

Wholeness in Intertextual Perspective:
James' Use of Scripture in Developing a Theme

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Dedication

Though it has been nearly twenty years since I stepped foot into Dr. Tomlinson's classroom, his passion for the text of Scripture generally and his wide-ranging grasp of language and backgrounds continue as a personal reminder of how one must allow the text itself to speak with its own voice. Hopefully his example of attending to the voice of the text before anything else might, in some small way, mark my own endeavors, including the present one. In the brief study that follows it is James' use of Scripture, especially Leviticus 19 and Proverbs 3, as it shapes his call to wholeness, which constitutes our focus. In this we hear a particularly Jamesian way of construing wholeness/perfection before God.

Though in the not too distant past one would be justified in lamenting over the scholarly neglect of James,¹ that is certainly no longer the case today. Within the last decade major commentaries by Dan McCartney, Scot McKnight, and especially the magisterial volume by Dale Allison in the ICC series have been published. These major contributions have been accompanied by a host of homiletical and student commentaries along with several major academic monographs appreciating various aspects of the Epistle of James. Within this general renaissance the common turn has been to appreciate James on its own terms. In keeping with Dr.

¹ For example, the opening two sentences of Andrew Chester's work are representative of this negative assessment: "James presents a unique *problem* within the New Testament. The questions that loom over it are whether it has *any* theology at all, and whether it should have *any place* in Christian scripture" (A. Chester and R.P. Martin, *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 3, emphasis added).

Tomlinson's example, one must attend to James' particular voice by listening for the reoccurring phrases or, perhaps, even better, listening for the dominant *leitmotif* which characterizes the letter. The textual voice of James strikes the thematic note of "perfection," or wholeness and whole-hearted devotion to God and this *leitmotif* is grounded in, so to speak, the *cantus firmus* of James' own hearing of Scripture.

The present thesis is that James' concern for perfection or wholeness cannot be understood apart from key intertextual allusions to two Old Testament passages because when modern readers encounter James' discussion of "perfection" incorrect assumptions regarding the sinless life quickly come to mind. Rather than a kind of religious perfectionism, the wholeness to which James calls his readers is characterized especially by the concern for holiness articulated in Leviticus 19 and the humility noted in Proverbs 3. The first section of this study will briefly describe the main theme of wholeness ("perfection") in James with a view to understanding how it aids the overall argument of the letter. The essay then turns to an examination of James' use of Leviticus 19:15, 18b and Proverbs 3:34. Here the study will consider the importance of the wider context of each passage and the role James' citation plays in his understanding of wholeness. Here the call to holiness, from Torah, and to humility, from Israel's wisdom tradition, necessarily inform James' notion of wholeness before God. In conclusion the essay offers some implications stemming from James' scripturally informed view of wholeness with regard to the "path" the renewed people of God must tread.

Wholeness or "Perfection" in James

The thematic importance of wholeness (or "perfection") in James has been articulated predominantly in German-speaking scholarship,² and

² For example: R. Hoppe, *Der Theologische Hintergrund des Jakobusbriefes* (FzB 28; Würzburg: Echter, 1977); J. Zmijewski, "Christliche 'Vollkommenheit': Erwägungen zur Theologie des Jakobusbriefes," *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 5 (1980), 50–70; H. Frankemölle, "Das semantische Netz des Jakobusbriefes: Zur Einheit eines umstrittenen Briefes," *BZ* 34 (1990), 161–97; W. Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes* (SBS 125/26; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986); F. Mussner, "Die ethische Motivation im Jakobusbrief," in *Neues Testament und Ethik*, ed. H. Merklein (Freiburg:

only recently has received detailed exposition in English.³ In several of these works wholeness is directly related to knowing and practicing the law and the working of wisdom. Consequently, these three elements—wholeness, law, and wisdom—constitute the hermeneutical key for understanding the argument and theological perspective of James. That is, James' understanding of the law of love as articulated in Leviticus 19:18b and the call to humility (and away from pride) in Proverbs 3:34 constitute key passages—Torah and Wisdom—which shape how James understands the law and wisdom of Israel generally. And James' understanding of wholeness or perfection is grounded by such an understanding of Israel's Scriptures.

A key lexical indicator of the importance of wholeness or "perfection" in the letter is the frequent use of the τέλ-word group. Terms from this word group appear eight times in James. Out of a total of nineteen occurrences in the New Testament, the adjective τέλειος

Herder, 1989), 58–59, 422–23; M. Klein *Ein vollkommenes Werk: Vollkommenheit, Gesetz und Gericht als theologische Themen des Jakobusbriefes* (BWANT 7; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1995); M. Tsuji, *Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung: Eine Untersuchung zur literarischen Gestalt und zur inhaltlichen Kohärenz des Jakobusbriefes* (WUNT 2/93; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 53–54, 100–104; M. Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief: Eine Studie zu seiner soteriologischen und ethischen Konzeption* (SUNT 22; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 267–86.

³ Though only a few recognized "perfection" as an important theme in James (S. Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* [BNTC; London: Black, 1980], 28–32; *idem*, "The Doctrinal Basis for the Ethics of James," *SE* 7 (1982), 299–305; R. P. Martin, *James* [WBC 48; Waco, TX.: Word, 1988], lxxix–lxxxii; P. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* [JSNTSup 47; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], 199–217; E. Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James* [New York: Crossroad, 1992], 56–68; J.H. Elliott, "The Epistle of James in Rhetorical and Social Scientific Perspective: Wholeness-Holiness and Patterns of Replication," *BTB* 23 [1993], 71–81; R. Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* [London: Routledge, 1999], 165–68, 177–84) P. Hartin (*A Spirituality of Perfection* [Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1999]), Moo (*Letter of James* [PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 45–6, 80), and Cheung (*The Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of James* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003], especially chapter 4) have provided extended studies of perfection in James, which Hartin offering an entire text to the topic.

appears five times in James.⁴ Beyond the adjective, James contains two τέλ-related verbs as well: τελειῖτε (“fulfill the royal law,” 2:8) and ἐτελειώθη (“brought to completion,” 2:22). This word group describes something as “perfect,” or “complete” in the sense of the highest standard, or in some contexts it refers to something that is “fully developed” or “mature.” In the Septuagint τέλειος often translates מִמְּן (“unblemished”), a technical term originating in the sacrificial cult referring to the whole, unblemished offering. Though it regularly refers to the sacrificially pure animal it also refers to one’s relationship to God, which is expressed in a certain manner of life. In these instances, מִמְּן refers to wholeness of heart, or singleness of devotion, and is specifically applied to human conduct where it conveys the notion of walking blamelessly before the Lord. For example, in Genesis 17:1 the Lord says to Abraham: “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless [מִמְּן; LXX ἄμεμπτος].” Moses commands the nation of Israel: “You shall be blameless [מִמְּן; LXX τέλειος] before the LORD your God” (Deut 18:13). Furthermore Noah is presented as the model of the “perfect” person both in Scripture: “Noah was a righteous man, blameless [מִמְּן; LXX τέλειος] in his generation” (Gen 6:9); and in subsequent Jewish tradition: “...he was ‘perfect,’ intimating by this expression that he was possessed not of one virtue only but of all...” (Philo, *Abr.*, 34).⁵ Τέλειος is also used to translate the Hebrew phrase “a heart that is whole” (עַץ דָּלֶשׁ). In 1 Kings 8:61 we find the command “devote yourselves completely [ἔστωσαν αἰ καρδία ἡμῶν τέλειαι LXX] to the Lord your God, waking in his statutes and keeping his commandments...” and in 11:4: “For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true [οὐκ ἦν ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ τελεία] to the Lord his God.” Here τέλειος conveys the notion of whole-heartedness (or lack thereof) in

⁴ At 1:4a, b; 1:17; 1:25; 3:2 (note the concentration in chapter one). Of the nineteen occurrences of τέλειος in the New Testament, five occur in the undisputed Pauline epistles (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6, 13:10, 14:20; Phil 3:15), the term also appears in Matt 5:48 (2x), 19:21; Eph 4:13; Col 1:28, 4:12; Heb 5:14, 9:11; 1 John 4:18.

⁵ Philo also refers to the fact that Noah was unaffected by evil in every way (τέλειος ὁλόκληρος ἐξ ἀρχῆς *Abr.*, 47). This phrase is significant because James uses the same two terms to refer to the wholeness or perfection which is the goal of enduring faith (1:4).

devotion before God. One can say that these Old Testament individuals are $\alpha\mu\eta\tau/\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ because they are wholehearted in devotion to God and in this sense perfect or whole.

With this background informing our understanding of the term it is significant to note how James strategically places $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda$ -related words along with other key terms in his argument. $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ is used with “work” in James 1:4 and with “work” and “faith” in James 2:22: “You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected [$\acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omega\theta\eta$].” More important for the present argument, James uses $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ to modify both “law” and “wisdom.” First, James describes the law as perfect or whole. The one who is a “doer” of the word looks intently into the “perfect law” ($\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\ \tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$; 1:25) and further, one does well if one “fulfills [$\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$] the royal law” (2:8). Second, though never directly modifying the term $\sigma\omicron\varphi\acute{\iota}\alpha$, in 1:5–8 wisdom is cast as the remedy for the one who lacks $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ as described in verses 2–4. The end of verse four articulates the result of steadfastness in trials as being “mature, complete, lacking in nothing.” Yet, in the very next verse the author concedes that if one is “lacking” then seeking wisdom from God is the remedy. By implication the one possessing wisdom is also one who is “perfect” or whole before God. Furthermore, the $\delta\acute{\omega}\rho\eta\mu\alpha\ \tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ (“perfect gift”) that comes from the Father of lights in 1:17 is thematically connected to “wisdom from above” in 3:17.⁶ That is, “wisdom” is that “perfect” gift that comes from above originating with the Father of lights. Thus, “work,” “faith,” “law,” and “wisdom” are either designated as $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ or, in the case of wisdom, characterized as God’s remedy for the one lacking $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$. Though anticipating some of the argument to come, James seems to not only view the law and wisdom as “whole” or “perfect,” but also as agents of wholeness for God’s people. As God’s people receive the law and wisdom as interpreted through the Jesus tradition they are enabled to walk in wholeness before God.

Another indicator of the importance of “perfection/wholeness” in James’ argument, which very few have noticed, is the relationship between “perfection” and “purity” language in the letter.⁷ $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ bears

⁶ Zmijewski, “Christliche Vollkommenheit,” 73.

⁷ For a full discussion see D.R. Lockett, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James* (LNTS 366; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 21–25.

a certain semantic and conceptual overlap with the idea of “purity,” and, upon the backdrop of Jewish tradition, terms associated with purity such as “clean” (καθαρός), “undefiled” (ἀμίαντος), “pure” (ἄγνός), and “unstained” (ἄσπιλος) relate a similar concern for wholeness of constitution, or whole-heartedness. James uses each of these terms in his composition⁸ beginning in the key section, which concludes the opening prologue of the letter. In 1:26–27 James summarizes his thematic introduction by describing the content of “pure and undefiled” religion, or better piety (θρησκεία). Here “worthless” religion is contrasted with “pure and undefiled religion” (θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος) before God. Furthermore, maintaining “pure” religion includes keeping “oneself unstained [ἄσπιλον] from the world.” Elsewhere James reflects upon how “the perfect [τέλειος] man” is such by virtue of keeping control over his tongue, he declares that the tongue is a “world of iniquity”; “staining [ἡ σπιλοῦσα] the whole body.”⁹ The language of purity again surfaces in the climatic call to repentance in 4:7–10: “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse [καθαρίσατε] your hands, you sinners, and purify [ἀγνίσατε] your hearts, you double-minded.” And finally, the first characteristic produced by the “wisdom from above” is “pure” (ἄγνή). Thus James applies the cultic language of purity to his understanding of “perfection” and suggests the notion of one walking in wholeness or purity before God.¹⁰

⁸ The LXX translates דָּמִים (“unblemished”, or in an ethical sense “blameless”) with τέλειος in Gen 6:9; Exod 12:5; Deut 18:13; 2 Kings 22:26 (LXX). In its original context דָּמִים most often describes an animal or crop intended for sacrificial offering as “unblemished,” or “whole.” And the term often appears in cultic contexts with specific reference to the composition of the sacrifice offered in Israel’s worship (Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 4:3; and throughout). In these texts דָּמִים is rendered by ἄμωμος (“blameless”) in the LXX.

⁹ Note where the one who controls the tongue is “perfect” (3:2), the one failing to do, his religion is “worthless” (1:26).

¹⁰ This association is further evidenced by a lexical connection which Bauckham comments upon: “We should...note that James’ overarching paraenetic aim of ‘perfection’ (1:4) also has cultic resonances, since the Hebrew דָּמִים, to which James’ use of the τέλειος word-group (perfection, wholeness) corresponds, can mean both moral integrity and the unblemished wholeness of a sacrifice offered in the Temple” (Bauckham, *James*, 146).

Richard Bauckham has noted that the language of purity in James is connected to the theme of wholeness or perfection. He observes that

[t]he overarching theme of James is “perfection” or “wholeness” (1:4). Wholeness requires wholehearted and single-minded devotion to God, and its opposite is that half-heartedness in devotion to God and that divided loyalty, vacillating between God and the world, which James calls double-mindedness (1:8; 4:8). Also part of this complex of thought in James is the cultic language of purity and defilement (1:27; 4:8). The unblemished wholeness of the sacrifice suggests the image of the pure heart as the state of integrity before God or entire devotedness to God that is, again, the opposite of double-mindedness.¹¹

Bauckham goes on to articulate one specific aspect of wholeness, wholeness as exclusion, and links this notion to purity and its opposite, defilement. “This cultic language is closely connected, from its Old Testament and Jewish background, with wholeness. Its use belongs to this aspect of wholeness as exclusion: purity must be preserved by removing and keeping untainted by anything that would defile.”¹² This concern for exclusive loyalty as voiced in the Jewish background of Old Testament cultic law (Leviticus 19) also surfaces in Israel’s wisdom traditions in the form of humility. Both of these traditional sources—Old Testament law and wisdom—directly influence James’ notion of wholeness.

Wholeness in James’ Use of the Old Testament

The letter of James contains four direct citations,¹³ and makes frequent allusion to specific phrases and larger narrative portions of the Old Testament.¹⁴ However, the author pays special attention to Leviticus

¹¹ Bauckham, 165.

¹² *Ibid.*, 180.

¹³ James cites Lev 19:18b in 2:8; Deut 5:17–18 LXX in 2:11; Gen 15:6 in 3:23; and Prov 3:34 LXX in 4:6.

¹⁴ Though not formally cited, James alludes to Isa 40:6–8 (1:10–11); Lev 19:15 (2:1, 9); the narrative in Gen 22 and Josh 2, 6 (2:21, 25 respectively); the

19 (in chapter 2) and Proverbs 3 (in chapter 4 and 5). It is evident that as an exegete of Scripture, James intended more than the portion of text quoted to play a part in his exegesis and application. Thus we will consider how the broader context of the citation in question forwards James' particular argument and how this argument informed by Scripture informs James' understanding of wholeness.

Leviticus 19 in James 2

Following the introductory prologue, a distinct unit begins at 2:1 with the vocative address and a negative imperative dealing with the incongruence of partiality and faith in Jesus Christ: "show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory" (RSV).¹⁵ What "partiality" entails is illustrated in verses 2–4 which climactically end in the rhetorical question regarding partiality in judgment. Then, moving from the paradigm challenging questions of 2:5–7, James appeals to the formative traditions of the community in 8–11: the law of love for neighbor and two of the Ten Commandments.¹⁶

James 2:8 cites Leviticus 19:18b following the LXX.¹⁷ Where James elsewhere explicitly cites Scripture using variations of "says,"¹⁸ here the text citation is introduced by the phrase "according to the

combination of Deut 24:14, Lev 19:13, and Isa 5:9 (5:4); Hos 6:4 LXX (5:7); parts of the narrative in 1 Kings 18:42–45 (5:18); and Prov 10:12 (5:20).

¹⁵ The NRSV takes this phrase as a question along with H. Ropes (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* [ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916], 46), but is better translated as a general prohibition giving the impression that partiality is inconsistent with faith in the Lord Jesus (Martin, *James*, 59; L. T. Johnson, *Letter of James* [AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995], 220; Moo, *Letter of James*, 98). For the difficulty with the phrase τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης see Especially D. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James* (ICC; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 379–84.

¹⁶ Respectively the citation of Lev 19:18b in James 2:8 and to Deut 5:17–18 in James 2:11.

¹⁷ Lev 19:18 was influential in early Christian texts as it is cited in Matt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14 (allusion in Rom 12:19).

¹⁸ ὁ εἰπὼν...εἶπεν 2:11; ἡ γραφὴ ἢ λέγουσα 2:23; ἡ γραφὴ λέγει 4:5; διὸ λέγει 4:6.

Scripture” (κατὰ τὴν γραφήν), using *κατὰ* with the sense of “in correspondence with.”¹⁹ Rather than only signaling the citation is from Scripture, James is stating that there is a way of life or conduct which is “in keeping” with or consistent to the scriptural principle of “love your neighbor as yourself.” Thus Luke Johnson observes that “James obviously wants to place Lev 19:18b in its full context, which includes Lev 19:15.”²⁰ Leviticus 19:15 reads: “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.” Specifically, the phrase “you shall not be partial” is translated uniquely in the Septuagint as “do not receive the face” (οὐ λήμψη πρόσωπον). The term rendered “partiality” in 2:1 is a Christian neologism,²¹ *προσωπολημψίας*, which echoes the phrase οὐ λήμψη πρόσωπον in LXX Leviticus 19:18. Furthermore, the verbal form of the term is taken up in 2:9 (*προσωπολημπεῖ*). Keeping in mind the proposition stated in 2:1 regarding the incongruity between claiming faith in Jesus Christ and showing favoritism, James is arguing that rather than partiality, loving the neighbor is “in keeping with Scripture.” Thus one may agree with Johnson that James is expounding upon the admonition against partiality and unjust judgment in Leviticus 19:15 in light of the “love command” in 19:18. James, having in mind the entire passage of Leviticus 19:15–18, creatively applies the law of love for one’s neighbor not only as the hermeneutical principle for understanding Torah but also as a key characteristic of the one who is perfect or whole.

Further indication of an extended reflection on Leviticus 19, the author continues to add more authoritative evidence to his argument against partiality by citing two of the “ten words,” from the LXX version

¹⁹ For the only other use of this construction see 1 Cor 15:3–4 (κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, 2x).

²⁰ Johnson, *Letter of James*, 231.

²¹ Johnson states: “The term *prosopolempsia* is a Christian neologism, based upon the Hebrew *nasa panim*, translated in the LXX by *labanein prosopon*, literally “to life up the face/appearance” (see Lev 19:15 and, similarly, Mal 1:8), in the sense of “respecting persons” or showing favoritism (see Luke 20:21; Gal 2:6; also *Did.* 4:3; *Barn.* 19:4). The usage in Lev 19:15 makes it clear that the original context of the language was that of judging cases in the community: unjust judgment was that based on appearances rather than on the merits of the case” (*Letter of James*, 221).

of Deuteronomy 5.”²² The same law that says, “love your neighbor as your self,” also says: “do not murder” and “do not commit adultery.” In keeping with Second Temple tradition, James draws together the Decalogue with the principle of non-partiality characteristic of Leviticus 19; a combination seen in Philo, Josephus, and *Pseudo-Phocylides*.²³ The argument runs like this, partiality and faith in Jesus Christ are incompatible because the scripture says: “love your neighbor as yourself,” and just as you should not commit adultery or murder, you should not show partiality because the law is a whole.²⁴ Furthermore, Leviticus 19 itself reflects echoes the Decalogue. Samuel Balentine notes: “all the instructions in this chapter function as commentary on the Decalogue given at Sinai....”²⁵ Some even assert that each of the commandments

²² The order of the commands are slightly different in the LXX and the MT. In the LXX of Exod 20:13–15, adultery is followed by stealing, then killing, yet in the LXX of Deut 5:17–18 stealing comes after murdering thus it is perhaps more likely that the author of James follows LXX Deut 5:17–18 here.

²³ Cf. Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.1–9; Josephus, *Apion* 2.190–219; and *Ps.-Phoc.* 9–41.

²⁴ In treating the command to love the neighbor as the summary of the whole law, has James neglected the commandment to love God, which Jesus placed first, before the commandment to love the neighbor (Matt 22: 37–38; Mark 12:29–30; cf. Luke 10:28)? The commandment to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:5; 11:13) is part of the *Shema*, to which James refers twice (2:19; 4:12). He also twice refers to the eschatological reward as promised by God to “those who love him” (1:12; 2:5; cf. 1 Cor 2:9; Sir 2:15–16). Further, the commandment’s requirement of devotion “with all your heart and with all your soul” is the implicit opposite of the attitude James calls “double-minded” (1:8; 4:8). Allison (*James*, 379) notes that James takes up the traditional “combination of the imperative to love God (Deut 6.5) with the imperative to love neighbor (Lev 19.18), which Christian tradition attributed to Jesus. But whether he knew that combination from the Jewish tradition or from the Jesus tradition or both cannot be ascertained.” And again Allison notes, “there was a conventional, close relationship between Lev 19.18 and the second half of the decalogue, which would entail that breaking any one of the commandments in Exod 20.13–17 = Deut 5.17–21 would mean breaking Lev 19.18; and the latter was widely considered to be a general summary of the second half of the decalogue and so of the whole Torah” (*James*, 415; see sources cited in n. 328 and 406–7).

²⁵ S.E. Balentine, *Leviticus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 161. Allison notes, “Given the conventional status of Lev 19.18 as the most important principle in the Torah, that verse is a part that stands for the whole, and James

specifically appear in Leviticus 19.²⁶ Whether or not each of the “ten words” are present in Leviticus 19, there is clear evidence that the chapter offers commentary upon the Decalogue as a whole. The significance of this observation is that James 2:1–13 seems to be an exegetical reflection upon Leviticus 19 and reference to two of the “ten words,” though likely influenced by LXX Deuteronomy 5, could very well have also reflected the interpretive concerns regarding the Decalogue present in Leviticus 19. All of this makes clear that James was strongly influenced by the Torah in general and interpretive perspective of Leviticus 19 in particular. The author of James seems to have been reflecting on the entirety of Leviticus 19 here in chapter 2.²⁷ The point of

seems to be writing about both part and whole simultaneously” (*James* 402–3). And further Allison argues, “James probably shows knowledge of one of the exegetical traditions associated with Lev 19.18, namely, that it summarizes much of Torah in general or the second half of the Decalogue in particular” (*James*, 406; see also Bauckham, *James*, 142–44; Jackson-McCabe, *Logos*, 169–76).

²⁶ W.C. Kaiser (“The Book of Leviticus,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994], 1131) lists the following connections: 1 and 2 appear in 19:4; 3 in 19:12; 4 and 5 in 19:16; 7 in 19:29; 8 and 9 in 19:11, 16; and finally, 10 in 19:18. Balentine notes however, “more than half of these parallels are inexact at best. The only Commandments clearly echoed are numbers, one, two, four, and five...” (*Leviticus*, 161).

²⁷ Allison thinks that Jas 2:8–13 is an exposition on Leviticus 19:18 (*James*, 381). Allison summarizes the logic of James 2: “The point rather is to make explicit that showing partiality to the rich is not an issue of etiquette but a matter of Torah...favoritism contradicts love of neighbor” (*James*, 401). Allison further states: “In this section James cites Lev 19.18, alludes to 19.15, and draws upon an exegetical tradition associated with the latter. Leviticus 19 has, moreover, influenced other passages in our book. One may wonder, then, whether the train of thought in vv. 10–12 has something to do with how that famous chapter ends: ‘And you will keep all my law (LXX: πάντα τὸν νόμον) and all (πάντα) my commandments and you will do (ποιήσετε) them’” (*James*, 413). L.T. Johnson (“The Use of Leviticus 19 in the Letter of James,” *JBL* 101 (1982), 391–401), argues that James chapter 2 alludes to Leviticus in multiple ways, which seems to make the text almost midrashic in parts. See also I. Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process: Tradition and Interpretation in Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 7 entitled “The midrashic background for James 2:21–23,” 145–53; M. Gertner, “Midrashim in the New Testament,” *JJS* 7 (1962), 267–92, especially, 285; and Gertner, “Midrashic Terms and

James' extended reflection on Leviticus 19 is that favoritism toward the rich is at odds with the command to love the neighbor—which for James is the command taken up by Jesus and summarizes the whole law.²⁸

James selects and cites the epitome of the law, Leviticus 19:18b, and comments upon its implication for his readers. Those reading James' letter are challenged to view the love command as a summary and interpretive principle of the Torah and consequently as a *means* to freedom and "perfection." Loving the neighbor, as the summation of the law, not only excludes favoritism, but moreover is a primary means to a life of wholeness before God.

Proverbs 3 in James 4

James 4:6 cites Proverbs 3:34 and introduces the text citation with the phrase "therefore it says [διὸ λέγει]." ²⁹ In the literary context of James, the citation functions as a transition from the indictment against the audience for living under the influence of earthly wisdom, which produces envy and strife in 3:13—4:6, to the call to repentance in 4:7—10. The citation not only marks the transition between the indictment on one hand and the call to repentance on the other, but also it constitutes the foundation for the following exposition regarding the penitent humble and promised judgment upon the arrogant.

In the verses following the quotation of Proverbs 3:34, James, in reverse order, expounds the second half of the text in 4:7—10, and then considers the first phrase of the citation in 4:11—5:6. Arguing for this structure, Alonso-Schökel observes that the thematic refrain of "humble yourselves" (ταπεινώθετε) in 4:10 recalls the "lowly" (ταπεινοῖς) in 4:6 thus framing James' exposition upon the second half of the citation: "God gives grace to the lowly." The first half of the citation, "God resists the proud," is then considered in 4:11—5:6, which is signaled by the

Techniques in the New Testament and the Epistle of James, a Midrash on a Psalm," *Studia Evangelica* 3 (1964), 463.

²⁸ See Bauckham, *James*, 142–47. Allison notes: "Since Lev 19.18 was widely thought of as summarizing half of the decalogue, and since furthermore the decalogue was in turn thought of as a sort of summary or précis of the Torah, Lev 19.18 was not an isolated commandment but an imperative that stood for a large portion of the law" (*James*, 407).

²⁹ Again James follows the LXX except for the substitution of θεός for κύριος.

repetition of the rare verb ἀντιτάσσω in both 4:6 and 5:6. Read in light of this lexical connection, the subjectless phrase in 5:6 “he does not resist you” (οὐκ ἀντιτάσσεται ὑμῖν)—taken either as a statement or a question—may be read in light of in 4:6. In other words this might indicate that the subject of the verb in 4:6 (ὁ θεός) may be supplied for the verb appearing in 5:6 and that the entire phrase could be expressed as a rhetorical question rounding off James’ exposition of God’s judgment against the proud: “does he [God] not resist you?”³⁰ Alonso-Schökel outlines the logic of the passage as “God gives grace to the humble, therefore humble yourselves before God; God opposes the arrogant, you behave arrogantly; should not He oppose you?”³¹ This effectively marks the end of the James’ exposition of the proverb.

Not only has James offered an exposition of the text citation and made application for his present readers, he also calls the larger context of Proverbs 3 to mind. When Proverbs 3:34 is read in its original context a set of implicit contrasts emerge. The LXX version of Proverbs 3:33–35 reads:³² “The curse of God is on the houses of the ungodly [ἀσεβῶν; פְּשָׁר “wicked” MT]; but the habitations of the just [δικαίων] are blessed. The Lord resists the proud [לְצַיִם “scorners” MT]; but he gives grace to the humble [tapeinoi~j; עֲנָוִים “humble” MT]. The wise shall inherit glory; but the ungodly [ἀσεβεῖς; כְּסִילִים, “foolish” MT] have exalted *their own* dishonor.” Bauckham argues that if the preceding and following verses are aligned with 3:34, two sets of three terms result: “wicked,” “arrogant,” and “fools,” contrasted with “righteous,” “lowly,” and “wise.”³³ In light of the promise in Proverbs 3:35, that the wise will inherit honor but fools dishonor, James reads the wisdom tradition as referring to God’s final retribution, and thus, interprets the traditional Jewish wisdom saying in

³⁰ L. Alonso-Schökel, “James 5,2 [sic] and 4,6,” *Biblica* 54 (1973), 73–76; see also Johnson, *Letter of James*, 305; Penner, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology: Re-reading an Ancient Christian Letter* (JSNTSupp 121; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1996), 155–58; both McKnight (*The Letter of James* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 399 n.142) and Allison (*James*, 687–8) are unpersuaded.

³¹ As recorded in Allison, *James*, 688.

³² The text of the LXX is in view as Allison notes: “The citation is of LXX Prov 3.34, except that the subject in the latter is anarthrous κύριος” (*James*, 623); the Hebrew is very different.

³³ Bauckham, *James*, 154.

an eschatological context. This complex of ideas is summarized in James' exposition in 4:10: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." The eschatological reversal of status before God reinforces the antithesis between how God generally deals with two opposite types of individuals: first the "lowly" (4:7–10) and then the "proud" (4:11—5:6).

Thus not only does James quote Proverbs 3:34 but he also intends to comment on the text allowing the logical pressure of the citation, as unpacked in his exposition, to influence his readers' actions. The "lowly" one God rewards with grace; the "proud" is promised judgment. Within the matrix of James' argument, the "lowly" one bears a key characteristic of one who is "perfect" or "whole" and in contrast the "proud" manifests his lack of "perfection." Here James interprets the wisdom traditions of Israel to refer to two different types of individual, one traveling the path of "wisdom" to "perfection" and one traveling the path of "foolishness" to "death."³⁴

Wholeness in Intertextual Perspective

The distinctive melody line sounded in the letter of James is deeply influenced by his hearing of Christian Scripture. Both Torah and Wisdom are foundational to the way James understands wholeness. Using the Torah as his authority, James argues for one to live in keeping with the law as understood by Jesus, that is the Torah summarized in the love command. Here a clear contrast appears between judging with partiality on the one hand (which is tantamount to breaking the law and thus forfeiting wholeness) and loving the neighbor on the other. Living in light of the former is to embrace imperfection and ultimately death, while the one loving the neighbor lives in keeping with the law, and thus is walking blamelessly before God, choosing the path of life. Similarly, in James' exposition of "wisdom" one may either live in proud arrogance or in gentle humility, living either as a fool inheriting dishonor and punishment or as one who is wise inheriting honor and life.

Within James' overall strategy he associates both law and wisdom with wholeness or "perfection." The "the law of liberty" and wisdom "from above" are both perfect gifts which develop holiness and

³⁴ Commenting on James 1:5 Allison notes that the connection between perfection (1:2–4) and wisdom (1:5) is traditional (*James*, 156).

humility—both key components of wholehearted devotion to God. The law of liberty, summarized in the dual love command,³⁵ is a means by which wholeness before God is achieved. Likewise, wisdom, which is both a gift from God in response to prayer and a result of studying and practicing the perfect law, is a necessary component of the one possessing wholeness (1:4–5). Perfection is the goal and Torah and Wisdom, as read through the lens of Messiah Jesus, are the means to that goal.

Identifying the *leitmotif* consisting of the intersection of “perfection” and James’ hearing of Scripture, specifically Torah and Wisdom, helps tune our ears to the hermeneutical and theological symphony of the letter. Yet acknowledging this connection may also demonstrate that “perfection” for James does not reverberate with the notion of perfection we see in the history of the western church. Rather than viewing perfection as achieving a state of sinlessness, James redirects our attention to living in wholeness before God—singular loyalty and wholehearted devotion to God alone. And though James does register a concern for separation from “the world” as part of perfection, sectarian isolation from the surrounding culture is clearly not James’ primary view of wholeness.³⁶ James understands Christian “perfection” as consisting of loving one’s neighbor and embracing the wisdom of humility. James articulates the concern for taking care of brothers and sisters in need and pointedly states that “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, [read “perfect”] is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress.” And it seems this is the needed corrective the church must hear as it attempts “to keep [itself] unstained by the world.” Thus in walking the “path of life” for James we must not neglect the corporate nature of “perfection” brought to fruition through the law and wisdom.

³⁵ Whereas this study has focused on the law of love of neighbor, James also is clearly aware of the law of love of God (2:19).

³⁶ For a fuller discussion of whether James strikes a sectarian posture see D.R. Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 146–84; and *idem*, “Strong and Weak Lines: Permeable Boundaries between Church and Culture in the Letter of James,” *Review and Expositor* 108 (2011), 391–405.