defender of the persons deficient in works as here drawing a sharp contrast specifically between James and himself has the effect of making the words a direct attack on James as a man who lacks faith. It is hardly possible that James would have introduced this attack against himself. His sole purpose is to present clearly and sharply a possible excuse for the morally lax, in order that he may then summarily dispose of it.

One other interesting question arises, which, like all questions of its class, is hard to answer. Does, namely, the supposed objection imply a knowledge of and tendency to misuse the teaching of Paul, repeated in more than one passage of his epistles, about diversity of function in the Christian Church? This point does not seem to come out in the commentaries generally. I am inclined to think that, in view of the other probable allusions of James to misused Pauline formulas and ideas, this is also to be so understood. It should, however, always be observed, as is generally not observed, that it is by no means certain that the knowledge on which these allusions rest came either to the persons addressed by James or to the author of the Epistle, in Jerusalem or Antioch or wherever it was that he lived, through *written* media. He may well never have read the Epistles, and the persons he has in mind may never have seen them, and yet they may have been able to make this

<sup>1</sup> Pfliegerer, *Urchristenthum*, 1887, p. 874; 1902, ii. p. 547; Codex Corbeiensis (ff<sup>1</sup>), *tu operam habes, ego fidem habeo*. See E. Y. Hincks, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, xviii. 1899, pp. 199–202, where other conjectural emendations are discussed.

use of the Pauline ideas. For those ideas must have been often expressed, and they were not merely the product of the Epistles to the Corinthians and Romans, but were the source of those Epistles. That Paul was daily expressing his ideas in other modes than through his ten or thirteen preserved letters is a fact which is sometimes overlooked.

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### *THE EXPANSION OF JERUSALEM.*<sup>1</sup>

“ And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou ? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what should be the breadth thereof, and what should be the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me stood still, and another angel came forth to meet him ; and he [i.e., the angel that talked with me] said unto him, Run, speak to yonder young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, by reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein. For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and a glory will I be in the midst of her.” —*Zech.* ii. 1-5.

THE new Jerusalem was the problem of the hour : How was it to be built up ? When were the prophecies to be fulfilled ? A band of exiles had arrived from distant Babylon with great words ringing in their ears, great visions rising before their eyes. “ Behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.”<sup>2</sup> With words like these the Second Isaiah had kindled the hopes of the exiles. And then Ezekiel, after the destruction of the city and temple, had seen his vision as he lay by the waters of Babylon ; he saw the temple rebuilt, furnished and ordered in minutest detail, and the

<sup>1</sup> The annual sermon on Messianic Prophecy preached before the University of Oxford, January 26, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah liv. 11 ff.