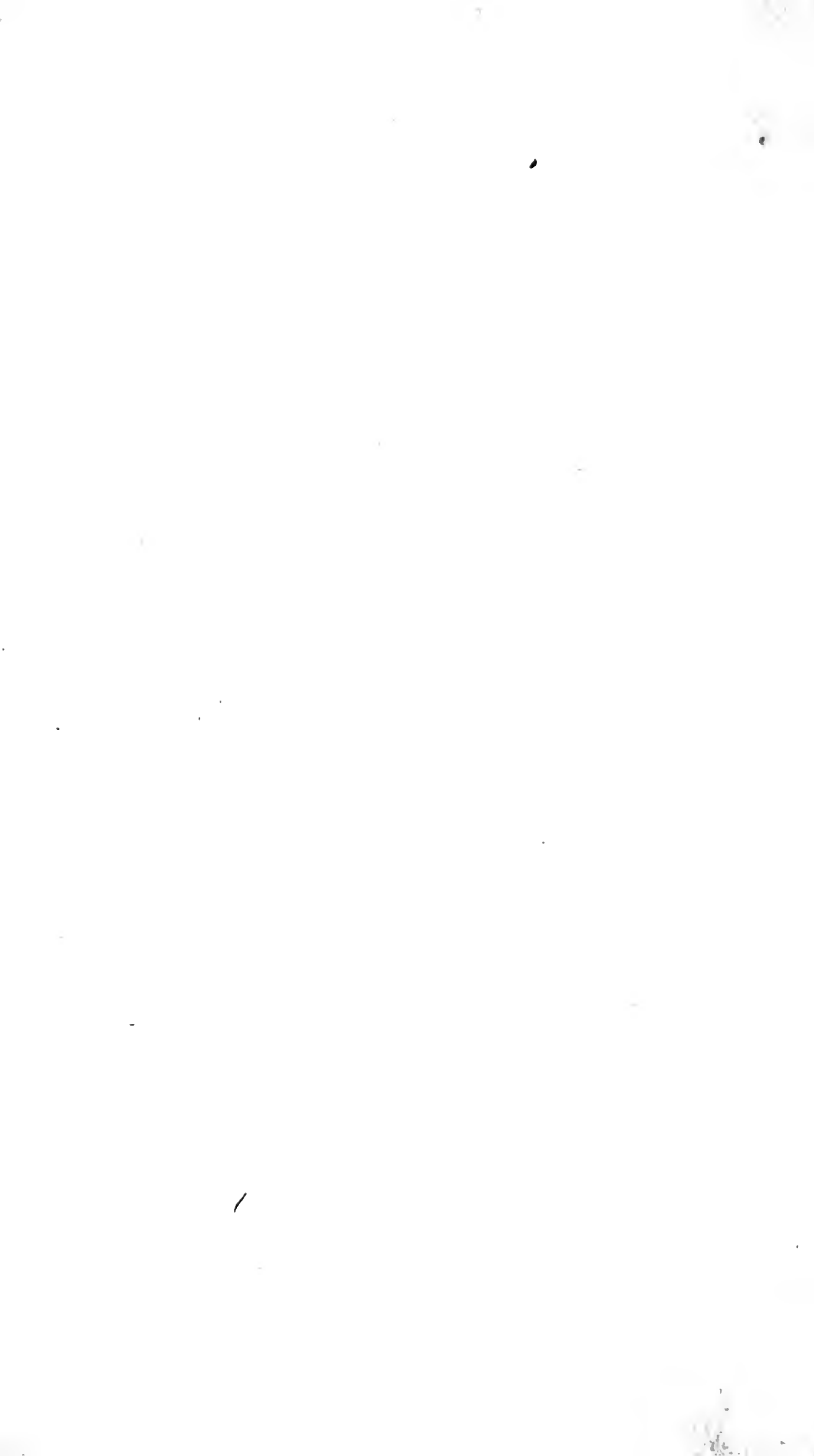
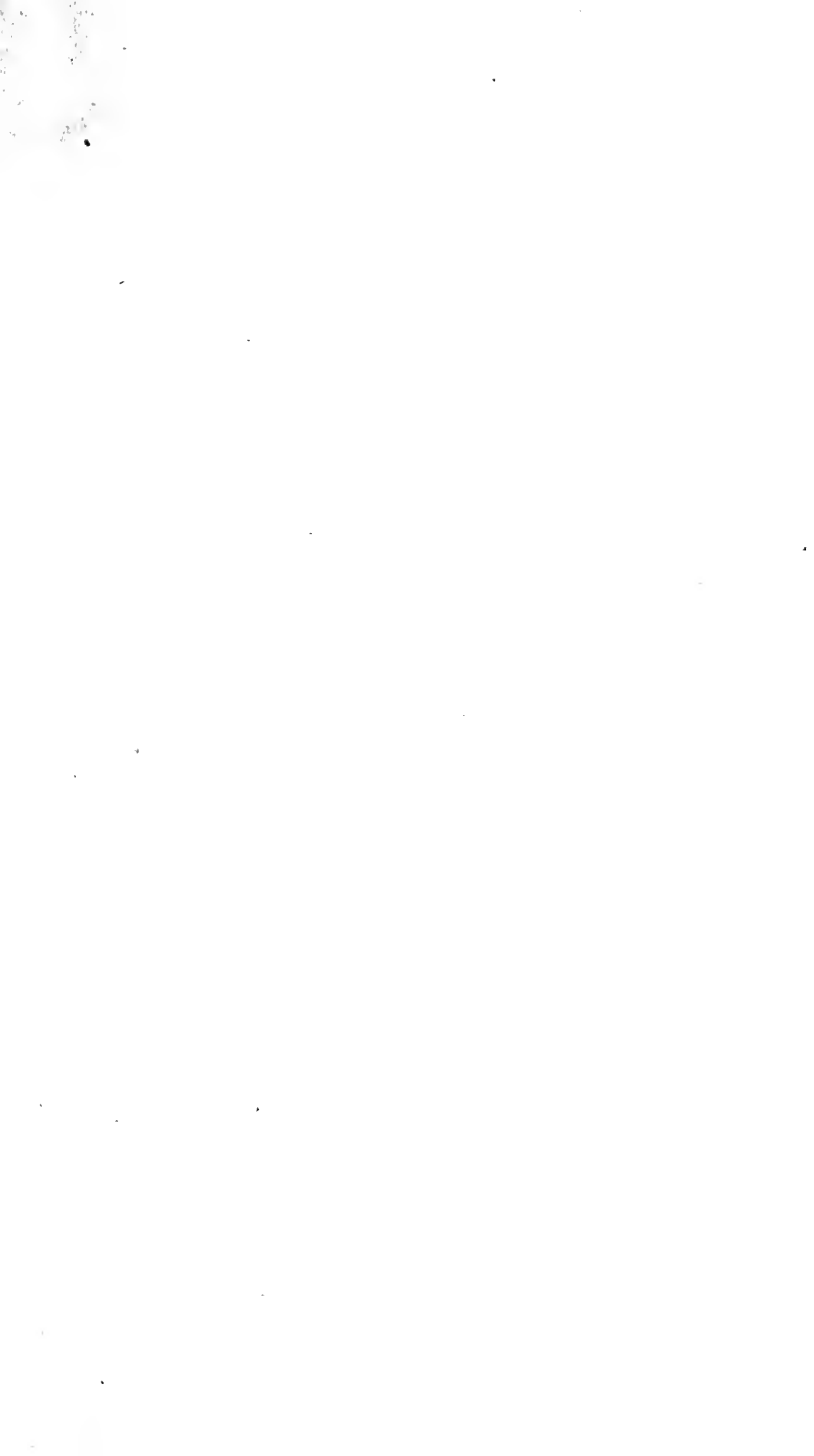




From the Library of  
Professor Samuel Miller  
in Memory of  
Judge Samuel Miller Breckinridge  
Presented by  
Samuel Miller Breckinridge Long  
to the Library of  
Princeton Theological Seminary

SCC  
8542







- 1 Scott's Rights of God.
- 2 Miller's Fast Sermon. Yellow Pine
- 3 Dwight on Goodrich.
- 4 Morse's Masonic Sermon.
- 5 McWhorter's Missionary Sermon.
- 6 Rogers on Witherpoon.
- 7 Pearce <sup>Kirkland on Witherpoon.</sup> at the Ordination of Belcher.
- 8 Osgood on Prophecies.
- 9 Lumbull's Ordination Sermon.
- 10 Emmons's Ordination Sermon.
- 11 Calvin on James.
- 12 Steven's Ordination Sermon.







✓  
CALVIN'S

COMMENTARY

ON THE

*Sam. Miller*

EPISTLE OF JAMES:

NEWLY TRANSLATED

FROM THE

ORIGINAL LATIN.

---

WITH

NOTES, PRACTICAL, HISTORICAL, AND CRITICAL.

---

ABERDEEN:

PRINTED BY J. CHALMERS AND CO.;

AND SOLD BY A. BROWN, BOOKSELLER, BROADSTREET.

MDCCXCVII.



---

## TO THE PUBLIC.

---

**I**N this short epistle of James, you have a specimen of the labours of Calvin. His strength of understanding, concise manner, and nervous style, occasioned no small difficulty in translating this part of his Commentary into English.

The learned know, that diffuse sentiment is more easily translated than the close, accurate, and sentimental.—Care has been taken to keep as near the original as possible; so far, at least, as the English language would permit. A more elegant and verbose translation might have been given; but the great object with the editors was, to give their author, and not themselves: and they had no hesitation to sacrifice their own fame to honesty and truth. If they have been mistaken in any part, let it be ascribed to inability, and not to design. They will listen with candour, to any improvements suggested, by others better qualified, for an undertaking of this nature, and receive them with gratitude.

Calvin is one of those writers who appear a little stiff on the first perusal: but has this special recommendation—that he always improves upon his readers. Some authors please for a moment, and are relished no more: but, the more frequently Calvin's Commentary is perused, the sensible reader becomes the fonder of it. He always reads to his improvement, and with the greater satisfaction and profit.



---

## P R E F A C E.

---

FROM the writings of Hieronymus and Eusebius we find, that this epistle was not received by many of the ancient churches, without some degree of contest. [1] There are even some, at this day, who hold it to be unworthy of divine authority. For my part, as I can see no just cause of rejecting it, I do, therefore, embrace it without hesitation, and cheerfully. For, altho' the doctrine of justification by grace appears, in the second chapter, to be reversed\*; we shall, however, easily do away the force of that objection in the proper place. Again, what tho' he appear more sparing in preaching the grace of Christ than is consistent with the character of an apostle: 'tis not to be expected, that they all should handle one and the same argument. The writings of Solomon differ much from those of David, both as to matter and style. Solomon directs his view, chiefly, to form the external man, and to deliver to us the precepts of political life: David constantly chooses the spiritual worship of God, peace of conscience, or the gracious promise of salvation, for his theme. This difference, however, is no reason, why, in approving the one, we should condemn the other. Even among the evangelists themselves, there is such a difference in displaying the glory of Christ, that the other three, compared with John, seem hardly to possess the sparks of that brightness which appears so conspicuous in him: still, however, we pay an equal regard to them all. Wherefore, to me it appears a sufficient reason for receiving this epistle as authentic, that it contains nothing unworthy of an apostle of Christ; but, on

B

the

---

\* Paul asserting "that we are justified by grace—and by faith"—whereas the words of James are, "Ye see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

the contrary, abounds in doctrines, the utility of which extends to every part of the christian life. Here we find eminent maxims concerning patience, prayer, the excellence of heavenly doctrine, humility, the exercises of the saints, the command of the tongue, the observance of peace, the government of the passions, contempt of a present life, and many similar subjects, each of which we shall discuss in its proper place. But with regard to the author of this epistle there is greater reason of doubt. One thing is certain, that it was not James, the son of Zebedee; for he was put to death by Herod soon after the resurrection of our Lord. The ancient fathers, in general, agree, that it was one of the disciples, whose surname was Oblias, a kinsman of Christ, who presided over the church of Jerusalem; and they are of opinion, that it is the same James whom Paul mentions, together with Peter and John, in the ii. chapter of the epistle to the Galatians; and of whom he says, “that they seemed to be pillars.” But, to me, it appears not at all probable, that one of the disciples should be reckoned among the three pillars, and thus exalted above the other ten apostles. I, therefore, rather incline to go into this opinion, that he of whom Paul there speaks, was James the son of Alphaeus. At the same time, however, I do not deny that there was another, the overseer of the church of Jerusalem, and one too of the number of the disciples. [2] For the apostles were not to be bound down to one place. [3] But which of the two was the writer of this epistle I will not take upon me to determine. That he, who was surnamed Oblias, was a person of great authority among the Jews, is evident from this; that after he had been cruelly put to death by the faction of a wicked high priest, Josephus, without hesitation, ascribes the destruction of the city, as owing, in a great measure, to his death.

---

#### NOTES ON THE PREFACE.

[1] Eusebius, one of the most judicious and faithful of the ancient historians, divides the books which claim a divine inspiration, into three classes. 1st, Those which were universally received by the whole church. 2dly, Such as were received by a majority, but rejected by some: and 3dly, The spurious productions. Among those books which were received as divine  
by

by a majority, but rejected by some, are the epistles of James and Jude; the second and third of John; and the second of Peter. The epistle of James, however, was received into the sacred canon very early, as is evident from its being translated into Syriac, at the same time, with the first epistles of Peter and of John. The evidence, that these three epistles were written by apostles, no doubt, was the reason why they were so early adopted as canonical.

The extreme caution wherewith this epistle was received, shews us the great care of the primitive church to be thoroughly satisfied, that what they admitted as sacred scripture was assuredly written by men divinely inspired. The credulous easily admit what they wish to be true. Aware of this propensity, like men of integrity, the first christians examined again and again, and permitted nothing to be received on general evidence. Hence the reason why the general epistles were last of all taken into the sacred canon. Paul's letters or epistles were all inscribed to particular churches or persons; and it was easy to ascertain whether such letters existed, being in the possession of those to whom they were transmitted; and copies of the originals carefully preserved: whereas the epistle of James being addressed to christians at large, a considerable time must have elapsed before it could be ascertained in what particular place the original was lodged, and the evidence of its authenticity collected. The receiving of it, so universally, after such a tedious, accurate, and scrupulous examination, is a strong proof that the primitive church was fully convinced of its being genuine.

## NOTE II.

[2] The opinion, that there were three of the name of James, long prevailed with many. James the Great; James the Less; and James the Just. Dr Cave says this opinion is built on a sandy foundation. The scriptures evidently refer to two only of this name. James the Great, the son of Zebedee, so called on account of his age. This James was put to death by Herod in the 44th year of our Lord. James the Less, called also James the Just, and the same whom Calvin alludes to by the name of Oblias, was the author of this epistle. He lived about eighteen years later than the other James, and wrote his epistle a little before the destruction of Jerusalem. He is supposed to have been the son of Alphaeus, by a relation of the Virgin Mary, a niece of Zacharias, John the Baptist's father. His mother, who was

also called Mary, after the death of her first husband, became wife to Joseph the Carpenter, before his espousals to the Virgin; and James, though called the son of Alphaeus, remotely, after the manner of the Jews, was, probably, the real son of Joseph, and one of those four sons whom he raised up to his deceased kinsman. This opinion is best supported by the words of scripture, Matth. xiii. 55. where the inspired writer leads us to believe, that James was the son of Joseph, in the same literal and natural sense, in which we are to understand Mary to have been the mother of Christ. His residing in Joseph's house along with Joses, Simon, and Jude, and making one of the family, strongly supports this opinion.

## NOTE III.

[3] In the primitive church there were apostles, elders, and brethren. It was the peculiar office of an apostle, 1st, To testify of the resurrection of Christ. For this purpose, it behoved him to have seen the Lord, either in the flesh, as in the case of the eleven apostles; or in vision, as in Paul's case, who appears to have had no personal acquaintance of the Messiah, when he dwelt on earth. 2d, To confer the gifts of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. That this power was peculiar to the apostles, is evident from the case of the Samaritans; for though on Philip's preaching and their believing, he baptized them, yet he could not confer on them the Holy Ghost. Luke expressly affirms, that the Holy Ghost had not fallen upon any of them, till the apostles, at Jerusalem hearing of Philip's success, sent down Peter and John into Samaria; and that after they had prayed and laid their hands on these new converts, immediately they received the Holy Ghost. To this power, our Saviour alludes in the xxiv. of Luke, and 29th verse, emphatically called power from on high. It is the same word by which David, in the ex. psalm, 2d verse, had foretold the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We translate it the "*Rod of Christ's strength*;" but it was better rendered, in the old translation, "*the rod of his power*." This power of conferring the gift of the spirit, is what Paul particularly mentions, as the most distinguishing proof of his apostleship, 1 Cor. ix. 2. Of all the other gifts of the Holy Ghost, this was the least liable to suspicion, and impossible to be counterfeited. 3d, The apostles, for the most part, were not stationary in the exercise of their office; but frequently travelled from place to place, planting and confirming the churches, and cau-



conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost: whereas the disciples were more confined in the functions of their office; though not always restricted to one place.

The elders, or disciples, were next in rank to the apostles: they were such as had accompanied with Christ from the beginning of his ministry, heard his doctrine, saw his miracles, conversed with him, after he rose from the dead; and on whom the Holy Ghost fell at Pentecost, without the laying on of hands. Among the Jews, there were the elders of the people, and the elders of the city, men of age and experience. In analogy to this, it is probable, that those christians who had been the oldest disciples of Christ, and hereby had the advantages of being well acquainted with his doctrine, miracles, and history, were stiled elders in the church, and frequently officiated as public teachers. Such were the elders Paul commanded Titus to ordain at Crete. The first ministers of the gospel, and the deacons of the church were chosen from among them. Their labours, however, were much more limited than the labours of the apostles, nor were they of equal authority in the church. True, indeed, the eleven apostles and Matthias were elders; though there were elders who were not apostles. Peter expressly calls himself an elder in his first epistle, chap. v. and so does John. Yet it is remarkable of Paul, that he never stiles himself an elder; even when giving himself the greatest weight, he only calls himself Paul the Aged. Paul was not of the hundred and twenty on whom the Holy Ghost fell at Pentecost, nor had he accompanied with Christ as they had done; therefore, strictly speaking, was not an elder, but an apostle born out of due season.



---

---

# CALVIN'S COMMENTARY

## ON THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

---

### CHAP. I.

**J**AMES, [1] a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

*To the twelve tribes.]* When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity, the king of Assyria settled them in different parts of his dominions. [2]— Afterwards, as usually happens in the revolutions of kingdoms, which, in ancient times, were frequent, it is probable, that they were often separated, and removed from one place to another.— The Jews, indeed, had been scattered up and down in almost all the regions of the world. Those of them, there-

fore, whom he could not address by speech and face to face, because they were far and widely dispersed, he now exhorts by letter. And the reason why he treats not on the subject of the grace of Christ, and faith in him, appears to be this; that he was addressing himself to those who had been already properly established in the first principles by others; so that information on points of doctrine was not so necessary to them, as animated exhortations to practice.

2. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.

2. *Count it all joy.]* The first exhortation is, that they should meet, with joy, the temptati-

ons by which their faith is tried. At that time, it was a primary and essentially necessary ob-

ob-

object, that the Jews, almost overwhelmed with calamities, should be supported and comforted. For so infamous was the name of the nation, that they were hated and contemned by all people, whithersoever they came.— And still more miserable was the condition of the christians, who had the Gentiles of their own kindred for their bitterest foes.— This exhortation, however, is not so peculiarly appropriated to any one particular period, but that it may be useful to the faithful in every other; for their life is a constant warfare while on earth. But, in order the better to comprehend its meaning, we observe, that by the word, temptations, we are, undoubtedly, to understand adversity, or the hardships and afflictions of life, for these are trials of our obedience towards God. He enjoins the faithful, then, “to count it all joy,” when they are exercised with calamities: and not only when they fall into one temptation, but into more; not only, when they are of one kind, but when they are manifold and various. And surely, forasmuch as these trials have a tendency to mortify the flesh, the vices of which are continually springing up in us; so, for that reason, it is necessary that they should be frequently repeated. Nor is it to be wondered at, that as our

diseases are various, so the remedies applied for their cure should also be various: and hence, because the vices of ambition, of avarice, of envy, of gluttony, of the immoderate love of this world, and the innumerable other lusts with which we abound, cannot be cured by one and the same medicine, the Lord visits us with manifold and various afflictions. When he requires them “to count it all joy, &c.” it is, as if he had said, that such temptations were so far to be accounted profitable, as to be really the subject matter of rejoicing: in fine, it signifies that there is nothing in afflictions which ought to disturb our joy. And thus he not only enjoins to bear adversity with quietness and equanimity, but teaches that there is reason why the faithful should rejoice, even when hard pressed by calamities. There is no doubt, but the constitution of our nature is such, that any trial or affliction will affect us with pain and sorrow; nor can any of us so far divest ourselves of our natural feelings, as when we sensibly experience evil, not to grieve and be sad. But this is no reason why the children of God, under the direction of the Spirit, may not rise above all the pains of the flesh: and hence it is, that even in the midst of sorrow, they need not cease to rejoice.

3. Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

3. *Knowing this, &c.*] Hence we see why he calls adverse circumstances in life, or afflictions, *temptations*; namely because they serve for the trying of our faith: this cause is here assigned for the confirmation of the foregoing sentence. For it might be objected; how is it possible we should account that joyous or pleasant, which to our natural senses is grievous and bitter? In answer to this, he shews that 'tis on account of the effect of afflictions, we ought to rejoice in them, because they produce patience, which is a fruit of high price. Since God, then, by these, provides for our future welfare and salvation, he certainly furnishes us with just ground of rejoicing. Peter uses the same argument near the beginning of his first epistle, chap. i. 6. 7. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness thro' manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, tho' it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Certainly, it is on this account

that we dread diseases, poverty, banishment, imprisonment, disgrace and death, because we account them to be evils: but when we come to understand, that by the goodness of God they are converted into the means of our salvation, it would be ungrateful in us to repine when visited with them; or rather, not voluntarily to present ourselves as the subjects of such fatherly treatment. Paul, in his v. chapter to the Romans, and 3d verse, says, "we glory" on account of that, which James here bids us rejoice in: "we glory in tribulation" also, knowing that tribulation "worketh patience;" altho' what Paul immediately subjoins—"and patience experience," seems to be contrary to the words of James. For Paul puts experience in the third place as the effect of patience, which James places before it as the cause; "the trying of your faith," says he, "worketh patience." The solution is easy. James uses a word in an active sense;\* and says, "the trying of your faith worketh patience;" because, if the Lord were not to try and examine us, but leave us alto-

C

gether

\* James uses the word *δοκιμιον*, Exploratio, a search, a trying, or a making trial—Paul uses the word *δοκιμη*, Experientia, experience, or a practical knowledge.

gether at our ease and in comfort, there would be no need of patience, or of fortitude of mind in enduring calamities; Paul, on the other hand, uses a word in a passive sense, and means, when he says, "patience worketh experience," that while thro' patience we overcome evils, we experience the happy effect of God's power and assistance in our struggle with these calamities; for then the truth is more immediately displayed, that he is a present help in time of need: and hence our confidence and hope in him for the future, are increased; for our faith in the divine truth becomes more firm, the more we have experienced it. Paul's doctrine then is this,

that from such an experience of divine grace, hope springs up: not, that it then has its first commencement, but that it is thus increased and confirmed. Both, however, mean that adversity furnishes ground and opportunity for the exercise of patience. Our minds, however, are not naturally so constituted that affliction should work in them patience. But Paul and James do not so much point at what the nature of man is, in this respect, as they do at the providence of God, which so orders it, that the faithful learn patience from afflictions; altho' the ungodly by them are more and more incited to outrage and fury; as the case of Pharaoh witnesseth.

4. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

4. *But let patience have her perfect work.*] Forasmuch as generous and worthy feelings often arise in the mind, and immediately die away again, he therefore requires constancy: this, says he, will be the true patience which shall endure to the end: for *work* is here taken for the effect. Not only must we be superior in one contest, but persevere thro' the whole of life. *The perfection* here mentioned may have a respect also to sincerity of mind, and imply, that mankind should offer

themselves freely and not feignedly to God: but as the word *work* is added, I choose rather to explain it as meaning constancy. For there are many, as we have already said, who at the first display an heroic magnanimity in the christian warfare, but in a short time are fatigued and worn out: wherefore, he enjoins those, who would be *perfect and entire*, to persevere to the utmost. By these two words, viz. "perfect and entire," he points out what he immediately explains, that

that is, those who faint not nor are weary: for such as become dispirited and fail in the exercise of patience, will gradually relax in their exertions, and at length give up the contest.

5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

5. *If any of you lack wisdom.]* Forasmuch as our reason and all our feelings recoil at the thoughts of happiness in adversity; therefore, the apostle enjoins it as our duty to ask of God, that he would endow us with this wisdom: for I confine the meaning of the word wisdom to the circumstances of the present passage; as if he had said, if this doctrine be above your capacities, pray earnestly to God, that he would illuminate you by his holy Spirit. For as this consideration alone is sufficient to mitigate any bitterness of calamity whatever, namely, that what is disagreeable to the flesh is salutary to the soul; so, unless we be supported by such kind of comfort, we must of necessity be overcome by impatience. Thus we see that God does not require of us those things which are above our strength, without being also ready to assist us, if we ask him. Wherefore, as soon as he lays any commandment upon us, let us learn to ask of him the power to perform it. But, altho' in this place, wisdom means the submission

of ourselves to God in enduring calamities, after having duly weighed that he directs all things, in their issue, to our happiness; yet the sentence may be applied to wisdom, considered in every point of view. But why does he say, "if any one," as if all did not lack? I answer, that all, indeed, naturally lack; but that some have been gifted with a spirit of prudence, which others want.— Since then all have not made such a progress, as to be able to rejoice in affliction, but only the few to whom this hath been given; James, therefore, addresses himself to those who had not attained to this persuasion—that by afflictions the Lord promotes our happiness, and admonishes them to ask that they might obtain the gift of this wisdom. And indeed it is not to be doubted, but that necessity would teach all to ask the same; for even he, who hath made a considerable progress, is still at a great distance from the goal; but it is one thing to ask an increase, and another to ask a beginning. When he enjoins us *to ask of the Lord*, he

points out to us, that 'tis he alone, who is able to heal our diseases and succour our necessities. *Who giveth to all liberally;* he means to all who ask; for those who do not seek a remedy for their wants deserve to perish in them. The general form of his address has great weight in it; by which he invites each and all of us without exception; and, therefore, no one should deprive himself of so great a blessing. To this a promise is immediately annexed. For, as by this command he points out what the nature of every one's duty is; so he affirms, that if they do what he commands, they shall not labour in vain; agreeable to what our Saviour says, "knock, and it shall be opened:" and the word *liberally* denotes his readiness to give. Thus, Paul, in the xii. chap. to the Romans, ver. 8. requires from the deacons liberality: "he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity, or, liberally; and in the viii. and ix. chapters of his second epistle to the Corinthians, treat-

ing of alms, he frequently repeats the same words. The sense then is, that God is so readily inclined to give, that he neither rejects nor contumeliously puts off any one: not like some penurious close-fisted mortals, who bestow but little, and with an ill will, and, as it were a half shut hand; or who retrench from what they were about to give, or debate long with themselves, whether they shall give it or not. *And upbraideth not.* He adds this, that no one may be afraid to approach God frequently: The most liberal of men, if repeatedly solicited for assistance, will remind us of their former benefactions, and so excuse themselves for the future; hence we are ashamed to importune any man, however liberal, with too frequent requests. But James puts us in mind, that there is no disposition in the divine Being to upbraid—that he is always ready to add new benefits to the former, and to give without measure or end.

6. But let him ask in faith, [3] nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.

6. *But let him ask in faith.*] First he teaches the right way of asking: for as we cannot open the mouth in prayer, but through the medium of words,

so, before we open our mouth in prayer, we ought to believe. By prayer we testify that we expect from God the grace which he has promised; but if any



any one has not faith in his promises, he prays as a hypocrite. Hence, also, we learn what true faith is: as soon as James hath directed us to ask in faith, he adds this explanation "nothing wavering." Faith, then, is that principle, which, relying on the promises of God, gives us the assurance of what we ask; whence it follows, that it is conjoined with a confidence in, and certainty of the divine love towards us. The word used, in the original, properly signifies to enquire, or, after the manner of disputants, to search diligently on both sides. He would, then, have us to be so fully persuaded in our own minds of the certainty of what God hath promised, as by no means to entertain doubt, whether we shall be heard or not. *For he that wavereth.* By this figure of speech, he elegantly points out the manner in which God punishes the infidelity of those who doubt concerning his promises. They inwardly torture themselves by their own inquietude; for no where can they have peace or

rest to their souls, but while they rely on the truth of God. At length he concludes, that they who waver are unworthy to obtain any favour from God. This passage is remarkably well calculated to refute that popish doctrine, which, thro' the whole of their church, is held sacred as an oracle; namely, that we are to pray doubtingly, and with an uncertain belief of success. But let us hold this principle, that our prayers are not heard by God, unless we pray in the full confidence of obtaining what we ask: 'tis impossible, indeed, but that, in this infirmity of the flesh, we must be harrassed by various temptations, which are as engines to shake our faith. Nor will any one be found, who, in his carnal man, would not totter and tremble under them: but such temptations must at length be overcome by faith: as the tree, which hath struck its roots deep and firm in the earth, is shaken indeed by the violence of the wind, yet is not torn up, but continues fixed and firm in its place.

7. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

8. *A double minded man.*]— This sentence may be considered in a separate sense, and as

spoken of hypocrites, in general: I am rather, however, inclined to consider it as the conclusion

sion of the foregoing doctrine. Thus, there will be a tacit antithesis between the open, ready, and constant beneficence of the Deity, and the contracted and unstable disposition of man. For, as God bestows his gifts on us liberally and with an open hand; so, on our part, it becomes us to receive them with

a grateful and open heart. He says, then, that the unbelieving, whose paths are crooked, are unstable, because they keep not in view one and the same object; but are at one time elated with confidence in the flesh, at another are sunk in the depths of despair.

9. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted :

9. *Let the brother of low degree rejoice.*] As Paul, when he exhorts servants to bear their lot with patience, proposes to them this consolation, that they were God's freemen, liberated by his grace from the miserable servitude of Satan; and admonishes the free born to remember that they were the servants of God: so our author, in the same sense, enjoins those of low degree to glory in this, that they were adopted into the number of the sons of God; and the rich to rejoice, that from an effectual conviction of the vanity of this world, they had been brought to a regular and orderly deportment. He desires the former to be content with their humble and low condition, and forbids the latter to be high minded; reminding them, that this is our highest and incomparable dignity, that

we are admitted into the society of angels, yea, made joint heirs with Christ. Those who set a proper value on this great kindness of God, will lightly esteem all other things. Therefore, neither poverty, nor contempt, nor nakedness, nor hunger, nor thirst, shall so distract their minds, but they may support themselves with this consolation—since the Lord hath bestowed on me the chief good, it becomes me to bear the want of inferior blessings with resignation and a patient mind. In this sense it is that “the brother of low degree, ought to rejoice in that he is exalted:” because, if he is acceptable to God—in his adoption alone, he hath sufficiently abundant ground of consolation, and need not grieve beyond measure in an inferior or adverse condition of life.

10. But the rich, in that he is made low : because as the flower of the grafs he shall pafs away.

10. *But the rich, in that he is made low.*] He has put the species here for the genus\*.— For this exhortation hath a respect to all who are exalted either in honour, or by nobility, or other external circumstances. He enjoins them to “glory in their being made low,” or in their meannesses, that he may check the proud and high minded, who are wont to be too much elated in prosperity. Moreover he defines it a “being made low,” because the kingdom of God revealed ought to lead us to a contempt of the world; that we may know, that all things, which we held in high estimation before, are less than nothing and vanity. For Christ, who hath declared himself, in an especial manner, the guide of little children, effectually crushes all carnal pride by his doctrine. Therefore, lest the rich should be carried away by the vain joy of the world, let them accustom themselves to glory in the destruction of their

carnal excellence. *Because, as a flower of the grafs, he shall pass away.*] If any be of opinion, that James here alludes to the words of Isaiah, (xl. 6.) I do not oppose them, but I will not grant that he cites the words of the prophet as any testimony in confirmation of his doctrine; for Isaiah speaks not of the good things of fortune and the fleeting fashion of the world alone; but of the whole man, the soul† as well as the body; whereas James treats only concerning the pomp of wealth or worldly good things.— The sum is, that glorying in riches, which make to themselves wings and fly away, is foolish and preposterous.— Philosophers teach the same doctrine; but it is like telling a story to a deaf man, until the Lord open the ear to understand the everlasting duration of the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, he uses the word *brother* in the 9th ver. meaning that we are not prepared for this doctrine, until we have been adopted into the num-

\* *Genus* is a logical term which comprehends under it many Species. Thus the word *animal* denotes a genus which comprehends under it many species, or different classes of living creatures. But riches, which include in them one species of greatness, are here put by James for worldly honours, nobility and every other circumstance which exalt and dignify.

† What Isaiah and Calvin both teach is—the vanity of all men in themselves, not only in respect of the body, or any thing that adorns it; but also in respect of the endowments of the mind, as wisdom, courage, and eloquence; for man in the midst of all these is fading like the grafs and passeth away.

number of the children of God. Altho' the reading *ἐν ταῖς πλογαῖς*,\* is received; yet I agree with Erasmus, that it ought rather to be read *πλογαῖς*. without the diphthong, i. e. he shall pass away in his wealth, or with his wealth.

11. For the sun is *no sooner* risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

12. *Blessed is the man.*] After he has, by administering due consolation, mitigated the grief of those who experience hardships and calamities in this world, on the one hand; and humbled the pride of the great on the other; he now concludes that happy are the persons who endure affliction and other trials with such magnanimity as to rise superior to them. The word *temptation* may indeed be taken in a different sense, namely, for those stinging passions which inwardly disquiet the mind.—But, in my opinion, he means, here, to extol fortitude in bearing adversity. Altho' it may seem a paradox, that; those who enjoy every thing they could wish for in this world, are not happy, as they commonly are thought to be; but those, only, who are not overcome by calamities. *For when he is tried, &c.*] He gives the reason of the foregoing assertion; for the crown follows the contest. If, then, to obtain a crown in the kingdom of God be the highest happiness, it follows of consequence, that the trials, wherewith God exercises us, are the furtherances of our happiness. Thus he argues from the end proposed by calamities, or from their effect. Whence we conclude, that the reason why the faithful are harassed with so many evils is, that their piety and obedience may become the more conspicuous; and that they may be at length prepared to receive the crown of life. But the reasoning of those

\* *Ἐν ταῖς πλογαῖς*. In his ways, viz. thinking that he is rich, and, therefore, happy in his own judgement. DEREK, the Hebrew word which is rendered by this frequently refers to an opinion of the mind, the way in which the mind operates. *Ἐν ταῖς πλογαῖς*. In his wealth—or actual possessions. Thus, whatever he may think, or whatever he may enjoy of this world, death soon sweeps him away.

those is vain, who infer from this, that the crown is merited by the contest. For as God has, of his grace, appointed it for us, the *enduring of temptations* only fits us to receive it.— As to what he adds, “ that it is promised to those who love God;” by so expressing himself, he does not assert that the love of man is the cause; for

we love God, because he first loved us—he only means, that those alone approve themselves the elect of God, who love him; while at the same time he puts us in mind, that those who love God shall conquer all temptations; and that it is only on this account, because the love of the world prevails, that we faint in our minds when we are tempted.

13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

13. *Let no man say when he is tempted, &c.*] Here, it is plain, he begins to treat of temptations of a different kind. 'Tis well known that those outward temptations, of which only, he has hitherto made mention, come immediately from the hand of God. In this sense God tempted Abraham, and daily tempts us; that is, he makes trial of the qualities of our hearts, by furnishing us with an opportunity of disclosing them. But to draw forth to view the secrets of the heart, and to stir up in it perverse and wicked passions, are very different things. Here, then, he treats of internal temptations, or of those inordinate appetites which incite us to transgression: and, with great justice, denies God to be the author of these; for they flow from our own carnal corrup-

tion. This is a very necessary admonition; for nothing is more common among mankind, than to transfer to others the blame of the evils which they themselves have done; and especially they think themselves then most free from blame, if they can turn it upon God— This shuffling artifice, handed down to us from the first man, we are too careful to imitate: for this reason, James calls upon each of us to confess his own guilt, and not to lay the charge upon God, as if he tempted us to sin. But many passages of scripture seem to oppose the sentiment in this verse, which inform us, that mankind are “ given over to “ blindness of mind by God, “ and to a reprobate mind, and “ to vile and unlawful affec- “ tions.” I answer, that, 'tis probable, James was induced,

on this very account, to assert that we are not tempted of God, because the wicked, for a pretext, arm themselves with the testimony of scripture.— But there are two things to be observed here.— When the scriptures ascribe blinding the mind or hardening the heart to God, they neither impute the commencement of these to him, nor make him the author of evil, so as that he should be in any sense liable to blame. And on these two alone James insists.— The scripture asserts that the reprobate are given up by God to vile affections. Is it because God depraves or corrupts their hearts? By no means: for they are subjected to perverse lust, because they were already vicious and corrupt. But when God blinds and hardens; is he the author or minister of sin? Yea, in this way he punishes sins, and repays to the wicked, who have

refused to be guided by his holy Spirit, their deserved reward. It follows, therefore, that the origin of sin, or the guilt of it, cannot be imputed to God, as if he took pleasure in evil. The conclusion is, that they are idle triflers, who endeavour to lay the blame of their vices upon God; for all evil, of whatever nature, springs from no other fountain but the perverse lust of man.— And thus it is evident that every one's own wicked passions are his instigators to sin, and guide him in the commission of wickedness. And he proves that God tempteth no man from this, that God is not tempted with evil. For 'tis on this account that the devil entices to sin, because he is wholly inflamed with a furious desire of sinning. But God desireth not evil; neither can he be the promoter of wicked conduct in us.

14. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

14. *When he is drawn away of his own lust, &c.*] Since evil arises from the internal workings and suggestions of our own hearts, 'tis in vain for the sinner to seek a pretext or excuse from any external influence:

however, these two effects of lust are to be observed, that it ensnares us by its enticement, and leads us captive by its power; each of which is sufficient to constitute guilt.

15. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

15. *When*

15. *When lust hath conceived, &c.*] 'Tis not any one particular appetite, but the source of all our concupiscible faculties, which he here calls lust. By that a vicious brood are conceived, which, in time, make their appearance openly as sins. It would appear, however, that the word sin is, improperly, restricted to external works, and not at all according to scripture-use; as if lust itself were not a sin; as if the wicked desires which continue shut up and suppressed within us, were not all of them so many sins. But as the use of the word is various, there is nothing absurd in it, tho' it be here used for actual transgression, as it is in many other places. The papists, however, ignorantly use this as an argument, when they want to prove, 'that vicious, yea, vile, wicked, and even heinous desires are not sins, if consent be not given [4] to them. For James is not disputing, "when sin begins to have its birth, so as to be sin, and to be so accounted

" before God; but when it " openly appears." Thus he gradually proceeds, that the finishing of sin is the cause of eternal death—that sin arises out of our unlawful desires, and that these unlawful desires have their root in lust: whence it follows, that mankind, in their eternal death, only reap that fruit which they themselves have sown. By "sin when it is finished," I do not then understand any one wicked work done, but a finished course of sinning. For altho' every sin deserve death; it is, however, said to be the wages of an impious and wicked life. Hence the foolish notion of those is refuted who argue, from these words, that sin is not mortal until it break out, as they phrase it, in the exterior act; that is, *till it appear openly in deeds*. But neither is that the subject which James treats of; he is only endeavouring to instruct us in this, namely, 'that the source of our death or ruin originates in ourselves.'

16. Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17. Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

16. *Do not err, &c.* 'Tis an argument from opposites. For if God be the author of all good, it would be absurd to account him the author of evil. 'Tis his peculiar and natural property, from whom all good things come, to do good; and to do any thing evil, is altogether unnatural to him. But, as it sometimes happens, that a person who behaves generally well thro' life, may occasionally fail in some part, he anticipates the surmise, and declares it not applicable concerning God; he assures us that God is not changeable like man. Now if in all things and at all times he is like himself; from this steady and constant course of conduct, it follows, that his beneficence is perpetual and uninterrupted. This reasoning is very different from that of Plato, who maintains that no calamities are inflicted on man by God, because he is good. For as it is just that the wickedness of mankind should be punished by God; in this

respect, it is not proper to reckon among evils the punishments which he ordains. Plato betrays [5] ignorance of the subject: but James, while he leaves the right and office of punishing to God, only asserts him to be free from the blame. This passage teaches us that we ought to be so affected with the innumerable benefits which we daily receive from the hand of God, as to entertain no thought but what tends to his glory; and that whatever thoughts arise in our minds, or are suggested to us by others, which are less consistent with the honour of the divine Being, we ought to reject and abhor with our whole hearts. God is called "the Father of lights," that is, of all excellence and good order. And when he immediately adds, that there is "no shadow of turning" with him, 'tis a continuance of the metaphor, signifying to us, that we are not to measure the glory of God by the apparent splendour of the sun.

18. *Of his own will begat he us, &c.*] He now brings forward a particular instance of that divine goodness which he has proclaimed and commended; namely, that he hath regenerated us unto eternal life.

Every one of the faithful has, in some degree, the experience of this inestimable blessing.—The goodness of God then, experimentally known by all, ought to destroy any contrary opinion\*. When he says that  
God

\* The goodness of God is universal or particular. Regeneration is an instance of his particular goodness, and is experimentally known only by the faithful.—But as the general goodness of God is daily exercised towards all, every one, from his own experience, may be sensible that God is good.



God “ of his own will begat “ us,” he means that he was induced to it by no cause ; as the will and counsel of God are often opposed to the merits of man. For what great matter would it be, if he only meant that God was not compelled to it? He expresses something more ; that God hath begotten us of his mere good pleasure, and thus was himself the cause of it : whence it follows, that to do good is natural to God. The passage farther teaches us, as our election was of grace, before the world was made, so, that our calling may correspond to our election, we are enlightened in the knowledge of truth merely by the grace of God : the scripture teaches us that we were freely adopted by God before we were born—Ephesians i. chap. 4th and 5th ver. “ According as he hath “ chosen us in him before the “ foundation of the world, “ that we should be holy, and “ without blame before him “ in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of “ children by Jesus Christ to “ himself, according to the “ good pleasure of his will, to “ the praise of the glory of his “ grace, wherein he hath made “ us accepted in the beloved : “ in whom we have redemption “ thro’ his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according

“ to the riches of his grace.” But James here expresses something more, viz. that we attain the right of adoption, because God also freely calls us. Hence too we learn, that to beget us spiritually is God’s own work : for altho’ it seems, sometimes, to be ascribed to the ministers of the gospel, ’tis to be understood only in this sense, that God acts by means of these ; and altho’ he act by them as means, he is nevertheless still the sole agent. The word *begat* signifies that we become new men, that we put off our former nature when we are effectually called by God. He adds, how God begets us anew ; namely, “ with the word of “ his truth,” to teach us, that we cannot, by any other door, enter into the kingdom of God. “ That we should be a kind of “ first [6] fruits.” As if he had said, we, in some sort, are the first fruits. This is not to be restricted to a few of the faithful, but extends to them all in common. For as man excels among all the creatures, God chooses out and separates his faithful from the herd of others, as an holy offering to himself. This is no common nobility to which the sons of God are raised : wherefore they are deservedly said to be selected as first fruits, when the image of God is renewed in them.

19. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

20. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21. Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

19. *Let every man be swift to hear, &c.*] If this be a general observation, the inference will be to be sought at a great distance. (See ver. 22d.) But as he immediately annexes this sentence, corresponding to the last, respecting *that word of truth*, I have no doubt but that he accommodates this exhortation particularly to the point in hand. The goodness of God being thus laid open before us, he shows with what readiness and preparation it becomes us to receive this incomparable benefit—a very useful doctrine. For regeneration of the spirit is not the work of a moment; inasmuch as some remains of the old man always continue, we must be continually fashioned anew until the flesh be abolished. But our own pride, arrogance, and sloth prove great obstacles to the Deity in accomplishing his work in us.—When James desires us, then, to be “swift to hear,” he recommends to us aptness: as if he should say, since God so freely gives himself to you,

show yourselves to be of a docile disposition towards him; let not your sluggishness occasion to him any delay. Again, as we are apt to be puffed up with our own imaginary wisdom, and impatiently bear to hear God speaking to us, and by our hurry, as it were, break off his discourse, therefore the apostle enjoins us silence. And certainly no one will ever be a good disciple of the Lord unless he be silent to hear him. He does not however enjoin the silence of the Pythagorean [7] school; or that we may not enquire as often as we wish to learn whatever is of use to be known; he only means to reprove our saucy forwardness, lest, as frequently happens, we should unreasonably interrupt God: and that while he hath his sacred mouth open, that we should open our minds and ears to him, but not anticipate him by our speech.—*Slow to anger.* Anger, I am of opinion, is condemned, as by exciting tumultuous passions it disturbs and hinders that attention which

God

God requires to be paid to him: for God cannot be heard unless with a composed mind. Therefore, he adds, that so long as anger reigns, there is no room left for a due attention to

God. Finally, unless the heat of contention be put away, we will never shew to God that moderation of silence, concerning which he has been speaking.

21. *Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, &c.*] He now concludes how the word of life is to be received. And first he informs us that it cannot be rightly received, unless it be ingrafted or rooted in us. For the phrase, "to receive the ingrafted word," may be resolved into this or a similar one; so receive it that it may really be ingrafted. 'Tis an allusion to seed which falls upon dry ground, and is not received into the moist bosom of the earth; or to shoots which pine away, when either cast upon the earth, or joined to dead wood. He orders, therefore, that a living engraftment should be made, with which it may unite as with our heart. At the same time he shews the manner of this receiving of the word, namely, *in meekness*: by which word he points out the modesty and aptness of a mind disposed to learn; such as Isaiah describes, when he says, "I dwell with him that is of an humble and contrite spirit." Hence cometh it to pass, that so few make proficiency in the school of God; because hardly one in a hundred lays aside the

haughtiness of his spirit, and submits himself with meekness to God: but they almost all come under the influence of pride and stubbornness. Now if we would really be the living plantation of God; let us use our endeavour to reduce our minds to humility, that, like lambs, we may suffer ourselves to be ruled by our heavenly Father. For as mankind are never so tamed as to become of a peaceable and mild disposition, until they have been first cleansed from their vile affections, he therefore orders them "to lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness." And as James borrows the figure from agriculture, it was necessary this order should be observed, to begin with the extirpating of noxious herbs: and as he addresses himself to all, we are hence to collect, that these evils of our nature are bred with it, and remain in us all: yea, when he addresses the faithful, he shews that we are never entirely cleansed from them in this life, but that they are springing up afresh every now and then, and consequently require a constant

attention to eradicate them.— First, as the word of God is a sacred thing, it is proper that we should lay apart the filthiness wherewith we are defiled, in order that we may be fitted to receive it. Under the word *naughtiness* he comprehends hypocrisy and stubbornness, as well as all the wicked affections, and not satisfied with having assigned the human mind as the seat of this naughtiness, he teaches us by the expression, “superfluity of naughtiness,” that it overflows, or, as it were, gathers into an heap; and certainly every man who shall examine himself thoroughly, will find in himself an immense mass of evil. *Which is able to save your souls.* An illustrious encomium on the heavenly doctrine—that by it we attain

to certain salvation: and it is added, that we may learn to desire, to love, and to admire this word, as an incomparable treasure.— 'Tis then a sharp spur to chastise our indolence, that that word which we are wont to attend to so negligently, is the (*instrumental*) cause of our salvation. Altho' the power of saving us is not ascribed to the word with this view, as if either our salvation were included in the external sound of it, or the office of saving us taken from God, and transferred elsewhere.— For James treats of the word which by faith hath entered into the hearts of men; and only intimates that God, the author of salvation, works it out by his gospel.

22. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridlèth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27. Pure

27. Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

22. *But be ye doers of the word, &c.*] A doer of the word does not mean here, as it does in the ii. chap. to the Romans, ver. 13. one who satisfies the law of God, and fulfils it in every part; but one who embraces the law of God from his heart, and testifies by his life, that he hath seriously believed it; according to that saying of Christ, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." For here he declares, from its fruits, what

kind of an ingrafting that is which he has before mentioned. 'Tis moreover to be observed, that faith is comprehended by James, along with other works, and that too among the first— for it is the principal work that God requireth of us\*. The force of his argument then is this, that we ought to give all diligence, that the word of God may be rooted in us, so that afterwards it may bring forth fruit.

23. *He is like unto a man, &c.*] The celestial doctrine is indeed the mirror in which God presents himself to be seen by us; but so that we should be changed into his image, as Paul observes, 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." But

here, James is speaking of the external cast of the eye, not of that lively efficacious contemplation which penetrates into the heart. An elegant figure, by which he briefly points out, that that doctrine profiteth nothing, which is received by the hearing only, and not with the internal affection of the heart; because it immediately passeth away.

25. *But whofo looketh into the perfect law, &c.*] After having spoken of this vain view of the

word, he now comes to that penetrating insight into it, which transforms us into the likeness

E of

\* Altho' Calvin expresses himself in this strong language; it is not to be supposed that he loses sight of the necessity of divine grace to begin, strengthen, and perfect our faith.

of God. And because he is addressing himself to the Jews, he uses the word law, which was familiarly known to them [87] for the whole of divine doctrine.— But interpreters have not understood, why he calls it a perfect law, and why the law of liberty; because they adverted not to the antithesis here marked, which is collected from other passages of scripture. So long as the law is preached by the external voice of man only, and is not inscribed in our hearts by the finger or Spirit of God, 'tis a dead letter, and, as it were, a lifeless body. 'Tis no wonder, then, that the law should be considered as maimed, until it be received with the heart. The same is its case with regard to slavery: for, (as Paul teaches us in Gal. iv. 24.) separated from Christ, “it gendereth to “bondage:” and as the same apostle (Rom. viii. 15) argues, it can only tend to deject us thro' diffidence and fear. But the spirit of regeneration which hath inscribed it on our hearts, brings also along with it the grace of adoption. The reasoning of James, then, is to this effect: “That the law

may be no longer a servile institution, but rather tend to set you at liberty”—That it no longer may be as a schoolmaster only, but lead you on unto perfection; you ought to receive it with a sincere affection of heart, that ye may live piously and godly. Moreover, as it appears from the testimony of Jeremiah and several others, that this is a blessing of the New Testament, namely, that the law of God should reform us, it follows, that that blessing cannot be obtained until we shall have come to Christ; and without doubt, he is the sole end and perfection of the law. James adds *liberty*, as its only attendant; because the Spirit of Christ never regenerates us, but, (in order that he may free our hearts from all fear and disquietude,) at the same time he becomes the witness and earnest of our divine adoption.— *And continueth, &c.* That is, who shall persevere firm in that knowledge of God. And when he adds, *this man shall be blessed in his deed*, he means that happiness is placed in actual doing, and not in cold and listless hearing.

26. — *seems to be religious, &c.*] Now he reprehends a vice in those who boast that they are doers of the law, and under which all hypocrites,

in common, labour; namely, an intemperate proneness of the tongue to detraction.— He formerly touched on the bridling of the tongue, but  
with

with another view. He was then enjoining us to observe silence before God, that we might be the better prepared to learn. Now he is treating of another matter—that believers should not employ their tongue in reproaches. It was proper that this vice, in particular, should be rebuked, when he was discoursing of the law: for those who have put off the more gross vices, are for the most part, liable to this distemper. He who will neither be an adulterer, nor a thief, nor a drunkard, but rather shall have a bright external appearance of holiness, will glory in tearing the good name of others—under the pretext of zeal too, but in fact from a lust of detracting.— He has here, then, in view, to distinguish the true worshippers of God from hypocrites, who are so puffed up with pharisaic pride, that they catch at praise to themselves from the disgrace of others. *If any one among you seem, says he, to be religious; that is, have, in other respects, the appearance of holiness, but in the mean time, delight in detraction; by this it is proved that he is not a worshipper of God in truth. For when he says, this man's religion is vain,*

he not only signifies that his other virtues are corrupted by the stain of slander, but concludes that his apparent zeal for godliness is not sincere.— *For he deceiveth his own heart.*— I am not satisfied with the version of Erasmus, “he suffers his heart to wander.” James points out the source of that forward self-sufficiency to which hypocrites are addicted, because blinded with an immoderate self love, they flatter themselves that they are much better than they really are.— And, certainly, to this source the disease of detraction is to be traced; as the bag hanging at the back, agreeable to that in the fable of *Æsop*, is not exposed to sight. James, therefore wishing to correct the effect, namely, the lust of evil speaking, hath, very properly, annexed the cause, viz. that hypocrites are too partial to themselves. For they would be readily inclined to forgive; if they would acknowledge that they, in their turn, stood in need of the forgiveness of others.— The blandishments, then, by which they deceive themselves, in their partiality to their own vices, make them such supercilious censurers of others.

27. *Pure religion, &c.*] As he here passes over these things

which are of the highest consequence in religion, he is not giving

giving a definition of what religion is, in general: but only puts us in mind that those duties are absolutely essential to religion. Just as if a person devoted to wine and gluttony should boast that he was temperate; and another should take him up and maintain, that he only is a temperate man who does not glut himself with wine and riotous living: the purpose of the latter will not be to define temperance in its whole extent; but he will only employ that part of the description which is suited to the case in question. For these vainly-confident persons of whom he makes mention are, for the most part, but idly ostentatious. James, therefore, teaches that religion is to be estimated by another test than the pomp of ceremonies: for, that there are serious exercises in which the worshippers of God ought to engage

themselves. *To visit* in necessity, is to stretch forth the hand to relieve those who are in distress. But as there are several others whom the Lord commands us to assist; by the figure synecdoche he mentions widows and orphans only. Wherefore, there is no doubt, but under that one species of charity he recommends it to us in its whole extent: as if he should say, Let him who would be accounted religious, approve himself such, by denying himself, and by his compassion and beneficence to his neighbours. He uses the expression, "before God," to point out to us, that men, who are guided by external appearances, think otherwise; but that we ought to enquire after what is acceptable to God. *God and the Father*—thus explain, God who is the Father.

### C O N C L U S I O N.

THE great truths, contained in the chapter explained, teach us, 1st, That afflictions are part of the discipline, by which good men are trained up for heaven. It is through manifold tribulations that we enter into the kingdom of God. We ought, therefore, to meet them with fortitude, to submit to them with faith, to endure them with patience, knowing it to be the will of God that we should be occasionally under these trials. Yea, "rejoice in that we have been thought worthy to suffer for his name's sake."

2dly, Prayer is our best resource under our sufferings. "If any man lack wisdom" how to endure them, let him ask it of God, and look to Him who is a present help in time of need.

Let



Let us rely on his promise, "When thou passest thro' the fire, I will be with thee." Let us comfort our hearts from this consideration, that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. "Blessed is the man who endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

3dly, Sin, wilfully committed by us, is the true cause of suffering. Let us then beware of impeaching God falsely, as if he took pleasure in our pain, or grieved the children of men in vain. It is only when we forsake his law, that he visits our iniquities with rods, and our sins with chastisements; let us set a watch upon our lips, lest we offend against him with our tongue. Even in our daily intercourse with mankind, let us be swift to hear, but slow to speak; ever using the noble faculty of speech to promote the pious and rational purposes for which it is bestowed.

4thly, Let us give good heed to the doctrine of life, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls; always taking this word to be a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path; well knowing that to be hearers of the word only, but not doers, is deceiving our own souls; for he, only, shall be blessed of God, who, through grace, continueth in the perfect law of liberty, firm unto the end.

In fine, To a well ordered conversation before God, let us study also to add and abound in acts of charity and mercy to our fellow creatures, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, the widow and the fatherless, hereby adorning the doctrine, and imitating the practice of Him who went about constantly doing good. AMEN.

## NOTES ON CHAP. I.

## NOTE I.

[1] **T**HE evangelists do not inform us to what occupation James was bred, before he became an apostle. It is probable, he procured his subsistence by the labour of his hands, like the other apostles. From his residing in Joseph's house, it is likely, he followed the trade of a carpenter. The Jews, even the most wealthy, that their children might be the less dependent through life, always bred them to some trade or occupation.

A wise precaution, the neglect of which many a literary character in our day may justly regret.— That James was highly esteemed in the church, is evident from a variety of incidents. To him Peter sent the news of his miraculous deliverance out of prison, Acts xii. 7. To him Paul made his address, after his conversion, Gal. ii. 9. He presided in the synod at Jerusalem, in the great controversy about Mosaic rites, summed the arguments, and pronounced the decree. It is evident, James was a person of an amiable disposition, and a great instrument of preserving peace among his brethren, while he lived. Peter was naturally of a fiery temper. Paul was in some things peculiarly positive in his opinion; but both of them had great deference for James; and, on more occasions than one, followed his advice. So high was his reputation among the people, at large, they thought that the safety of the state, in a great measure, depended on his life; giving him the distinguished name of Oblias, that is, the Bulwark of the State; justly apprehending the downfall of it after his death.

## NOTE II.

[2] In the seventh year of the reign of Hosea, the king of Assyria came up against Samaria, the chief city of the kingdom of Israel, and took it by assault. The loss of this city was the final ruin of that kingdom. The Israelites were transplanted into Media and Persia; and a strange people settled in their room. Nine hundred and forty years had elapsed, from their coming out of Egypt, till this woeful dispersion. During all this period, God had, in his patience, borne with them; but now he cast them off, in his indignation—a solemn warning to other nations to fear him, and keep his ways; for “blessed is that people whose God is the Lord. The Hebrews were twice carried away beyond the Euphrates. The ten tribes, as we have said, in the days of Hosea, by the king of Assyria.—The other two tribes, by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, about 120 years after the extinction of the kingdom of Israel. Though the kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the great body of the people carried into perpetual captivity, yet it appears, that on the return of the people of Judah from their 70 years bondage, a considerable number of the people of Israel took the benefit of the decree of Cyrus, and returned also with them. In 2 Chron. xxxiv. 6. we are informed, that when Josiah purged the land of its idols, and collected money for repairing the house  
of

of the Lord, this reformation, and this tax extended to the cities of Manasséh, Ephraim, Simeon, and even to Naphtali. The persons, whom the king of Assyria transplanted from Media into the land of Israel, were heathens; but the persons comprehended in the decree of Josiah were Hebrews, worshippers of the true God, and descendants of the ancient inhabitants of the land. See more to this purpose in Ezra, vi. 21. In the xxvi. chap. of Acts, 7 ver. we read that "the twelve tribes instantly served God day and night." Hence it is evident, that they were all represented, and had interest in the daily service, and waited for the hope of Israel.

It is probable, that the epistle of James was intended, chiefly for the instruction and comfort of his countrymen residing in Judea and Samaria; not excluding those of them who might be scattered into more remote parts of the earth. For at the time when James wrote, the Jews were widely dispersed.

## NOTE III.

[3] It is the necessary effect of faith to fix the mind, and prevent it from wavering. The stronger our faith is, the more steady will be our minds, and the less liable to wavering, which is frequently connected with duplicity in religion. The faith, which is here recommended, relates chiefly to prayer, and consists in a firm belief, that God will afford us such aid under all our sufferings for his name's sake, as will enable us to bear them with magnanimity and patience. He, who doubts of this, must be very much agitated betwixt hope and fear, a state of mind, not only very uneasy in itself, but also very unacceptable to God; in as much as it betrays a distrust of his goodness, truth, and mercy; and, of consequence proves a very great hinderance to the success of prayer. There is no promise more explicit, or more often repeated as a ground of hope, than the promise of assistance from on high, in the time of need. The condition of those, for whose instruction and comfort James wrote this epistle, peculiarly required the exercise of faith in this promise. He therefore exhorts them, neither to trust to their own understanding, in preference to the word of God; nor to lean to their own strength, but to look up to heaven, and solicit the necessary aid of that divine Spirit, whose peculiar province it is, both to enlighten and to succour the humble minded, whose hope is in their God.

## NOTE IV.

[4] The distinction betwixt venial and deadly sins, so well known among the papists, is altogether without any foundation in the word of God. They define a venial sin to be an inward desire without advised assent. A desire which remaineth no time in the mind, but soon vanisheth, the person not feeling that pleasure which ariseth from consent. They teach, that venial sins are easily washed away; that the sprinkling of holy water, the telling of beads, the saying of the Lord's prayer, and that one or more of the sacrifices of the mass are sufficient for this purpose. Whereas deadly sins require much severer remedies, and cannot be remitted, but by a long and rigorous course of penance: but this jesuitical casuistry speaks a language very different from the holy scriptures. In them we are often admonished, to be on our guard against all sin, and told that our God sees the wicked desires of our hearts, and is offended with them as well as with the wicked actions of our lives: "keep thy heart "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Every motion of the heart towards evil is sin. Whence come these motions, but of this, that there is something in the soul corrupted, and wrong, and open to temptations? We are expressly commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and rained. If, then, all the powers of the mind be not bent on his love; we have already departed from the obedience of His law, and must be conscious, that his throne is not established in our hearts. Therefore, says Calvin, and the word of truth confirms his doctrine—the very weakest desire after sin is evil, and deserveth punishment; even when there is no time for the will to follow it, and to consent unto it. Verily there is no need to teach mankind, that some sins are venial, and can be easily surmounted. We are all too much inclined to try to lessen our guilt, and to flatter ourselves in our folly; but let us believe God rather than man, and give good heed to what Paul teaches, "that the wages of sin is death."

## NOTE V.

[5] Plato, one of the most celebrated of the ancient philosophers, was born at Athens, about 429 years before the christian æra. He studied under Socrates for eight years; during which period he made great proficiency in the Socratic philosophy. Eager in the pursuit of knowledge, after the death of his

his master, he travelled into Egypt, and then into Persia, where he became acquainted with the chief principles of the oriental philosophy. Having thus furnished his mind with a great stock both of Grecian and oriental literature, he returned to his native country; and opened a school in the Academia, a place of exercise in the suburbs of Athens, from which his followers took the name of Academics.

Plato taught the doctrine of a plurality of Gods: he divided them into various classes: the superior, the middle, and the inferior. From this division, some have thought he was not altogether unacquainted with the scripture doctrine of the Trinity. Justin asserts, that there are many things in the writings of Plato, the knowledge of which could only be acquired from the books of Moses. It is generally thought, that Plato, when in Egypt, had either seen those books, or learned some of their doctrines from some of the Egyptian priests, who could hardly be ignorant of the writings of a man, once so famous in their country. Gale is at great pains to prove that Plato borrowed a great part of his philosophy from the holy scriptures: a respectable divine, in our own country, has attempted to shew that his notions of the Deity come very near the christian doctrine.

It is extremely difficult to collect what were Plato's sentiments in theology. They are evidently very confused, and sometimes inconsistent. He taught, that there is one great first cause, eternal and independent; that under him, there is the soul of the world; an universal spirit, diffused throughout all matter, and the great principle of all motion. He mentions also a third principle, which he calls *nous*, or intellect, immovable, and to which he ascribes the formation of the world.—The production of the universe he attributes to a combination of matter, which he calls *necessity*; and of *mind*, which he calls *understanding*: yet so, that *mind* rules over *necessity*; and to this *necessity*, he ascribes the introduction and prevalence both of natural and moral evil. He thought it was inconsistent with the nature of a good Being, to inflict evil upon man, and therefore imputed the origin and prevalence of evil to the perversity of matter. In opposition to this conceit, Calvin affirms, what the scriptures so plainly teach, that *afflictions* are appointed, permitted, and over-ruled by God, for the good of the faithful. They spring not from chance, nor accident, neither are they the effect of necessity; but are part of that discipline by which the heavenly Father trains up his children for glory.

## NOTE VI.

[6] "*Be a kind of first fruits.*" In the New Testament, to be a christian early is always reckoned an honour. Paul mentions it as the glory of the Jewish believers in the church of Ephesus, that they first trusted in Christ, Eph. i. 21. Luke mentions one Mnason of Cyprus with a note of distinction—that he was "an old disciple." Stephanas and his house are praised for being "the first fruits of Achaia, 1 Cor. xvi. 15.—Paul declares, that Adronicus and Junia, his kinsmen, were in Christ before him. John, in Rev. xiv. 4. gives this account of the heavenly assembly, of which he had a sight: "that they "were the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." And here James says of the twelve tribes, "that God begat them of his "own will, that they should be a kind of first fruits of his new "creation." They were among the beginnings of that rich and plentiful harvest which was gathered to the Messiah, whose spiritual offspring soon became like those innumerable shoots which spring from the earth. In this the spirit of christianity accords with the natural feelings of man, who generally reckons it to his praise, to be the first, or among the first, even in any little incorporation or society. How much more honourable, how much more desirable, to be early among those, who are incorporated with Christ by faith, begotten again to a lively hope, by his resurrection from the dead, partaking of the privileges of his children, and secure of that inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away!

## NOTE VII.

[7] Pythagoras was born at Sidon, about 590 years before Christ. He early discovered a keen desire after knowledge.—At eighteen, he set out in quest of learning, and from Sidon went down into Egypt, when Amasis was king of that country. The king received him kindly, and gave him letters of introduction to the priests. The Egyptian priests were extremely reserved in discovering the secrets of their philosophy and theology. In this they thought they were justified from the example of their gods, who never permitted mortal men to see or to converse with them. The necessity of concealing their mysteries made them invent three kinds of styles, or ways of explaining their thoughts, the simple, the hieroglyphical, and the symbolical. This occasioned a long delay, before any person could be fully initiated; and compelled Pythagoras to spend  
five

five and twenty years among them. This philosopher perceiving the vast power this mode of communicating knowledge gave its teachers over mankind; when he opened his school at Crotona, in Italy, imitated his former masters, the Egyptian priests, and made his disciples pass through the austerities, which he himself had endured. He enjoined them silence for five years, during which time they were to hear only. In reference to this, says Calvin, though christians are commanded to be slow to speak; yet it is not to be that tedious silence which distinguished the followers of Pythagoras, but only to act prudently, avoiding all rash, foolish, and prophane talking; using their speech for the edification and religious improvement of one another. Perhaps, it might be with some of them, as among the Corinthians, having some degree of christian knowledge, in the vanity of their minds, they were very forward to display it, whereas the edification both of themselves and others was the great object to be promoted.

## NOTE VIII.

[8] The Jews, to keep them mindful of their duty, after their return from Babylon, had part of the law of God read to them every sabbath. The law was divided into fifty-four portions, and a section usually read at a time. These sections were formed in such a manner, as to comprehend the reading of the whole law in the course of the year. This practice, introduced by Ezra, was continued till the persecution under Epiphane. It was restored again by the Maccabees. From their time, a section also of the prophets was read along with a section of the law. This was the manner in which the scripture was read in the apostles days. Many of the Jews believed that their hearing the law read after this manner, was of much greater importance, and much more acceptable in the sight of God, than the practice of what it commanded. Their hopes of future happiness were founded, 1st, On the merits of their ancestors; saying, "We have Abraham for our father. 2dly, On their attention to the Mosaic rites. They believed, that circumcision was of such value in the sight of God, that it would secure them from eternal misery. It was a very common opinion among them, that no circumcised person goes to hell. 3dly, They believed that if they were punctual in hearing the law read, whether they kept it or not, they were sure of heaven. In the ii. and iii. chap. of the Romans, Paul corrects

these mistakes, and tells them, that " he is not a Jew, who is  
 " one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is out-  
 " ward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly, and  
 " circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, or wrought by  
 " the spirit; and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men  
 " but of God." He likewise informs them of the inefficacy of  
 that knowledge which is merely speculative, without a sancti-  
 fied influence upon the conduct. Here James perfectly agrees  
 with Paul, by exhorting the Jews of the dispersion " to be  
 " doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving their own  
 " souls." Knowledge of the word of God is indeed a most  
 valuable attainment, to be sought after by all with great care  
 and diligence. But unless this knowledge purifies the heart,  
 works by love, and is productive of the peaceable fruits of  
 righteousness, it will rather aggravate our future misery than  
 prevent it. Rom. iii. 19.

---

## C H A P. II.

**M**Y brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus  
 Christ, *the Lord of glory*, [1] with respect of  
 persons.

2. For if there come into your assembly a man with a  
 gold ring, in goodly apparel; and there come in also a  
 poor man, in vile raiment:

3. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay  
 clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good  
 place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here  
 under my footstool: [2]

4. Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are be-  
 come judges of evil thoughts?

At first sight, this reprehension appears severe and absurd. For this is one of the offices of humanity which ought not to be neglected—to honour those who are exalted in the world. If, then, the respecting of persons be culpable, servants will be to be exempted from all subjection; for both the bondman and the free are reckoned by Paul among the persons whom



whom James here means: and the same thing would hold good concerning magistrates; viz. "that they were not to be respected for their office fake." But the solution of these points is easy, if we do not separate what James has joined together: for he does not disapprove of honouring the rich, without having something else in his view; namely, that while they honour the rich, they condemn the poor. This will better appear from the following verses, in which he will try all things by the royal law of charity.— Wherefore let us keep in mind, that this is the respecting of persons here condemned, which honoureth the rich to the injury of the poor; as the context clearly shews. That indeed is a fawning and vain-glorious honour which is shown to the rich in contempt of the poor: and there is no doubt but that am-

bition and vanity will reign where the appearances of this world are held in high estimation. This truth will always hold—"That he is to be reckoned among the heirs of the kingdom of God, who despiseth the wicked, but honoureth them that fear the Lord." Psa. xv. 4. The vice then which is contrary to this virtue is here condemned—when any one, from a respect to riches only, honours the wicked, but despises the good. Wherefore, were you to separate the sense, and read thus: "He who honoureth a rich man, sinneth;" the sentence is absurd: but if you read it in conjunction with what follows: "He, who honoureth the rich only, while, at the same time, he despiseth the poor, and even treats them with contumely, sinneth," the doctrine will be both according to godliness and truth.

1. — *have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.*— He means, that to have a respect of persons is so inconsistent with the faith of Christ, that they cannot be connected together: and deservedly are they separated: for by faith we unite into one body, of which Christ is the head.— While, then, the pomps of this world so far prevail as to over-

power the things of Christ, 'tis evident that faith must be weak. I have followed Erasmus in translating τῆς δόξης, *ex opinione*, "according to opinion;" altho' the old interpreter is not to be censured who hath rendered it by—"of glory."— For the word δόξα, among the Greeks, signifies both; and may very properly be applied to Christ; and very consistently too with the scope of the passage. For the

the glory of Christ is so great, that it easily extinguishes all the pomps and glories of this world, if once it shine into our eyes. Whence it follows that Christ is lightly esteemed by us, so long as admiration of worldly glory possesses us. But the other way of tuning it will

also very well agree with the context, for while a high opinion of riches and honours dazzles our eyes, truth, which ought to prevail, is suppressed.\* He uses the expression, "fit thou here in a good place," for "an honourable seat."

4. *Are ye not then partial, &c.*] It may be read either affirmatively or interrogatively; but almost in the same sense. For he amplifies their guilt from this, that they delighted and indulged themselves in such a base perverseness.— If you read it interrogatively, this will be the sense. 'Do not your own consciences convict you

in such a manner, that there is no need of any other judge?' If you prefer to read it affirmatively, the force of the reasoning will be to this purpose: 'This too is an additional evil, that ye are not sensible of your transgression, neither do ye acknowledge, that your thoughts are evil, as they really are.'

5. Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?

6. But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgement seats?

7. Do not they blaspheme that worthy name, by which ye are called?

#### 5. *Hearken,*

\* Some have translated the verse thus—"Hold not the glorious faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, with respect of persons;" and have thought this translation to be most agreeable to the scope of the apostle's argument; because the christian's faith has clothed him with a much better and more glorious attire than what riches can procure. The learned reader will perceive, that this translation agrees very well with the Greek construction. Beza and the old translation have it as in our version: Erasmus and Calvin use the word *opinione*, opinion, for the original word *δοξῆ*, commonly translated *gloria*, glory. This opinion, then, of the sense of the passage, seems to be—that the apostle is directing us not to estimate the servants of Christ, and their worth, by common opinion, or the way in which mankind generally judge of persons and things that is, "with respect of persons according to worldly distinctions and circumstances."

5. *Hearken, my beloved brethren, &c.*] He now uses a twofold argument to prove that they act preposterously, who on account of the rich despise the poor. The first *argument* is, that 'tis unworthy conduct in man to despise those whom God hath exalted; and to treat with contumely those whom he honours—but God honours the poor; therefore, whosoever rejects them perverts the order of God. The other *argument* is taken from general experience: as the rich, for the most part, are the occasion of trouble to the good and the innocent, 'tis very absurd, to return them such a reward for their injuries, as to regard them more than the poor, who assist us more than they injure us. But we shall consider, distinctly, the force and extent of each of these arguments. *Hath not God chosen the poor, &c.*] Not them alone, however: but he chose to begin with them, to give a check to the pride of the rich. This is agreeable to what Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 25, &c. “ For ye see  
 “ your calling, brethren, how  
 “ that not many wise men after  
 “ the flesh, not many mighty,  
 “ not many noble are called:  
 “ but God hath chosen the  
 “ foolish things of the world  
 “ to confound the wise; and  
 “ God hath chosen the weak  
 “ things of the world to con-  
 “ found the things that are

“ mighty, &c.” In fine, as God hath shewn his kindness, in common, to the rich and to the poor; he hath, however, chosen to give the poor a preference, that the great might learn not to be too partial to themselves; that the mean and obscure might learn to ascribe whatever they have to the mercy of God; and that both parties might be trained up to modesty and humility. He calls those, *rich in faith*, not who abound in the greatness of their faith, but whom God hath enriched with the various gifts of his spirit, of which by faith we are made partakers.— For certainly, as God freely offers himself to all, every one is made a partaker of his gifts, according to the measure of his faith. Wherefore, if we be empty or poor, this argues a failure of our faith: for if we only extend the sails of our faith, God is always ready to fill them. He says the kingdom is *promised* to those who love God, not in the sense that the promise depends upon their love; but to put us in mind, that we are called by God to the hope of eternal life, upon this condition and for this end, that when called, we should love him. 'Tis the end *of our calling*, then, not the beginning of it, that is here pointed out.

6. *Do not rich men oppress you?*] He seems here to stir up to revenge, by bringing forward to their view the unjust tyranny of the rich, as if those who are used unjustly by others were at liberty to retaliate.— But we are every where enjoined to do good even to our most implacable enemies. But James has another object in view here: for he only wishes to shew, that they act without reason and judgment who eagerly honour their oppressors; and, in the meantime, act injuriously to people, who are their friends, or from whom, at least, they have never received any injury. For in this, their folly appears more strongly, that without being induced to it by any benefits received, they only admire the rich, because they are rich; yea, they even fervently

fawn upon those whom, to their own hurt, they have experienced to be both unjust and cruel. There are, no doubt, some of the rich, who attend to equity and moderation; and who would scorn to do any injustice; but few such are to be found. James, then, only relates what their general conduct in this respect is, and what is confirmed by daily experience.— For as mankind, commonly, experience their power by their injuries, it thence comes to pass, that the more powerful any one is, the more worthless he becomes, and the more unjust toward his neighbours. Wherefore, the rich ought to be particularly cautious, lest they should contract any thing of that contagion which rages every where among their order.

7. *Do not they blaspheme that worthy name, &c.*] Without doubt he means the name of God and Christ. And he says, that they are called by it, or that it is named upon believers, not in prayer, as the scriptures sometimes use to speak, but in respect of their profession, (*as christians*;) just as the name of a father is said to be named upon his offspring. See Gen. xlviii. 16. “The angel which redeemed me from all evil, blest the lads: and let my name be named on them,

“and the name of my fathers, “Abraham and Isaac.” Or the name of a husband named upon a wife, Isa. iv. 1. “And in that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” ’Tis then the same as if he had said, “that worthy name, in which ye glory, or by which, because of its honour, ye desire to be enrolled and called.” But if they

they proudly stand and dishonour God, how unworthy are they to be honoured by christians.

8. If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.

9. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

11. For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said, also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

We have here now a more ample declaration. He openly assigns the cause of his last reproof—that their courteous behaviour to the rich proceeded, not from brotherly love, but rather, from a vain desire of courting their favour. 'Tis the anticipation of an objection: for some might make this exception—that a person is not to be blamed who submits himself with humility even to the unworthy. James grants that to be true; but teaches us, that this was used as a false pretext by them; because this complaisance was not shewn to them as neighbours, but to their personal rank. In the 3th verse he acknowledges that whatever offices of brotherly love we shew towards our neighbours are proper and commendable; but in the 9th he denies that a fawning respect to su-

periority of rank ought to be reckoned among the duties of charity or brotherly love; because it by no means agrees with the rule of the law. The hinge of the reasoning turns upon the words *neighbours and persons*; as if he had said, "If you pretend to hold out charity as a pretence for this kind of conduct, it will not avail you; for God orders us to love our neighbours, not to have respect to persons. Besides the word *neighbours* comprehends the whole of mankind: he, then, who passing by others, selects, agreeable to his own will and humour, a few only as the objects of his respect and esteem, doth not keep the law of God, but complics with his own perverse humour. God expressly recommends to our regard both strangers and enemies, and whosoever may be, in other

respects, in mean circumstances. The respecting of persons is quite contrary to this

doctrine; wherefore James justly affirms it to be inconsistent with charity.

8. *If ye fulfil the royal law, &c.*] I take the word law here simply for a rule, and to fulfil it, is to observe it with sincere integrity and in all its parts: it is opposed to the partial observance of some. 'Tis called the *royal law*, as a turnpike road is called the king's highway—'tis plain, straight, and equal; as opposed to winding by-paths and turnings. An allusion, however, is here, in my opinion, to be noted, to that servile complaisance which they shewed to the rich, while they might not only live as freemen,

but as kings, by a frank and liberal performance of the duties owing to their neighbours.—When he says, that those who respect persons *are convinced of the law, &c.* the law is taken in its proper sense; for when, by the command of God we are enjoined to love all mankind; whosoever, excepting only a few, rejects all others, and prefers even the most unworthy to those of good character, he is deservedly styled a transgressor of the law, inasmuch as he not only inverts the order but breaks the command of God.

10. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, &c.*] This only means that God will not be worshipped with exception, [3] nor deal with us so partially as to allow us to retrench from his law such parts as may be less agreeable to us. This appears, at first sight, hard doctrine to some, as if it corresponded with the paradox of the stoics, which makes all sins equal; and asserted that he who hath offended in one point, is to be punished with equal severity as if his whole life had been worthless and wicked.—But it is evident from the context, that the apostle has not any such thing in view: for the

circumstances which gave cause or occasion to any thing said are always to be considered.—The apostle argues, that this is not to love our neighbours, when a part is fawningly selected to the neglect of others.—He proves this, because there cannot be obedience towards God, where there is not an uniform endeavour to comply with whatever is agreeable to the command of God.—As then the law of God is simple and perfect; so it is proper that it should be kept in all its parts, and that none of us should vainly separate what he hath joined together. If, then, we would pay a due obedience to God,

we must be possessed of steadiness and uniformity; as for instance, if any judge should punish ten thefts, and leave one unpunished; by this he betrays a crooked perverseness of disposition, and that he was more an enemy to the persons of the criminals than to their crimes; for he punishes in one what he pardons in another.— Now, then, we have the scope of the apostle before us, namely, if we retrench from the law of God, any part with which we are dissatisfied, altho' we should observe it in its other parts, we *are guilty of all*, because, in breaking one point we violate the whole law.— And altho' this mode of expression be ac-

commodated to the circumstances of the present case, 'tis taken, however, from this general principle, that God hath prescribed to us a rule of life, which 'tis unlawful for us to dismember. For it is not concerning any part of the law that it is said, “ This is the way; “ walk ye in it;” nor does the law promise any reward but to universal obedience: 'tis folly, then, in the schoolmen to consider a partial righteousness, as they call it, as supplying the place of a meritorious righteousness. For this passage, and several others, demonstrate clearly, that there is no righteousness but in the perfect observance of the law.

11. *For he that said, &c.*— A proof of the former sentence. For the legislator is rather to be considered than single precepts of the law apart. The justice of God is contained, as an individual body, in the law.— Whosoever, then, transgresseth one point of the law, as much, as in his power, overthrows the justice of God. Besides, as God would try our obedience in one part, so would he in

every part. Wherefore, he is a transgressor of the law, whosoever offendeth in respect of any commandment, according to that scripture—“ Cursed be “ he that confirmeth not all “ the words of this law to do “ them.” Deut. xxvii. 26. In fine, we see that a transgressor of the law, and one “ who is “ guilty of all,” with James mean one and the same thing.

12. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

13. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment,

12. *So speak ye, &c.*] Some thus explain the verse, that because they were too partial to themselves, they are put in mind that they are to be tried at a legal tribunal. For men acquit themselves in their own opinion, because they do not try themselves by the sentence of the divine law. He has in view then, to put them in mind that all words and actions will be brought to this test, for God will judge the world according to his law. But as such a denunciation might strike a more than ordinary terror, they think the severity to be amended and mitigated by the words added, "the law of liberty." For we hear what Paul saith: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse."— Wherefore, the judgment of the law in itself will be (*to them*) the condemnation of eternal death. This sense of the verse corresponds

13. *For he shall have judgment, &c.*] This is the application of the last sentence to his present purpose, which entirely confirms the second exposition which I have given of it. For it teaches us, that as we depend on the mercy of God alone, we ought to shew mercy to those whom God himself recommends to us. And this is a remarkable recommendation of humanity and beneficence,

well enough with the context. However, if any one consider more nearly what immediately follows, he will see that James has something else in view; as if he had thus expressed himself: "If you yourselves would not wish to undergo the rigour of the law, be not too rigid against your neighbours." For the law of liberty is of the same import with the mercy of God, which frees us from the curse of the law.— And thus the words will be to be read in context with the following, where he speaks of bearing with the infirmities of others. Then the context runs smoothly thus: "Since none of us can stand before God, unless delivered from the rigour of the law, we ought so to behave that we may not, by our too great severity, (*towards others*) exclude ourselves from the Divine favour and indulgence, of which all have the utmost need."

that God promises he will be merciful to us, if we be merciful to our brethren: not that any mercy of ours, of what kind soever it be, that we can shew to our fellow creatures, merits the mercy of God: but whom God hath chosen, that he may be to these a compassionate and merciful father— these he wishes to carry about and bear in themselves his own image while on earth: accord-  
ing



ing to that commandment of Christ; "Be merciful, as your heavenly father is merciful." 'Tis to be observed, on the other hand, that, "the apostle can denounce nothing more severe or dreadful than the judgment of God:" whence it follows, that they are more than wretched and undone who do not fly to the sanctuary of his forgiveness. *And mercy rejoiceth, &c.* As if he had said, "'Tis the mercy of God alone that frees us from the fear of judgment. For he useth the word *rejoiceth* here, for its being victorious and superior: for the judgment of condemnation hangeth over the whole world, if mercy in-

tervene not to relieve them.—The exposition of those, who would have a person to be here pointed at under the name of a thing is harsh and forced; for man is not, with propriety, said to rejoice against the judgment of God: but the mercy of God itself in a manner rejoiceth and obtains a sovereign triumph, when the severity of judgment ceaseth. Altho' I do not deny that a confidence of glorying ariseth thence, while the faithful find the anger of God, in some measure, yielding to his mercy; so that supported by the latter, they cannot be overwhelmed by the former.

14. What doth it profit, my brethren, tho' a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food;

16. And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.

14. *What doth it profit, &c.*] He proceeds in commendation of mercy. As he had threatened that God would be to us a severe and terrible judge, unless we be humane and com-

passionate to our neighbours: and as on the other hand hypocrites objected—that faith, in which the salvation of man consists, is sufficient for us, he now inveighs against that vain boast-

boasting. The sum of his reasoning is—that faith without works profiteth nothing, and consequently is dead.— But here a question arises—can faith be separated from charity? The exposition of this passage gave occasion to that trite distinction among the sophists—into faith informed and formed. [4.] But James had no such thing in view. 'Tis sufficiently evident from his words, that he is speaking of a false profession of faith; for he does not begin by saying, “if any one *have* faith;” but “if any man *say* he hath faith;” by which he undoubtedly signifies that hypocrites boast in the empty name of faith, altho' in reality they have no claim to it.— What then he here calls faith is a concession, as rhetoricians call it. For when we are only entering upon the discussion of a point, it doth not hurt the cause, yea, it sometimes profiteth it, to give up to our opponent the word which he requires; because, when the question itself hath been investigated and resolv-

ed, the word is easily recovered. As James then thought it sufficient to refute that false pretext by which hypocrites screen themselves; he would not stir up any controversy about the word. Let us keep it in remembrance, however, that as often as he mentions the word faith here, he is not speaking according to the real sense of his mind; but is rather disputing against those, who falsely pretend that they have faith, of which they are altogether destitute. *Can faith save him?* As if he had said, “'Tis impossible for us to obtain salvation by a cold and bare knowledge of God; which all readily grant to be true. For thus it is, that our salvation is of faith, because faith unites us to God. And this is brought about by ingrafting us into the body of Christ; so that living by his spirit, we may also be governed by him. But there is no such thing in this dead phantom of faith. 'Tis not strange, then, that James deprives it of the power to save.

15. *But if a brother or sister be naked, &c.*] He takes an example from a common case. He is exhorting; as hath been said, to the offices of charity. If any one, in opposition to him, should boast that he is content with faith without works; he compares this insignificant faith to that kind of language

which bids a hungry man go and be filled, but which does not provide the food of which he is in want. As, then, he mocketh the poor man who puts him off by words, but gives him no aid, so they mock God, who frame to themselves a life *destitute* of good works and every pious duty.

17. — *is dead being alone.*] He calls that faith dead in itself, which is without good works. Whence we conclude that it is not faith; for where it is dead, it does not properly retain the name. The sophists urge this expression as a proof that some kind of faith may be found alone. But such frivolous cavilling is answered with-

out difficulty; especially as it is evident that the apostle reasons from an impossibility; as Paul calls the angel accursed who should endeavour to subvert the gospel.— Gal. i. 8. “But tho’ we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

18. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19. Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble.

18. *Yea, a man may say, &c.*] Erasmus here introduces two conversing together, one of whom boasts of faith without works; the other of works without faith: and thinks both of them are confuted by the *intervening* answer of the apostle: but this notion appears to me to be too forced. He thinks it to be absurd that this expression, “thou hast faith,” should be spoken in the person of James, who acknowledgeth no faith without works. But he is much mistaken in not discovering, that these words are used *ironically*. The word translated *yea*, I take here to signify *but rather*; and the word rendered *a man* to mean *any man*: and the sense will run thus: “But rather any man

may say, (to refute the foolish vain glorying of those who imagine that they have faith, while by their walk and conversation they discover themselves infidels)—*thou hast faith, &c.* For, says James, it would be easy for all who live godly to drive out of hypocrites that vain glorying with which they are elated—by thus addressing them, “Shew me thy faith, &c.” Altho’ the text more commonly in the Greek runs thus, “Shew me thy faith by thy works.” I rather, however, incline to prefer the reading of the old Latin, which is also found in several Greek copies. By ordering them, then, “to shew their faith without works, he argues from a thing impossible, in order to prove that

that they have none. Thus the phraseology is *ironical*. However, if any one would rather follow the different reading, "Shew me thy faith by thy works," it will amount to the same meaning: for the activity of any thing must be proved by works; the sense then is, "Unless you show me the fruits of your faith, I deny that you are possessed of any." But it may be asked, is an external probity of life a certain proof of faith? for, says James, "I will shew thee my faith *by my works*."— I answer, that the

unbelieving too sometimes excel in specious virtues, or pass an honourable life remote from every crime: and, therefore, illustrious works may, in appearance, be separated from faith. But James is not arguing, that whosoever has an appearance of probity is immediately possessed of faith.— He only means this, that it is in vain to boast of faith without the testimony of good works, because from the living root of a good tree, the fruits always proceed.

19. *Thou believest that there is one God, &c.*] From this single expression 'tis abundantly manifest, that the whole of this disputation is not concerning faith, but that common knowledge of God which no more joins a person to God, than the sight of the sun elevates him to heaven; whereas it is certain, that by faith we draw near to God. Besides it will be ridiculous, if any one should assert that the devils have faith:\*

but James here prefers them to hypocrites.— The devil trembles, says he, at the mention of God, because while he acknowledges him as his judge, he stands in awe of him: therefore, he who acknowledges God, but despiseth him, is something worse than the devil. *Thou dost well*, is added by way of extenuation; as if he had said, "This to be sure is a great matter, to sink below devils."

20. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21. Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23. And

\* He means a faith connected with obedience to God.

23. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.

24. Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. [5]

25. Likewise, also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

20. *But wilt thou know, &c.*] The state of the question is to be attended to. For neither here is the disputation concerning the cause of justification: but the point under consideration is only this—what a profession of faith profiteth without works; and of what account it is to be held? They labour in vain, then, who endeavour to prove from this passage, that a man is justified by

works; for James had no such thing in his view; the proofs which he subjoins have a reference to this sense, that there can be no faith without works, or, at least, that without works faith is dead. For no one will ever be able to understand what is spoken, or prudently to judge of the meaning of words, unless he shall keep in view the design of the writer.

21. *Was not Abraham, our father, justified, &c.*] Sophists lay hold of this word *justified*; and then, as if conquerors, exclaim—that a part of justification consists in works: but the sound interpretation must be taken from the context. We have said that James is not here treating of those points, either whence or how mankind may obtain justification; as is evident to any one; but that he has this only in view, to prove

that good works are always joined with faith: therefore, when he declares, that Abraham was justified by faith, he speaks of the proof of his justification. When, then, the sophists oppose James to Paul, they commit a mistake, thro' the ambiguous signification of the word: because when Paul says, that we are justified by faith, he means nothing else, but the attainment of our being considered as justified before God; whereas

James has a very different matter in view, namely, that he who professes to be possessed of faith should demonstrate the truth of his faith by his works. Certainly James did not mean here to teach upon what foundation the certain hope of our salvation ought to rest, on which alone Paul insists. Therefore, that we may not fall into the false conclusion which hath deceived the sophists, this double meaning of the words is to be attended to—that *justification*, as used by Paul, is a free imputation of righteousness before the tribunal of God; but, as used by James, is a proof of justification from its effects before men: as we may gather from the foregoing words,—“Shew me thy faith, &c.”—In this sense we acknowledge, without controversy, that a man is justified by works. As if any one should say, that a man is enriched by the purchase of a great and costly estate, because his riches, which formerly lay concealed in a chest, have now become more generally known. When he says, “that faith wrought with his works, and by them was

“made perfect;” he again shews that the question here is not concerning the cause of our salvation—but is whether works necessarily accompany faith? For in this sense faith is said to have co-operated with works, because it was not inactive. 'Tis said to have been made perfect by works, not because it receives its perfection from works, but because by these it is proved to be real. As to that stale distinction of theirs, which the sophists artfully draw from the words, of a faith formed and unformed, it stands in no need of long refutation. For the faith of Abraham was formed and real before the sacrificing of his son. But that action was not the finishing part, so to speak; for many actions followed afterwards, by which Abraham demonstrated the increase of his faith. Wherefore, neither was that the perfection of his faith, nor did it then first receive a beginning. James then means nothing else, but that the perfection of his faith consisted in this, that it displayed that distinguished fruit of obedience.

23. *And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, &c.*] Those, who would prove from this testimony of James, that the works of Abram were imputed to him for justification, must,

of necessity, acknowledge the scripture to be miserably wrested.— For let them do their best, they will never bring it to pass that the effect should be prior to the cause. That passage

sage of Moses, Gen. xv. 6. is cited; "And Abram believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The imputation of righteousness, of which Moses there speaks, preceded that work by which they would have Abram to be justified more than thirty years. Surely, as faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, fifteen years before Isaac was born, it could not be on account of the sacrifice of his son. Whoever maintains that righteousness was imputed to Abram before God, because he sacrificed his son Isaac, who was not yet born, when the holy spirit pronounced Abram a justified person, can never give a satisfactory answer to this point. Therefore it necessarily remains that we should maintain that some-

25. *Likewise, also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, &c.*] It appears absurd to couple together characters so unlike as those of Abraham and Rahab. Why did he not rather choose out some from the great number of illustrious patriarchs, whom he might join with Abraham? Why does he prefer a harlot to them all? 'Tis purposely that he hath joined together two persons so very opposite, that he might the more clearly demonstrate, that no person, of whatever condi-

tion, family or rank, was ever accounted among the number of the justified and the faithful, without good works. He has named the most distinguished, by far, of all the patriarchs; now, under the person of a harlot, he comprehends all, who, when they were aliens from the church, are ingrafted into her. Whosoever, then, desires to be accounted justified, even to obtain a place among the meanest of such, let him shew himself such by his good works. Because James, ac-

tion, family or rank, was ever accounted among the number of the justified and the faithful, without good works. He has named the most distinguished, by far, of all the patriarchs; now, under the person of a harlot, he comprehends all, who, when they were aliens from the church, are ingrafted into her. Whosoever, then, desires to be accounted justified, even to obtain a place among the meanest of such, let him shew himself such by his good works. Because James, ac-

according to his manner of writing, says that Rahab was justified by works, the sophists thence conclude, that we obtain justification by the merits of our works. But we deny that he is at all here treating of the manner of obtaining justi-

fication; we acknowledge that good works are requisite indeed to justification; but we divest them of all power to confer justification—because they cannot stand before the tribunal of God.

### C O N C L U S I O N.

**F**ROM the general scope of this chapter, learn, 1st, Wherein the real excellence of a rational being consists: not in the possession of the honours, the riches, or the pleasures of this vain and perishing world; but in our relation to him who is the Lord of glory. Secure of his favour, clothed with his image, and holding his faith in righteousness, seek ye the honours which are from above, the riches which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and study that integrity of conduct which angels revere, and wherewith God himself is well pleased. Be not deceived by any outward appearance, either in yourselves or others; but try to discern and esteem real worth, wherever you behold it. Remember, that in matters of religion, the rich and the poor stand on a level before God. He accepteth no man, on account of his riches, or his rank; neither ought ye to have respect, only, to him with the gold ring and the gay clothing. “Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”

2d, Wealth and honour frequently expose to vice. They too often puff up with pride, and lead to oppression, to the neglect of religion, and despite of its great and glorious author. “Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?” Are ye rich? Be on your guard against those temptations, to which your circumstances in life, more immediately, expose you. Remember, that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Remember, that the cries of the oppressed go up unto him, and he will ere long vindicate the cause of the injured. O! remember what is to be the portion of the profane and blasphemous. Psa. xi. 6. Are ye poor? Be resigned to the will of providence: yea be thankful, that  
here-



hereby ye are the less in danger of falling into wickedness. To be poor and wicked is most miserable indeed: yet this is too generally the case. A want of truth and of honesty, merciless slander and detraction, cruel envy, much filthy speaking, and too much blasphemy, even among the poor. O! man, no wonder thou art poor, when this is thy manner of life; when thou art at so much pains to provoke God to make thee wretched here, and miserable, beyond expression, hereafter.

3d, It will be the care of the real christian to yield an uniform obedience to all God's commands; remembering, that he who said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Like God, he hates and abhors every false and wicked way; he has no desire to wink at or to indulge in any favourite vice, and can find no peace in his mind, while any wickedness, of which he is conscious, cleaves unto him. He often lifts up his voice to heaven, in fervent supplication, saying, "Take away my transgressions, O God, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Yea, afraid, lest his own heart should deceive him, he cries, "O! cleanse thou me from secret faults, and purge away all my sin."

4th, True faith, where it prevails, is also productive of true charity. It cannot rest satisfied with saying to the needy, "be ye warmed and be ye filled, without giving them the things which are needful for the body:" but, while it feels for their wants, it is also forward to relieve them. The words of Solomon are often in remembrance: "He that giveth unto the poor, lendeth unto the Lord." True faith, as it were, figures unto itself the judgment come, the judge seated, the books opened, all mankind standing at the bar, and Him who once shed his blood on the cross, speaking unto those on his right hand, and saying, "In as much as ye did it unto these, my needy disciples, ye did it unto me." Lord, what can our substance do, though it were all bestowed in charity for thy sake, to bring from thy lips such a declaration!

Lastly, While we know by the doctrine of one apostle, "that we are justified by grace, through faith which is the gift of God;" let us give good heed also to what is so plainly taught by another; "that faith without works is dead." What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. While we magnify the riches of that grace, by which we hope to be saved; let us, at the same time, remember, that "this grace, which bringeth to us salvation, teacheth and prevaileth with all its  
" happy

“ happy subjects; all who are actually saved by it,” to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world; for “ God hath chosen them unto eternal life, only through the sanctification of the spirit, and the belief of the truth—and without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

## NOTES ON CHAP. II.

## NOTE I.

[1] **M**ANY of the Jews were of opinion, that God dwelt in light, rendered awfully obscure by a mixture of darkness. They were led into this opinion, probably, from the appearance of that cloud which attended them, in the wilderness, and from which God is said to look forth. This cloud was indeed a striking emblem of a present Deity. Its appearance, by day, was similar to that of a thick mist; but it had the likeness of a flaming fire, by night; and was much brighter by night, than by day. It was this light which is so frequently called the SHECHINAH, or *CHABOD JEHOVAH*—*the glory of the Lord*, in the Old Testament. Not that this light was God, but only a symbol of his glorious presence.— When God descended on mount Sinai, to give the law to his people; “ the glory of the Lord dwelt upon the mount: the sight of this glory was as burning fire, and the people trembled to come near, because of it.” It appeared, in the same figure, in the tabernacle; so that Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, Exod. xl. 34. and 35. At the dedication of the temple, this glory shone so bright, that the priests could not stand to minister; “ for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.” 1 Kings, viii. 10. and 11. After the Israelites had terminated their wanderings in the wilderness, this cloud became stationary on the ark, over the mercy seat, and between the cherubim. When the ark was removed from one place to another, Jehovah is said to arise, and the ark of his strength. When it was removed from the house of Obadedom, and placed in the temple on mount Zion, the Psalm, sung upon that occasion, concludes with these remarkable words, Lift up “ your heads, O ye gates, that the King of glory may come in.” Psal. xxiv. 9.

It is evidently in allusion to this glory of Israel, that Christ is styled

styled by James, "the Lord of glory." Paul expressly affirms, that Christ was with the Israelites in the wilderness. He was the person whom they frequently offended, and by whose hand they were occasionally corrected, 1 Cor. x. 9. The separation of the Jews from the rest of mankind, and the establishing a covenant with them was a pure act of mercy in God; and he appointed his own Eternal Son to be the minister of his grace, under the Old Testament dispensation. The Son of God appeared among the Jews, in a manner becoming his high office and appointment, occasionally putting forth a part of that glory which he had with his Father, from the beginning.— When Christ came in the flesh, and acted as the minister of God, under the New Testament, he, now and then, manifested his essential glory, and no doubt, one end in view by this was to convince the Jews, that he verily was the true Messiah—that very person who attended their ancestors in the wilderness. Many of their doctors taught, that the wonders done in Egypt, in the desert, and on their entrance into Canaan, were wrought by the Messiah—that it was his glory which the Israelites so often beheld, and that before the end of the world, he would again appear and make it shine forth. Accordingly, when Christ came in the flesh, he appeared still in, or with the glory of the Lord. At his transfiguration, on the mount, we read, "that his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." This appearance was not unfamiliar to that in which the Israelites had seen him in the cloud. Saul, at his conversion, saw him in his glory, clothed also in light. John speaks, as if this glory had been frequently manifested by him, when he says, "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

## NOTE II.

[2] In the synagogues of the Jews, there were places appropriated for judging and deciding in civil causes—generally, the inner part of the house. Here the ruler of the synagogue, and the elders met to try the cause and pronounce judgment. Cases of great importance were usually tried before the sanhedrim; but in questions of less consequence, the leading members of the synagogue gave sentence, and likewise inflicted punishment; Matth. x. 17. and Acts xxvi. 11. The divine law was very particular, how these judges were to act, when they sat in  
judge-

judgment on their brethren. "Thou shalt not honour the person of the great, or respect the person of the poor: in justice shalt thou judge thy neighbour: ye shall hear alike the small and the great: ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is the Lord's." They were not to be afraid of any man's rank, or influence, so as to be overawed by him. They were not to despise any man's poverty, so as to be inattentive to his case, or neglect to do him justice. They were not to receive a gift, "which blindeth the eyes;" neither were they to discover any partiality to their own kindred; but to judge as for the Lord, who is no respecter of persons; and to remember, "that God was with them in judgment." Accordingly the Jewish canons expressly appointed, that when the rich and the poor had a suit together, in their consistories, that either both must sit or both stand, to avoid all marks of distinction, and every appearance of there being any respect of persons.

In reference to this, James exhorts the christians to be very impartial, when any question of a civil nature came before them; acting on the pure principles of justice, and without respect of persons. The Romans, though they reduced Judea into the form of a province, and set prefects over it, still permitted the Jews to judge and determine the most of their civil disputes, after their own manner, and among themselves. The christians were regarded by the Romans, as a Jewish sect, and for a considerable time, after the commencement of christianity, were always comprehended with the Jews—enjoying the same privileges both civil and religious. It appears from the words of James, that at the time he wrote his epistle, the christians had power to decide in their own disputes, and might settle them at home, without having recourse to any foreign judicatory. He, therefore, exhorts them, when met together in their consistories, for this purpose, to act impartially, and to shew no favour to the rich, more than the poor—saying to the man in the gold ring and gay clothing, "Stand thou there, or sit thou here, under my footstool."

## NOTE III.

[3] It was the opinion of the stoics, that all sins were equal. Many of the Jews, especially of the Essenes, went into this opinion. In opposition to this notion, there were others who taught, that if a person kept but one commandment of the law, this was sufficient to entitle him to the divine favour, and would com-

compensate for all his other omissions, and transgressions.— Accordingly, we are informed, that it was a common practice among them, to fix on one single commandment, and to exercise themselves, chiefly, in this commandment. They generally made choice of that precept, which they conceived was least hostile to their favourite pleasures or interests. It was usually some ritual and positive duty—such as tithes, anise, mint, and cumin; while truth, mercy, and judgment were but little regarded, and looked on as things only of inferior moment. This was palatable doctrine, and an easy sort of morality; but without any foundation in truth. On the contrary, the law of God was in direct opposition unto it; for says the apostle, “Who-  
“soever shall keep the whole law, and yet, knowingly, offend  
“in one point, is guilty of all; for he that said, Do not com-  
“mit adultery, said also, Do not kill. James does not mean by this, however, that there is no difference in sins; for some, by reason of aggravation, are more offensive to God than others. Nor does he teach, that there will be no difference made in the punishment of sin: for, “that servant, who knew his master’s  
“will, but did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.”— But, what the apostle affirms, is, that the authority of the divine lawgiver is as much despised, by breaking any one of his laws, as by the violation of them all: that the transgressor shall be as certainly punished for one offence, as for many; because every sin deserves God’s wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come. Our God hates every false and wicked way, and there shall, by no means, enter into his presence, in heaven, any that are defiled, or make a lie.— Let no man, then, deceive himself, by imagining, that his good deeds can atone for his bad deeds: but, while he abhors every wickedness, let him look to Him, who is become the end of the law for righteousness, and by whose merits alone, we obtain the remission of all our sins.

## NOTE IV.

“*Faith formed and unformed.*” An unformed faith, according to the schoolmen, was that which consisted, merely, in the assent of the mind, without having any influence on the affections, or on the conduct. This conceit gave birth to some very lax and pernicious tenets; viz. that a person might have true faith, and yet, no fear of God before his eyes. But this is entirely contradictory to what Paul teaches, Rom. x. 10. “that  
“with

“with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and likewise, to what James affirms, “that faith, without works, is dead, being alone.” True faith receives, and rests upon Christ, as he is offered in the gospel: but he is offered, not only for righteousness, forgiveness of sin, and peace with God; but also for sanctification. Therefore, says Calvin, it follows, that faith can, by no means, be separated from godly affection, and godly living; but, wherever it prevails, it purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, and is productive of the peaceable fruits of righteousness.— It may, indeed, be less operative in one believer than in another; but in no believer, does it always continue lifeless and inactive.

Faith formed, according to the sophists, is a faith, which derives its justifying power, principally, from charity. It is allowed, indeed, that charity is not the essential form of faith; but, in as much as it imparts a certain degree of perfection to faith, it, as it were, gives it substance, or form, so as to be of efficacy, in order to justify. The scripture doctrine on this point is, that we are justified by faith, not as a meritorious, but only as an instrumental cause. Charity being a special ornament of faith, and only a fruit of it.

## NOTE V.

[5] “*You see then, that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*” These words, when contrasted with what Paul, in the iv. and v. chap. of the Romans, teaches on this subject of justification, have been the occasion of much controversy among christians. The point, indeed, is important, and demands the attention of every person into whose hands the gospel is come. It is not to be supposed, that this revelation from God, which unfolds to us the riches of his mercy, would leave it unresolved in what manner we actually obtain this mercy. One main purpose, why Christ came into this world, was to resolve this very question. He not only purchased eternal life for us, by the shedding of his precious blood, but he also clearly pointed out the way in which this salvation is to be obtained. An attentive reader of the New Testament will perceive, that the doctrine of Christ and of all his apostles is uniformly the same on this subject: so that it is not owing to the teachers, but to our not understanding aright what is taught, that any apparent contradiction takes place.

There are two considerations which have not been sufficiently  
at-

attended to in the question before us. 1st, The proper acceptation of the word justified, as used by Paul and by James—whether they use it exactly in the same sense? 2d. The particular situation and circumstances of the persons to whom their epistles are inscribed, at the time when they were written. Paul uses the word justified in a law sense, signifying much the same as to absolve, to acquit, and in particular reference to the guilt and the condemning power of sin, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” James uses it as applied to character, to denote approbation or disapprobation, arising from a knowledge and conviction that the actor is just what he says he is.— Abraham believed in God, and as a proof of this, offered up his son Isaac, in obedience to the command of God, and God approved his conduct to that degree, as to condescend to speak to him in these remarkable words, saying, “Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”

It is evident, then, both from what is said of Abraham and of Rahab, that James uses the word justified, in a different acceptation from Paul—in a sense chiefly applied to conduct; whereas in Paul’s sense, it refers principally to a man’s state. Paul, in his reasoning on this subject in the epistle to the Romans, lays it down as an indisputable point, that both Jew and Gentile were under sin, and become guilty before God. But God cannot enter into covenant with sinners; he cannot receive them into favour till their sins are forgiven them.— There is no remission of sin but through Christ: he is our peace: we are brought nigh unto God by his blood, and made accepted only in him, the beloved. Therefore, it follows, that our justification before God, and our being reconciled unto him, is a pure act of mercy, which we owe entirely to the interposition and death of his son.

The necessity of atonement and pardon, before men could have access to God, was clearly taught the Jews under the Old Testament; when God entered into particular covenant with them, Moses took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people. No Jew, under any defilement, was permitted to come into the presence of Jehovah till this impurity was

washed away by sacrifice, or some ceremonial purgation. The moment the leper was discovered, he was separated from the congregation, and compelled to reside by himself, till the leprosy departed from him: his hair and his garments, which had been infected, were burned with fire, and he himself washed again and again, before he was permitted to join in the public worship with his brethren; Lev. xiii. 45. to the end. Any beast offered in sacrifice for the whole congregation of Israel was burned without the camp, because it was reputed unclean, by having the sins of all the people on it; whereas the other sacrifices were usually consumed on the brazen altar which stood on the north side of the ark, and near the center of the camp.— Lev. xvi. 17.

The temple is often styled the house of God, that place where Jehovah more immediately dwelt. To impress all the people with becoming sentiments of his immaculate purity, and to teach them that no sinner can stand in God's presence, till his sins are forgiven him, it was expressly enjoined, that he who touched a dead body, or had any scab upon him, should have no access to the temple, till these impurities were removed; yea, to show how great an enemy God is to every sin, even sins of ignorance prevented from joining in his worship, till an atonement was made for them. In like manner, under the New Testament dispensation, it is equally impossible to have access to God, so as to be accepted of him, till our sins are forgiven us, and we are delivered from the guilt of them, by some atonement being made. But, says Paul, we have access to God, by the blood of Jesus, for he is our propitiation. We may now draw near with full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled by Christ's blood, and our sins forgiven us for his sake.— To be justified, then, in Paul's sense, is to be absolved from guilt, and accepted as righteous, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith. Hence it appears, that Paul reasons from the cause to the effect; but James argues from the effect to the cause: for he uses the word justified not to signify the pardon of sin, or any act of absolution, but to intimate that God is well pleased with the person's conduct, and justifies or approves of it, because there is no hypocrisy in him: for while he says, he has faith, he proves the truth hereof by his works. This will appear still more evident by attending in the

2d place, to the situation and circumstances of the persons to whom



whom their epistles are inscribed, and observing whether they were exactly alike, or in what respects they were different: Paul wrote to a people, (the Romans) who were ignorant of the true God, and totally unacquainted with the way of acceptance with God. These heathens had been accustomed to rely on the number and cost of their sacrifices, for their acceptance with their own gods. If there were any Jews in this church at Rome, even the Jews founded their hopes on the merits of their ancestors—their sacrifices and other toilsome rites. Both Jew and Gentile appear to have objected to christianity, that it taught too easy a way of being received into the divine favour, and hereby lessened the character of the Deity. If men be justified by grace alone, said they; why, this is making religion nothing—encouraging indolence, yea, opening a door to all manner of wickedness. That these were their sentiments of the gospel method of salvation, is evident from the way in which the apostle argues with them, in the iii. chap. of his epistle; and his being at so great pains to prove that the doctrine of grace gave no countenance to vice: “Do we make void the law through grace? God forbid; nay, rather, we establish the law.” The Jews were offended at Paul’s doctrine, because they could not endure to hear, that the Gentiles should be so readily and easily admitted to partake with them in their hope through the Messiah; and even to higher privileges than what they enjoyed. The Gentiles excepted also against it, for they thought it by far too simple and too easy a way to eternal life, it being, in their opinion, a very small matter, to possess that faith which the gospel required. Hence we find Celsus, one of its bitterest adversaries, alledging this as the chief reason for Constantine’s conversion; “That he was shown a much easier way of salvation from his sins by the christian teachers, than by the heathen priests.” Paul, in the iii. and iv. chap. of the Romans, endeavours to remove the prejudices and opposition both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, by shewing, “that on account of the sinfulness and guilt of all men, such an exhibition of mercy as the gospel unfolded, such a promise of pardon and acceptance, on account of that atonement which Jesus Christ had made by his death, was absolutely necessary; and had not God in his mercy appointed this method of salvation, all mankind must have perished for ever in their sins.” The persons, then, with whom Paul reasons in his epistle to the Romans, conceived that works did every thing in order to procure justification with God. It was very

very different with those to whom James inscribes his epistle, and with whom he argues in the ii. chap. from the 19. ver. to the end. Their conceptions as to faith, and the efficacy of it, were in direct opposition to the sentiments of Paul's disputants: for they seem to have maintained, that faith was all in all; and magnified the virtue of it to such a degree as to lead the adversaries of christianity to think, that the gospel permitted the total neglect of good works, and taught its subjects to view with indifference the most essential duties of the law. This was an entire misconception of the nature and design of the gospel, and that very mistake of the law being made void by grace, which Paul had been at so much pains to correct in his epistle to the Romans. James as well as Paul knew the danger of permitting his countrymen to continue in so pernicious an opinion. It is obvious, then, that both concur in maintaining the glory of Christ, and the credit of his gospel. Paul declares, works cannot justify, "but we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." James affirms, that faith cannot justify, for faith itself is only a fruit of our justification, and unless the other fruits of justification are connected with faith, it is vain to magnify its virtue, and a deception to rely on it.

---

### C H A P. III.

**M**Y brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

2. For in many things, we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

3. Behold, we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4. Behold, also, the ships, which, tho' they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governour listeth.

5. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth  
great

great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

1. *My brethren, be not many masters, &c.*] The common and generally received interpretation of this passage is, that it dissuades us from desiring the office of teaching—and on this account, because 'tis dangerous; and should any one fail in it, he is liable to the severe judgment of God.— And they are of opinion, that he says *be not many*, because 'tis necessary there should be some. But, by *masters* I understand, not those who discharge some public office in the church; but those who usurp the right of censurs upon others; for such censurers would willingly be esteemed the masters of manners, as it were.— And this form of speech, to call those masters, who superciliously animadvert upon others, is very common both among the Greeks and Latins. And he forbids them *to be many*, because many such are everywhere thrusting themselves forward. This is a disease innate, as it were, in the human disposition—to catch at fame by the censuring of others: but, here, a double vice reigns—that tho' few be qualified, all promiscuously thrust themselves into the office of a master.— And again, few of them are influenced by a right view; for

hypocrisy and ambition actuate them rather than a regard for the salvation of their brethren. 'Tis to be observed, that James is not here dissuading from brotherly admonitions, which the spirit so often, and so much recommends to us; but that he is condemning that immoderate desire, which arises from pride and ambition, of exalting ourselves above our neighbour, of reviling, censuring, backbiting, and maliciously inquiring out every thing which they can turn to his disadvantage. 'Tis usual for such cruel censurers of others, to boast themselves with insolence in their searches into the vices of others; from this intemperance and arrogance of conduct James dissuades us: and he gives the reason, viz. that they shall undergo a more severe judgment themselves, who are so severe upon others. He imposes a severe law upon himself, who judgeth of the words and actions of others, according to the strictest rigour; nor does he deserve forgiveness, who cannot bear to spare another. The general scope and sense is carefully to be noticed, namely, that those who are too rigid against their brethren provoke the severity of God against themselves.

2. *For, in many things, we offend all, &c.*] This may be understood as spoken by way of concession. As if he had thus said: "Be it so, that you find in your brethren just cause of blame, for no one is free from faults; yea, every individual labours under many: but do you, with that evil-speaking and poisonous tongue of yours, imagine yourself to be perfect?" I am, however, rather of opinion, that by this argument James would exhort us to mercifulness of disposition, as being also ourselves surrounded with many infirmities; for he acts unjustly, who refuses to others that forgiveness of which he himself stands in need. So, also, Paul orders that those who are overtaken in a fault should be restored in the spirit of meekness; adding, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." For there is nothing so effectual to moderate our excessive rigour, as the consideration of our own infirmity. *If any man offend not in word, &c.* After he hath said, that there is no person who sinneth not in various ways; he now shews

3. *Behold, we put bits in the horses mouths, &c.*] By these two similes he proves, that the great point on which true perfection turneth is in the tongue; and that it, as he lately said, has a sovereign influence on the

that the disease of detraction is odious beyond all other sins. For in saying, that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man;" he signifies that continency of the tongue is a distinguished virtue, and one of the chief. Wherefor they act very perversly, who curiously pry into every the least faults of their neighbours, and yet indulge themselves in so gross a vice. He elegantly here, therefore, glances at this hypocrisy of censurers; because, in examining themselves, they omit what is a principal and important matter—their own malevolence and back-biting. Those who correct others, maintain a shew of perfect sanctity: but, if they would be perfect, they ought to begin with the tongue. Whereas, while they pay no regard to the bridling of the tongue, but rather vaunt in their feigned sanctity by back-biting and tearing others, they lay themselves open as the most reprehensible of all, in neglecting this first of virtues. This connexion clearly shews us the mind of the apostle.

whole of life. He, first, compares the tongue to a bit; next, to the helm of a ship.— If so fierce an animal as a horse is turned about, at the pleasure of the rider, because he is bridled; so no less power will the tongue

tongue have in ruling man.— So, also, is it with regard to the helm of a ship, which governs the whole body, even when driven by the fierce wind. The tongue, then, tho' it be a very small member, hath a very great influence in regulating the life of man. The word in the original, in the last clause of the 5th verse, signifies to boast or vaunt of great things. But James in this passage had it not so much in view to rebuke ostentation, as to express that the tongue effecteth great things. This 5th verse ac-

commodates the former similes to the present purpose: but vain boasting would not be properly represented by the similes of a bridle or helm: it signifies, then, that the tongue is a very powerful member. *Turned about as the governor listeth*, Erasmus translates, “at the *impetus* of the governor”—because the Greek word *ἰσχυρῶς*, signifies an *impetus*, or furious impulse.— But, James is here treating, simply, of the will of the pilot or governor of the ship. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

He now lays before us the inconveniences which arise from the intemperance of the tongue, to let us know that it has a powerful influence in the two following respects: if it be modest and well regulated, it has a commanding power over the whole life; but if it be forward and wicked, it sweeps all things to destruction, as in one general conflagration. He uses the phrase, “a little fire,” to point out, that the littleness of

the tongue hindereth not its power from extending far and wide to do mischief. When he adds, “that it is a world of iniquity,” 'tis the same as if he had said, “a sea or abyss of iniquity.”— He elegantly connects the littleness of the tongue, with the immense bulk of the world; a small bit of flesh, as the tongue is, contains in itself a whole world of iniquity.

6. *So is the tongue amongst our members, &c.*] He here explains what he would have us to understand by the word

*world*—because its contagion is diffused thro' every part of life. Or, rather, he shews us what he would have us to understand

derstand by the metaphor of *fire*; namely, that it disfigureth the whole man. He immediately has recourse again to the metaphor of *fire*; when he says, that "the course of nature is "set on fire by the tongue." He compares the course of human life to a wheel: he takes the word, *in the original, as we have it rendered in our translation, for nature, as he formerly uses it.* The sense is, "Tho' other vices may be corrected in the different stages of life, and in process of time, or at least may not engross the whole man; the evil of the tongue spreads itself and rages throughout the whole life." Unless any one chooses rather to take the words, *setteth on fire*, to denote "a violent impulse;" as we call that "hot or fervid" which is dragged along with violence. Horace speaking of wheels uses the same expression, on account

of their rapidity in the chariot race. He calls them "the fervid wheels." Thus the sense would be, "That the tongue is like untamed horses, because by its forwardness it drags a man headlong, as they do the chariot." When he says, *'tis set on fire of hell*, 'tis as if he had said, "That the intemperance of the tongue is a spark of the fire of the infernal lake." For as profane poets feign that the wicked are blasted by the torches of the furies; so it is true, that Satan, by the blasts of his temptations, kindles up the fire of all the evils in the world. But James means, that a fire sent by Satan is so very easily caught by the tongue, that forthwith 'tis in a blaze. In fine, that it is a proper subject for receiving, cherishing, and increasing the fire of hell.

7. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

8. But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

11. Doth

11. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12. Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

7. *For every kind, &c.*] This verse is a confirmation of the last.— From that he proves, that Satan reigns in the tongue with an astonishing power, which cannot by any means be kept in order; and amplifies upon the subject by adducing comparisons.— For, says he, there is no animal so fierce, cruel, or violent, but it may be tamed by the industry of man—that fishes, which in some measure, inhabit another world—birds, so much inclined to motion and wandering—and even serpents, the enemies of the human race, are sometimes tamed. Since, then, the tongue cannot be restrained, there must be concealed in it some secret and lurking fire of hell. What he says with regard to wild beasts, serpents, and other creatures, is not to be understood of them all: 'tis enough that the art of man hath succeeded in reducing to obedience and complaisance some of the fiercest among the beasts; and also that serpents are sometimes tamed. Therefore, he uses both tenses—the present “is tamed,” and the perfect, “hath been tamed.” The present points at the power and faculty; the perfect, the use and experience. With great justice, he hence concludes, “that the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” But tho' all these arguments have a reference, in the first instance, to the foregoing passage: “That even men who labour under this most detestable vice, usurp to themselves the office of exercising mastery and judgment over others.” still, however, the general doctrine is to be kept in view—that if we would frame our life aright, the utmost attention must be paid to the correction of the tongue, for no human member is more noxious.

9. *Therewith bless we God, &c.*] This is a striking specimen of its deadly poison, that by its excessive levity it thus transforms itself. For tho' it may pretend to bless God, it

instantly curses him in his image; that is, when it curses man. For if God is to be blessed in all his works, he ought especially to be so in man, in whom his image and glory particularly

shine. The hypocrisy, therefore, is insufferable, when man employs the same tongue in the praise of God, and in the cursing of men. There can be no calling upon the name of God there—and there his praise must cease, where detraction reigns. For this is an impious profanation of the name of God, when the tongue filled with virulence against mankind, unlawfully usurps his province of judging, under the pretence of praising him. Wherefore, in order that we may duly praise him, 'tis necessary that the vice of reproaching our neighbour should especially be corrected. Meanwhile, the particular doctrine is also to be observed, “ that

those severe censurers of others ought to detect their own virulence, who, after they have sweetly praised God, suddenly vomit forth every imaginable reproach against their brethren.” Should any one object, that the image of God in human nature, was destroyed by the transgression of Adam: it must be acknowledged that it was miserably disfigured; but yet some lineaments of it still appear.—Justice and rectitude with the liberty of desiring good have been taken from us: but many excellent gifts, by which we excel the brutes, remain. He, then, who worships and honours God in truth, will stand in awe to reproach men.

11. *Doth a fountain, &c.*] He adduces these similes to shew that an evil-speaking tongue is a kind of prodigy, contrary to nature, and that it overturns the order every where establi-

shed by God. For God hath so distinguished things which are contrary, that even things inanimate ought to deter us from such a confused disorder as prevails in a double tongue.

13. Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work.

17. But



17. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

13. *Who is a wise man, &c.* As the lust of evil speaking commonly springeth from pride, and as a false persuasion of wisdom for the most part generates pride; therefore, he here discourses of wisdom.— 'Tis usual for hypocrites, by accusing all others, to exalt and boast themselves. Many of the ancient philosophers fought to catch glory by their bitter railing against all ranks of mankind. Such kind of pride with which evil-speakers are puffed up and blinded, James expresses by telling them that the wisdom, with which they please themselves in opinion, has nothing in it divine, but is rather

of the devil. The sense then is: "These supercilious censurers who so liberally indulge themselves, and spare nobody besides, are wise above others in their own opinion, but they are much deceived. For God trains up his children in a very different manner—to be meek and humane to others." These only, then, are accounted wise before God, who join with this meekness an upright and becoming conversation: for those who are severe and inexorable, tho' in other respects they may excel in many virtues, are not in the right way of becoming wise.

14. *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, &c.* He points out the fruits which arise from that excess of severity which is opposed to meekness. Immoderate rigour must necessarily beget perverse envyings, which immediately bursts out into strife. He speaks indeed improperly, when he places strifes in the heart: but this has little or no relation to the sense: for he wanted to point

out the source of these evils, which is the perverse disposition of the heart. He calls it bitter envying, because it prevails not, but when our minds are so infected with the poison of malignity, that they convert every thing into bitterness. In order, then, that we may truly glory in being the sons of God, he enjoins us to deal meekly and moderately with our brethren; otherwise he declares that

that we lie, when we boast of being christians.— Aptly too hath he joined strife with envying, because from malignity and envy all quarrels and strifes spring up.

15. *This wisdom descendeth not from above, &c.*] As hypocrites with difficulty yield to truth, he severely checks their pride, denying that to be the true wisdom with which they are puffed up, while they continue to be too severe in searching out the vices of others. But while he grants to them the name of wisdom, he demonstrates by epithets of what kind it is; namely, earthly, sensual, devilish; whereas, in direct opposition to this, it ought to be heavenly, spiritual, and divine. For James takes it for granted, that we cannot become wise in any other way than by being illuminated from heaven by God thro' his spirit.— Whatever way then the mind of man may extend itself in knowledge, all its perspicuity will be vanity; and not only so, but entangled

in the wiles of satan, it will miserably doat and blunder.— The *sense* here is opposed to the *spirit*, as it is in the first epistle to the Corinthians ii. 14. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”— Nor could the pride of man be more effectually humbled, than by this condemnation of all the wisdom whatsoever that he acquires by his natural powers only, without the aid of the spirit: especially as the transition is from his sensual nature to that of demons. For 'tis of the same import as if it were said, that men, while they follow their own carnal inclinations, fall into the snares of satan.

16. *For where envying and strife is, &c.*] 'Tis an argument from contraries: for the *envying* by which hypocrites are actuated, produces effects contrary to wisdom: wisdom requires a well regulated state of mind; envy discomposes it, occasions in it tumultuous passions, and ungovernable resentments against others. Some render the word translated *con-*

*fusion*, by *inconstancy*; but tho' it may signify also both sedition and tumult, the word *confusion* seemed more adapted to the present passage. For James meant to express something stronger than inconstancy; namely, that the malignant man and detractor doth every thing confusedly and unadvisedly, and as if he were beside himself. Therefore, he adds, *and every evil work.*

17. *But*

17. *But the wisdom that is from above, &c.*] Now he enumerates the effects of heavenly wisdom, which are quite opposite to the former. First, he says, it is pure; by which epithet hypocrisy and ambition are excluded: secondly, he calls it peaceable, to denote that it is averse to strife: thirdly, he calls it gentle or humane, to let us know that it differs widely from immoderate austerity, that bears with nothing in brethren. He calls it easy to be intreated, to signify to us that it is abhorrent from pride and malignity. Lastly, he teaches us that it is full of mercy, whereas hypocrites are inhuman and inexorable. By *good fruits* he points out in general all the kind offices which benevolent men bestow on their brethren; as if he had said in one word, that it is full of active goodness: hence it follows, that those lie\* who glory in sour austerity. Altho' when he had

said that it is pure or sincere, he had sufficiently condemned hypocrisy; he, however, repeats it more clearly in the conclusion: by which we are put in mind, that 'tis on this account only, that we are immoderately severe, because we are too partial to ourselves, and wink at our own vices. But it may appear improper, that he says, "it is without partiality;" for the spirit of God neither taketh away the distinction between good and evil; nor doth it render us so senseless, that destitute of all judgment, we should approve vice for virtue. I answer, that by the word translated *partiality* here, James means an over-anxious scrupulous search, such as is commonly to be met with in hypocrites, who, while they too nicely search into the actions and words of their brethren, view and judge of every thing with partiality and injustice.

18. *And the fruit of righteousness, &c.*] The meaning may be double: either that this fruit is sown for the peace makers, which they reap afterwards; or that they themselves cease not to sow righteousness, altho' they bear with many things in their neighbours. 'Tis an anticipation of an objection: for those who are inclined to detraction, and evil speaking,

have always this pretext at hand: What? shall we by our easiness be the encouragers of evil? Therefore, James says, that those, whose wisdom is from God, are gentle, moderate, meek, and merciful; not, however, so as to conceal vices, or to favour them; but that they rather study to correct them, provided it can be done in peace, that is, by the application of

such

\* If they say, that they are possessed of the wisdom that is from above.

such moderate admonitions as may preserve peace and concord. And thus he testifies, that what he has hitherto advanced was by no means with a view to set aside gentle rebukes: but that those who would cure vices, ought to act with the gentleness of physicians, and not with the harshness of butchers. The passage then may be thus paraphrased—

“Those, who are studious of peace, do nevertheless pay a proper attention to the sowing of righteousness; neither are they slothful or unserviceable in promoting and pressing good works, but they temper their zeal with a regard for peace; whereas hypocrites, by their blind and furious vehemence, throw all things into trouble and confusion.”

### C O N C L U S I O N.

**L**ET it be thy constant care, O Christian, to govern thy tongue aright. Knowing, from experience, that the tongue is an unruly member; set a watch upon thy lips, and let no corrupt communication proceed out of thy mouth. Let the declaration of thy Saviour be always in remembrance; that, “for every idle word, which men shall speak, God will bring them into judgment.” It is much to be lamented, that multitudes, even of those who think they have received the truth, as it is in Jesus, and are found in the principles of their faith, are yet grossly addicted to calumny and detraction, and judge too lightly of this abominable practice. Do ye not perceive, that this sin is often mentioned in scripture, in conjunction with murder and adultery, and the blackest crimes? Be not ye, then, of their number, who make detraction essential to their profession of the faith; for, “this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” It was an ancient saying among the heathen, and greatly to the honour of the primitive christians: “Behold how these people love one another!”—Shall the adversaries of the gospel have it in their power to reverse this maxim, and to say, “See how the disciples of Jesus—of him who once loved them unto the death—now tear and devour each other!” Ye pretend, that ye have the truth, but if this is your practice, ye lie, and the truth is not with you; for, “the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy, and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He  
that

that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

## NOTES ON CHAP. III.

## NOTE I.

“*BE not many masters*”—teachers of the law. In the decline of the Jewish commonwealth, the titles Rabbi, Doctor, or Teacher, were much sought after. It appears from the words of our Lord to his disciples, in the xxiii. chap. of Matthew, that these titles were connected with something which he wished his apostles by all means to avoid. Our Saviour was no enemy to such designations, merely in themselves; but only to the abuses which were made of them, and the vices of those on whom they were conferred. In the early ages of the state, the most eminent men among the Jews, such as Ezra and Nehemiah, were satisfied with the humble designation of Readers of the Law; and their chief ambition consisted, not in being distinguished among their brethren by any pompous title, but in communicating the right knowledge of the scriptures, and leading their brethren in the way of life. It was not till near the end of the commonwealth, that the words, Abbi, Rabbi, Mori, came to be of so general use.

When the right knowledge of the scriptures began to decline, and a mere shadow of learning to be substituted in its place: when the foolish traditions of the fathers were magnified above the written word, the teachers found it necessary to assume titles and designations, in order to supply in appearance, what in reality was wanting. Josephus, tho’ the son of a priest, and of that sect which coveted these titles beyond any other, does not hesitate to affirm, that in his day these Rabbis were notorious for their pride, their dogmatism, their ignorance, and their lusts. If such were the vices of the Jewish doctors, vices not easily, at that time, separated from their office; it would be wise in you, christians, says James, not to covet this office. It is difficult to determine, whether, by masters, he means instructors among the Jews, in their synagogues, or teachers among christians only. For a considerable time after the commencement of christianity, the Jews did not prevent the christians from joining with them in the public worship, in the synagogues or in the temple. — When the congregation was met, not only

the ruler of the synagogue read the law, and gave instructions from it, but any other person sufficiently qualified, was permitted also to speak in public, and to tender a word of exhortation unto his brethren. It is evident, that the apostles were often present in the Jewish synagogues, and after the synagogue service was ended, were allowed to exhort the congregation; Acts xiii. 14. "When they departed from Persia, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience!—" Even our Lord was sometimes permitted to preach in the synagogues; Luke iv. 15. "He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read."

The primitive christians appear to have regulated their public worship after the Jewish manner. In our churches, the minister only has a right to speak, and explain the scriptures; but among the first christians, the laity were occasionally allowed to speak in public, for general edification. As many as had received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, spake alternately in the congregation. Some prophesied: some interpreted these prophecies: some prayed: some composed divine hymns, like David. In the exercise of these various gifts, it is natural to suppose, there would arise a striving for mastery. James was afraid, that this aspiration would generate pride, and stir up contention among them. Therefore, says he, keep every one of you in your own proper place, that in which God designs ye shall be useful, and "be not many masters."

## NOTE II.

"*The same is a perfect man.*" To be perfect, generally signifies, in the language both of our Lord and of his apostles, to be well instructed in the main principles of christianity. This is the acceptation in which Paul almost uniformly makes use of this word: see 1 Cor. ii. 6. Col. i. 28. Heb. v. 12. and vi. 1.—Many rejected the gospel from spite and hatred. The Jews, in particular, could not endure it, because it disappointed their hopes

hopes of a temporal Messiah, and an earthly kingdom. Many more paid no regard to it, chiefly from ignorance, thinking that they were rich and increased with goods, standing in need of nothing, while, in fact, they were poor, and blind, and naked. Wherever this light of truth shone into the mind, the happy subject soon became sensible, both of the great excellence, and of the great usefulness of the gospel, and diligently aspired after a more perfect knowledge of it. All, who had made considerable progress in this knowledge, were styled perfect men, and fathers in the church. The bridling of the tongue, then, in the opinion of James, could only be acquired by long practice, and by being well acquainted with those motives and arguments which the gospel suggested. Here, indeed, we have set before us the most powerful considerations to take good heed to our speech, lest at any time we sin with our tongue. None can be stronger than those our Saviour mentions in the xii. chap. of Matth. 36 ver. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

---

#### C H A P. IV.

**F**ROM whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *Come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts, that war in your members? [1]

2. Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

1. *From whence come wars, &c.*] As he had formerly treated of peace, and warned us that vice must be exterminated, so that peace may be cherished, on this occasion he descends to the strifes by which mankind mutually harass themselves, and shews that these arise from inordinate desires rather than from a pursuit of what is right: for, if every one were to conduct himself in an orderly manner, no one would be the mean

of stirring up another. 'Tis owing to this, because our lusts domineer with impunity, that wars and fightings prevail.— 'Tis evident, then, that we would have greater peace among us, if every one were to abstain from doing injury to

2. *Ye lust and have not, &c.*] He appears to signify that the mind of man, when it indulges in wicked lusts, is insatiable: and truly it is so; for he who suffers his appetites licentiously to domineer, will never have any bounds to his lusts and desires. Yea even if the world were given him, he would wish for new worlds to be created on his account.— Thus, it comes to pass, that men procure to themselves torments which surpass the cruelty of all executioners. So true is the observation of Horace, "That even Sicilian tyrants have not invented a torment greater than envy and malevolence."— *Ye fight*; he means not those wars and fightings, in which men engage sword in hand; but any contentious strife, whereby one

3. *Ye ask, and receive not, &c.*] He further proceeds; that tho' they asked, they deserved a refusal, because they desired to make God the minister of their lusts.— They do not observe that moderation in their desires which he hath enjoined; but

another. But the vices which reign in us, are as armed guards, as it were to excite fightings. All our parts he calls *members*: by *lusts* he means those unlawful and libidinous desires which cannot be satiated but in doing injury to others.

endeavours to depress another and exalt himself. They profit nothing by such kind of strifes, and thus he affirms, are deservedly punished for their depravity: for God deservedly disappoints those who acknowledge him not as the author of all good; for while thus they strive unlawfully, they desire to obtain riches under the auspices of Satan, rather than from the goodness of God. All desire happiness, but one aspires to it by fraud, another by violence, another by reproaches, and all by wicked and accursed practices, but they seek it not from God. No wonder, then, that they are disappointed in their pursuits; for prosperity and success in this matter are only to be expected from the blessing of God,

thro' an unbridled licentiousness daringly venture to demand such things as they would be ashamed of even before their fellow creatures. Pliny, somewhere, justly ridicules this impudence—that men so unworthily abuse the freedom of access



access to God: it is then the less to be endured in christians, who have a rule of prayer delivered down to them from their heavenly master. And sure it is evident that we can have no reverence for God, no fear of his name, in fine, no regard for him, when we have the presumption to ask from him such things, as even our own consciences would refuse us. Upon

the whole, the meaning of James is, that our desires must be bridled—that the manner of bridling them is to keep them in subjection to God; and next he teaches us, that what things we ask in moderation, we must ask from God himself. And if we do so, we will abstain among ourselves from evil contentions, from fraud, from violence, and from every injury.

4. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.

5. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy?

4. *Ye adulterers, &c.*] I connect this verse with the former. He calls those, in my opinion, metaphorically *adulterers*, who, being corrupted thro' the vanities of this world, alienate themselves from God: as if he were to call them degenerate, or by some other such name. We know that mention is often made in scripture of the sacred marriage which God hath contracted with us. He would, therefore, have us to be like the chaste virgin whom Paul makes mention of in 1 Cor. chap. ii. All impure and worldly affections violate and contaminate this chastity: it is not, then, without reason, that

James compares the love of the world to adultery. Those who understand the words literally and without the metaphor, do not pay a proper attention to the context. For he still goes on to inveigh against the lusts which lead those who are under their power, astray from God; as follows: *Know ye not that the friendship of the world, &c.* He calls that the friendship of the world, when men addict and give themselves up to the corruption of the world: for so great is the disagreement between the world and God, that the more anyone gives himself up to the world, the more he is alienated from God: on this

this account it is that the scripture so often enjoins us to re-

nounce the world, if we would be the servants of God.

5. *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, &c.*] He seems to cite the words which follow, "The spirit which dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" from scripture. Interpreters, therefore, puzzle themselves not a little, because there is no where found in scripture such a passage, nor one nearly similar to it. But nothing hinders, why it may not have a reference to the expression used in the verse before it: "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." Besides we have already said, that it is a doctrine which occurs frequently in the scriptures. As to his having omitted the pronoun, which might have rendered the sentence more clear, it is no way strange, as he is evidently everywhere very concise. *The spirit, &c.* Some are of opinion that this is spoken concerning the soul of man; therefore, they read the words affirmatively in this sense, that the spirit of man, being malignant, is so infected with envy, that it continually blends its passions with this pernicious principle, envy.— But the opinion of those is to be preferred who refer them to the spirit of God, for 'tis he who is given to us, to dwell in us. I both understand the passage

as referring to the spirit of God, and read it interrogatively.— For James wishes to prove, that their envying is a proof that they are not ruled by the spirit of God; because he trains up the faithful in a different manner. And he confirms it in the next verse when he adds; "But he giveth more grace." For it is an argument from contraries. Envy is a sign of malignity, but the spirit of God, by the abundance of his gifts, sheweth himself to be a liberal spirit. Nothing, then, is more repugnant to his nature than envy. Upon the whole James affirms that the spirit of God doth not reign where corrupt lusts, which provoke us to mutual strife, prevail; because 'tis the property of the spirit, time after time, more and more, to enrich men with new gifts. I wait not to refute the other interpretations: some explain it, "That the spirit lusteth *against* envy. This interpretation is too harsh and forced. They explain, "But he giveth more grace of God:" to the end that our lusts may be subdued and reduced to order. But the sense which I have adduced is more genuine; because the spirit, by his beneficence, recalls us from spiteful emulation.

7. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands, ye finners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

9. Be afflicted, and mourn and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

10. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

7. *Submit yourselves, therefore, to God, &c.*] The submission which he requires is humility: he doth not in general exhort us to obey God, but requires submission; because the spirit of the Lord resteth upon the peaceable and humble.— On this account he uses the illative particle, *therefore*: for as he had declared, that the spirit of God is liberal in increasing grace, he thence infers, that laying aside envying and strife, we ought to submit ourselves to God. Many copies have this sentence inserted here: “Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” But as it is not found in other copies, Erasmus suspects that it might have been written originally on the margin by some studious searcher of the scriptures, and afterwards have crept into the text; and it might be so: the words, indeed, would very well correspond with the text.—

I rather conjecture, however, that this was a proverbial and common saying among the Jews, arising out of the general scope of all scripture doctrine. And, indeed, it contains nothing more than what we have in Ps. xviii. 27. “Thou wilt save the afflicted people, but wilt bring down high looks:” and in many other places. *Resist the devil, &c.* He shews us against whom we ought to contend. As Paul tells us, that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;” and thus excites us to the spiritual warfare; so James, after he hath taught us moderation towards men, and submission towards God, proposes Satan as the enemy whom we ought to rise up against. The promise, however, which he adds, concerning the flight of Satan, seems

seems to be refuted by daily experience: for 'tis well known, that the more vigorously any one resists him, the more keenly he presses his attacks. For Satan in some sort trifles where he is not seriously opposed, but exerts all his strength against those who resist him: and again he is never weary with fighting,

but, if conquered in one engagement, immediately commences another. I answer to this, that by *fleeing from us* here, we are to understand his being put to the rout: and tho' indeed he renew incessant attacks, he always comes off worsted in the end.

8. *Draw near to God, &c.*]

He again puts us in remembrance, that God's assistance will not be wanting to us, provided we give him a welcome reception. For when he bids us draw near to God, that we may experience him drawing near to us, he means, that we are deprived of his grace, because we withdraw ourselves from him. And while God is on our side, we need not be afraid of failing in the conflict. But if any one should infer from this passage, that the principal part depends upon ourselves, and that the grace of God afterwards follows; the apostle means nothing such: for if it ought so to be, it does not follow that it is in our power so to act. And when the spirit of God encourages us to duty, he derogates nothing from himself or his own power, but even accomplishes in us the very thing which he enjoins.— In fine, James meant nothing else in this passage, than that God is never wanting to us,

unless it be because we alienate ourselves from him. The invitation, then, *to draw near to God*, is of similar import, as if any one were to carry along with him, the hungry to a table, or the thirsty to a fountain. It importeth this: that as we are apt to stumble and fall, our goings should be directed and upheld by the Lord. Again, as to that cavilling objection; "that the grace of God is made secondary, and as it were attendant upon our preparation;" because James says, in the latter place, "that God will draw near to us," it is altogether frivolous; for we know that it is nothing uncommon for God to increase his former gifts of the spirit by new ones; and in this manner, more and more, to enrich those, on whom he had formerly bestowed much. *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, &c.* He here addresses all who are alienated from God: nor does he, however, point at two kinds of persons; but the same, he calls both *sinners*  
and

*and double minded.* Nor does he mean sinners of any kind; but the wicked, and those of an abandoned life. As when John saith, chap. ix. 31. "God heareth not sinners." In which sense the woman is called a sinner by Luke, chap. vii. 37.; and by the same and other evangelists it is said, "he eateth and drinketh with sinners." Wherefore, James invites not all promiscuously to that kind of repentance here mentioned; but those who are of a perverse and corrupt heart, and of a

base, scandalous, and wicked life: from these he requires purity of heart and propriety of conduct. Whence we gather what the true meaning and nature of repentance is; namely, when not only the external life is amended, but when it commences by the purification of the mind: as with respect to the converted person, it is necessary, that the fruits of an inward repentance should appear by the purity of their works.

9. *Be afflicted and mourn and weep, &c.*] Christ, in Luke vi. 25. denounces sorrow, to those who laugh now, as a curse. "Wo unto you that laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep." And in the beginning of the next chapter, James, in the same sense, threatens mourning to the rich. But here he treats of that salutary sorrow which leads to repentance: he addresses himself to those, who being intoxicated in their minds, perceive not the judgment of God; and hence it comes to pass that

they indulge in their vices.— To rouse them from this fatal stupidity, he admonishes them, that affected with a conscientious grief, they should learn to be afflicted and mourn; and while bordering on destruction, should cease to indulge themselves in a partial and flattering self-approbation.— *Let your laughter be turned, &c.* Laughter is here taken for the pleasures which the wicked make for themselves, while, infatuated by the enticing sweets of vice, they live forgetful of God and his judgments.

10. *Humble yourselves, &c.*]— This is the conclusion of the former verses. That, then, the grace of God will be manifested to lift us up, when he shall see that we have humbled our proud spirits. We strive and

envy, because we wish to be exalted. This is a preposterous method: for it is a distinguishing characteristic of God to raise up the bowed down, and especially those who voluntarily abase themselves. Who-

M ever,

ever, then, dejected from a sense of his own weakness, aspires to stable exaltation, let him not, on account of his abasement before God, entertain any mean opinion of himself. Augustine has well ob-

served somewhere, that as the tree must strike its roots deep, that it may grow upwards; so whosoever has not his mind rooted in humility, is exalted to his own downfall.

11. *Speak not evil, one of another, brethren:* he that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth *his* brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

11. *Speak not evil, &c.*] We see what a deal of pains he takes in correcting the lust of evil speaking. Hypocrisy is always proud; and by nature we are hypocrites, who eagerly exalt ourselves and degrade others. There is another disease natural to the human mind, that every one would have others live according to his own will and humour. This rashness of daring to impose a rule of life upon our brethren, James, with great propriety, rebukes in this passage. *Evil speaking* he takes for all the calumnies and froward speeches which proceed from a malignant and perverse judgment. The pernicious consequences of evil-speaking extend widely: but he here properly insists only on that one species which I have

mentioned, namely—when we superciliously determine concerning the words and actions of others, and securely condemn whatever displeases us, as if our caprice were to be a law for their conduct. That such arrogance is here pointed at, is manifest from the reason annexed. *He that speaketh evil of his brother, &c.* He means, that just so much is detracted from the law as any one usurps to himself over his brethren.—Detraction, then, against the law is opposite to that reverence which all ought to have for it.—Paul uses nearly the same argument in his epistle to the Romans, altho' upon a different occasion. For when a superstitious notion, respecting the choice of meats, possessed some: what they thought

not

not lawful for themselves, they condemned also in others.— There he puts us in mind, that there is one Lord, at whose tribunal we must all be sifted, and by whose judgment we all stand or fall. Whence he concludes, that he who judgeth his brethren from his own notion of things, arrogates to himself the province of the Deity.— But James censures those, who in condemning their brethren, seek after the fame of sanctity to themselves; and, therefore, substitute their own caprice for the divine law.— He argues, however, with the same view as Paul, namely, that we act rashly if we arrogate to ourselves authority over the lives of our brethren, when the law of God is the only fixed and general rule by which the conduct of all must be tried and determined. *Thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.*— The sentence ought to be thus resolved—When you claim to yourself a censorious power above the law of God, you exempt yourself from subjection to the law. He, then, who rashly judgeth his brother, shakes off the yoke of God; because he submits not himself to the common rule of life.

It is then an argument from contraries; because the observation of the law differs widely from this arrogance of men, when they give the force and authority of the law to their own foolish opinion. Whence it follows, that then we are observers of the law, when we depend solely upon what it teacheth, and use no other mean of distinguishing between good and bad; as by this rule, also, all the actions and words of men ought to be examined, and condemned or approved. Should any one object, that the saints will be the judges of the world; the answer is easy, that such an honour belongs not to them in their own right, but as they are members of Christ: respecting any judgment which they now pass according to the law, they are not on that account to be reckoned judges, because they only submissively subscribe to God their own judge, and the judge of all. With regard to God, he is not to be accounted the maker of the law; for his justice is superior to the law.\* For the law flows from the eternal and immense justice of God, as a fountain from its source.

12. *There is one lawgiver, &c.*]  
When he conjoins the power of saving and destroying with the

office of a lawgiver, he gives us to understand, that those who claim the right of law-

M 2

giving,

\* This sentiment see discussed in Owen's Treatise on Divine Justice.

giving, assume to themselves the whole majesty of God.— But such are those, who impose upon others their own will as a law. Let us remember, however, that James is not here treating of external polity, in which the edicts or laws of magistrates are concerned, but of the spiritual government of the soul, in which 'tis proper that the word of God only be the supreme rule. There is then one God, who, by right, has the consciences of all subject to his laws; as he alone has the salvation or the destruction of the soul in his power. Hence it appears what sentiments we ought to form of those human commandments which impose the yoke of necessity on the conscience.\*— Some complain of the want of modesty in us, when we call the Pope, (who exercises tyranny over souls, and makes himself a legislator equal with God) Antichrist. But from this passage we collect much more; namely, that those who volun-

tarily wear such yokes† are members of Antichrist; and so far renounce Christ, as they associate with him a man who is not only a mortal, but one who exalteth himself against him.— It is, I say, a false obedience, and of such a kind as is paid to the devil, when we admit any other legislator to rule our minds, than God. *Who art thou that judgest another?* Some are of opinion that backbiters are here put in mind of their own vices, in order that they should begin the examination from themselves; and while they reflect that they are in no respect holier than others, may refrain from their rigorous severity against others. I, for my part, think that mankind are here simply presented with a view of their own condition, that they may reflect how widely distant they are from that degree of perfection to which they exalt themselves. In the same sense, Paul also says, “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?”

13. Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.

16. But

\* Or shackle the conscience.

† Shackles.



16. But now ye rejoice in your boasting: all such rejoicing is evil.

17. Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.

13. *Go to now, &c.*] He here condemns another kind of pride: namely, that most men with confidence determine *what they will do*; whereas they ought to rely on the providence of God. They adjust their schemes for a long time to come, as if they had a series of years at their own command, while they are not even certain of a single moment.— Solomon, also, ridicules this foolish boasting, when he says, Pro. xvi. 2. “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits.” But it is very foolish in us to pretend to execute, what we ought not even to pretend to utter.— James inveighs not so much against their form of speaking, in itself, as against want of thought; that men forgetful of their own infirmities express themselves with such arrogance. For it may so happen, that the godly who think humbly of themselves, and acknowledge their steps to be directed according to the will of God, nevertheless may say, that they will do this or that, without restriction.\* It is indeed right and profitable, when we pro-

mise any thing relating to the time to come, to accustom ourselves to these modes of expression, “If the Lord will,” or, “If the Lord permits.”— But the use of this religious form of expression is not to be understood in such a sense, as if it implied that the person omitting it were guilty of any impiety by such neglect. For we frequently read in scripture, that the holy servants of God have spoken of future things, unconditionally—while, at the same time, they both well knew and remembered their own inability to accomplish any thing without the divine permission. This form of speech then, “If the Lord will,” or, “If the Lord permit,” ought to be carefully held in reverence by all the godly. But James is endeavouring to rouse those from their *listlessness*, who setting aside all regard to divine providence, account the whole year in their power; whereas they have not even a moment that they can call their own.— They promise themselves gain at a distance, when they can, by no means, in their own power, retain even the present.

14. ——— *for what is your life, &c.*] By many other arguments he might check this foolish freedom of projecting. For we see how God daily disappoints those haughty men who flatter themselves that they have power to accomplish any thing, however great and magnificent. He is content, however, with this one argument: "What is your life?—who can promise on it to-morrow?—will you, when dead, accomplish what you now so confi-

15. *If the Lord will, we shall live, &c.*] A double condition is supposed. "If we shall live so long," and, "If the Lord shall permit:" for many things may intervene to overturn what-ever had been purposed by us;

16. *But now ye rejoice in your boastings, &c.*] From these words we may collect that James means to reprehend something more than inconsiderateness in speaking. Ye glory in your boastings, namely, that while they deprived God of his authority, they were, nevertheless pursuing their own pleasures.— Not that even those who are most elated with self-confidence, openly prefer themselves to God; but because their senses are so intoxicated with vanity, that they regard no-

dently determine?" For the presumption of the man who thinks on the shortness of life will easily be restrained from extending his projects too far—yea, 'tis not on any other account that profane men so much indulge themselves, as because they forget that they are men.— By the simile of a vapour he elegantly points out, that those schemes are even more than vain, which have their existence only in a life which passeth as a shadow.

as the events of futurity are concealed from us. He does not mean the will of God which is expressed in his law, but the counsel of his will, according to which he ruleth over all.

thing less than God.— And because such admonitions are usually received by profane men with contempt, or they generally return such answers as the following: "that they know such things sufficiently well already, and do not want such admonitions;" he retorts upon them the knowledge in which they gloried, declaring, that on this account their sins were the more grievous, because they sin not thro' ignorance, but in contempt.

## CONCLUSION.

THE truths we have had under review should teach us—to study an intimate acquaintance with our own hearts. Pride, envy, ambition, and covetousness too often stir up contentions, and make men injurious to one another. “Whence come wars and fighting among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?”—The spirit of christianity is a spirit of peace, of humility, of love, of brotherly kindness, and charity, and were it not owing to our own perverse dispositions, under the influence of this spirit, society would be happy. See, then, O christians, that ye cultivate the true spirit of your religion, and, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men. Use no unlawful means to promote your temporal interest. While ye look up to God, and solicit his blessing to crown your honest industry with success, guard your affections and desires, and wish for nothing that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Forget not that he who brought you into existence is the constant preserver of your lives, and that ye owe every thing that makes life comfortable unto his bounty. Draw nigh, then, to God, and he will draw nigh to you. With every rising and setting sun let the incense of thy sacrifices, of praise, and of thanksgiving, rise up to heaven. Collect thy family around thee, and be not ashamed to worship Him before whom myriads of angels bow down and adore. Hast thou any hope through the mercy of thy God? dost thou believe that his Son died for thee? and yet thou forgettest to call on Him by prayer, and to render thanks unto his name—O! base ingratitude. Verily, the day is approaching when thou wilt fly to Him for protection, and cry for pity; but he will laugh at thy calamity, and mock when thy fear cometh.

## NOTE ON CHAP. IV.

“WHENCE come wars.” The supreme Governor of the world can, by various ways, punish the wickedness of men. The miseries of war may justly be regarded as the rod of his anger, and he generally proportions the weight of this rod to the guilt and sinfulness of those on whom it falls. The Jews were become extremely vicious and abandoned by the time the indignation of heaven burst forth against them. Josephus informs us, that in every city, yea, in every corner of the land, mul-

multitudes of thieves, pick-pockets, and cut-throats lay in wait to catch every opportunity for mischief, that occurred. These banditti took advantage of the feeble state of the government and the distractions of their country, and, under the pretence of recovering the liberties of it, attempted to throw all things into confusion. Whilst the real friends of rational liberty eagerly wished for deliverance from the oppressive yoke of the Romans; these mere pretenders, and black-hearted men, had no other object in view but their own aggrandisement, and the gratification of their lusts. A nation in this situation is most miserable; but such was the state of the Jewish nation at the time when James wrote his epistle. The Jews were as ready to quarrel with the Romans, as the Romans were disposed to fall upon the Jews.—For a considerable time after the Romans became masters of Judea, the conquerors and the conquered lived in good correspondence.—Herod the Great was a particular favourite of Augustus. He was permitted to hold his kingdom in fief of the Romans, while many other kings were completely deprived of their royalty, and Roman prefects appointed in their place.—Titus wished to be as favourable to the Jews as possible, and it was chiefly owing to the Jews themselves that he was compelled to use such harsh measures with them. Josephus, in the 16th book of his Antiquities, records a long letter, containing an account of a variety of singular privileges granted his countrymen by the express command of Augustus and the Roman senate. It was not till about the 8th year of the reign of Nero, that the rage of the Romans broke forth in all its fury; at which time James is supposed to have written his epistle. When the sins of a nation have ripened them for judgment, by an unaccountable fatality they themselves hasten forward their own ruin.—This was particularly the case with the Jews immediately before their final overthrow. Their own perverse passions and lusts excited and promoted those wars which soon brought their destruction.

---

## C H A P. V.

**G**O to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*.

2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3. Your

3. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

4. Behold the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton: ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

6. Ye have condemned and killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

1. *Go to now, &c.*] They are mistaken, in my opinion, who think that James is here exhorting the rich to repentance. His words appear to me rather a simple denunciation of the judgment of God, in which he means to alarm them, as being without hope of forgiveness; for his words have a tendency only to despair.—Wherefore, he addresses not the rich themselves, to invite them to repentance: he rather has the faithful in his view, that they hearing of the unhappy fate of the rich, may not envy their fortune; and may endure with a patient acquiescence the injuries which they suffer, knowing that God will be their avenger. But it is not the rich of every description whom he addresses,

but those, who sunk in sensuality, and elated with pride, think of nothing but this world; who, like insatiable gulphs, swallow up all; and who tyrannically oppress and harass their neighbours. That this is his meaning will appear from the context. *Weep and howl.*—Repentance, indeed, is attended with its sorrows, but they are mixed with consolations, and tend not so far as to howling. James, then, means that the severity of the divine curse against the rich will be so dreadful and dire as to force them to burst out into howlings.—As if he had said in a word, “Woe to you!”—The form of speech is also prophetic; the wicked, says he, who account the punishments which await themselves, as threatenings against

gainst mankind in general, are dragged, as it were, to an instant doom. While, then, they are now indulging their appetites, and promising to them-

2. *Your riches, &c.*] The sense may be twofold: he either ridicules their foolish confidence, because the riches, in which they place their happiness, are fading, and may, even by a single blast of the Almighty, be reduced to nothing: or, he rebukes their insatiable avarice in heaping up riches for this purpose only, that they may perish unused. The latter sense agrees better: 'tis true indeed, that the rich, who glory in things of so perishing a nature, as clothes, gold, silver, and the like, are foolish; for this is to glory in what is subject to rust and moth. Besides, 'tis a well known, and true saying: "That ill gotten goods pass idly away:" for the curse of God consumeth all things. Neither, indeed, is it equitable, that the wicked or their heirs should enjoy the wealth which they have violently wrested, as it were, out of the hand of God himself. But, as James here enumerates the vices, by which the rich invite the calamity he mentions; the context, I think, plainly points out, that the immense rapacity of the rich is the object of his censure; especially when they

themselves, that the fortune in which they think themselves happy, will be eternal, he declares that the heaviest sorrows are fast approaching them.

suppress whatever they can scrape together from whatever quarter, that it may uselessly perish in their chests; for, thus it is, that like the common enemies of human nature, they destroy what God had created for the common use of mankind. 'Tis to be observed, that the vices which he here recounts do not lie against every individual. Some of the rich liberally indulge themselves; others squander much on idle pomp and ostentation; others pinching themselves, live in sordid wretchedness. Different vices, then, are here thrown up to different individuals; but, in general, all are condemned who either unjustly accumulate riches, or who vainly abuse them. What James now says, is not only applicable to the parsimonious rich, (such as the Euclio of Plautus) but to several, who, tho' they live in some respects splendidly and luxuriously, would rather have their heaps of wealth rot with themselves, than bestow it on necessary uses. For such is the malignity of some, that they can hardly bear that the sun and air should be common to their fellow creatures.

3. *Shall*

3. *Shall be a witness against you, &c.*] Here he confirms the exposition formerly adduced. For God hath neither destined gold for rust, nor garments for moths.— He designed them rather to be the aids of human life.— Wherefore, the very waste of them, without using them, will be a proof of their inhumanity. The canker and rust of their gold and silver will prove as fuel to inflame

4. *Behold the hire of the labourers, &c.*] Now he inveighs against cruelty, the inseparable companion of avarice: he mentions one species of it, which ought to be particularly odious. If a humane and just man hath a regard for his beast, (as Solomon says) this is an excessive cruelty, when man has no compassion even for the man who hath spent his sweat in his service. The law of God, under severe penalties, forbids the retaining of the hire of an hired servant, even till the going down of the sun: besides James names not labourers of every description, but labourers in agriculture, and reapers. For what could be more unworthy, than that those who furnish to us bread by their labour, should themselves perish thro' want? Yet this is no uncommon circumstance. For there are many of such a tyrannical disposition, that they think mankind live

the divine anger, that he may consume them like fire.— *Ye have heaped treasure together, &c.* This clause may likewise admit of a double explanation: either that the rich are never satiated, but busily heap up, as if they were to live always, what might suffice them to the end of the world—or, that they treasure up the anger and curse of God against the last day: this last sense I prefer.

only for themselves. He says, *the cries of them which have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord;* because any thing whatsoever that men retain fraudulently or unjustly, demands vengeance, as it were with a loud cry. The expression is to be noted, “that the cries of the poor have entered into the ears of the Lord,” and means, that their injuries shall not pass unpunished. Let those, then, who are oppressed by the unrighteous, bear it with patience, for they shall have God for their avenger. Let those again, who have the power of doing injury, abstain, lest they provoke God, who is the protector and patron of the poor, against themselves. And for this reason, he calls him the Lord of Sabaoth, to denote his power and strength, and to shew that his judgment is the more to be dreaded.

5. *Ye have lived in pleasure, &c.*] He comes now to mention another vice, luxury.—Those who immoderately abound, seldom refrain themselves from abusing their abundance in excess of delicacies. There are some of the rich, indeed, who, as I have said, starve in their plenty. 'Tis not without a reason, that the poets have feigned a Tantalus hungry at a plentiful table. There have always been such Tantalus in the world: but, as we have said before, James speaks not of individuals. 'Tis sufficient that we see this vice commonly reigns among the rich, and that they are expensive and superfluous in the expences of the table. Altho' God allows that they should liberally enjoy what they possess, they ought, however, to be on their guard against profusion, and to cultivate frugality. 'Tis not

for nothing that God, by his prophets, so severely rebukes those who sleep in ivory beds, who are perfumed with precious ointment, who delight in banqueting and music, and who are as fatted kine in rich pastures. All these things are spoken to let us know, that moderation in delicacies is to be observed, and that intemperance is displeasing to God. *Ye have nourished your hearts, &c.* The expression implies not only an indulgence sufficient to satisfy nature, but to the utmost extent of desire. He adds the simile, *as in a day of slaughter*, because they were wont at solemn sacrifices to feast more liberally than they were usually accustomed to at other times: he means, then, that the rich continue a festivity thro' the whole of life, because they are sunk in continued pleasures.

6. *Ye have condemned, &c.*] Here follows another species of inhumanity—that the rich, in their power, oppress and destroy the helpless. He metaphorically says, that the just are killed and condemned by them; for altho' they neither kill with their own hand, nor discharge the office of judges; while, however, they use the power they are possessed of to injure, while they corrupt judgment, while they devise arts

to destroy the innocent, this is, in fact, to kill—to condemn. When he adds, *and he doth not resist you*, he means that the audacity of the rich is increased, because those whom they ruin are destitute of every protection. At the same time he puts us in mind, that the vengeance of God will be the more ready, because the poor are undefended by men. Altho' on this account the just resisteth not, because it is his duty patiently



siently to bear injuries; I think his want of power is likewise signified—he resists not, because he is unarmed, and destitute of human assistance.

7. Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain.

8. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

7. *Be patient, therefore, &c.*] From this inference, it is evident that what has hitherto been said against the rich, is intended for the consolation of those, who are, without any redress in their power for the present, exposed to their injuries. For after he hath recounted the causes of calamities which threaten the rich, and mentioned this in particular—that they have proudly and cruelly domineered over the poor; he immediately subjoins, that we who are unjustly afflicted, have ground of patience in this consideration, that God will be the judge. For this is his meaning when he says, “that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh,” that the present disordered state of things perceivable in the world, will not be continual; because, the Lord at his coming shall ref-

ore it to order; and that, therefore, our minds ought to rest firm in this good hope. The restoration of all things on that day is not promised to us in vain. In scripture, however, any manifestation of judgment or of grace, when he succours his servants, and chastises the wicked, is called the day of the Lord: I rather chuse to understand this passage as respecting the last deliverance. *Behold the husbandman, &c.* The same similitude Paul shortly glances at, in his second epistle to Timothy, ii. chap. 6 ver. when he says, “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.” But the expression of James is more explicit: he mentions the long patience of the husbandman; who, after he hath committed the seed to the earth, waits in security, or, at least,

in patience, until the time of the harvest arrive; he fretteth not, because the earth doth not instantly produce ripe fruit. From this he infers, that we ought not to be anxious beyond measure; tho' we must labour and sow till the day of the Lord, the harvest, appear. *Precious fruit, &c.* I understand it to be called precious fruit, because it is the nourishment and mean of supporting life. James means, when he says, that the husbandman deposits his food in the earth, which to him is so precious, and patiently suspends his hope of reaping the fruits—that we are too rash and discontented if we do not wait the day of our redemption with patience. It is not necessary to trace every other particular of the simile. *The early and the latter rain.* By these two epithets two seasons are pointed out, the former which follows soon after the seed time; the other

while the fruits are a-ripening. Thus the prophets express themselves when they would point out the seasonable time of rain, which Moses has promised in Deut. xxviii. 12. "The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven, to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand, and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow."— Joel ii. 23. "Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he hath given you the former and the latter rain moderately; and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain, in the first month." He expresses both periods, the better to signify that husbandmen are not discouraged from supporting the delay, from the tediousness of the time.

8. *Stablish your hearts, &c.*] Lest any one should object that the time of deliverance was too long delayed, he answers the objection, telling them, *that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*: at the same time, orders them to correct that of feminacy of mind which weakens perseverance in hope. And

for certain, it is on this account that the time appears long; because we are too tender and delicate. We must then collect strength to endure; and it cannot be better collected than from the hope and prospect of the coming of the Lord.

9. *Grudge not one against another, &c.*] The complaints of many are commonly heard—that they are more severely handled than others: therefore, this passage is thus explained by some, as if James enjoined that every one should be contented with his condition—“Should not envy others, nor fret if the condition of another be more tolerable than their own.” But I interpret it otherwise; for after he hath discoursed of the unhappy fate of those, who, by their tyranny, oppress the good and the peaceable; he now is exhorting the faithful to be just among themselves, and easy in pardoning offences—that this is the real meaning of the passage may be gathered from the reason adduced: “Do not, says he, grudge one against another, lest ye all be condemned.” We must, indeed, lament when any evil befalls us; but he means an accusatory complaint, when we mutually expostulate with one another before the Lord. Thus he denounces that

all would be condemned; because there is no one who offendeth not his brethren, and affordeth not matter of complaint. If all should complain, they will mutually accuse one another; for nobody is so innocent but that he hath injured others; God will be the common judge of all: what, then, will be the consequence, but that every one admit against himself the judgment that he wishes against others; and, thus, all be heard to their mutual destruction. Let no one, then demand revenge upon others, but he who wishes to call it down upon his own head. And that mankind may not rashly proceed to such quarrels, he denounces that the judge standeth before the door; for such is our propensity to profane the name of God, that even in the slightest quarrels we appeal to his judgment. There is no fitter curb to restrain this temerity, than the recollection, that our imprecations do not vanish into air, for the judgment of God is near.

10. Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and patience.

11. Behold, we count them happy which endure: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

10. *Take, my brethren, &c.*] The consolation presented is not such as is understood by the common proverbial expression—that the wretched wish to have any kind of associates in their calamities. He proposes those associates, to whose society it would be desirable to be admitted, and with whom, were the condition of human life common, it could not be unhappy. For as we must be necessarily afflicted with extreme sorrow, should any evil happen to us which the children of God never experienced; so it is a singular consolation, that our case is not different from theirs; yea, we know that we are made to bear the same burden with themselves. When Job heard this from his friends: “Call now, if there will be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?” this was the language of Satan; by which he wished to drive himself to desperation. On the other hand, when the spirit, by the mouth of James, wishes to raise us to firmness of hope, he represents to us all the faithful going before us; and who, as it were, by their example stretch out their hand, and invite us, from the precedent they have given to undergo and overcome afflictions.—Human life, indeed, is subject promiscuously to sorrow, and to adversity; but James intro-

duces not all for an example; for what happiness would it be to perish with a multitude? but he selects the prophets whose society is to be wished for. It is only the feeling of unhappiness that breaks and discourages the spirits. This, then, is the true ground of consolation—to think, that the things that are commonly accounted calamities, are the means and aids of happiness. This is a language very different, indeed, from carnal wisdom; but so all the faithful ought to think—that they are happy when they are tried by the Lord by various sorrows. To persuade us to this, James advises us to consider the end of afflictions as to the prophets; for as in our own afflictions, thro’ pain, sorrow, or some other violent affection, we are deprived of judgment, and tossed, as it were, in a tempest—in such a foggy sky, and amidst surrounding storms, we discern nothing; we must, therefore, cast our eyes elsewhere—where the sky may chance to be serene and pure. When the afflictions of the righteous are mentioned, nobody would think them to have been miserable, but rather happy. James, then, with propriety, proposes to us this example, that we might have recourse to it, when at any time tempted by impatience or despair. He, however, assumes this principle, that the

pro-

prophets are to be accounted happy in their afflictions, because they supported them with constancy.— This being the case, he infers, that such our sentiments ought to be when we are afflicted. He says, “the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord”—to signify, that they were acceptable to God. If, then, to be exempted from miseries would have been advantageous

to them, beyond a doubt, God would have exempted them from them. But he hath not done so: it is to be concluded, then, that afflictions are salutary to the faithful. In this sense, he orders them to be considered as a pattern in afflictions. But patience must be supposed to attend—the true proof of obedience. He, therefore, joins both together.

II. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, &c.*] He has mentioned the prophets, in general. He now selects a particular and distinguished instance. For no one, so far as we can collect from history, was ever oppressed with such various and hard afflictions; he emerged, however, from this deep abyss. Whosoever, then, will imitate his patience, beyond a doubt, shall, in like manner, experience deliverance from the hand of God, at length. We see for what purpose history was written. God suffered not his servant Job, because he patiently endured affliction, to be overwhelmed: nor will he disappoint the patient expectation of any of the faithful. 'Tis asked, why the apostle so much recommends the patience of Job, when, thro' some hidden impulse, he uttered many signs of discontent? I answer, that, altho',

thro' the infirmity of nature he might waver, or be sometimes disturbed, he always kept steadily to this point—to give himself to God wholly, and submit himself to him to be restrained and ruled.— Altho', then, his patience might fail, in some respect, it is not without reason that he is applauded. *The end of the Lord.* By the expression he means—that afflictions are to be accounted of by their end. In their beginning, God appears to be absent. Meanwhile Satan exerts his licentious and violent efforts. The flesh suggests to us that we are abandoned by God, and lost. We must, then, further extend our prospect, because no light appears near.— He uses the expression, “the end of the Lord,” in another point of view, to signify, that it belongs to him, to make adversity happy in the issue: if we perform our duty, by bearing pa-  
 O tiently,

tiently, he will not be wanting in the performance of his part. Let hope direct us to the end—God will show himself more than merciful then; altho' he appear rigid and severe, while he afflicts.

12. But, above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay: lest ye fall into condemnation. [2]

13. Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.

12. *But, above all things, my brethren, swear not, &c.*] This hath been a common vice in all ages, to swear inconsiderately; for such is our wickedness, that we reflect not how atrocious a crime it is to abuse the name of God.— But as the Lord, under severe penalties, enjoins the reverence of his name; various are the subterfuges which men have recourse to, from the notion that they may swear with impunity. They imagine that there is no harm, if the name of God be not openly expressed—this was the ancient notion. When the Jews swore by the heaven and the earth; they thought not, that they were abusing the name of God, because it was suppressed. But shall mankind think, by such seeming ingenuities, to impose upon the Deity, and only delude themselves with idle cavillations? Christ, in Mat. v. 34. had censured such folly. Now, James, agreeably to the denunciation of his master, enjoins us to abstain from such improper modes of expression, because, whosoever sweareth in vain, abuseth the name of God, whatever may be the pretence. The import is, that it is, in no respect, more allowable, to swear by the heaven, or the earth, than openly by the name of God. The reason is expressed by Christ—every where the glory of God is inscribed, and every where it shines. Mat. v. 24. &c.— Indeed, in no other sense, and from no other design, do men swear by heaven and earth, than if they used the name of God himself: because, in thus expressing themselves, they but design the Creator in his works. He says, *above all things*, because the profanation of the name of God is no slight offence. Anabaptists, when they screen themselves under the pretext of this passage, in condemning all oaths, shew their

their ignorance. For James is not disputing about oaths in general; neither does Christ in the place which I cited before. Both refute this cavillation to the disgrace of the law, while mankind eagerly catch at a licence in swearing, tho' not in the express name of God. I call that licence, or licentiousness which opposes the prohibition of the law. This, undoubtedly, is the meaning of the words, *neither by the heaven nor the earth*. For if the question related only to something existing, of what use would it be to mark or point at these particular forms? It is evident, then, both from what James and Christ have said—that the foolish artifice is meant to be condemned of those who think that they swear with impunity, provided they express it ambiguously. To keep in mind, then, the meaning of James, we must first keep in mind the precept of the law—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Whence it is evident, that some use of the name of God is just and lawful. Now James condemns those who dare not, in a direct manner, to abuse the name of God; but by a villanous and ambiguous use of words, strive to evade the condemnation of the law. *But let your yea be yea, &c.* He proposes the best remedy for

the correction of the vice which he is censuring: namely, that mankind should accustom themselves to truth and constancy in all their words and actions. For whence arises the wicked practice of swearing, but from the excessive levity of the most of mankind, which doth not give credit to plain and simple speaking? Did they cultivate a becoming regard to fidelity in their words, there would be no occasion for so many superfluous oaths. Since, then, the perfidy or levity of man is the source whence the pernicious practice of swearing issues—James, in order to correct the latter vice, warns us that the former ought to be removed. For the reason of a cure ought to begin from the cause. Some copies have a small difference in the reading, but the sense is the same—namely, that we should be true and steady in all our words. In the same sense Paul expresses himself, in the 2d epistle to the Corinthians, chap. i. 17. and 18. “When I, therefore, was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I propose, do I propose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? But as God is true, our word toward you, was not yea and nay.” *Lest ye fall into condemnation.* There is here a various reading, occasioned

caſioned by the affinity in found of the Greek words, *ἁποκρίσιν* and *ἁποκρίσιν*. If we read it, “into judgment or condemnation,” the ſenſe is abundantly clear—namely, that they who take the name of God in vain, ſhall not do it with impunity. The other ſenſe, “left ye fall into hypocrify,” likewise corre-

sponds well enough with the context; for, as we have already ſaid, where ſincerity is becomingly regarded, all occaſion for ſuperfluous oaths is removed. If, then, fidelity be attended to in our words and actions, hypocrify, which prompts to raſh and vain ſwear- ing, will be deſtroyed.

13. *Is any among you afflicted, &c.*] He means, that on all occaſions, and in every ſeaſon, God invites us to himſelf: for as afflictions ought to excite us to prayer; ſo proſperity affords juſt matter of praiſe. But ſuch is the perverſe diſpoſition of mankind, that in proſperity

they forget God; and in afflictions they deſpond or deſpair. This *medium* ought to be attended to—that the joy which is wont to lead to a forgetfulneſs of God, ſhould incite us to celebrate his goodneſs; and ſadneſs ſhould teach us to pray.

14. Is any ſick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15. And the prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up: and if he have committed ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him.

14. *Is any ſick among you? &c.*] As the gift of healing continued ſtill efficacious at that time, he enjoins the ſick to have recourſe to this remedy. 'Tis true, indeed, that all have not been healed, (*in ſuch a caſe*) but the Lord beſtowed this gracious benefit, as often, and as far as he knew it to be expedient: nor is it probable that the oil was promiſcoully uſed, but only when there was a firm

hope of its profitable effect: for, with the power, there was given to the miniſters diſcretion, that they might not profane the ſymbol by its abuſe. The deſign of James was no more than this—to recommend that gracious benefit which the faithful might then enjoy, left its utility ſhould be loſt thro' negligence or contempt. For this purpoſe, he orders “the elders of the church to be cal- led.”



led." But the use of the unction is to be restricted to the effect of the Holy Spirit. The papists proudly glory in this passage, when they want to puff off their extreme unction. How far their corruption differs from the ancient custom here mentioned by James, I forbear to discuss at this time. This the readers may learn from its institution.— Thus much only I affirm, that the place is improperly and ignorantly wrested to prove that extreme unction is, and ought to be called a sacrament, the use of which ought to be perpetual in the church. I acknowledge, indeed, that it was used as a sacrament by the disciples of Christ, (for I agree not with those who think it to have been a medicament,) but as the thing signified by this sign continued only for a time, I contend that the symbol also was temporal. It is a plain case, that there can be nothing more absurd than to call that a sacrament which represents nothing really signified. That the gift of healing was temporary, all are obliged to acknowledge, and it is known from fact—its sign, then, ought not to be perpetual. It follows, that they are not true but false and apostate imitators of the apostles, who still account unction a sacrament, unless they could restore to us that effect

of it which God hath been pleased to deprive the world of, for above fourteen hundred years. The question is not, whether unction ever was a sacrament, but whether it was given us to be continued in use to the present time. This last part of the sentence we deny— because, 'tis evident, that the thing signified by it hath long ago ceased. *The elders of the church.* I comprehend under the words all, in general, who were appointed to preside over the church. For pastors not only are called elders, but those also who were chosen from the people, as censors, to inspect the discipline.— For every church had, as it were, its own senate, composed of men venerable, and of tried integrity. And as the custom was to select those chiefly who were endowed with the more excellent gifts, he enjoins them to call for the elders, as the power and grace of the Holy Spirit acted more fully, in general, by these. *Let them pray over him.* The custom of praying over any one has a respect to the idea of being sifted immediately in the presence of God: then we conceive our prayer with the greater earnestness and feeling, when we come, as it were, to the object itself.— Thus, not only Elisha and Paul, but Christ himself excited ardour in prayer, and recommended the

the grace of God: see 2 Kings iv. 32. &c. Acts xx. 10. &c. John xi. 41. and 42. &c. It is, however, to be observed, that it is to the prayer of faith that James here annexes the promise: for he that wavereth, as he calls not on God in a proper manner, so he is unworthy to obtain; as we have it mentioned in the first chap. Whosoever, then, wishes to be heard, let him possess a firm

belief that he prayeth not in vain. As James publicly mentions this special gift, the acquiescence of which was only an external rite; thence we collect—that not even the use of oil was lawful without faith. But as the papists, evidently, can exhibit no certain effects from their unction, it is manifest they want the gift, and that it is counterfeit.

15. *And if he have committed sins, &c.*] This is not added, merely to signify, that God will grant something more to the sick than health of body; but as diseases are inflicted often on account of sins; when speaking of their remission, he signifies that the cause of the evil will be removed. And we see, indeed, that when David was afflicted, while he begged relief, he was wholly employed in requesting the forgiveness of his sins. The meaning of this must be, that while he acknowledge the effect of his sins and

punishment, he judge the only remedy to be, that God would cease to impute transgression. The prophets, every where, abound with this doctrine, that mankind are relieved from their calamities, when they are delivered from the guilt of their iniquities. Let us learn, then, that this is a proper medicine both for our diseases of body, and for our other evils; if, thro' an anxious solicitude to appease the Deity, and obtain the forgiveness of our sins, we examine ourselves with diligence and care.

16. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed: the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

17. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18. And

18. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

16. *Confess your faults one to another, &c.*] In some copies the illative particle (then) is inserted, and not with impropriety: for altho' it be not expressed, it is to be understood. He had said, that sins are forgiven to the sick over whom the elders should pray; now he reminds us how useful it may be to confess our sins to one another; meaning, no doubt, that thro' their intercession we may obtain forgiveness.— I know that this passage is explained by many as respecting reconciliation of offences; for those who wish to be reconciled must first acknowledge and confess their faults. And thence it comes to pass, that enmities take root, increase, and become irreconcilable; because every one obstinately maintains his own cause. Many, therefore, are of opinion, that James points out this as a way of brotherly reconciliation—that we should mutually confess our transgressions; but the passage is to be understood otherwise, as hath been already observed. For he joins mutual prayer with mutual confession, to signify that this is the end of confession, that we should assist the prayers of our brethren before God. For those who are acquainted with our wants are

incited to pray for our relief; but those who are unacquainted with our diseases, will be slow to administer relief. The folly or wickedness of the papists is astonishing, who attempt, by this testimony, to support auricular confession.— For, from the words of James, it would be easy to infer that priests alone ought to confess. For as here a mutual or reciprocal confession is required, are not others enjoined to confess their sins, besides those who are fit on their part to hear the confession of others? but the priests claim this right to themselves alone; the confession, then, is to be considered as required of themselves alone. But as the trifles of those whom we are employed in refuting are insignificant, let the genuine exposition which we have adduced, claim our attention, and suffice us. For the words clearly imply, that confession is enjoined us with no other view, but that they who know our evils may be the more ready to contribute to our relief. *Availeth much.* Lest it should be thought that this is done vainly—that others pray for us, he tell them the effect and utility of their supplication.— But he particularly mentions the prayer  
of

of the just: because God hear-  
eth not the unrighteous, neither  
is there any access to him,  
but thro' a good conscience—  
not that our prayers avail  
from the mouth—but as the  
heart ought to be purified by  
faith, that we may present our-  
selves before God, James tes-  
tifies that the just or faithful  
pray not in vain for us. But  
what does he mean, when he  
adds *effectual*? for this appears  
to be superfluous; for if a  
prayer availeth much, no doubt  
it is efficacious. The antient  
interpreter hath rendered it  
*constant*; but it appears to be  
forced. For James uses the  
Greek participle *εργασμεν*, which  
is of the same import as effec-  
tual. The sentence might,  
however, be thus resolved, It  
availeth much, because it is  
effectual. The argument, then,

17. *Elias was a man, &c.*] Innumerable instances are to  
be found in scripture to prove  
the point in view; but he chuses  
one particularly remarkable,  
for this was a very remarkable  
circumstance, that God to com-  
ply with the prayer of Elias, in  
a manner subjected the heavens  
to his desire. Elias kept the  
heavens shut for two years and  
a half, by his prayers; he a-  
gain opened them, that an a-  
bundant rain might immedi-  
ately pour forth; hence the  
wonderful power of prayer ap-

is drawn from this principle,  
that the Deity will not that the  
prayers of the faithful should  
pass unregarded. Thence he  
not improperly concludes, that  
they avail much. But I rather  
restrict the meaning to the pre-  
sent circumstance; for it is  
then that our prayers may be  
called *εργασμεν*, or effectual—  
when any necessity is present-  
ed to us that rouses the serious  
affection of prayer. We every  
day pray for the whole church,  
that God would forgive their  
sins; but, then, we only mean  
an expression to succour those  
who are in distress. Moreover,  
our confidence in the prayer of  
our brethren could not be such,  
unless we knew them to be in  
distress. This, then, is not a  
general inference, but is to be  
applied particularly to the for-  
mer sentence.

It is a celebrated story  
which we have in 1 Kings xvii.  
18. It is not here delivered to  
us that Elias prayed with fer-  
vency upon that occasion; but  
that the drought and the rain  
were granted to his prayers,  
cannot be doubted. But the  
application of the example is  
to be noticed. James does not  
say that drought is to be re-  
quested of the Lord, because  
Elias had obtained this; for  
thus, thro' an inconsiderate  
and rash zeal, we might emu-  
late the prophets. The rule  
of

of praying is then to be attended to, that it should be from faith; to this purpose he accommodates the example, that if Elias hath been heard, we also, by duly praying, will be heard.— For if the precept and promises be common for prayer, it follows, that the effect will be common. But lest any one should object, that we are far distant from the degree of Elias, he ranks him in our own order, when he says, “ That the man was mortal, and subject to the like passions with ourselves.” For thus we less profit from the example of the faints; because we suppose them to have been semi-gods, or heroes, who had a peculiarly intimate commerce with the Deity—thus, because they have been heard, we conceive no confidence in ourselves. To destroy this heathenish profane

superstition, James admonishes us, that the faithful are to be considered as in the weakness of the flesh; that we may learn that it was not owing to their merits, but to the efficacy of prayer, what they have obtained of God. Hence it appears how vainly the papists act, when they teach us to have recourse to the protection of the faithful, because they have been heard by the Lord. Thus they argue—because they obtained what they requested when they lived in the world, they will now be our best patrons after their death.” This device had been unknown to the Holy Spirit. For James reasons oppositely—that we ought to pray after their example; as their prayers have been so prevalent, and that, therefore, we shall not pray in vain.

19. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him :

20. Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

I doubt that it was written *γινώσκετε*; it ought, then, to have been read *learn*; the meaning, however, will be the same in both senses. James recommends the correction of brethren. Nothing could be more desirable, than to rescue a

soul from eternal death. This he does who recalls a wandering brother into the right way. So glorious a work is not to be neglected. To give meat to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty—we see at what a rate Christ estimated it; but the

salvation of the soul is much more precious to him than the life of the body. We must be on our guard, then, lest the souls redeemed by Christ, should, in some measure, perish thro' our indolence; the salvation of whom God hath, in some measure, placed in our hands. Not that we ourselves can confer salvation, but that God, thro' our ministry, preserves and delivers what, otherwise, seemed approaching to destruction. Some copies have it, that he shall save *his soul* from death; but this alters not the sense. I, however, chuse rather to follow the different reading, as being more energetic. *And shall hide a multitude of sins.* He alludes to the observation of Solomon, which he cites as a proof. Solomon says, Prov. x. 12. "Hatred

"stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins." Those who envy are inflamed with a mutual desire of defaming one another.— Those who love cheerfully, pardon many faults among themselves. Charity, then, buries transgressions among men. James here teaches something higher; namely, that they are blotted out before God. As if he should say—that Solomon announces this as a fruit of charity, "that it hideth sins." But there is no better, nor more salutary mode of hiding them, than when they are abolished before God. And this taketh place, when a sinner by our admonition is converted to the way. Therefore, we ought more particularly and more earnestly to direct our exertions to this end.

## CONCLUSION.

**L**EARN to accustom yourselves to the exercise of prayer. Do it while health and strength continue. When sickness overtakes you, ye will fly unto this refuge; but if ye are negligent at present, ye have cause to fear, that God will not then regard you. Let not the fashion of the world tempt you to omit this duty. Remember the words of your Lord and Saviour, "Who-soever is ashamed of me, before men, of him will I be ashamed, before my Father, and his holy angels."— Let the resolution of Joshua be your resolution. "Whatever others may do, as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."— However occupied in business, however much in company, always reserve a portion of your time to bow at the footstool of mercy, and to pour out your hearts in gratitude unto your Maker. Never betake yourselves to rest, till ye

ye have committed your family to the protection of the Almighty. When you close your eyes for sleep, ye know not, if ye shall open them again, till ye see the Lord coming in the clouds to judge the world. Watch, therefore, and pray, for blessed is that servant, who, when the Lord cometh, shall be found watching.

## NOTES ON CHAP. V.

## NOTE I.

“*THE early and the latter rain.*” Some have been of opinion, that the rains in April are the former rains mentioned in the scriptures; and that the rains which fall in September are the latter rains: the first, so beneficial for the barley harvest, and the last, not less necessary for the vintage. In Judea, they have two harvests in the year. Barley, corn, pease, and wheat, are cut, and gathered in May. Grapes, figs, and pomegranates, in August, or September. It must have been about the first of August, that the spies were sent by Moses to spy the land; for it was the time of the first ripe grapes, Numb. xiii. 20. Their observations, concerning the fatness of the soil, must have related, chiefly, to its figs, grapes, and other fruits, rather than its grain; for the grain had been gathered in long before that time, and lay concealed in granaries; which granaries, in Judea, were usually under the earth. The ablest critics have fixed the period of the former and the latter rain in the spring season. The former rain, according to them, falling in the month of February, and the latter rain, in the month of April. Dr Shaw, one of the most celebrated travellers, informs us, that the rains in February are regarded as of such importance, that they usually prognosticate the fate of the following crop from them; as the Egyptians do from the over-flowing of the Nile. If these rains are copious, every heart is made glad: if they are scanty, a fearful apprehension of scarcity prevails. The husbandman, especially, must have waited for these rains with great anxiety, yet he did it in patience, and in hope, trusting in a gracious providence. Therefore, says James, let all Christians, particularly when under trouble, exercise a similar trust.

## NOTE II.

[2] “*Swear not, neither by heaven, &c.*” The Jews, tho’ they had a deep veneration for the name of God, and never swore by it in their ordinary conversation, afraid lest the Almighty had struck them dead in a moment; yet, were much addicted to profane swearing. Some swore by the heavens: some by the earth: some by Jerusalem: some by the temple: some by their truth, and their faith: and some by their own life. In as much as the swearing by any of these things was, in effect, swearing by God, the maker and preserver of them; both Christ, and his apostles, very properly, condemned this profane practice, and commanded all christians to refrain from it. A most abominable practice, indeed, it is; to which we lie under no temptation, and yet, alas! too prevalent among us; a crying iniquity, which causes our land to mourn, and multiplies the judgments of heaven upon us. O! reader, tremble to be guilty of it, and use all thy influence to check it in others. When thou hearest the name of thy God abused, scruple not to express thine indignation at the vile iniquity. Does thy spirit kindle, when thine earthly sovereign is traduced, and shall the King of kings be disgraced in thy presence, without reprehension? Never permit any under thy roof, to speak this language of Belzebub; watch thy children with the utmost care, and correct, with severity, every oath which comes from their lips. Be as much afraid of blasphemy in them, as of an inclination to theft and dishonesty; for even the gallows is nothing, compared to their being cast into hell.

THE END.



A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

*REV. WILLIAM NICOL,*

*Esq. Esq. Esq.*

---

[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]





