

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXEMPLARS FOR THE  
INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF JAMES

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The author of the Book of James names four exemplars in the course of his work. These serve specific functions within their individual contexts in the composition; Abraham and Rahab as exemplars of a vital active faith, Job as an exemplar of steadfast endurance, and Elijah as an exemplar of effective prayer. This thesis explores the wider stories of the exemplars in the Hebrew Bible, traces their development in elements of early Jewish tradition, and compares the author's use of the exemplars with that of other New Testament writers. It argues that, the author of the Book of James uses the exemplars collectively as a means to encourage his messianic audience to remain faithful to God in the trials of everyday life until the imminent Parousia of the Lord. The four exemplars share three characteristics that will aid the audience in their daily struggles: they were all tested to the limit, yet demonstrated their whole-hearted commitment to God by remaining faithful to him; they were all outsiders who rejected the wisdom (values) of the world and they all faced their life-defining trials reliant on God rather than on other human beings.

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## Abbreviations and Biblical Quotations

### Abbreviations

Abbreviations of the books of the Hebrew Bible, the Deuterocanonical corpus and the New Testament follow those of the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized edition), 1995. Abbreviations of all other ancient texts follow the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Handbook of Style.

Other abbreviations used are:

BDAG: Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).

COD: The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English. 7th ed.

ECM: Novum Testamentum Graecum, Editio Critica Maior

ESV: English Standard Version.

NA<sup>27</sup>: Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graecum (27th ed.).

NETS: A New English Translation of the Septuagint

UBS<sup>4</sup>: The Greek New Testament (4<sup>th</sup> Revised ed.).

### Biblical Quotations

#### In Greek

Greek quotations from the New Testament and the Septuagint are, unless otherwise stated, from the combined NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/Rahlfs LXX database in Bibleworks 8, BibleWorks™ Copyright © 1992-2008 BibleWorks, LLC.

#### In English

All English quotations from the Book of James are my own translation unless otherwise stated.

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Quotations from the *Book of Jubilees* are from Wintermute, O. S. (1985).

Quotations from the *Testament of Job* are from Spittler, R. P. (1983).

Quotations from the works of Philo are from 'Philo in ten Volumes' in the Loeb Classical Library Series 341, vols 1-5 translated by Colson F.H and Whitaker G. H, vols 6-10 by Colson F.H., London, Heinemann, (1929-1962).

All other quotations in English are from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF JACOBAN TRAGEDY

It was customary in the latter half of the twentieth century to start a Jacobean monograph with some reference to the work's previously poor reception in (especially Protestant) theological circles. My own favourite is Cranfield's 'At least it may be said of the Epistle of James that it escapes the "woe" of Luke 6:26' (Woe to you, when all speak well of you) (Cranfield, 1965, p.182). Cranfield's tongue-in-cheek opening neatly encapsulates what has plagued the history of Jacobean studies – a tendency to view the Letter unfavourably through the lens of other (particularly Pauline) theologies, and thereby, deny it the right to have an authentic and distinctive voice of its own.

Martin Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone allied to his now infamous description of the Letter of James as 'the Epistle of Straw' has also cast a long shadow over biblical research into this short yet controversial New Testament book. In fact, the dominant Pauline influence within much of Christian theology since the Reformation has tended to stifle other New Testament voices, especially those, such as the Letter of James, which seem to present a message that can be interpreted as being different from, or even opposed to, that of Paul. Whilst all of the General Epistles have suffered from this Pauline dominance to some degree, it is the distinctive message of the Letter of James that has been particularly silenced. If it

was not being read through the lens of Martin Luther's polemical 'letter of straw' accusation, then, where critical scholarship deigned to take notice of it at all (Chester and Martin, 1994, p.3 n.3; Johnson, 1995, p. 111 n.270),<sup>1</sup> the Letter was being squeezed into the mould of Pauline-dominant theology.

Unlike the Petrine and Johannine epistles, the Letter of James lacks a *theologia crucis*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there are no direct references in the Letter to the life or death of Jesus and only disputed indirect ones to the resurrected/glorified Christ (e.g. 2:1; 5:7). A second area of suspicion that led to neglect within Protestant scholarship relates to the Letter's attraction within Roman Catholic theology. Both the Letter's emphasis on the need for works (2:14-26), and the use of Jas 5:14 and Jas 5:16 as proof texts in support of the Roman Catholic doctrines of the sacrament of Extreme Unction, and of auricular confession to a priest, weighed heavily against the Book (Tasker, 1957, pp.128, 135-136; cf. George, 2000, p.21, who states that Jas 5:14 was the most frequently quoted text from the Letter during the millennium that spanned Augustine of Hippo and the Reformation). A third area of concern within Protestant theology has been the apparent contradiction between the Letter of James and the doctrine of forensic justification purportedly found in the Pauline corpus.

The arguments posited by F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School advocating Pauline-Petrine and Pauline-Jacobean schisms in the Early Church have also served to push the Letter of

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Chester cites Luck's (1984) observation that the Letter of James is mentioned only briefly in Bultmann's **Theology of the New Testament**, and not at all in Conzelmann's **Outline of the Theology of the New Testament**.

<sup>2</sup> Whereas the Petrine corpus includes a clear *theologia crucis* in passages such as 1 Pet 1:3-12 and 2:24-25, that of the Johannine corpus is implied as in 1 Jn 1:7 & 2:1-2.

James to the margins of the New Testament such that in the 1892 edition of his work, Mayor can describe the Tübingen School's almost creedal influence in this exasperated tone: 'I believe in the quarrel between Peter and Paul, and in the well-meaning but unsuccessful attempt by Luke and others to smooth it over and keep it in the background', before going on to argue that James (perceived as being allied to the Petrine camp) and Paul were not at loggerheads over faith and works (Mayor, 1892, p.ci).

However, we must recognise that the Letter's 'woes' began long before Martin Luther's polemic, or F. C. Baur's wish to emphasize the theological tensions within the Early Church. From earliest times doubt was expressed about the apostolic authority behind it. For example, Eusebius of Caesarea states (c325 C.E.) that the Letter was classed among the disputed writings as there were some who doubted its authenticity (*Historia Ecclesiastica* II, 23, 25) and both he (*H.E.* III,25,3) and Jerome (*De viris inlustribus* 2: J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina* 23, 639) assert that it was only gradually accepted in the church. This lukewarm reception of the Letter allied to Luther's doubts as to the Letter's rightful status has made it difficult for its message to be heard and understood on its own terms. For example, Adamson (1976, p. 20) boldly asserts (without supplying any evidence for his statement): 'James should not, and *cannot* be understood in isolation, but is to be read in the whole context of the NT [emphasis added]'. I do wonder whether Adamson would have made the same comment had his commentary been on the Book of Romans. The largely negative reception of the Letter of James over the centuries led Johnson (Johnson, 1995, pp.110-111) to conclude the 'Theories of Authorship' section of his commentary in this way:

The most burdensome aspect of theories of authorship and provenance, whether conservative or liberal, has been the insistence on reading James and Paul in tandem. Even Dibelius' influential commentary, which rightly seeks to distance itself from the error "of thinking that Paul influenced every branch of Christianity," and does everything possible to portray James as a free-floating pseudonymous repository of wisdom traditions, fails to escape the Pauline connection completely when it declares that James 2:14-26 cannot be understood without presupposing "not only Paul's formulation of the question about the Law but also the resolution of Paul's struggles regarding the Law".

He goes on to assert, in the section entitled 'Loosening the Pauline Connection': 'Luther's preference for Paul and dismissal of James . . . is still active in those scholars who make Paul the measure of authentic Christianity' (Johnson, 1995, p.111). Hence, even where historical bias is recognised, the pervasive influence of Pauline theology can make it difficult for scholars to take an objective step backwards when interpreting the Letter of James.

I have started my thesis in this way so as to highlight the problems scholars face before they can even begin to investigate the traditional elements to the background of a biblical book, such as authorship, dating, genre, structure, location, recipients etc. Unfortunately, when it comes to such background issues, biblical scholars can agree on very little where the Letter of James is concerned, hence, the Pauline bias is not the only issue to plague Jacobean research.

Over the last century, scholars have asserted that the Letter of James was written by James, the 'brother' of Jesus or by a pseudonymous author during the hundred years after James's death (see Davids, 1982, p.4 for a chart of scholarly views on authorship). It is a letter (Davids, 1982, p.22), a homily (Witherington, 2007, p.386), a paraenetic collection (Dibelius,

1976, pp.1-7), a diatribe (Ropes, 1916, pp.10-16). It has a deliberate structure (Davids, 1982, pp.25-28) and it has no meaningful structure (Dibelius, 1976, pp.1-7). It was written from Jerusalem (Witherington, 2007, p.401), from Rome (Laws, 1980, pp.20-26), from Caesarea (Ropes, 1916, p.50), from Antioch (Allison Jr, 2001b, p.566). It was written to the Jewish Diaspora (Bauckham, 1999, p. 15) or the new messianic Israel that is the Christian Church (Vouga, 1984, pp.24-26). It was written to Jews (Adamason, 1976, p.51); it was written to Gentiles (Laws, 1980, pp.32-38). It is a Christian work (most commentators); it is a Jewish work given the merest of Christian glosses (Spitta and Massebieau, both 1896). Its central theme relates to the testing of faith (Hiebert, 1978); eschatology (Penner, 1999, p.224); purity (Lockett, 2008b); perfection (Hartin, 1999, p.10); wholeness (Moo, 2000, p.46); the friendship with God versus friendship with the world (Johnson, 1995, p.14), to name but a few. In short, one would be excused for wondering whether the Letter of James has almost become whatever the individual scholar has wanted it to be.

Despite all these obstacles, this long-neglected Biblical book seems to have no shortage of admirers in the twenty-first century, so my own thesis comes amid a spate of monographs and commentaries in Jacobean studies including Cheung, 2003; Brosend, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Maier, 2005; Witherington, 2007; Webb & Kloppenborg, 2007; Blomberg & Kamell, 2008; Lockett, 2008; Sandt & Zangenberg, 2008; McCartney, 2009; McKnight, 2011. But what do I bring to the discussion? I offer no radical new theory of authorship, dating, structure or any of the other disputed background matter. Instead, I wish to explore how the Author uses his named exemplars (Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah). For example, does the Author use them just for his immediate purpose (e.g. in support of his argument or exhortation), or is

there some deeper connection between them which may help to bind the composition together? If there are links between the exemplars do these throw any light on the purpose of the composition? Indeed, is it possible that the exemplars function on more than one level, and if so, what is the significance of that for interpreting the Letter of James?

Although commentators have considered these exemplars within their specific contexts within the Letter of James, there has been little attempt to explore possible links between them, perhaps because for so long scholarship accepted the view that the composition was a patchwork of paraenetic sayings and analogies with little, if any, deliberate structure.

However, if one accepts that the Book may have a meaningful structure (however one chooses to conceive that structure) the possibility that the Author may have chosen these four specific exemplars to reinforce a major (or even central) theme becomes a possibility.

Wall, 1997a, p.255, for example, has already posited that:

[The exemplars'] role in the Book of James serves a theological end; they embody the author's interpretation of the "way of wisdom" that leads pilgrims toward (in this age) into (in the age to come) the kingdom of God. These are . . ."prophetic" exemplars, since they illustrate what manner of faith fulfils the promise of salvation.

Laws, 1980, p.216, on the other hand is struck by the obvious gentile connections of Abraham, Rahab and Job and wonders whether Elijah may have been chosen because: 'in Lk. [4:25]ff [he] is a prophet sent to the gentile world', which if true, would fit very nicely with her thesis that the Letter of James was written from Rome to a predominantly gentile audience. Johnson, 1988, p.644, suggests their function in these terms: '[The four exemplars] are models of how faith is "brought to perfection" by specific deeds. Abraham and Rahab exemplify the obedience and hospitality of faith; Job the endurance of faith;

Elijah the prayer of faith'. These three commentators, however, have not explored the purported links in any significant detail, and they offer their comments almost in passing.

Other scholars (outside of the commentaries) have considered the author's use of individual exemplars – see for example, Ward, 1968, Longenecker, 1977, Compton, 1997, on Abraham; Wall, 2001, on Rahab; Seitz, 1993, Gray, 2004, Richardson, 2006, on Job; Warrington, 1994, on Elijah. However, no-one to the best of my knowledge has undertaken any in depth study of all four exemplars.

When I set out on this journey of exploration, I had no pre-conceived ideas as to what the outcome might be. I was hopeful that I might uncover connections and themes that would assist our understanding of the composition, and having concluded my investigations, I am confident that there are indeed valuable connections and insights that arise from the author's use of these four exemplars. I will say more about these in my final chapter.

Before I can examine the four exemplars in any detail, I need to say something about my methodologies. Since my intention is to examine how the Author uses his named exemplars, I shall utilise a range of historical critical tools alongside literary and rhetorical ones. My basic approach for each exemplar will be to examine their portrayal in the Hebrew Bible, in the literature of Second Temple Judaism and in other parts of the Christian New Testament (where applicable) before undertaking a close study of the passages in the Letter of James where the exemplars appear, together with the relevant contexts of those passages. I will

then provide a brief interim summary for the role of each exemplar in their contexts. First, though, I will undertake two tasks so as to provide a framework in which to operate.

When approaching any written text a scholar will want to draw conclusions as to its genre, structure (if any), and authorship/date. Often scholars will try to determine these before they undertake their more specific enquiry. I will, therefore, reflect on the debate that has taken place over the last century regarding these in the next chapter, before drawing some conclusions of my own.

Since most scholars accept that the first chapter of the Book of James (or the major part of it) serves as a form of introduction (Taylor, 2004, p.112), I will show in Chapter Three, by means of an exegetical study, how the opening chapter of the composition serves as an introduction to the Author's major themes, and the extent to which his structuring of that chapter may provide pointers to a thematic lens for viewing the composition as a whole. I will then be ready to examine each of the exemplars in turn before drawing my conclusions in the final chapter.

Finally, I have decided to refer to the author/redactor of the Book of James simply as 'the Author' or 'our Author' so as to retain the focus on the text of the composition as opposed to the writer.



## CHAPTER 2

### GENRE, STRUCTURE, DATE & AUTHORSHIP

As stated in the previous chapter there is little consensus as to the genre, structure, dating and authorship of the Book of James. I will, therefore, consider briefly the scholarly debates of the last century on these issues and provide working models of my own in which to place my thesis, starting with the debate concerning the composition's genre.

#### 2.1 The Genre Debate

'A clear concept of a document's literary character is necessary in order to understand it as a whole' is how Martin Dibelius commences his magisterial commentary on the Book of James, before asserting: 'only the document itself can provide the necessary information as to its genre' (Dibelius, 1976, p.1).<sup>3</sup> After careful analysis of the text Dibelius declares that '*the entire document lacks continuity in thought*' (emphasis in original), and deduces that the Book of James must be paraenesis, which he defines as: 'a text which strings together admonitions of general ethical content' (Dibelius, 1976, pp.2-3). This understanding of paraenesis together with his view that ancient compilers of paraenesis were chiefly concerned with transmitting an ethical tradition to their audience(s), led Dibelius to believe that it was not possible to discover anything concrete about the author, audience, *Sitz in Leben* or the specific purpose of the Book of James.

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<sup>3</sup> Dibelius' commentary in German (**Der Brief des Jakobus**) was originally published in 1921. The 1976 English translation was based on the 11<sup>th</sup> revised edition prepared by Heinrich Greeven and published in German in 1964.

In his helpful synopsis of the state of Jacobean research at the end of the twentieth century, Todd Penner asserts:

Dibelius's commentary on James is widely regarded as being one of the most influential and significant treatments of the letter in twentieth century scholarship, *having sweeping consequences* [emphasis added] for other areas of New Testament research as well, including the understanding of paraenesis and its transmission, the interpretation of New Testament ethics and the perception of ecclesiological and community development in post-apostolic Christianity. (Penner, 1999, p.263).

He also suggests that the very fact that Dibelius' commentary was translated into English more than fifty years after its original publication in German is testimony to its continuing influence in the second half of the twentieth century (Penner, 1999, p.263).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that biblical scholars, especially in Continental Europe, accepted Dibelius's interpretation of the Letter's genre and its implications, thereby effectively consigning it to the biblical studies archives, although such marginalisation was hardly Dibelius's fault. The German scholar had a high regard for the book and went to great lengths to allow it a voice of its own within the New Testament canon (cf. Johnson, 1995, pp.110-111). Its marginalisation arose from what subsequent scholars chose to do in the light of Dibelius' analysis (Penner, 1999, p.263). Before looking, therefore, at how more recent scholarship has engaged with Dibelius in regard to the Book's genre and structure, it will be useful to examine Dibelius' views of paraenetic literature in more detail so as to grasp why he was so adamant that the composition precluded any meaningful enquiry into the social context(s) of the Author's and audience's worlds.

Dibelius argued that since the early Christians were an eschatological people they saw no need to develop ethical rules for communal living. However, once it became apparent that the Parousia of Jesus was delayed, rather than develop their own rules from scratch, they took the ethical framework of Jewish paraenesis as their starting point. Such Jewish paraenetic literature was rooted in Jewish wisdom poetry and over time amassed aphorisms and sayings from a wide range of sources both within and beyond Judaism. By the time of the New Testament era, and after several centuries of Hellenization during long periods of Ptolemaic and Seleucid influence, Jewish paraenesis had become imbued with Hellenistic characteristics (Dibelius, 1976, p.5). Consequently: 'Christian writings [had] become the transmitters of popular ethics of antiquity [and the Book of James] is to be counted as one of these writings' (Dibelius, 1976, p.5). Furthermore, paraenesis comprised a number of characteristics which when combined made it a distinctive genre in its own right, or so Dibelius argued.

The first of the discernible characteristics of such writings was 'a pervasive *eclecticism* . . . since the concern is the transmission of an ethical tradition that does not require a radical revision even though changes in emphasis and form might occur' [emphasis in original] (Dibelius, 1976, p.5).

The perceived lack of continuity in a composition was a second marker of paraenesis, but such lack need not mean that there was no connection at all between different units. Since the primary function of the genre was to transmit ethical teaching, it was usual for the author/compiler to use catchwords as mnemonic links for the benefit of the recipients, and

Dibelius identified a number of these in the Letter of James, and I shall look at some of these as they appear later in this study.

A further device to aid retention of paraenetic teaching was the repetition of motifs at different points in a composition. Examples within the Book of James include warnings about the tongue in Jas 1:26 and Jas 3:3-10; perseverance under testing in Jas 1:2-4 and Jas 5:7-11; the prayer of faith in Jas 1:5-8 and Jas 5:16-18 and warnings to the rich in Jas 1:9-11 and Jas 5:1-6.

One final element of the genre for Dibelius was the impossibility of constructing a single specific milieu into which all the exhortations and admonitions could be placed. He argues, for example, that the merchants of Jas 4:13-17 and the wealthy landowners of Jas 5:1-6 are not the same audience as those addressed by the Author in Jas 2.

He concludes by quoting from Pseudo-Isocrates to the effect that the purpose of such paraenetic writings was to provide advice not just for the present but also for the future where there are likely to be situations that the recipient(s) will not yet have faced. Hence the content of a typical piece of paraenetic writing would include some elements that would be relevant to some parts of the audience and others which might not be relevant to the current context of any in the audience (Dibelius, 1976, pp.5-11).

Dibelius believed he had identified all these elements of paraenesis, namely, a pervasive eclecticism, a perceived lack of continuity, the repetition of motifs, and the absence of a

specific context, in the Letter of James, and concluded that the composition could only be a general letter in both senses of the word, having neither a specific context nor an identifiable audience, and more importantly, that the Book could therefore have no discernible theological principle. The best that scholars could hope to achieve by studying the Book of James was to gain some idea of the Author's intentions through careful examination of the way in which he had chosen to arrange his eclectic material. It seemed that Dibelius had provided a masterful and emphatic argument to determine the genre of the Book of James once and for all.

Today, however, a plethora of theses can be found setting out the structure of the Book of James within a range of genre frameworks as part of a renewed interest in the composition. So what has happened over the last fifty years to cause such a radical shift of opinion? Two factors of particular significance are: firstly, scholars from a variety of disciplines both within and outside of theology have developed new methodologies which have broadened the range of critical tools available to biblical scholars (Penner, 1999, p.262).<sup>4</sup> It needs to be remembered that, as the person who invented the term *Formgeschichte* (Goeder, 2008, p.21), Dibelius was naturally interested in the history of the form of biblical texts, and his analysis of the Book of James reflected that interest. Indeed, the form-critical method was the dominant approach for much of the twentieth century, especially in Continental Europe. Among the more important methodological developments for the purpose of biblical studies has been a reassessment, one might even say, a rediscovery of the use of rhetoric in ancient

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<sup>4</sup> For a helpful introduction to the range of critical tools and an outline of their history, see Goeder 2008.

texts, which alongside advancements in literary and linguistic theories has attracted the interest of a broader scholarly audience.

Secondly, research into the Graeco-Roman historical, social, philosophical, and religious fields, allied to archaeological finds (especially those in the Judean Desert and Lower Egypt) have provided valuable new insights into both early Jewish and early Christian societies and have encouraged biblical scholars to reassess the first-century C.E. Mediterranean world.

As Penner rightly noted, if Jacobean studies were to flourish in a post-Dibelian world, it was essential that credible arguments be developed to challenge Dibelius's theories of genre and structure (Penner, 1999, p.298). One catalyst for this was Francis's 1970 literary study on the opening and closing sections of the biblical books of James and 1 John in which the author argued strongly that both 'epistles' contained double opening statements that were not uncommon in letters during the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman periods, and both closed with eschatological instructions and thematic reprises (Francis, 1970, pp.112, 124). In the same article, Francis proffered elaborate structures for the two letters (Francis, 1970, pp.120-124). There followed a spate of commentaries and monographs asserting not only the epistolary nature and supposed structure of the Book of James but also the central motif(s) that served as the lens through which to view the main themes of the composition. Many of these theories appear heavily reliant on Francis's work at least in regard to the epistolary nature of the composition (Penner, 1999, p.267).

Over-reliance on a single study, however impressive that study may seem, runs the risk that one's whole thesis could be undermined if it can be shown that such study is less robust than previously thought, hence more recent research, whilst recognising the value of Francis's work, has been more critical about what Francis's study actually reveals.

Witherington, for example, whilst believing Francis successfully rebutted Dibelius's claims regarding the lack of structure in the Letter of James, questions whether Francis has proved the epistolary nature of the composition, positing instead a rhetorical structure for the opening and closing units (Witherington, 2007, pp.421-422). Luke Timothy Johnson, one of the most influential of recent commentators, is more circumspect, asserting that identifying genre, whether contemporary or ancient, is 'frustrating' (Johnson, 1995, p.16) For Johnson, the problem with ancient rhetoric is twofold; firstly, rhetorical theorists disagree on how to classify compositions, and secondly, ancient writers were not always bound to keep to the rhetorical ideals set out in those classifications (Johnson, 1995, p.16). One might also add to what extent, in any case, the Author of the Book of James was concerned to follow rhetorical etiquette, especially in a context where 'friendship with the world is hostility towards God' (4:4).

A second challenge to the Dibelian view arose out of a reassessment of ancient paraenesis itself. Whilst many scholars acknowledged paraenetic elements within the Book of James, they increasingly questioned whether paraenesis was a genre in its own right with a world-view of its own in Graeco-Roman times. Bauckham, for example, suggests that it is a false premise to see any of the different genres of New Testament literature as representing different world-views; rather the differences to be identified are within the genres and how

they interact with the other genres within their own texts. He suggests that the New Testament and its contemporary compositions fall into a spectrum according to the different emphasis the composition gives to the four main genres in Jewish literature (law, prophecy, apocalypse and wisdom), with apocalypse at one end of the spectrum and wisdom at the other (Bauckham, 1999, pp.33-35). Bauckham's point is well made, and has been reinforced in more recent studies drawing on the discipline of cognitive science (see for example, the studies in prototype theory in Qumranic texts by Williamson, 2010, pp.336-360 and Wright, 2010, pp.289-314). After all, given the concern of both Jewish sage and Jewish teacher (and, of course, the two roles were often combined in Second Temple Judaism) with the question of how one could live a good life in obedience to Torah, it is hardly surprising that Jewish paraenesis's roots in wisdom literature should also have strong connections to the law, thereby resulting in an element of 'fuzziness' at genre boundaries (cf. Williamson, 2010, pp.357-360). For example, although Ben Sira describes himself as 'the last to keep vigil' (Sir. 33:16a), he was the first of the teacher-scribes to gather and filter the eclectic wisdom tradition of the Ancient Near East through the particular lens of the Jewish Torah, against the foundation of the Book of Proverbs and thereby provide a written framework for subsequent Jewish paraenesis. Indeed, Ben Sira's belief that wisdom, and not just law, was a divine gift to, and possession of, Israel for the well-being of the pious, was widely adopted from Diasporan Judaism in Alexandria to the Torah theology of rabbinic teaching (Schnabel, 1985, p.88).

This is not to say that paraenesis is absent in the Book of James; far from it. Johnson has no qualms in agreeing that one can legitimately call the Book of James 'paraenesis', but does so



within a context where he has already asserted (not unlike Bauckham above) that a close examination of the text of the composition reveals that it conforms to several types of ancient literary genre, but defies confinement to any specific one (Johnson, 1995, p.17). This bears due reflection by all who would wish to force the Letter of James into too tight a strait-jacket, or to view it through too narrow a thematic lens.

Finally, the renewed interest in ancient rhetoric and its use in the New Testament, has brought with it increased scrutiny of the Letter of James. Dibelius, of course, was not ignorant of rhetorical influences in the composition, but he limited its scope to the use of catchwords as mnemonic devices for joining the otherwise unconnected units together with a few elementary rhetorical flourishes such as alliteration, *gradatio* and, in the longer units, diatribal features (Dibelius, 1976, pp.6-7,37-38). Recent studies, on the other hand, focusing on the oral/aural aspects of ancient literature, have argued for a rhetorical framework for much if not the whole of the Book of James (e.g. Wall, 1997a, and Witherington, 2007).

In his tautly argued monograph Cheung explores the possible genres in some detail. He dismisses allegory (of the patriarch's Jacob's farewell address to his sons), diatribe, homily and protreptic discourse, and after a detailed analysis of Hellenistic paraenesis and Jewish wisdom literature, plumps for the latter (on the grounds of the content of the Book of James) in an epistolary form albeit recognising a significant degree of overlap between paraenesis and wisdom literature (Cheung, 2003, pp.6-49). Cheung's analysis, in fact, reveals just how divided modern scholarship remains on the question of the composition's genre and structure.

We can see, then, that whilst there has clearly been a loosening of the Dibelian grip on the Letter of James in recent decades, no single genre dominates scholarly thinking today, begging the question, what are we able to say about the composition's genre?

Taking the advice of both Bauckham and Johnson referred to earlier in this section regarding not being too dogmatic as to the composition's genre, I would suggest that the Letter of James contains rhetoric but rhetoric does not provide its main framework; there are notable diatribes (for example in Jas 2:14-26), but the work is not diatribal; it contains aphorisms and wisdom teaching but is not solely a piece of Jewish wisdom literature; it has significant paraenetic content, but paraenesis is not its defining element; it has outlines of sermonic material but is not a homily. In short the Letter of James refuses to be categorized beyond what it purports to be, namely a communication from a teacher (3:1) to a scattered community of adherents to the God of Israel and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1), urging them to (re)adopt certain ethical standards and admonishing them against (the risks of) moral failings. If one must give the Letter of James a generic identity then the term 'encyclical' is as good as any, since that is what it claims to be. If further description must be added, then Bauckham's 'paraenetic encyclical' provides a working model (Bauckham, 1999, p.13).

## **2.2 The Structure Debate**

If the identification of genre has proved problematic in the study of the Letter of James, then that of determining the Book's structure has been positively excruciating. Although most contemporary scholarship accepts that the Letter has a structure, there are nearly as many theories of structure as there are commentators, and Hiebert's complaint that the Book of James is: 'notoriously difficult to outline' will attract sympathy from many given that the

composition has been divided into: 'as few as two and as many as twenty-five major divisions' (Hiebert, 1978, p.221).

Since Dibelius's commentary has had such a significant impact on Jacobean studies during much of the last century, it seems appropriate to start our investigation on the Book's structure with his thesis:

1:1	Prescript
1:2-18	A series of sayings concerning temptation
1:19-27	A series of sayings about hearing and doing
2:1-13	A treatise on partiality
2:14-26	A treatise on faith and works
3:1-12	A treatise on the tongue
3:13-4:12	A group of sayings against contentiousness
4:13-5:6	A group of sayings against worldly-minded merchants and rich people
5:7-20	A series of sayings on various themes

Dibelius argued that the Book of James contained a range of units of differing lengths as well as isolated aphorisms. Most notably there are three main treatises relating to partiality, faith and works, and the tongue. He further recognised that the Author had, seemingly deliberately, linked some units through the use of catchwords and wordplay but saw some of these links as loose and superficial (Dibelius, 1976, pp.vii-viii, 6-7).

As stated earlier, Francis's work on the opening and closing verses of the Books of James and 1 John provided a serious challenge to Dibelius's weighty thesis on genre and structure.

However, the proliferation of structures proposed since that seminal 1970 article shows just how relevant the structural division proposed by Dibelius remains, even though, different labels would be used by those who follow Francis in seeing a more purposeful as opposed to loose structure in the Book. However, to what extent might structures be imposed upon the

composition by the scholar? For example, Davids was one of the first to accept Francis's thesis of the Letter's double opening, and proposed one of the more elaborate structures as follows:

I. Epistolary introduction 1:1

II. Opening statement 1:2-27

1. First segment: testing, wisdom, wealth 1:2-11
  - a. Testing produces joy 1:2-4
  - b. Wisdom comes through prayer 1:5-8
  - c. Poverty excels wealth 1:9-11
2. Second segment: testing, speech, generosity 1:12-27
  - a. Testing produces blessedness 1:12-18
  - b. Pure speech contains no anger 1:19-21
  - c. Obedience requires generosity 1:22-25
  - d. Summary and transition 1:26-27

III. The excellence of poverty and generosity 2:1-26

1. No partiality is allowable 2:1-13
  - a. Illustration: judicial assembly 2:1-4
  - b. Rational argument 2:5-7
  - c. Biblical argument 2:8-12
  - d. Call to obedience 2:13 (transition)
2. Generosity is necessary 2:14-26
  - a. Illustration: poor Christian 2:14-17
  - b. Rational argument 2:18-20
  - c. Biblical argument (two-part): Abraham; Rahab 2:21-26

IV. The demand for pure speech 3:1–4:12

1. Pure speech has no anger 3:1-12
  - a. Warning against self-exaltation 3:1-2a
  - b. Warning about the power of the tongue 3:2b-5a
  - c. Warning about the doubleness in the tongue 3:5b-12
2. Pure speech comes from wisdom 3:13-18
3. Pure prayer is without anger/in trust 4:1-10
  - a. Prayer with anger and desire 4:1-3
  - b. Condemnation of compromise 4:4-6
  - c. Call to repentance 4:7-10
4. Pure speech is uncondemning 4:11-12

V. Testing through wealth 4:13–5.6

1. The test of wealth 4:13-17
2. The test by the wealthy 5:1-6

## VI. Closing statement 5:7-20

1. Endurance in the test 5:7-11
2. Rejection of oaths 5:12
3. Helping one another through prayer/forgiveness 5:13:18
4. Closing encouragement 5:19:20 (Davids, 1982, pp.27-28)

One might want to question a number of captions within this structure. For example, in Jas 1:2-4 is the Author really asserting that testing *produces* joy? The Author actually asserts that the testing of faith produces or develops several ethical qualities leading ultimately to a form of wholeness or perfection. His plea is that the sufferer should accept such testing with joy because of the beneficial end-product. Likewise, is not Jas 1:19-21 about more than ‘pure speech not containing anger’, and does ‘generosity’ even feature in Jas 1:22-25? And so one could go through the rest of the structure and question the accuracy or even relevance of some of the captions.

The French text critical scholar, Amphoux having analysed the divisions of the Letter of James in ancient lectionaries concludes:

La composition qui a notre préférence donnerait à Jc quatre parties, chacune était composée de deux grandes unités contenant à leur tour des petits développements liés entre eux par une logique démonstrative . . .<sup>5</sup>

His proposed four sections are Jas 1:2-27, l'épreuve et l'espérance (testing and hope); Jas 2:1-26, à la synagogue (at the synagogue); Jas 3:1-4:10, la vie quotidienne (everyday life), and Jas 4:11-5:20, jugement et salut (judgement and greetings). Divided this way, each of the four main sections in Amphoux's structure has a similar number of words and verses, which Amphoux suggests may be deliberate (Amphoux, 1981, p.399). Amphoux also sees the two inner sections addressing specific situations within the audience's situation, whilst

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<sup>5</sup> 'The structure which we prefer would give James four sections, each composed of two main units, which in their turn comprise smaller units logically linked together' (my translation).

the two outer sections deal with more 'abstract' matters (Amphoux, 1981, p.400). One may wonder whether this is not just a little bit too neat.

I have chosen Davids and Amphoux simply to illustrate how easy it is to create a seemingly plausible structure to the Letter of James. I could quite easily have chosen other commentators in order to make my point.

Johnson, to his credit, recognising the danger of such approaches, is more careful in his own approach to the composition's structure:

No attempt is made [in this commentary] to locate and describe a complex structure based on the intricate connection of semantic signals. Such arrangements can legitimately be "found" in many texts, including that of James. But they are based in a spatial, visual apprehension of the text as it now appears on the printed page. A reading of James in closer conformity to its original rhetorical setting recognizes that, like all ancient compositions, it was composed first of all for oral presentation. The text, as first experienced, unfolded its meaning through time rather than displaying it in space' (Johnson, 1995, pp.13-14).

And in this observation lies part of the key to unravelling the Gordian Knot that is the plethora of structures proposed over the last forty years. If we are to compare like with like we must first identify the hymn sheets from which the various proposers are singing. Those who wish to work with the text as we now have it and wish to view the Book of James in a canonical way or according to a modern literary convention such as socio-rhetorical criticism will inevitably produce a different structure to those who seek to visualise the composition in some form of original setting (however vague) and also from those who wish to stress the oral/aural structure above the written one, or vice versa. As one who seeks to explore the composition in its original historical and social setting, I shall follow Johnson and pay due

attention to the fact that the composition's original recipients will almost certainly have been 'hearers' and not 'readers' in the first instance, although there will, of course have been a 'reader', and the composition will almost certainly have been studied by some of the 'author-teacher's' students.

This short review has shown that the structure of the Book of James remains a disputed issue. Indeed, one may be left wondering whether the sheer range of scholarly offerings might not ultimately point to there not being any significant structural division beyond that which Dibelius posited ninety years ago. However, there is some light on the matter because, as noted in the previous chapter, despite the variety of structures proposed by modern Jacobean scholarship, there is widespread agreement that Jas 1, or at least the greater part of it (1:2-18), serves as some form of introduction to themes that will be revisited (usually in more detail) later in the work (Taylor, 2004, p.112). I concur with this and propose as a working hypothesis a simple structure comprising Jas 1 as the introduction to the composition and Jas 2-5 as the main body. An exegetical study of Jas 1 follows in the next chapter and will serve a dual purpose. Firstly it will help in identifying the Author's themes and secondly it will provide a framework against which I can examine the Author's use of his exemplars.

### **2.3 The Dating and Authorship Debate**

The two aspects are usually treated together (Davids, 1982, p.2). Traditionally, the composition's author was deemed to have been James the Just, the relative of Jesus, and it was consequently dated between c40-62 C.E. (Davids, 1982, pp.2-5). The challenge to this traditional view arose out of a number of concerns. Firstly, the composition's acceptance as

Scripture was late (Davids, 1982, p.3). It was not included in the late second century Muratorium Canon and the church historian Eusebius, although accepting its scriptural authority himself, acknowledged that there were some who doubted its provenance (*Historia Ecclesiastica* II, 23, 25). Indeed it is not included in the pre-Peshitta Syriac NT works and was not fully accepted as canonical until the Synod of Hippo and Council of Carthage at the end of the fourth century C.E. (Davids, 1982, p.7). The first clear evidence of the citing of the letter of James is in Origen's commentary on the Book of Romans, written in the first half of the third century, (*Origen, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Fathers of the Church translated by Sheck, T. P., 2001, Vol 103, pp.221-222; Vol 104, p.281).<sup>6</sup> This raises the obvious question – if the Letter of James was written as early as tradition asserted, why did it take two hundred years for the work to be cited as Scripture? Secondly, doubt was cast over the ability of a Galilean Jew from a lower class background to write the quality of Greek contained in the composition. The semantic structure is such as to rule out the likelihood of the Letter being a translation from an Aramaic original. Thirdly, the diatribe of Jas 2:14-26 was seen by a number of scholars as being an attack against Paul and the doctrine of Justification by faith alone, hence it had to be dated later than the circulation of the Pauline corpus and therefore, after the death of James the Just. Fourthly, given the portrait of James in both the Book of Acts and early Christian works as a strict observer of the Jewish law, the lack of reference to ritual activity in the Letter is surprising. How could the man who urged Paul to join in purification rites (Acts 21:24), and who insisted on the new Gentile converts to Christianity keeping some basic Jewish ritual and legal requirements (Acts 15:19-21, 28-29)

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<sup>6</sup> The direct quotations (ascribed by Origen to James) include Jas 1:17 in 9.24.3, 4:4 in 4.8.2, and 4:7 in 4.8.4. Johnson, 1992, pp.130-31, argues that since Origen saw the importance of citing Scripture to support his arguments, his citing of the Letter of James suggests that the Book was regarded as Scripture in Alexandria by this time. However, if Origen did not know about the Letter of James until his move to Caesarea (cf. Laws, 1980, p.24) then this argument is thin.



fail to make any mention of the ritual law in his letter? (Dibelius, 1976, pp.17-18; cf. Davids, 1982, p.19, who cites Kümmel and Windisch as examples of earlier commentators who were persuaded by this argument).

One or more of these problems were seized upon by a number of twentieth century scholars to reject Jacobean authorship and to posit a later date for the Letter (cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.17; Laws, 1980, pp. 38-42). However, many still argued that James the Just wrote or at least influenced the composition. Davids (1982, p.4) provides a helpful list of scholarly opinion including the minority who argue that the Letter of James is a work of Jewish origin. Scholarship since Davids' work remains equally as divided, although the recognition of the probable extent of Hellenization in Palestine during the first century C.E., together with the range of Judaisms and Christianities of the period has weakened the original arguments against Jacobean authorship (cf. Davids, 1982, pp.10-13; Hengel, 1996, pp. 58-106;<sup>7</sup> Bauckham, 1999, pp. 15-16, 24, who rightly notes that Greek had been widely used in and beyond the eastern borders of Palestine for several centuries following Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire and would have been widely used as pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem for the various annual Jewish festivals).

Today, most commentators, including those who see the work as pseudonymous, are agreed that the 'James' of Jas 1:1 is almost certainly James the Just, since only the leader of the Jerusalem Church during those critical formative years of c40-62 C.E. could expect to be

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<sup>7</sup> Hengel, 1989, p.8, also asserts 'Judaea, Samaria and Galilee were bilingual (or better trilingual areas) . . . [with] Aramaic [being] the vernacular of ordinary people . . . Hebrew the sacred language of religious worship and . . . Greek . . . largely . . . established as the linguistic medium for trade, commerce and administration'.

identified by simply calling himself '[James], the slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ' (1:1; cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.12; Davids, 1982, pp.6, 9; Chester, 1994, p.11; Moo, 2000, p.10; McKnight, 2011, p.28).

The most serious objections to an early date and, therefore, possible Jacobean authorship are those relating to the lack of clear citing of the Letter of James prior to Origen and the apparent attack on Pauline teaching in Jas 2:14-26. If the composition was indeed the work of James the Just, why was it not cited or clearly alluded to in the first two centuries of Christianity? The possible reasons are, firstly, that the Letter was not deemed significantly important to circulate to other Christian groups and was consequently largely ignored (Laws, 1980, p.25; Davids, 1982, pp.8-9). Secondly, the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. saw the influence of the Jerusalem Church wane. Thirdly, the frictions between the Judaisms and Christianities of the first century C.E. saw a gravitation towards those writings such as parts of the Pauline corpus and the Synoptic Gospels that emphasized the distinctiveness of Christianity as against Judaism; the Letter of James was simply too Jewish to be of use for that purpose or as ammunition in the second century Christological controversies and the challenge of Gnosticism (McKnight, 2011, p.30). Finally, we simply do not know how widespread the original distribution was. The 'twelve tribes in the Diaspora' of Jas 1:1 may refer to the Jewish diaspora as understood by the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem (cf. Bauckham, 1999, p.15). However, this seems unlikely given the limited awareness of the the composition's existence in subsequent years. A reference to a limited dispersion such as that referred to in Acts 8:1 is more plausible, especially given that Origen, the first author to state that he was quoting from the Letter of James, may have only discovered the work after

his move to Caesarea (Laws, 1980, p.24), and given the composition's possible connections to the traditions behind the Matthean Sermon on the Mount. The nomenclature may, of course, simply refer to a new spiritual Israel, a common concept in both Judaism and early Christianity (Verseput, 1997, p.97; Moo, 2000, p.23).

The argument as to whether or not Jas 2:14-26 is an attack on Paul has filled reams of paper. As Ward noted, 'Since the time of Martin Luther, no one has been able to write on the Epistle of James without considering its relationship to Paul' (Ward, 1963, p.159; cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.174, n.132, in which he prefaces a list of some eighteen scholarly works with 'Out of the *abundance* of literature which deals specifically with Jas 2:14-26 I will mention here the following . . .' [emphasis added]). In an excursus entitled, 'Faith and Works in Paul and James' Dibelius accepts that the author of the Letter '[stood] within an early Christian development which does not directly derive from Paul . . . *but his remarks in 2:14ff are still inconceivable unless Paul had previously set forth the slogan "faith, not works"*' [emphasis in original] (Dibelius 1976, p.179). The counter-arguments to Jas 2;14-26 being an attack on Paul or Pauline doctrine are as follows: Paul and the Author of James were addressing different issues and so are not in direct conflict (Jeremias, 1955, pp.370-71; Rakestraw, 1986, p.49; Martin, 1988, pp.80-81; Fung, 1992, p.161); the Author is attacking a misguided form of Paulinism (Chester, 1994, p.12; Dowd, 2000, pp.196, 202; Moo, 2000, pp.25-26); he is attacking antinomianism within Jewish (as opposed to Pauline) Christianity (Jenkins, 2002, pp.71-71); he is responding to early reports of the Pauline mission in Asia Minor (McKnight, 2011, p.2). A number of those advocating these counter-arguments also assert that Paul and 'James' were in agreement (Lodge, 1981, pp.212-213; Fung, 1992, pp.161-162; Compton,

1997, p.44). However, one does wonder to what extent a personal theological bias drives many of the proposed arguments, especially those based on the doctrines of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture (cf. Compton, 1997, pp.21-22; Jenkins, 2002, p.63). As Townsend, 1994, p.50, states 'Passages from different NT writers ought not to be harmonized on the basis of some theory that they cannot be allowed to contradict one another'. Any assessment of the Author's relationship to Paul, therefore, must take due account of the Author's own theological perspective and not assume that it must be the same as that of Paul or any other NT writer.

Perhaps the most significant element for the purpose of dating the Letter is an increasing recognition that our Author's diatribe cannot be construed as a response to the teaching of Paul as set out in Galatians and Romans since he simply does not engage in any meaningful way with the Pauline arguments found in those compositions (Dibelius, 1976, p.178; cf. Davids, 1982, p.21; Moo, 2000, pp.18-20, 25-26, 121; McKnight, 2011, p.261). In other words, Jas 2:14-26 is not evidence of a late date. Indeed, our Author's possible lack of understanding of the mature and developed Pauline position may point to an early date for our composition.

If the objections to an early date are no longer as strong as they once were, what evidence is there in the composition itself to support an early dating? Firstly, the Author sets his exhortatory pleas in a context of imminent eschatology (Moo, 2000, pp.29-30). The enjoinder that the community be patient (5:7) is made against an assertion that the Lord's coming is near (5:8) and that the (divine) judge stands at the door (5:9). Secondly, the church

hierarchy seems to comprise simply of teachers (3:1) and elders (5:14). Thirdly, the Author uses both the terms συναγωγή and ἐκκλησία to describe a gathering of the community. He is unlikely to have used the former had he written the composition after the expulsion of Christians from the Jewish synagogues. Fourthly, as will be argued in the next chapter (3.13), the teaching of Jesus, and especially that reflected in the Matthean Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) and Lukan Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:17-49) underpins much of the composition. The form of the one probable citing of that teaching (5:12; cf. Mt 5:34-37) appears to be in a more primitive form than that found in the Matthean Gospel (Minear, 1971, p.7).

Whilst there is no compelling evidence to support a particular date range, on balance, an early dating, prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, seems reasonable, with the composition either written by James the Just or by an amanuensis during his lifetime, or possibly by a member of the Jacobean Christian community shortly after James' death. I do not propose to try and narrow the dating any further than this, since that is not germane to this thesis.

I shall deal with the identity of the audience in my final chapter. In the meantime I shall work on the basis that since the New Testament portrays James as being linked to the Jewish as opposed to Gentile mission (Gal 2:9), his hearers will be mainly Jewish converts to Christianity.

## CHAPTER 3

### JAMES 1 AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK'S THEMES

#### 3.1 Introduction

So where to begin with an ancient document? The textual critic would point us to the physical manuscripts; to what their appearance can tell us about how the text has been copied and transmitted, and to the relationship between manuscripts and manuscript families. The text of the Letter of James, however, is remarkably stable for so ancient a composition, with few disputed variants. In response to those who criticised the editors of the ECM for having changed the NA<sup>27</sup> text of the Book of James so little, Parker, after reminding the critics that the editors of NA<sup>27</sup> had access to the same materials as the editors of ECM, adds:

If a textual tradition has been studied afresh, and the text constituted agrees with what had already been considered good, then what can one do but be pleased to find that the critical decisions had been along the right lines all along?' (Parker, 2009, p.204).

As a biblical scholar, therefore, I can start with the text as we have it in its eclectic form with a fair degree of confidence that what I have in front of me is as close as we can reasonably expect to get to the autograph bar some miracle future findings.

In this chapter I will offer an exegetical study of Jas 1, based around a structural divide that I will set out below. As part of that exercise, I will also provide brief word studies on those catchwords which I suggest are key elements in the Author's composition. I will then provide

a summary of the themes identified before briefly considering several other aspects that appear or are implied in Jas 1 and which will surface again later in the main body of the composition.

The opening of a composition should provide the hearer/reader with some indication of what the author intends to speak or write about, and this is especially so in a composition designed for an audience in which only a minority of people are able to read. The Letter of James is no exception. Even before the opening greeting and initial exhortation is complete, we hear rhetorical devices at work: . . . χαίρειν. Πᾶσαν χαρὰν . . . πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις . . . πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν . . . ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον . . . τέλειοι . . . λειπόμενοι . . . λείπεται . . . (1:2-5). We see in these few verses the use of wordplay, alliteration and *gradatio*, and detect a composer competent in the rudimentary arts of Graeco-Roman rhetoric. As Johnson has noted (and others have cited):

In general, it can be stated that James' Greek is a form of clear and correct *koine* with some ambitions toward rhetorical flourish. Less idiosyncratic than the Greek of Paul and far more polished than that of John, James' language is comparable in quality, if less complex in texture, to that of Hebrews'. (Johnson, 1995, p.7; cf. Thuren, 1995, p.262, who posits that the Greek of the composition is 'high' and 'the style has sophisticated literary characteristics').

The introduction is surely intended to gain the ear of every listener as well as catch the eye of any reader, and those, like Witherington, who see the composition as a homily in its original form find some merit here for their argument (Witherington, 2007, p.386). But this distinctive opening does more than gain the audience's attention; it sets out the framework themes of the composition, themes which, as I shall show as my thesis develops, are built around the catchwords *πειρασμός*, *πίστις*, *ὑπομονή*, *ἔργον*, *τέλειος* and their respective

cognates.<sup>8</sup> This enables the Author's audience to prepare themselves for what is to be said and taught. I say 'taught', because there is no reason to doubt the Author's claim that he has a teaching role in relation to his audience (3:1). However, since the composition is generally lacking in new teaching, the Author's primary concern appears to be one of wanting the audience to apply what had been previously taught (and purportedly learned), by being 'doers of the word' (1:22). In other words, he exhorts his audience to be those who live out what they have been taught in a consistent way.

The Book of James is no basic instruction in personal or communal living. Nor do we have a teacher methodically repeating material so as to reinforce prior teaching. Instead, the sheer quantity of imperatives (there are fifty five, of which six are placed by the Author into the mouths of his audience – cf. 2:3, 16) reveals a passionate plea to the addressees, but a plea to do what? As I will show, it is a plea that the audience demonstrate its whole-hearted commitment to God, and this will require them to prove the reality and quality of their faith by enduring and/or overcoming their various trials (including temptations from within) and through steadfast perseverance become more mature/perfect in anticipation of the great reversal which will come at the Lord's Parousia (cf. 1: 2-4, 9-11; 22-25; 5:7-11). The four named exemplars will, inter alia, show exactly what such whole-hearted commitment in the midst of trial looks like, albeit in their very differing life contexts.

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<sup>8</sup> The use of catchwords as a means of connecting units within predominantly paraenetic compositions was not uncommon in the Graeco-Roman world; see Dibelius, 1976, p.6; Hartin, 1999, p.9.



As stated in the previous chapter, there is no general agreement on the structure of the composition, although an increasing number of scholars see its first chapter (or the major part of it) as an introduction to the Author's themes. I offer the following as a basic working outline of Jas 1, and whilst it does not match exactly any of the scholars I have consulted, many of them have most of the divisions I have set down (cf. Davids, 1982, p. 27 who has the same division except that he combines 1:12-16 and 1:17-18 in one unit; Witherington, 2007, p.405; McKnight, 2011, pp. 55, 59, 69, 83, 93, 134, 145, 162):

1:1	The Greeting
1:2-4	The Purpose of Trials
1:5-8	The Need for Wisdom and for Trust in God
1:9-11	The Poor and Wealthy – a Pointer to the Great Reversal
1:12-16	Trials and the True Source of Temptation
1:17-18	The Generous Life-giving God
1:19-21	The Proper Response to the Gift of the λόγος ἀληθείας
1:22-25	'Doers' and 'Hearers' of the Word Contrasted
1:26-27	Empty and True Religion Contrasted

Although Jas 1:2-4 introduces the framework themes of the Letter of James based on the catchwords in that sub-unit (πειρασμός, πίστις, ὑπομονή, ἔργον, τέλειος), other significant themes appear later in the opening chapter, namely, the tension between poor and rich (1:9-11, which will be developed in the first of the Author's three major treatises in Jas 2:1-13), the importance of both speech ethics and the Word (and Law) of God (1:19-21 – speech ethics will be the subject of the third major treatise in Jas 3:1-12) and the need to prove the reality of faith through works – not just any works, but the right kind of works (1:22-27, which will be developed in the second major treatise in Jas 2:14-26). Jas 1:26-27 provides a summary of the two types of works the Author has in mind, works of love and compassion towards the needy neighbour and the practical demonstration of love for God rather than

love for the world by espousing the values that God requires rather than those of the world. Indeed 'κόσμος' in the Book of James is always the enemy of the Author and his audience (Johnson, 1995, p.84; Hartin, 1999, p.110; cf. 1:27; 3:6, 13-15; 4:4).

I turn now to an exegetical overview of the opening chapter of the composition so as to put more flesh on these themes. Although the introduction to the themes starts in Jas 1:2, I want to deal briefly with the greeting in Jas 1:1 as the Author uses the final word as a link to the next verse.

## **3.2 The Greeting (Jas 1:1)**

1:1: Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ χαίρειν.

1:1 Jacob a slave (or servant) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes in the Diaspora, greetings.

The greeting is short, naming sender and recipients, and is the minimum required for the composition to be considered as epistolary (Bauckham, 1999, p.12). As we saw in Chapter One, the actual identity of both sender and recipient(s) remains disputed in Jacobean scholarship.

### **3.2.1 The Author's Self-Identification**

The Author gives his name simply as 'Jacob', a common Jewish name in the first and second centuries C. E. (Bauckham, 2006, p.85). The absence of any other distinctive indication of his identity suggests that he was both known by his audience and did not expect to be confused with any other 'Jacob' they might know or about whom they may have heard.

The Author adds a statement concerning his religious allegiances. The concept of δοῦλος θεοῦ was well established in Jewish thought through its application in the Septuagint to famous national figures (cf. Deut 34:5 regarding Moses and 2 Sam 7:5 regarding King David; cf. also Martin, 1988, p.4). The Author is making it clear that he is a fully committed follower of the God of Israel. But in the same breath he adds that he is also δοῦλος . . . κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The suggestion that Jas 1:1 is a later Christian interpolation of an older Jewish work has generally been rejected, and I do not intend to rehearse the related arguments here.<sup>9</sup>

The Author's linking of his commitment to Jesus as well as to God says something about his Christology, and perhaps about that of (most of) his audience as well. The Author's self-designation must constitute at the least, a complete and whole-hearted commitment to Jesus Christ to the extent that the way of Jesus Christ (whatever that may have meant for the Author) directed the Author's life and thinking. We can, therefore, expect to find evidence of the Jesus tradition in some form within the composition (see section 3.13).

### **3.2.2 The Recipients**

The recipients are ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ. As with many of the background elements of the Book of James, scholars are divided as to what the Author means by this phrase. Whatever the meaning, the inference is that the audience comprises those who in some way or other are not 'at home'. They may be descendents of the original Jewish Diaspora found in a variety of cities in the Roman Empire and beyond its eastern borders, or a more recent 'Christian' Diaspora forced out of Jerusalem by the kind of persecution referred to in Acts 8:1. Or, they may simply be those who see themselves as

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<sup>9</sup> For detailed discussion of the arguments originally proposed by Spitta and Massebieau, (independently of each other) see Dibelius, 1976, pp.21-24; Johnson, 1995, pp.48-53.

members of a 'New Israel' striving to wait for/hasten the coming of the Lord. Their alien environment may be physical or spiritual or even both. For the purpose of this thesis it is sufficient to recognize and take seriously the Author's belief that his audience is in some way a 'Diaspora', without at this stage needing to identify them. However, I will revisit this issue in my final chapter when I assess what my investigations reveal about the Author and his audience (see section 8.3).

### 3.3 The Purpose of Trials (Jas 1:2-4)

1:2: Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, 1:3 γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν. 1:4 ἢ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἔχέτω, ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, whenever you encounter various kinds of trials, 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces steadfast endurance, 1:4 and let steadfast endurance have its perfect work, in order that you (pl) might become perfect and complete in every way, lacking nothing.

The Author addresses his audience as ἀδελφοί μου (1:2), a term which reappears regularly throughout the composition in this form, or occasionally as the more endearing ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. The term was used in both Jewish and Christian circles and is not, therefore, in itself a pointer to the audience's identity. The greeting χαίρειν<sup>10</sup> (1:1) is followed quickly by the first of many exhortations; the community is to count their experience as all χαρά (1:2). Joyful greetings? On the contrary, χαρά quickly becomes πειρασμός (1:3), two words that would not normally be associated with each other in human reasoning, but as we shall see, it is divine wisdom that the audience will need not human reasoning based in earthly wisdom (cf. 1:5; 3:13-18). Indeed, earthly wisdom must be shunned, and a positive response by the audience to the Author's enjoiner would demonstrate this.

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<sup>10</sup> Although Christian letters of the first century C.E. adopted variations on it, the basic greeting (λέγει) χαίρειν was a standard Greek epistolary greeting (cf. Dibelius, 1976, pp.67-68; Johnson, 1995, pp.168-169; Witherington, 2007, p.416).

Πειρασμός is the first of the Author's catchwords. It is rare in secular Greek, raising the question as to whether or not the word developed a theological meaning during the course of the development of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. Its first biblical use occurs in LXX Exodus 17:7 where Meribah and Massah are given their place names by reason of the people putting God to the test. This event is revisited twice in Deuteronomy (LXX Deut 6:16; 9:22) with a warning that the people must not put God to the test again, a plea that also arises in LXX Psalm 94:8 (Ps 95:8). Deuteronomy also uses the word to denote the troubles that God brought on the Egyptians (LXX Deut 4:34; 7:19; 29:3). Thus the Septuagint provides two very different, albeit related, meanings of πειρασμός, both of which depict trouble coming upon people from the hand of God as a result of their sin or their opposition to God. Indeed, when we place these two meanings side by side in their contexts in the LXX Pentateuch, we see the Israelites desiring to return to the land of the very people on whom God had brought πειρασμός, and that God views their moaning and complaining as πειρασμός against Godself.

Πειρασμός does not reappear in the Septuagint until the Book of Sirach, where the author uses it several times in the context of people proving their true character as potential friends through their speech. Sirach is also the first biblical writer to use πειρασμός in the sense of the righteous being tested, if not directly by God, then at least with the permission or knowledge of God (cf. Sir. 2:1; 33:1; 44:20). The word is used in the same sense in 1 Macc 2:52, the only other place in the deuterocanonical literature where it is found, in the context of the testing of Abraham in the *Aqedah*. It is this latter meaning that we find throughout the

New Testament from Jesus' testing by Satan (Lk 4:13), through the parable of the sower (Lk 8:13), to Jesus' exhortation to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane to stay awake and pray lest they fall into temptation (Mt 26:41). Πειρασμός is the word used in both the Matthean and Lukan versions of the Lord's Prayer in the request that one not be brought to the time of trial (Mt 6:13; Lk 11:4). By the time of the New Testament, therefore, the word was being used in the context of the righteous suffering for their faith in God at the hands of Satan or of evil people (cf. Popkes, 1993, p.65, who suggests that the word: 'largely refers to some burden or threat by humans or other powers (affliction, persecution, snares etc) . . . Objectively the πειρασμός . . . is some danger threatening to cause a person to depart from the correct path'). We may posit, therefore, from the Author's use of πειρασμός in this sub-unit that the community probably faces pressure from those outside who are viewed by the Author as evildoers. It is possible that such pressure included the temptation to conform to the values of the κόσμος (see section 3.5). Whatever the nature of the trials the audience faces, they are of various kinds (1:2), and thus the Author probably has something other than persecution in mind. The shadow of testing is never far away throughout the Book of James, with the result that testing remains one of the principal lenses through which the composition can legitimately be viewed (cf. Davids, 1982, p.35, who likens the theme of testing to the thread of a necklace hidden by the individual pendants).

We then see four more catchwords (or their cognates) together, πίστις, (κατ)εργάζομαι, ὑπομονή, and τέλειος. The first two will be seen in dialogue in Jas 2; the third reappears in the climax of the composition when the community is urged to take the patriarch Job as

their example whilst they await the Lord's Parousia (5:11); τέλειος reappears several times (see below).

The use of the verb κατεργάζομαι to describe what the testing is doing in relation to faith, pre-shadows the relationship between πίστις and ἔργα in the diatribal section of Jas 2:14-26, especially in the Author's rhetorical flourish in Jas 2:22, where, significantly, the verb τελειόω is also used. I shall say more about this when I examine the Author's use of Abraham as an exemplar (see section 4.7.5.2).

The word πίστις has received significant attention in recent years especially in relation to the 'πίστις Χριστοῦ' debate.<sup>11</sup> The polarisation of views on that issue needs to be put to one side if one is to grasp the meaning in the Book of James. After all whatever Paul may have meant when he used the word should not be allowed to influence how another New Testament writer has chosen to use it unless it can be clearly shown that the latter has been influenced by Paul with regard to that term.

The paucity of direct references to Jesus Christ in the composition makes it difficult to assess to what extent, if any, the Author may see faith *in Christ* in the word πίστις. For the Author, πίστις is undoubtedly more than belief in God (2:19). Whilst what is 'believed' may be important to him, the demonstrating of that belief in such a way as to attract πειρασμός from those outside of the community, points to the expectation, and even the requirement, that such belief or faith be clearly seen in action – a theme introduced, as we shall see, in Jas

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<sup>11</sup> For a recent review of the debate and its history see Bird and Sprinkle 2009.

1:22-25 and reinforced in no uncertain terms in Jas 2:14-26 – and in the type of action which demonstrates that the community has an ethos that is distinctive and at variance with that of the κόσμος. The word πίστις, therefore, is more readily seen in the Author’s thought as a total commitment to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ, something that the Author has already asserted about himself in his claim to be a δοῦλος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:1). Such commitment, if it is to be carried through to the end, which for the Author almost certainly means ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου (5:7), will undoubtedly require that the audience show ὑπομονή.

Υπομονή is the fourth catchword in Jas 1:2-4 (cf. DeSilva, 2012, p.12, who describes the word as a ‘keynote at the very outset of the letter’). It has a range of meanings, from obstinacy (negative) to steadfast endurance (positive) (Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.204). Unfortunately, the KJV’s ‘ye have heard of the patience of Job’ in Jas 5:11 is perhaps the most renowned rendering of the term. As I will show in Chapter Six, ὑπομονή is better translated as ‘steadfast endurance’ in that verse rather than as ‘patience’, and consequently, it should be translated likewise in Jas 1:3-4.

But ὑπομονή is not the final word. This quality, if allowed space and opportunity to develop, will enable the community to become τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. Τέλειος, the fifth and final catchword of this opening *gradatio*, will reappear in its various cognate forms at key points in the composition (cf. the contrast in use in Jas 1:15, where it depicts the destructive ‘perfection’ of sin, and in Jas 1:17 where it describes the perfect gift from



God; cf. also Jas 2:8, 22 and Jas 3:2). The desire for communal maturity or perfection reinforces the idea that the Author and his audience were part of a messianic movement (McKnight, 2011, pp.39-40) striving to reach the level of maturity/perfection (which I will term 'maturity-perfection') that will hasten the final deliverance of those found faithful at the Lord's coming. Following Baumgarten, 1998, p.51 note 59, I use the term 'messianic' to mean those who look for 'the collective redemption at the end of days, whether or not that transformation is to be brought about by a specific human leader, or messiah-figure'. However, given the Author's allegiance to the 'Lord Jesus Christ' (1:1; 2:1), it seems reasonable to see this messianic community as one that did envisage a specific messiah-figure appearing at the eschaton.

A number of scholars have suggested that some form of maturity-perfection is a, if not the, unifying theme of the Book of James, (Elliott, 1993, Hartin, 1999, Moo, 2000, Cheung 2003) and the latest commentator, McKnight, acknowledges that perfection has been one of the more fruitful themes in recent discussion, (McKnight, 2011, p.40), before shrewdly asserting:

Whatever one chooses as the central category, and one should question if there is such a thing and ask why some think there needs to be a "central" category, it is more a logical and explanatory device *in the mind of the interpreter* [emphasis added] than something explicitly stated by James. (McKnight, 2011, p.41)

He is right to express such caution since any cursory review of Jacobean scholarship over the last forty years will reveal a wide variety of unifying themes in the minds of scholars (see the examples in Penner, 1999, pp.272-275). Hence I am reluctant to point to any specific unifying theme at this stage of my investigation. However, I will suggest that the themes of testing, faith, works, steadfast endurance and maturity-perfection are markers against which

to place the other themes of the composition, and that to a greater or lesser extent one or more of these marker influences provide a context for the other themes.

### 3.4 The Need for Wisdom and for Trust in God (Jas 1:5-8)

1:5: Εἰ δέ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας, αἰτείτω παρὰ τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ πᾶσιν ἀπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ δοθήσεται αὐτῷ. 1:6 αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος· ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἕοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ. 1:7 μὴ γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήμψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, 1:8 ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ.

1:5 If any one of you is lacking wisdom, he must ask from God who gives bountifully and without reproach to all, and God will give it to him. 1:6 But that person must ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the doubting person is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind, 1:7 and must not think that he will receive anything from the Lord. 1:8 The double-minded person is unstable in all his ways.

At first sight Jas 1:5 appears to have no connection with the previous unit. However, the use of the verb λείπεται picks up on λειπόμενοι at the end of Jas 1:4, both rhetorically and structurally.

We see in this sub-unit the first of the Author's polar opposites, on the one hand the faith that trusts implicitly in the goodness and benefaction of God (1:5) and on the other the double-mindedness that leads to instability in all aspects of life (1:8). The use of such contrasts will resurface again and again in the composition (cf. 1:2-4 & 1:13-15; 1:22-25; 3:13-18; 4:4, 6) leading at least one commentator to suggest that the Author is using the Jewish 'two ways' motif as a template for his composition (Lockett, 2008a, pp.269-287; cf. Ps 1).

The Author has just stated that those who reach the state of maturity-perfection are those who lack nothing. The strong inference from the use of the verb λείπεται again in Jas 1:5 is that the mature-perfect lack nothing because they already have σοφία. Σοφία is the first of

the Author's themes after the *gradatio*, and it will reappear both directly and indirectly at subsequent points in the composition. True σοφία derives from God and is essential for the community's life and eschatological future. It is opposed both to, and by, human wisdom, and consequently can have no friendship with the κόσμος whose wisdom is destructive (cf. 3:13-15 and 4:1-4). The σοφία from above shows itself in the ability to live the right kind of life in community (3:13-18). At this point it is as well to say that unlike the Jewish wisdom writers before him, the Author directs his teaching more at the community than at the individual (Hartin, 1999, p.5). His exhortations are addressed to ἀδελφοί μου,<sup>12</sup> and his topics are community-centred: mutual care (1:27; 2:15-16; 5:13-20), community speech (3:6-12; 4:11-12; 5:9, 12), community tensions and disputes (3:13-4:2). What references there are to the individual tend to be in the context of the well-being/needs of the wider community (e.g. 5:13-20), and hence every individual is required to respond to the Author's exhortation so that the community can prosper in the service and sight of God. It is important, therefore, to keep the community context of the Author's teaching firmly in view when interpreting what he has to say (cf. Botha J E, 2005, p.396, who argues 'In interpreting James, we must realize that James is addressing a group, a community, and in line with the ancient Mediterranean worldview, it is the group that is important, not the individual').

The imperative αἰτέῖτω in Jas 1:5 is not the gentle English encouraging invitation of 'Let him ask', but the much more urgent demand, 'he must ask' (Wallace, 1996, p.486).<sup>13</sup> The one in

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<sup>12</sup> Hartin posits that the Author uses this term to mark off sections in the composition, (Hartin, 1999, p.5). See also Johnson, 1985, pp.166-183).

<sup>13</sup> Most modern translations, however, prefer the weaker 'you (or he) should ask' (cf. NIV; NKJV; CEV; NET etc). The NRSV retains the imperative mood with its 'ask God'.

need must ask ἐν πίστει. God is not a reluctant giver and his generosity overflows into a bounteous care for all (cf. 1:17 and section 3.6).

The Author then berates those who are διακρινόμενοι, because their double-mindedness leads to instability and inconsistency in praxis, failings which if left unchallenged risk leading the individual down the road to death (cf. 1:13-15; 4:1-4; 5:19-20). Such double-mindedness also casts doubt on God's generous care, and such people can hardly expect to receive anything good from the hand of the bounteous God.

### 3.5 The Poor and the Wealthy – a Pointer to the Great Reversal (Jas 1:9-11)

1:9 Καυχάσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ, 1:10 ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου παρελεύσεται. 1:11 ἀνέτειλεν γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος σὺν τῷ καύσωνι καὶ ἐξήρανεν τὸν χόρτον καὶ τὸ ἄνθος αὐτοῦ ἐξέπεσεν καὶ ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἀπώλετο· οὕτως καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν ταῖς πορείαις αὐτοῦ μαρανθήσεται.

1:9 Let the lowly poor brother boast in his exaltation. 1:10 But let the wealthy person boast in his humiliation, because he will pass, away like a flower of grass. 1:11 For the sun rises along with the scorching heat and dries up the grass, and its flower fades away and the beauty of its appearance perishes. In the same way, the rich person, in pursuit of his wealth, withers away.

Jas 1:9 introduces a theme that will bring tension throughout the composition, namely, the issue of the rich and the poor and their status. There has been significant debate over whether or not the wealthy referred to in this sub-unit and elsewhere in the Letter of James are members of the Author's community-audience. Those who think they are include Ropes, 1916, pp.282-283; and Townsend, 1994, pp.14-15. Those who argue they are not include Adamson, 1976, p.183; Dibelius, 1976, pp.84-88; Byron, 2006, pp.261-262). As I will show (see section 6.4.2), the wealthy landowners of Jas 5:1-6 are the subject of one of the fiercest judgement oracles in the New Testament, and their eternal destiny is one of misery with no

hope of reprieve. Similarly, the sins of the wealthy in Jas 2:6-7 are such as call into question their eschatological future. Those who blaspheme the name by which the community is called can hardly expect divine approval, especially as such sins are placed alongside those of oppression and of dragging the poor into the courts. The idea that the Author might be *totally* negative about the wealthy of his world (and ours) brings much discomfort to many in the wealthy West of our own day, and has perhaps influenced some commentators to find a glimmer of hope for the wealthy in this particular sub-unit of the composition. But is such hope justified?

The Author addresses the humble poor within the community first, and urges them not only to see themselves as those who will be raised up, but to boast in that fact (1:9). A person can only boast in a positive way when (s)he is fully confident that the boast is well-founded. Consequently, the Author cannot be talking in terms of any temporary reversal of fortune in this world or dispensation. As teacher (3:1), he would seem to be referring to the eschatological reversal that will occur at the Lord's final appearing, when the poor will inherit the kingdom promised to them (cf. 2:5; 5:8-9). What we have is a classic apocalyptic worldview among those who are, or feel, oppressed, and await the eschatological reversal (cf. Hengel, 1996, Vol1, p.254; Baumgarten, 1998, pp.38-40).

If the raising up of the poor is eschatological, how are we to interpret the humbling of the rich? If the reversal for the rich is also eschatological, how can the wealthy person be expected to boast in an event that will see them judged and found wanting at the Lord's coming? I shall return to this question presently, but first let us look at the reason the Author

gives as to why the wealthy person (unlike the poor person he is not expressly referred to as a 'brother') should boast in his humiliation. The Author states that the rich will 'pass away like a flower of the field' (1:10). In the Hebrew Bible, and elsewhere in the New Testament, this metaphor of the transient nature of life is applied to humankind generally rather than just to the rich (e.g. Job 14:2; Isa 40:6-7; 1 Pet 1:24). In Jas 1:11 the Author compares the perishing of the rich with the scorching of the field by the sun. Furthermore, since the rich person is described as perishing in the course of doing his business, (gaining more wealth? cf. Ropes, 1916, pp.148-149; Witherington, 2007, p.431), he does not even find time to enjoy the riches he has accumulated. There is perhaps an echo of the Jesus tradition here (cf. Lk 12:16-21).

It has also been noted that the Author does not provide any glimmer of hope for the rich person in this sub-unit. Indeed, if as is suggested by many, and as seems likely, the Author had Is 40:6-8 in view when composing this sub-unit, (Ropes, 1916, p.148; Dibelius, 1976, pp.85-86; Martin, 1988, pp.23-24; Johnson, 1995, p.191) he has, alongside other changes, deliberately omitted Isaiah's concluding statement of hope, 'the grass withers, the flower fades; *but the word of our God will stand forever*' (Isa. 40:8). This opening reference to the rich, therefore, does not seem to bode well for their eschatological future in the Author's eyes.

Whereas Jas 1:9 speaks of ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός, Jas 1:10 refers simply to ὁ . . . πλούσιος, possibly inferring that the Author does not see the rich in their current state as true brothers. Some scholars suggest that the verb Καυχάσθω applies to ὁ πλούσιος in an ironic

way such that ‘the rich man has had his day; all he can expect from the future is humiliation; that is the only thing left for him to “boast about”’ (Dibelius, 1976, pp.85, 87; cf. Davids, 1982, p.77). There is some merit in this argument.

I alluded earlier to the fact that the Author does not expressly use the term ὁ ἀδελφός to describe the rich in Jas 1:10. It is noteworthy that when addressing both the merchants in Jas 4:13 and the wealthy landowners in Jas 5:1, the Author simply uses the verbal nouns οἱ λέγοντες and οἱ πλούσιοι to address them, whereas in the sections before and after these connected units he has addressed his audience as ἀδελφοί (4:11; 5:7), as he does at regular intervals throughout the composition (cf. 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 5:9, 10, 12, 19). These rhetorical signals add weight to the argument that the Author may not regard the rich as being true members of his messianic audience even though they may be part of it physically. In other words, for the Author, the rich may already be under the imminent judgement of God. I will draw my final conclusions as regards the Author’s view of the rich after my investigation of the Author’s use of the patriarch Job (see Chapter 6).

### 3.6 Trials and the True Source of Temptation (Jas 1:12-16)

1:12 Μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν, ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν. 1:13 Μηδεὶς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα. 1:14 ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος· 1:15 εἶτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκει ἀμαρτίαν, ἡ δὲ ἀμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκίει θάνατον. 1:16 Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί.

1:12 Happy is the man who remains steadfast in his trials, for the person who has stood the test will receive the crown of life, which God promises to those who love him. 1:13 Let no-one being tempted say ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God is unable to be tempted by evil and does not tempt anyone. 1:14 But each man is tempted when he is lured away and entrapped by his own evil desires; 1:15 and then the evil desire having taken hold gives birth to sin, and sin when completed brings forth death. 1:16 Don’t be deceived my beloved brethren.

The macarism is addressed to those who overcome (i.e. are steadfast to the end), either in terms of enduring temptation (as the NRSV translates ὑπομένει πειρασμόν ) or by persevering under trial (the NIV preference). The context would seem to suggest that temptation is the better translation choice since the Author goes on to argue that the source of πειρασμός is a man's own ἐπιθυμίαι (1:14), which more naturally points to a temptation to sin rather than to a trial of one's faith from some outside source. However, it may simply be a case of the Author using πειρασμός in its widest sense in the macarism, before turning his attention to the more specific issue of temptation and its true source. As I argued in section 3.3, πειρασμός is generally used in the New Testament to mean external trials, usually from the Devil or evil people, and this would also concur with the notion that it is those who overcome all kinds of trials who will receive the crown of life.

The reward of the crown of life is for those who love God. The Author has just said that it is those who remain steadfast and overcome their trials who will receive this reward. It would seem that the Author sees such steadfastness as the way by which his audience can demonstrate their love for God. Friends of God (cf. 2:23; 4:4) are those who remain fully committed to God whatever their situation and whatever the trials they face. Friends of God do not blame God for the troubles they face in life, but strive to overcome them through their faith in God, his goodness, and his justice.

The Author moves from the idea of testing in the general sense to the specific question of the source of temptation and sin. He is adamant that God is in no way connected to temptation (1:13) and he will reinforce this belief in Jas 1:17. His insistence that temptation



starts with evil desires within, is not unlike Jesus' assertion in Mark 7:21-23 that defilement comes from the heart. In both units we see a contrast between a claim that an external source is to blame for the problem, and the teaching of Jesus and the Author that the real problem lies in the heart of humankind and specifically with the (evil) desires that people allow to take root and to grow in their hearts. It may be going too far to claim an allusion or echo of the Markan passage here in Jas 1:13-15, but the theological and ethical perspective of the Author is clearly similar to that of the Markan Jesus.

Where Jas 1:2-4 spoke of a virtuous cycle leading to maturity-perfection, Jas 1:14-15 depicts the polar opposite of a downward spiral that ends in death. The birthing imagery in this unit with possible sexual undertones (Wilson, 2002, pp.147-168) depicts the cankerous and destructive spread of sin if temptation is allowed to take root, and provides a striking contrast to the earlier *gradatio* of Jas 1:2-4. Indeed, it is this contrast and the fact that both units start with the notion of overcoming *πειρασμός* that has led a number of scholars to adopt Francis's theory of the composition having a double epistolary opening (cf. Francis, 1970, pp.110-117).

Both commentators and translators differ as to whether or not Jas 1:16 should go with what precedes it or with what follows.<sup>14</sup> I lean to the former since, the context regarding the source of temptation seems the more likely setting for an exhortation that the beloved brethren be not deceived, especially since, the phrasing of Jas 1:13-15 suggests that the idea

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<sup>14</sup> Kamell, 2011, p.276, sees it as both looking forward and looking back.

that God might be behind human temptation was one that may have been held by some within the messianic community.

### 3.7 The Generous Life-giving God (Jas 1:17-18)

1:17 πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα. 1:18 βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων.

1:17 Every good and perfect gift comes down from the father of lights with(in) whom there is no variation nor even a shadow of variation. 1:18 By his own will he gave us birth by the word of truth so that we might be the first-fruit of his creatures.

God is not only the one who created the lights of the heavens – sun, moon and stars, as πατερ τῶν φώτων he is also the very source of light. Consequently there can be no darkness in him at all. Indeed, the construction of Jas 1:17 is such as to state categorically that there can be no possibility whatsoever of there being even the slightest hint of any shadow of darkness or change in God. This reinforces the earlier assertion that God is not the one who tempts or tests, because tempting and testing are acts which are alien to the nature of a generous and benevolent God (cf. 1:5) who not only dwells in the light but is the source of all light. Indeed, far from being the one who tests and tempts people onto the road to death (1:13-15), God is the bringer of life, not just as Creator-God, but also as Redeemer-God whose word brings new life and hope to the Author and his audience through the λόγος ἀληθείας (1:18). But what is this λόγος ἀληθείας that God ἀπεκύησεν in the Author and his audience? Although I have suggested there are echoes of the Jesus tradition in previous verses, it is a big leap to interpret Jas 1:18 as referring to the Christian gospel message of being born again in Jesus as a number of commentators have done (cf. Dibelius, 1976, pp.104-105; Davids, 1982, p.24; Johnson, 1995, p.205, who recognises that other

interpretations, including birth through the giving of Torah, are possible; Moo, 2000, pp.79-80; Wilson, 2002, p.167; Witherington, 2007, p.435). Thus far in the composition the Author has demonstrated a strong connection with more traditional Jewish thought. In Jas 1:5 he urged his audience to seek wisdom (not the Holy Spirit) from God so as to be equipped to recognise and overcome their trials. He speaks of God rather than Jesus as the generous giver (1:5, 17). The Jewish concept of the evil inclination possibly lies behind his assertions as to the origin of human temptation (Marcus, 1982, pp.606-621; cf. 1:14-15). McKnight, therefore, is right when he suggests that the λόγος ἀληθείας of Jas 1:18 may be the Gospel of the Kingdom as taught by Jesus, and whilst the Author may see some form of redemptive work in Jesus, we do not have the evidence to assert that this must be a reference to the ‘story of Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection – and its significance’ (McKnight, 2011, pp.131-132, with the quotation coming from note 332 on p.132). Since the Author uses three other phrases in his composition: τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον (1:21), νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας (1:25), and νόμον βασιλικὸν (2:8), which may be interrelated, I have dealt with the issue more fully in a separate section (see section 3.14 ‘Λόγος and Νόμος in the Book of James’). What I would say at this juncture, is that the λόγος ἀληθείας seems unlikely to be simply the Mosaic Torah, since the Author asserts that he and his audience have become ‘a kind of first-fruits of God’s creatures’ (1:18), and have become so by God’s deliberate purpose (Kamell, 2011, p.278), inferring that something new has happened (cf. Nickelsburg and Stone, 2009, p.111, who go so far as to suggest that the Author is: ‘set[ting] “the perfect law” in opposition to the Jewish law’).

What we can see from Jas 1:17-18 is that our Author depicts God the giver of the λόγος ἀληθείας as generous beyond human imagination, a God who will provide everything the community needs if they ask for it in simple trusting faith (1:5), and he will do so because he is the one who has brought the community into existence and sees them as the first-fruits, i.e. the choicest fruit of his creative and redemptive activity (McKnight, 2011, pp.128-129).

### 3.8 The Proper Response to the Gift of the λόγος ἀληθείας (Jas 1:19-21)

1:19 Ἵστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν· 1:20 ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται. 1:21 διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεῖαν κακίας ἐν πραύτητι, δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν.

1:19 Know my beloved brethren that everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to become angry; 1:20 for the anger of man does not bring about the righteousness of God. 1:21 Therefore, in humility, throw off all filthiness and all rank growth of evil, and receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

The λόγος ἀληθείας requires that the community be swift to hear. Its members are to hear, understand and put into practice what they have been taught and must also be careful in their speech and not allow their frustrations to boil over into anger (1:19). Quite what might lead to such an expression of anger is not stated here. However, we are given a clue in the statement that man's anger does not bring about God's righteousness (1:20). In Jas 1:5, the Author had urged his community to ask God for wisdom if they were in any way lacking it, and later he will remind them that heaven-derived wisdom is inter alia, peaceable and gentle (3:17), and therefore, can have no truck with anger. Disruption and tensions in the community occur when the world's wisdom rather than the wisdom from above is embraced (cf. 4:1-4; cf. also Wall, 1997a, who bases his whole thesis around the three statements that the community be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger).

In the command that the community rid itself of *πάσαν ῥυπαρίαν* (1:21), the Author employs the rare term *ῥυπαρός*. He will use it again at the beginning of Jas 2 when the community is taken to task for showing favouritism to the wealthy who enter the assembly-synagogue in fine clothes as against the poor person who enters *ἐν ῥυπαρῶ ἔσθῃτι* (2:2). The contrast between moral filthiness here in Jas 1:21 and physical filthiness in Jas 2:2 may not be coincidental; *ῥυπαρός* is used in LXX Zechariah in a context where the image of filthy clothing clearly denotes being filthy before God (LXX Zech 3:3-4). The only other time the word appears in the Christian Bible (Rev 22:11), the *ῥυπαρός* is one who does vile and filthy things. The Author's two uses of the word in our composition may, therefore, reinforce the idea that it is inner moral filthiness, rather than outer shabby clothing, which offends God.

A further inference from the Author's command in Jas 1:21 is that the community may have been contaminated by a worldly spirit which can bring all manner of moral improbity. In order to combat this invasion of moral degradation the community must allow the implanted word (of truth – 1:18) to take full root and grow so as to save the soul. In what way, though, can this *ἔμφυτος λόγος* save the soul? Indeed what does 'salvation' mean for the Author and his audience? The context of moral improbity points strongly to some kind of moral law as the framework within which salvation operates. The command requires action in the form of 'getting rid of evil' whilst at the same time 'receiving' the means (the implanted word) whereby the audience can do good works. The Christian gospel of repentance and faith in Jesus therefore, may not be primarily in view here (contra Townsend, 1981, pp.122-123; cf. Cheung, 2003, p.92, who although he argues that Jas 1:18 portrays Christian conversion, sees the emphasis in Jas 1:21 ' . . . not on receiving the gospel

of truth in conversion, but . . . learning and understanding the word of truth, the messianically renewed community's formative message . . . given to them that they might gain wisdom from it'). However, the gospel of repentance preached by John the Baptizer and by Jesus may be what the Author has in mind, because their gospel of the kingdom called for true repentance to be demonstrated by the penitent bringing forth fruits worthy of that repentance (Mt 3:8; 4:17; 7:15-20; Lk 3:8). A concept of salvation based in such a gospel would require the adherent to continue to bear the fruit of repentance until the coming of the Lord. In other words, it is only those who endure to the end who can expect to receive vindication and reward in the eschatological judgement (cf. Dibelius, 1976, p. 152; Cheung, 2003, p.92; McKnight, 2011, p.144).

### 3.9 'Doers' and 'Hearers' of the Word Contrasted

1:22 Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταὶ παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοῦς. 1:23 ὅτι εἴ τις ἀκροατὴς λόγου ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ ποιητὴς, οὗτος ἔοικεν ἀνδρὶ κατανοοῦντι τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ· 1:24 κατενόησεν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀπελήλυθεν καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ἦν. 1:25 ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ παραμείνας, οὐκ ἀκροατὴς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος ἀλλὰ ποιητὴς ἔργου, οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται.

1:22 Be doers of the word and not just hearers who deceive themselves. 1:23 Because if someone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, this one is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 1:24 For he sees himself and goes away and immediately forgets what sort of person he is. 1:25 But the one who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and does not become a hearer of forgetfulness but a doer of works, this man is happy in the doing of it.

The ensuing exhortation in Jas 1:22 highlights the stark difference between hearing and doing the λόγος. This is elaborated at some length in Jas 2, especially in verses 14-26. The 'mirror' of the λόγος is more than a reflection of the soul in that it demands that the viewer reflect on how (s)he lives out life and not just what kind of person (s)he might be. In other words there is a strong moral dimension to this image, hence it is not simply a case of looking into the λόγος, but seeing one's true self in the light of the λόγος and responding

positively in the working out of faith in one's life (cf. Johnson, 1988, pp.632-645; see Denyer N, 1999, pp.237-240 for a possible parallel in Plato). We can note that the 'doer' of the word is one who continues in, or stays beside, it. In other words, doers of the word are those who allow the word to direct their lives in such a way that as they do the word, they are blessed, and thereby encouraged to continue in the virtuous cycle of looking into the mirror of the word, responding to it by the praxis of good works and being blessed by God the generous giver.

The Author's use of the terms νόμος τέλειος and νόμος τῆς ἐλευθερίας requires careful reflection. Later in Jas 2:8, he will add a third term νόμος βασιλικὸς κατὰ τὴν γραφήν, which he interprets as ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, καλῶς ποιεῖτε. Does he have the same νόμος in mind in all three places? I will consider that aspect further in section 3.14.

### 3.10 Empty and True Religion Contrasted

1:26 Εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκὸς εἶναι μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ, τούτου μάταιος ἢ θρησκεία. 1:27 θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου.

1:26 If anyone seems to be religious, but does not control his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is empty. 1:27 This is pure and undefiled religion before God the Father, to visit orphans and widows in their hard circumstances, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

These last two verses may form an *inclusio* with Jas 1:2-4. Where the opening verses had spoken in terms of the testing of faith and the journey towards maturity-perfection, these final two verses identify the day-to-day praxis that underscores that journey. In other words, the Author deals with the two sides of the faith coin; on the one side of the coin we have the way in which the obedient servant of God responds in adversity (1:2-4); on the other side we see what the daily living out of one's faithful obedience to God involves (1:26-27). These two

sides of the coin are interwoven throughout the composition as the Author deals with what the audience should or should not be doing (cf. 2:1-13; 3:1-12; 4:1-12; 5:13-16) and how and why they should stand firm when their faith and commitment to God is tested (2:14-26; 5:1-11).

The Author had introduced the subject of speech in Jas 1:21 with an enjoiner to be slow in starting to speak. He will have much more to say on speech ethics later but here he is content to assert unequivocally that those who are unable to control their tongues have an empty and vain religion. But why should the failure to bridle the tongue be a sign of vain religion? For our Author, as for many pious Jews in the first and second centuries C.E., it was only as people (and especially men) knitted together into the true community of God that their future salvation could be hoped for. The belief that the true Israel must become pure and holy led many to strive for holy perfection. Consequently, any who threatened the harmony of the community through thoughtless and hurtful speech were especially unwelcome (cf. Botha J E, 2005, p.407, regarding the communal dimension of salvation in the Letter of James).

Whilst the primary image in the references to the tongue is one of poisoned speech corrupting the individual and through the individual the whole community (cf. 3:6, 8-10, 14-16), a secondary thought might be the contrast between idle words and meaningful action which provide the central theme of Jas 2:14-26.



The final verse of this chapter not only encapsulates true religion for our Author but serves as the springboard for the elaborations to come as true religion is explored in a variety of ways. True religion is epitomised by action that derives from, indeed that is driven by, obedience to the perfect law of liberty. Such action reflects the heart of God for those in the community who are weak and helpless (Hartin, 1999, p.142). In the Hebrew Bible YHWH is depicted as having a particular concern for orphans and widows. Exodus 22: 22-24 sets out the divine command ('[Do] not abuse any widow or orphan'), together with the punishment for offenders, namely that YHWH will kill them so that their own wives and children will become widows and orphans. The Deuteronomic law places such offenders under YHWH's curse (Deut 27:10). YHWH's concern goes beyond command and judgement; it embraces a direct concern for the welfare of widows and orphans (Deut 10:17-18; Ps 10:14; 68:5 et al.); the community is to provide for them (Deut 24:19-21), even as part of the tithe (Deut 26:12-13); the prophets when explaining the divine judgement of captivity, list the maltreatment of orphans and widows as prominent reasons for the nation's plight (Is 10:1-3; Jer 5:26-29; Ezek 22:1-7 et al.); indeed, the failure to protect and plead the cause of the orphan and widow is sufficient to bring about divine hostility and judgement (Isa 1:23). Provision and support for the orphan and widow is restated in the deuterocanonical literature (Tob 1:8; 2 Macc 3:10). Sirach goes so far as to urge his son/pupil γίνου ὀρφανοῖς ὡς πατήρ καὶ ἀντὶ ἀνδρὸς τῆ μητρὶ αὐτῶν (Be like a father to orphans, and instead of a husband to their mother) so as to be loved even more by God (Sir 4:10). The practical support of the orphan and the widow was, therefore, a key part of pious Jewish orthopraxis, and our Author's similar level of concern points to his being firmly rooted in such Jewish tradition (Johnson, 1995, p.212; McKnight, 2011, pp.168-171).

We saw the Author's initial exhortation to maturity-perfection in Jas 1:2-4, a maturity-perfection which only develops as the community and its members learn to exhibit true steadfastness in the midst of an alien world. The strong enjoinder in Jas 1:27 ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου (keep oneself unstained by the world) may, at first sight, suggest that he is urging his audience to segregate themselves from the rest of society. However, that is to misunderstand what our author means by the word κόσμος. The tensions between the Author's communities and the 'world' (κόσμος) do not derive from any sense of Gnostic dualism; i.e. the Author is not arguing that the physical world is 'evil' and the spiritual world is 'good'. Rather the tensions relate to the things people value. For our Author the 'world' is represented by the rich oppressors who: amass wealth unjustly and place their trust in it; deny justice and equity to the poor and oppressed; and allow their inner cravings and greed to drive their lives (cf. 2:6-7; 3:14-15; 4:1-3, 13-16 & 5:1-6). The condemnation of Jas 4:4 is both illuminating and pivotal in understanding this. Those who do the evils of Jas 4:1-3 are adulteresses. The Author's deliberate use of the feminine form of this noun suggests he is thinking of those who have forsaken the New Covenant with God for the 'god' that is 'the world' with its associated values. In a sense, the idolatry of Baal worship so prevalent in the pre-exilic history of Israel has been replaced by the idolatry that is materialism and status in the world of our Author and his audience (cf. 5:17-20 and my comments in 7.7). Friendship with the world, therefore, is not a question of being in the world but one of living according to the values and expectations of the dominant and all-pervading culture round about. The call, then, is an ethical one of not allowing the cultural influences and ethos of the outside 'world' to have any place in the community. There is no evidence that the Author is arguing

for the community's physical segregation. Hence, the Author's community is probably not another Qumran (Hartin, 1999, p.50).

### 3.11 Summary of the Themes in James 1

The opening exhortation introduces us to the themes of the testing of faith and through overcoming such testing, the movement towards the goal of maturity-perfection (1:2-4). The very linking of these infers that the Author has no single overarching theme in mind. This inference is reinforced firstly by the early appearance of the catchwords *πειρασμός*, *πίστις*, *ὑπομονή*, *ἔργον*, and *τέλειος* which will reappear at key points in the composition, and then by the introduction of the theme of wisdom from above in Jas 1:5, a vital divine gift in the struggle to overcome the trials of life. This is quickly followed by the polar opposite of the wise person – the double-minded fool, whose divided loyalties bring communal instability (1:6-8). Jas 1:9-11 introduces the second pair of polar opposites, the poor and rich whose eschatological inheritances will be as far apart as their current experiences, but in reverse, so that the humble poor will be exalted and the arrogant rich brought low. Jas 1:12 completes the first part of the chapter as the Author encourages his audience by reminding them of the divine promise of eschatological reward to those who prove their love and loyalty to God by overcoming their trials and temptations.

The Author develops his opening themes by exploring one aspect of human testing, the problem of temptation (1:13-15). He assures his audience that the problem emanates from within and not from external testings by God, and succumbing to such temptations places the sinner on the road to death and the audience should be in no doubt about both the source of temptation and the result of giving in to it (1:16). But this creates a problem –

where is the community to find the means to overcome temptation, especially if the 'evil inclination' is at work? The Author now revisits his opening statement concerning the generosity of God and his willingness to provide for the community's needs (1:5) and reminds his audience that God, the father of lights, has made both him and them the first-fruits of his (new) creation through the provision of the word of truth (1:17-18). The key to overcoming temptation is for the members of the community to receive the implanted word (1:21) and allow it to germinate and grow in their lives. The evidence of such reception and germination reveals itself in a variety of practical ways. The Author specifically identifies a listening ear and the controlling of speech and of anger (1:19); the ridding oneself of all kinds of evil practices (1:21); living out the word of God in concrete actions of doing good – especially towards those in greatest need who are epitomised by the widow and the orphan (1:27). These practical expressions of receiving the word will bring eschatological salvation and blessing (1:21, 25). Intertwined with the exhortation to proper ethical praxis through the power of the implanted word is a reminder of what the polar opposite looks like (1:20, 23-24, 26). Finally, alongside the practical outworking of the word in their lives, the audience must be sure not to allow the values of the 'world' to inform any of their actions (1:27b).

Bauckham has shown there are very clear links between this introductory chapter and every one of the units in the rest of the Book. Each subsequent unit picks up on words and phrases from this first chapter which are found nowhere else in the composition other than in the introduction and the relevant discreet unit (Bauckham, 1999, pp.71-72). Consequently, even where the Author treats specific themes in apparent isolation later in the composition, his

literary strategy draws us, the hearer/reader back to the interrelatedness of the themes in the opening chapter.

Such are the Author's stated themes in Jas 1, but there are two other aspects to his composition that warrant an overview at this point, namely the theme of eschatology and the relationship between the composition and the Jesus tradition. I will briefly consider these before revisiting the question of what the Author means by his various references to *λόγος* and *νόμος*.

### **3.12 An Eschatological Lens?**

Penner has suggested that there is an eschatological framework for the whole Book of James (Penner, 1996, Taylor, 2004, p.101). This may be overstating the case (cf. Botha, 2005, p.397; Kamell, 2011, p.275), but it is clear that eschatology provides a significant context for the composition (Dibelius, 1976, p.49; Davids, 1982, p.39; Taylor, 2004, p.101). I suggested earlier that Jas 1:9-11 looks forward to the eschaton and the great reversal that will take place at the Lord's coming. Similarly, I will show (see sections 6.4.2 & 6.4.3) that the Author will urge his audience to patience (5:7) because the unscrupulous wealthy landowners will soon face eschatological judgement (5:1-6). The exhortatory 'whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy,' (1:2) is transformed from a fatalistic asceticism into a foretaste of God's imminent vindication, when placed in front of an eschatological lens such as this (cf. Hartin, 1999, p.54, who asserts '... those who embrace the community instruction should be full of joy, eager with expectation as they strive to be found perfect at the Lord's coming').

A further dimension to the eschatological context is the issue of whose παρουσία is expected. One aspect of Jewish eschatology that is undoubtedly relevant to the debate is that of the extent of the influence of messianism on Jewish society in the first and second centuries C.E. The Jewish uprising of 132-135 C.E. was centred around one Simon Ben Kosiba whose nickname 'Bar Kokhba' almost certainly refers to the messianic promise expressed in Num 24:17 (Evans, "Messianism" in Evans and Porter, 2000, p.699). The New Testament itself is set against a background of messianic expectation as one after another failed 'messiahs' rose up to throw off the yoke of Rome (cf. Acts 5:34-39; in which Gamaliel's assertion at v39 infers a messianic hope was still present in Jerusalem. Such hope is seen also in the Jewish authorities' questioning of John the Baptizer, and the people's expectations concerning him, cf. Jn 1:19-22 and Lk 3:15-16 respectively). Furthermore, within a Jewish context the messiah was human, and in some teachings would eventually die (4 Ezra 7:28-29).

Many commentators, though, see the Parousia of Jas 5:8-9 as being that of Jesus Christ (see 6.4.3). The exclamation ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν (5:9) certainly elicits a vivid portrait of an imminent event. The pictured Parousia will bring judgement (5:1-6) as well as deliverance (5:7-8). The hope in view is that those who endure the opposition of the world will see its enmity finally dealt with by God (cf. 1:2-4; 4:4; 5:1-8). In the midst of such pressures, the Author urges his audience to obey the perfect law of liberty (1:25) and the royal law (2:8) by living a counter-cultural communal existence. There is no place in such a context for paying lip service to one's beliefs; only a life of active full commitment to God will suffice (2:14-26).

We should not be surprised, therefore, to find harsh words of warning and condemnation for those who are 'rich in the world' but not 'rich in faith' (cf. 1:9-11 and 2:5). The rich cannot be 'heirs of the kingdom', not so much because God has 'chosen the poor to be heirs of the kingdom and rich in faith' (2:5a), but because the rich have demonstrated a love for the world rather than a love for God, and the kingdom has been promised only to those who love God (1:12; 2:5).

The eschatological, therefore, is an important lens through which to view the composition and its interconnected themes.

### **3.13 The Jesus Tradition in the Book of James**

'The fabric of the Letter is replete with allusions to and rhetorical emulations of the Jesus tradition' (Kloppenborg, 2007, p.251); 'one of the most fascinating features of James' rhetorical discourse is its use of the Jesus tradition, namely, its numerous allusions to sayings of Jesus' (Wachob, 2000, p.17); 'the whole book exudes the Sermon on the Mount' (Davids, 1982, p.16). Quotes such as these show that commentators are confident that the Book of James has strong links with the Jesus tradition. Indeed, Bauckham can go so far as to state his thesis in these terms:

James, as a disciple of Jesus the sage, is a wisdom teacher who has made the wisdom of Jesus his own, and who seeks to appropriate and to develop the resources of the Jewish wisdom tradition in a way that is guided and controlled by the teaching of Jesus. (Bauckham, 1999, p.30).

And yet, as Stanton shrewdly observed: 'the letter of James does not contain a single explicit citation of a saying of Jesus,' before adding: 'Nonetheless as many as forty-five possible allusions to Jesus have been noted' (Stanton, 1997, p.568). Clearly, therefore, we need to

see how these links have been made and determine the conclusions we can draw from them.

Dauids lists thirty-six parallels between the Book of James and the Synoptic tradition plus a further nine more 'general thought patterns'; Hartin provides twenty-six examples, whilst Martin quotes eighteen parallels between the Book of James and Matthew's Gospel alone (Dauids, 1982, pp.47-48; Martin, 1988, pp.lxxv-vi; Hartin, 1991, pp.141-142). Dauids further asserts that each and every block of material within the composition contains at least one allusion to the Jesus tradition, and that these allusions are spread evenly throughout the Book, leading him to conclude: 'the Jesus tradition, according to our hypothesis, forms the underlying rule of life for the early community' (Dauids, 1984, pp.70, 76). Others are more wary of making such firm associations, with Stanton, for example, tentatively offering just six likely links between the Book of James and the Synoptic tradition (Stanton, 1997, p.568).<sup>15</sup> There can be a danger in stretching allusions too far. For example, the 'but ask in faith, never doubting,' of Jas 1:6 may echo the 'if you have faith and do not doubt,' of Mt 21:21 as both Dauids and Hartin propose, but the contexts are so very different, with the Matthean context reflecting faith in action to achieve great things and that of the Book of James, a call to ask God for what is needed (Dauids, 1982, p.47; Hartin, 1991, p.141). That is not to deny the link, but such biblical allusions are much stronger where the same or a similar context is in view as, for example, in Jas 1:22-23//Mt 7:24-26 or where there are grounds for believing that the Jesus tradition alluded to was probably unique to Jesus, as may be the case with Jas 5:12//Mt 5:34-37 (Laws, 1980, p.224; Hartin, 1991, p.190).

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<sup>15</sup> His six allusions to the Jesus tradition are Jas 1:5; 2:5, 8; 3:12; 4:10 and 5:12.



The following chart provides what I suggest are the strongest of the allusions/echoes of the Jesus tradition in the Book of James (cf. Davids, 1982, pp. 47-48 who includes all these connections; Johnson, 1995, pp.55-57; Witherington, 2007, pp.394-95; McKnight, 2011, pp. 25-26, who include most of them).

### Possible Links Between the Book of James and the Synoptic Jesus Tradition

James	Matthew	Luke	Possible Source	Comments
1:5	7:7	11:9	Q	Both the Author and Jesus exhort their followers to ask of God what they need, because God is, inter alia, generous. The Lukan context comes immediately after the parable of the persistent friend (Lk 11:5-8)
1:22-23	7:24-26	6:46-49	Q	The importance of responding to the taught (or ingrafted) word through action.
2:5	5:3,5	6:20	Q	It is noticeable how the Author's concept of 'poverty' seems to reflect both the Matthean (spiritual) and Lukan (physical) ones.
2:8	22:39-40			A basis in Torah.
3:12	7:16	6:44-45	Q	The picture of trees and their fruit clearly made an impression on Jesus' followers appearing as it does in all four gospels in several settings (cf. Mt 12:33; 21:19; Mk 11:13-14; Lk 13:6-9; Jn 15:1-8).
3:18	5:9			An eschatological reward for those who pursue peace.
4:9		6:25		The call for the rich to 'mourn and weep' is distinctive in both passages.
4:10	23:12	14:11; 18:14	Q	Humility before God brings exaltation from God.
4:11-12	7:1	6:37	Q	Eschatological judgement hangs over those who dare judge.
4:13-14	6:34			The similar contexts of not knowing what the morrow will bring, strengthens the linkage between the two passages.
5:1		6:24-25		The call for the rich to 'mourn and weep'.
5:2	6:19-20	12:33	Q	'True riches (and poverty).' The contrast between laying up earthly and heavenly treasures is reflected strongly in all the passages.
5:9			Mk13:29?	Eschatological judgement is imminent.
5:12	5:34-37			The teaching of Jesus on the subject of oaths echoed in the Book of James.

What is noticeable from this chart is the purported link between the Book of James and the Matthean Sermon on the Mount (nine parallels) and the Lukan Sermon on the Plain (six

parallels), suggesting the possibility that the Author may have had access to the Q source (if there was such a thing – see Goodacre, 2001, for an argument against a Q source) or at least to some underlying shared oral (and possibly written?) tradition.

When one examines the content and contexts of these parallels we see the following themes: reliance on God to meet daily needs (1:5; 4:11-12); living out faith through works (1:22-23; 3:12), and God's preference for the poor and judgement on the rich within an eschatological context (2:5; 4:9; 5:1, 9).

If the Author is using the Jesus tradition, then why does he not cite it or identify it more clearly? Bauckham's thesis, as we saw earlier in this section, is that the Author is a wisdom teacher in his own right and in the tradition of good Jewish wisdom teachers (and Bauckham cites Ben Sira as the prime example) has taken his material (including the teaching of Jesus), reworked it and presented it through the lens of his own wisdom perspective (Bauckham, 1999, pp.30, 75-76; cf. Mt. 13:52, where the Matthean Jesus makes a similar assertion about the scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven). Fluidity in the text of a document was not uncommon in Second Temple Judaism even within prebiblical texts that were probably deemed authoritative by a community. The Qumran discoveries provide examples of this with differing versions of the same document being used concurrently (Hempel, 2010, pp.204-208). If that was indeed a common attitude to the handling of authoritative texts, we can hardly expect oral traditions to be any less fluid.

It is also possible that the Author's audience is a mixed Jewish one, that is, it may have comprised both Jews who were followers of Jesus and Jews who were not (Allison Jr, 2001b, pp.529-570). Allison argues that the Author is being deliberately ambiguous at times with the result that the Jews in his audience who follow Jesus are able to recognise where Jesus' teaching is being alluded to, whilst the remaining Jews will hear/see the Author drawing on more traditional Jewish wisdom and Torah teaching (Allison Jr, 2001b, pp.564-565; he cites 4QMMT as an earlier example of a sectarian group appearing to address an audience beyond the community's boundaries; see 4QMMT C 25 - 32 in Garcia Martinez and Tigchelaar, 1998, p.803).

In his comparison of the teaching of Jesus and the author of the Book of James, Bauckham not only identifies a similar range of themes of a counter-cultural nature in the two teachers, but also a similar list of traditional wisdom themes of the more conventional nature that both teachers did *not* address, thereby adding weight to the argument that the Author was consciously drawing on the Jesus tradition in this composition (Bauckham, 1999, pp.96-107).

I suggest that in the light of what we have seen in this section, it is reasonable to assert that the teaching of Jesus is a major influence in the Book of James and must inform our interpretation of the Author's message as well as his use of terms such as *λόγος* and *νόμος*, to which I will now turn.

### 3.14 Λόγος and Νόμος in the Book of James

Although λόγος appears first in the Book of James, I propose to start with the Author's use of νόμος as I believe this will provide us with pointers as to what he means by the terms λόγος ἀληθείας (1:18) and ὁ ἔμφυτος λόγος (1:21).

Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, καλῶς ποιεῖτε·

You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' (2:8)

A teacher of the law (amid a group of Pharisees) can come quickly to mind as one reads this verse. This part of Jesus' response to a lawyer's question concerning the greatest commandment was rooted in the Pentateuch and specifically in Leviticus 19 (cf. Mt 22:34-40). Johnson has demonstrated that there is a strong link between the Book of James and Lev 19:12-18, identifying seven points of contact: Jas 5:12 with Lev 19:12; Jas 5:4 with Lev 19:13; Jas 2:1 & 9 with Lev 19:15; Jas 4:11 with Lev 19:16; Jas 5:20 with Lev 19:17b; Jas 5:9 with Lev 19:18a and Jas 2:8 with Lev 19:18b (Johnson, 1982, p.399). As noted in the review of the purported parallels between James and the Synoptic tradition (see section 3.13), there is always a danger of making forced connections. Here, one might want to question the strength of the links between Jas 5:20 and Lev 19:17b and between Jas 5:9 and Lev 19:18a. Indeed, if there is a connection between the last two then possibly the whole of Lev 19:18 is needed in order to include the expression of love that is clearly inherent in Jas 2:8. Despite these slight misgivings, the number and concentration of other links between the Book of James and Lev 19:12-18 do point strongly to the Author having the Torah in some form primarily in mind, especially given the direct references to the law in Jas 2:8, 9 and Jas 4:11. Given that we have already seen that the Jesus Tradition as reflected in the Synoptic

Gospels (and especially in Matthew) forms an important source of our Author's teaching, then it seems reasonable to propose that the νόμος is for him, the Torah as seen through the lens of the teaching of Jesus (Hartin, 1991, Bauckham, 1999, p.3; Cheung, 2003, p.160; Jackson-McCabe, 2003, p.709).

If the teachings of Jesus underpin the Book of James then it is essential to bear these teachings in mind when interpreting how the Author uses both his catchwords and any religious terms that might be construed as being 'technical'. Hence the 'royal law' of Jas 2:8, when viewed through the lens of the Jesus tradition probably means the law of the kingdom about which Jesus taught (Moo, 2000, pp.111-112; Cheung, 2003, pp.160-161). His reinterpretation of the double love command (Mt 22:34-40 etc) and golden rule (perhaps through parables such as the Good Samaritan – Lk 10:30-37) redefined who one's neighbour was. After all, the fact that the question 'who is my neighbour?' was asked in the Good Samaritan parable points to it being an issue either for the Jewish communities of that period and/or at least for Luke and/or his community (Lk 10:29). The kingdom of heaven/God is what Jesus asserts he came to bring and his reinterpretation of Torah in the Sermon on the Mount (especially in Mt 5:17-48) is surely intended to represent the laws by which those who inherit that kingdom are to live.

If the royal law is indeed the law of God's kingdom taught by Jesus, what is the perfect law of liberty (1:25)? Johnson posits that whereas the royal law is the law by which the Author's audience must live, the law of liberty is the law by which the audience will be judged (Johnson, 1982, p.399). I remain to be convinced that the Author is making such a subtle

distinction. Yes, he specifically speaks about the need for his audience to live as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty (2:12), but that same law is the one by which they are to live (1:22-25). I suggest it is more a question of context and emphasis. The law of Jas 2:8 is 'royal' because it pertains to the kingdom that God has promised to the poor in Jas 2:5; it is a law of liberty because the doing of it will lead to eschatological blessing, including a crown of life (cf. 1:12).

The νόμος, then, is the new Torah which Jesus taught (Bauckham, 1999, p. 3), possibly reinterpreted by the Author for his own messianic audience. In that context, it is not certain that the λόγος ἀληθείας (1:18) and ὁ ἔμφυτος λόγος (1:21) must refer to the Christian gospel in its full kerygmatic form as preached by Peter and Paul, notwithstanding an apparent similarity in the use of the term ἀπαρχὴ in this composition and the Pauline corpus (cf. 1:18; Rom 8:23; 16:5; 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 16:15).<sup>16</sup> Whereas Paul uses ἀπαρχὴ to depict definite first-fruits, our Author sees himself and his audience merely as a kind of first-fruits, as if he has not yet fully developed his theology on what this might mean. The Author sees himself and his community as an embryonic new community created by God for God's own purpose (1:18). The λόγος ἀληθείας may simply be the words taught by Jesus which would never pass away (Mt 24:35; Mk 13:31; Lk 21:33). We can note that Jesus' assertion regarding the everlasting nature of his words was spoken in the context of the eschatological judgement of the end times, and may, therefore, have had a special meaning for our Author with his perspective of an imminent eschatological event.

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<sup>16</sup> ἀπαρχὴ is also used in the disputed Pauline composition, 2 Thess 2:13.

A number of scholars equate ὁ ἔμφυτος λόγος with the Christian gospel owing to the Author's assertion that it has the power to save the soul (1:21).<sup>17</sup> Additionally, this verse bears similarities with other New Testament texts which include a post-conversion instruction to throw off the filthiness of the old person and allow oneself to be renewed (cf. 1 Pet 1:23-25; Rom 13:12-14; Eph 4:22-24 and Col 3:8-10; Konradt, 2003, p.189). However, there is no reason to doubt that a similar power of renewal as described in the above verses could not have been attached to the teaching of Jesus. After all, Jesus had asserted that those who were ashamed of his words would find themselves being excluded at his coming in his glory (Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26), hence those who responded positively to his words could expect, like the wise builder (Mt 7:24-25), to be 'saved' come the eschatological storms.

Both λόγος and νόμος would seem, then to retain strong Jewish connections for our Author, albeit centred in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic traditions. Whilst the two terms are not synonymous, they, like the other themes within the composition, are closely linked, and it is probably best to focus on the way they interact, rather than strive to unearth their exact individual meanings.

### 3.15 Conclusion

Jas 1 has set the scene for the rest of the composition, introducing both its themes and the contexts that will inform those themes as they are subsequently developed. The teaching of Jesus (possibly reinterpreted by the Author) underpins the messianic community's praxis in daily life such that its members must seek to live peaceably with each other, control both

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<sup>17</sup> See Jackson-McCabe, 2001, pp.238-239 for a different idea of the term's meaning based in the Hellenistic Stoic concept of natural law.

speech and internal cravings, and demonstrate the reality of their new status as a 'kind of first fruits' of God's word of truth as they actively minister to the needs of the marginalised, whilst at the same time eschewing the values of the world. The prize for those who endure to the end and thus show they are true lovers of God is the crown of life and all the blessings of eschatological vindication.



## CHAPTER 4

### ABRAHAM

#### 4.1 Introduction

The choice of Abraham as an exemplar in the Book of James should come as no surprise since the patriarch is portrayed as both the physical progenitor of the Jews (in the Hebrew Bible) and the spiritual progenitor of Christians (in the New Testament). Indeed, along with Moses, Abraham is the most cited Hebrew Bible character in the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> That the patriarch is a fine example of faith in action is also evident from the account of his life in the Hebrew Bible. However, difficulties arise when it comes to determining *how* the Author of the Letter of James uses Abraham as an exemplar. The diatribe that comprises the unit Jas 2:14-26 in which the patriarch appears along with Rahab has received considerable attention from scholars over the centuries. As we saw in Chapter One, scholars continue to argue over the extent, if any, to which the Author is responding to either the teaching of the apostle Paul, or to some form of Paulinism, with his insistence that ‘faith without works is dead’ (2:20 NKJV). The arguments advanced have often been loaded with theological agendas as attempts have been made to harmonise the teachings of these two New Testament writers,

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<sup>18</sup> Exactly how many times a person is referred to in the NT depends on what criteria (and which Bible version) one uses. Does one use the number of times a name is used, or the person is referred to in whatever way, or the number of different occasions the person is referred to. For example, in his argument to the Galatians, Paul uses the name ‘Abraham’ at least seven times in Gal 3. Should one count this as seven references (or more if one includes the pronouns referring to the patriarch) or count it simply as a single reference? Accordingly, I have chosen simply to place Abraham alongside Moses as the most frequently named Hebrew Bible characters in the NT (each is named in the NRSV at least seventy times in the NT).

or to assert that their apparent opposing positions arise from differing contexts and purposes, or that the differences are so great as to be irreconcilable.

Abraham appears in the discreet unit that is Jas 2:14-26. Before looking at that unit, though, I will trace the Abraham tradition in the Hebrew Bible, in the deuterocanonical literature, in several other works from the Second Temple period and in the the New Testament outside of James, and then briefly review the earlier unit of Jas 2:1-13 so as to consider the context for our own unit in which the patriarch appears.

## **4.2 Abraham in the Hebrew Bible**

The biblical story of the life of Abraham (or Abram as he is originally called) begins at Genesis 11:26 and ends at Genesis 25:10, but the patriarch's influence can be seen throughout the biblical text, both in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. I shall not repeat the full life story here, as the relevant events will unfold later when I consider the way in which the author of the Book of Jubilees reinterprets it. Instead, I shall trace the development of the patriarch's function from the time of his recorded death in Gen 25:8 to the close of the Hebrew Bible.

Genesis 26:3-5 provides the first relevant reference in this study. Isaac has been forced to move due to famine. Divine guidance for Isaac includes a reaffirmation of the oath (LXX ὄρκος) made to Abraham concerning his posterity, the possession of the land and the blessing of the nations. At the end of the divine promise comes an assertion that these blessings derive from Abraham's obedience to God, not just through the obeying of God's voice but through the keeping of God's 'ordinances, commandments, regulations and laws.'

Already, therefore, the Abrahamic story has moved from the sovereign divine call of Gen 12:1-3 to a covenant in which Abraham's obedience has become a factor. As we shall see, Abraham's faithfulness becomes increasingly meritorious as the history of Israel unfolds and as later biblical and non-biblical writers look to interpret that history for their own times.

On his deathbed, Isaac blesses Jacob in these terms:

' . . . May [God] give to you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien – land that God gave to Abraham (Gen 28:4),

a blessing which is quickly reaffirmed by God in Jacob's vision (Gen 28:13); hence the twofold promise of posterity and land are reinforced.

Abraham is not mentioned again until the final verses of the Book of Genesis where the dying Joseph speaks a blessing over his relatives, asserting that God would indeed bring them out of Egypt into 'the land that [God] swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob' (Gen 50:24). The NRSV rightly picks up the nuance concerning the promise having been given to all three of the named patriarchs and not just to Abraham, since the repetition of the promise in Genesis 26:3-5, and 28:13 represented a renewing of the covenant to which Isaac and then Jacob had become parties in their own right, albeit by reason of the original covenant with Abraham and his obedient keeping of it.

In the rest of the Pentateuch the most frequent references to Abraham are in the context of entering the land which God had promised to the three patriarchs (cf. Ex 6:8; 33:1; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 33:4). To begin with, though, the enslaved people in Egypt have to be reminded of

who God is (Ex 3:8, 15-16; 4:5). Part of this reminding includes the revelation of a new divine name not known by the patriarchs (Ex 6:3). We also see several references to God 'remembering' or 'being reminded' of his covenant with/oath to Abraham (Ex 2:24; 33:1; Lev 26:42; Deut 9:27). There are two places in which the promise made to Abraham is set within a requirement that the people commit themselves fully to God. In Num 32:11 this is seen in its negative form so that the denial of entry into the land (to those aged over twenty) is by reason of their failure to follow God *unreservedly* (LXX 'συνεπηκολούθησαν'). In Deut 30:19-20, Moses's plea that the people choose life includes the requirement that they love God, obey him, and hold fast to him 'for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob'. The element of conditionality, typical of both Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomists has now been added to the covenant promise.

We see a contrast between the first and last canonical references<sup>19</sup> to the patriarch, Abraham in the historical books. In the first reference, which appears to have a non-biblical *Urtext*, (Bowley J, 2010, p.294), towards the end of the Book of Joshua, the leader reminds the people that God had taken Abraham out of his idolatrous family environment, inferring that God's sovereign choice was an act of divine grace (Josh 24:2-3). Towards the end of this 'historical period', Nehemiah, whilst acknowledging God's sovereign choice of Abraham links the making of the divine covenant to the patriarch's faithfulness (Neh 9:7-8a). In between are few, yet revealing, references to Abraham. Two of note have the struggles against idolatry and syncretism as their backdrop with pleas that the people of Israel return to the

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<sup>19</sup> Canonical as in the ordering of Books in the Christian English Old Testament.

true God of Israel, the God of the three patriarchs, perhaps implying that the use of the divine name or the Tetragrammaton was insufficient on its own to define the true God of Israel (cf. 1 Kings 18:36 and 2 Chr 30:6). A further notable reference is the description of Abraham as beloved of God, or God's 'friend', in a passage spoken by Jehoshaphat to God: Αβρααμ τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ σου (LXX 2 Chr 20:7). This passage also contains the concept that the possession of the land was an *eternal* gift from God to Abraham and his descendants, perhaps reflecting the real threat of invasion and foreign conquest, not so much from the Ammonites and Moabites who were in coalition against Judah in that particular account, but projecting forward to the Assyrian and/or Babylonian threats.

The few references to Abraham in the Prophets are dominated by the Book of Isaiah. The first Isaianic reference to the patriarch differs significantly in the Greek from the Hebrew rendering. The Hebrew talks of Abraham being redeemed (קָדַם), whereas the Greek has Jacob ἀφώρισεν ἐξ Αβρααμ (set apart from, or out of, Abraham) (LXX Isa 29:22). Isaiah also draws attention to Abraham's solitary status when God exercised his initial sovereign choice and uses that to reassure his audience of the great things God is able to do for the people in their exilic state (Isa 51:2). In effect, if God could take the idolator Abraham and make out of him a great nation then God was more than capable of ending the Babylonian captivity and bringing the Exiles back to their true homeland. Ezekiel, however, believes this divine reassurance has been abused by his contemporaries, who are blatantly breaking the covenant by reason of their presumption (Ezek 33:24). Whereas Isaiah had seen God's blessing of the solitary Abraham in terms of increase of numbers, the people against whom Ezekiel prophesies see their numerical strength as making it easier for them to reclaim the

lands of the promise. A third element of Isaiah's use of the patriarch is seen, as God, through the prophet, reassures the threatened, exiled, Israelites that he has indeed chosen them for his own because they are the descendants of his beloved Abraham (Is 41:8-10).

This quick survey of the Hebrew Bible's references to Abraham after his recorded death is sufficient to show how the covenant between God and Abraham came to be seen over time within the canonical context. It is one in which Abraham's faithfulness and commitment to God play an increasingly important role in the divine blessing and promise of the patriarch such that the later biblical writers (Deutero-)Isaiah and the Chronicler can refer to Abraham as God's friend.<sup>20</sup> A second strand develops a requirement of faithfulness and commitment to God by the patriarch's descendants if they are to receive the full benefits of the promises made to Abraham. We also see an editorial glimpse of the concept of Abraham keeping some element of Torah even before it had been handed down to Moses (Gen 26:3-5).

### **4.3 Abraham in Deuterocanonical Literature**

References to Abraham in the deuterocanonical books reflect the histories, contexts and experiences of their authors and these are sometimes projected through their main characters (Bowley, 2010, p.294). For example, Manasseh contrasts his own sinfulness with the perfect righteousness of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Pr Man 1:1, 8). For Tobit it is vital that his son, Tobias, marries a descendant of his ancestors (Tob 4:12). Likewise, the opportunity to 'live in safety forever in the land of Abraham' in the end of days would arise only for those who 'are truly mindful of God' (Tob 14:6-7). Both of these claims on the posterity of Abraham when allied to the author's concerns for religious purity (e.g Tob 1:11),

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<sup>20</sup> For the dating of these works see Coggins, 2001, p.267 and Mathys, 2001, p.433.

almsgiving (Tob 4:6-11), and burying of the dead (Tob 1:17-18), reflect a late post-exilic setting (Fitzmyer, 2001, p.627).

The heroine of the Book of Judith, probably written during the Hasmonean period (Levine, 2001, p.633; Halpern-Amaru, 2010, pp.856-857) when reminding the leaders of the besieged Bethulia of the town's strategic significance to the defence of Jerusalem, urges them to be an example for the rest of Judah and be thankful to God that he has chosen to put them to the test like Abraham and the other patriarchs (Levine, 2001, p.638; cf. Jdt 8:25-26). This concept of being tested like Abraham becomes more prominent within the later deuterocanonical works, especially in 4 Maccabees. In this latter work the elderly Jewish leader, Eleazer, urges his younger compatriots, as 'children of Abraham [to] die nobly for [their] religion' (4 Macc 6:22), before his own exemplary martyrdom, with his dying prayer being a cry to God that his might be a vicarious sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish people (Elliott, 2001, p.792; cf. 4 Macc 6:27-29). This 'religion' is typified by the refusal to eat pork and food sacrificed to idols (4 Macc 5:2-3). The eldest of the seven martyred brothers is 'worthy of Abraham' in his refusal to show weakness under the most horrifying of tortures (4 Macc 9:21). Similarly the author praises their mother's resolve as a 'daughter of God-fearing Abraham' as she controls her own grief whilst watching and encouraging her sons in their martyrdom (4 Macc 15:28). In all of these examples, it was not simply that the exemplars were tested like Abraham, they also faced up to their testing with Abrahamic fortitude and steadfastness, such that the author can assert in his encomium on the mother that her sons were 'true descendants of father Abraham' (4 Macc 17:6). By this period of Jewish history,

Abraham has become one who has seen and overcome unparalleled suffering and torture yet stood resolutely firm in his commitment and obedience to God and his law.

It is 1 Maccabees, though, that expressly links Abraham's faithfulness under testing with his righteousness – 'Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?' (1 Macc 2:52), a clear potential source for our Author's own statements in Jas 2:21 & 23, especially as the context of this verse suggests that the 'reckoning of righteousness' was a reward for the patriarch's faithfulness in his testings. 1 Maccabees goes on to declare that Joseph 'kept the commandment in the time of distress', and 'became lord of Egypt' (1 Macc 2:53). Similar statements of faithfulness and reward are made in respect of a number of other prominent fathers of the faith including Joshua, David and Elijah (1 Mac 2:54-60; cf. the similar concept of reward for faithfulness under testing in Sir 44:20-21). This belief that faithfulness to God brings reward in this life would clearly be important in the autonomous Jewish State that arose out of the Maccabean struggles. In any event we see in this work a clear statement that Abraham's faithfulness to God under testing was literally 'credited' to the patriarch as righteousness.

Abraham's exemplary status is given its highest rating in the deuterocanonical corpus in Sirach, where the author asserts, 'Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no-one has been found like him in glory' (Sir 44:19). When we compare this statement with the same author's description of Moses as one whom God 'made equal in glory to the holy ones' (Sir 45:1-2) and his semi-divine eulogy of the prophet Elijah (Sir 48:1-9), we must ask what influence Abraham might have attained in the heavenly courts. Sirach states that



Abraham's obedience in keeping 'the law of the most high' and his faithfulness under testing (Sir 44:20) resulted in the divine promise to the patriarch of great posterity and the inheritance of the land (Sir 44:21).

We can see that as the stories of the deuterocanonical corpus unfold, the legend and myth of Abraham develops, such that the patriarch becomes not just the supreme exemplar of faithfulness to God under extreme testing but also a hero whose obedience has earned the Jewish nation divine favour. But how did the biblical portrait of Abraham develop into the super-hero depicted in deuterocanonical literature? Part of the answer lies in the Book of Jubilees, to which I will now turn.

#### **4.4 Abraham in the Book of Jubilees: a Synopsis and Reflection**

The skilful reinterpretation of Gen 1 to Ex 19 places the *Book of Jubilees* amongst the most influential of the early Jewish writings on the Judaism(s) of the first century C. E. (most notably, the Qumran community and possibly on parts of the New Testament; cf.

VanderKam, 2001, pp.143-147; Crawford, 2008, pp.60-61, 146). I will therefore provide both a synopsis of its portrayal of Abraham alongside a reflection on its interpretation of the patriarch.

*Jubilees* purports to be a revelation of the history of the world, dictated to Moses during his first forty-day sojourn on Mount Sinai, by 'the angel of the presence who went before the camp of Israel' (*Jub* 1.29). The angel is depicted as dictating the message from heavenly tablets at the express command of God, thus the author asserts divine provenance for his work from the very start (Crawford, 2008, pp.8-9). The author's basic approach is one which

sticks closely to those parts of the biblical account which he chooses to use, whilst at the same time imaginatively filling in selected gaps in the biblical narrative.<sup>21</sup>

The first narrative about the patriarch (although not the first reference to him) begins in *Jub* 11.15, and tells of his birth into a family of idolaters. Of particular interest is Mastema's part in the build up to Abraham's appearance on the scene.<sup>22</sup> It is this spiritual adversary who is behind the sins that led to hostility between Noah's descendants, the building of Ur of the Chaldees, that city's turning to idolatry and the changing of Abraham's great-grandfather's name to Serug (*Jub* 11.2-6). We can also note the deterioration of environmental conditions for the people of Ur around the time of the birth of Abraham's father, Terah, as Mastema sends ravens and other birds to destroy the seeds that had been sown. It is as if that evil adversary was aware of what Abraham might become and was doing all he could to make Abraham's arrival in the world as difficult as possible.

*Jubilees* asserts that from boyhood Abraham began to understand that idolatry was wrong and at the age of fourteen, the patriarch sought the 'creator of all' in prayer (*Jub* 11.16-17).

Abraham questions his father about the value of worshipping dumb idols but does not rebel when his father responds:

I also know (that), my son, but what shall I do to the people who have made me minister before [the idols]? And if I speak to them in righteousness, they will kill me; because their souls cleave to [the idols] so that they might worship them and praise them. Be silent, my son, lest they kill you (*Jub* 12.6-8a).

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<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed account on the work's provenance and purpose, see VanderKam, 2001, pp. 11-22; Crawford, 2008, pp.67-82.

<sup>22</sup> I shall use the fuller name 'Abraham' throughout although the *Book of Jubilees* itself follows the biblical pattern of naming him 'Abram' until God changes his name to 'Abraham'.

A strong inference from Terah's reply is that he had some religious role within the local community. Hence Abraham was not only born into idolatry, but came from a family which actively promoted idolatrous worship, possibly worship of the moon which was prominent in both Ur and Haran (Wenham, 1987, p.252, who also draws attention to the connection of the names of Abraham's relations, Terah, Sarah, Milcah and Laban with lunar worship).

Abraham's hatred for idolatry eventually spills over into direct action as, in an act that may foreshadow that of Gideon (Jud 6:25-27), he destroys the temple of idols. Terah, possibly as a result of the destruction of the idol house (his role having gone up in smoke with the idols) leaves the city of Ur with his family and starts on the migration towards Canaan. There Abraham finally realises that the future cannot be read in the stars since the true God can make things happen irrespective of what the star signs may say. It is noteworthy that the initial request of his prayer to the God of heaven is: 'Save me from the hands of evil spirits which rule over the thought of the heart of man, and do not let them lead me astray from following you, O my God . . .' (*Jub* 12.20), perhaps a veiled reference to the perceived influence of Mastema in the world at that time. Abraham then seeks divine guidance as to where he should go and the words of Gen 12:1-3 are the response.

This prequel to the main Biblical account of the patriarch is illuminating, depicting Abraham's boyhood struggles against the idolatry of the world into which he was born and his early contesting against the forces of evil seemingly controlled by Mastema. The way has been paved for the depiction of a forefather who triumphed against all the odds and in spite of the most heinous of idolatrous beginnings.

The *Book of Jubilees* goes to great lengths to show that Abraham was upright and blameless in both his worship of God and his dealings with others. It glosses over a number of incidents in the patriarch's life recorded in the canonical account that place him in less than a perfect light (Crawford, 2008, p.74). For example, not only is Abraham's duplicity in his sojourn in Egypt ignored, but the Biblical account of the event is embellished in a manner that has Sarah 'torn away' from her husband and 'seized' by Pharaoh, and no mention is made of Pharaoh being kindly disposed towards Abraham on account of Sarah (cf. Gen 12:15-16 & *Jub* 13.11-13a). The similar Abimelech incident (Gen ch 20) is omitted altogether by the writer of *Jubilees*.

Abraham's marriage to Sarah his half-sister (see *Jub* 12:9) contravenes Levitical Law (Wenham, 1987, p.273; cf. Lev 18:9 and 20:17). Indeed the Law would have required both of them to be executed. However, *Jubilees* simply ignores this problem, whereas Lot's sexual sins with his two daughters are used to condemn Lot and his descendants to the same destructive fate as Sodom (*Jub* 16.9).

*Jubilees* provides a prequel to the testing of Abraham that is not dissimilar to the heavenly debate that precedes the testing of Job in the canonical book of that name (cf. Segal, 2010, p.845). It is possible that the author has latched onto the Septuagint's καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα in the opening verse of Gen 22 and provided the 'words' that preceded the 'Binding of Isaac' (the '*Aqedah*'). He has unnamed 'heavenly voices' asserting that Abraham was 'faithful in everything which was told him . . . that he loved the Lord, and was faithful in

all affliction' (*Jub* 17:15), thereby providing the adversary Mastema with an opportunity to lay down a challenge to test the extent of Abraham's faithfulness (*Jub* 17.16). For the author of *Jubilees*, however:

. . . The Lord was aware that Abraham was faithful in all his afflictions; because he tested him with his land, and with famine. And he tested him with the wealth of kings. And he tested him again with his wife, when she was taken (from him), and with circumcision; And he tested him with Ishmael and with Hagar, his maidservant, when he sent them away. (*Jub* 17.17-18).

This contrasts with the Genesis account of the *Aqedah* which seems to suggest that the extent of the patriarch's obedience and faithfulness only became confirmed to God by Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:12).

*Jubilees* asserts that after the last of the patriarch's trials, the death of Sarah, Abraham is recorded in the heavenly tablets as being 'the friend of the Lord' (*Jub* 19.9). He had passed every test and become the hope on which post-exilic Jews could rely, because he had kept Torah perfectly, even before it had been handed down to Moses, including the celebration of sacred feasts even before they had been instituted for the Sinai generation (cf. *Jub* 16.13-14, ; 21).

The death of Abraham also sees the removal of Mastema as an active agent from the scene and he does not reappear until the story of the exodus. This fact is significant. The adversary had appeared as an active enemy prior to Abraham's rise, was active during the ten trials of the patriarch, most notably at the *Aqedah* where Abraham's resolute faithfulness to God puts the enemy to shame. His reappearance in the exodus story is as the one who tries to slay Moses (*Jub* 48.2), tries to thwart his plans to deliver the Israelites from Egypt (*Jub* 48.9)

and, when all his attempts have failed, Mastema helps the Egyptians pursue the Israelites in order to destroy them (*Jub* 48.15-16). Hence Mastema is being depicted as the adversary directly responsible for, or behind, the trials of the righteous (cf. CD. 20.2).

It is clear from this synopsis of the story of Abraham within the *Book of Jubilees* that the author has raised Abraham's profile considerably from his depiction in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, the author regularly either enhances or degrades the status of his biblical characters so as to sharpen the divide between the righteous pure and the unrighteous impure (VanderKam, 2001, pp. 109-114; Crawford, 2008, p.67). The portraying of Abraham is firmly within this pattern as his failings are overlooked, his virtues enhanced and his accomplishments exaggerated. This is the stuff of legends.

## 4.5 Abraham in Philo and Josephus

### 4.5.1 Introduction

In Philo and Josephus we have two Jewish writers of broadly the same era as our composition, with Philo preceding it and Josephus writing after it. Both wrote essentially for a Hellenistic audience and were concerned to present Jewish origins, history, culture and religion in as positive a light as they could (Feldman, 1987, pp.133-135). Amongst the obstacles they faced was the charge that Judaism did not have any true heroes like those in either the Greek and Roman legends or more recent Greek and Roman history. Why should those outside of Judaism hold Moses and Abraham in esteem? What had they ever done? These were among the issues and questions which both Philo and Josephus tried to address in their writings. I shall deal first with the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, Philo (c20 BCE – c50 CE), as he almost certainly predates all the writings of the New Testament.

### 4.5.2 Abraham in Philo

Philo's basic approach to biblical interpretation is one that combines biblical exegesis with a strong element of Hellenist allegory (Sandmel, 1979, p.19, where he also asserts 'Allegory was Philo's principal way of meeting the difficulties to be found in Scripture'; Sterling, 2010, pp.1067-1068). This is hardly surprising if we think of Philo as being both 'a Greek philosopher nurtured by Judaism and also a Jewish thinker moulded by Greek Culture' (Mondésert, 1999, p.877) rather than simply a Jew who used the tools of Hellenistic philosophy. Philo sees interpretation at two main levels – the natural and the spiritual representing the body and the soul. For example, he describes Abraham's departure from Ur in these terms:

. . . Abraham, the moment he was bidden, departed with a few or even alone, and his emigration was one of soul rather than body, for the heavenly love overpowered his desire for mortal things (*On Abraham*, 66)

In his interpretation of the story in Genesis 14 about the battle of the nine kings (Gen 14:1-12), he provides what he calls an interpretation of the plain words of Scripture before adding:

But those who can contemplate facts stripped of the body and in naked reality, those who live with the soul rather than with the body, will say that of those nine kings, four are the power exercised within us by the four passions, pleasure, desire, fear and grief, and that five are the five senses, sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch (*On Abraham*, 236).

Philo tackled the issue of Jewish posterity by arguing that the true men of history are those who naturally display virtue without needing to be taught any man-made laws (*On the Change of Names*, 270). In antiquity the antediluvian patriarchs, Enos, Enoch and Noah formed the first trinity or triad of truly spiritual men who sought God, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the second trinity (*On Abraham*, 48-51). Indeed, although the Bible describes God

as the 'God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', for Philo, God is not so much the God of the three named patriarchs but the God of the virtues they represent (*On Abraham*, 52-53). By this method, Philo could argue that the founding fathers of the Jewish race were men of spiritual and philosophical renown through their piety and devotion to God. They also pre-dated the heroes of Greek and Roman history and hence could be seen to have embraced the virtues prized by the Graeco-Roman world before the rise of Greek philosophy.

Before considering Philo's approach to the Aqedah, it will be helpful if we can identify any links between his view of Jewish history and those of his predecessors. I shall limit the investigation to a couple of examples from his comments on the patriarch Abraham and his family. In his account of the event in which Abraham passes off Sarah as his sister in Egypt, Philo asserts that the King of Egypt (Pharaoh) 'paid little regard to decency . . . but gave rein to his licence and determined nominally to take her in marriage, but in reality to bring her to shame' (*On Abraham*, 94), thereby following a tradition also found in the *Book of Jubilees* (*Jub* 13:11-13a). Similarly, Lot's sexual sins are seized upon by Philo to denounce his spiritual failure (*On the Posterity of Cain*, 175; cf. *Jub* 16.9 where the same failure is highlighted and used to condemn Abraham's nephew). Whilst these two examples are not proof in themselves that Philo sourced at least some of his historical information from the *Book of Jubilees*, it points strongly to his following a similar, possibly common, tradition as that work (cf. Dibelius, 1976, pp.173-174; Sterling, 2010, p.1065).

As Johnson, 1995, pp.41-43, has demonstrated, there are significant similarities in the moral metaphors used by Philo and our own Author. The bronze basin of Ex 38:9 acts as a mirror



for those about to assist in the sacrifices (*Migration of Abraham*, 98). The mind looks at truth as in a mirror (*Migration of Abraham*, 190; cf. Jas 1:22-25). Speech, as ‘the brother of the intellect’ is important for Philo (*The Worse Attacks the Better*, 40). He is concerned for the ‘fountain . . . from which the channels of utterance are, in the course of nature, filled’ (*The Worse Attacks the Better*, 25; cf. Jas 3:11). Consequently, control of the tongue is imperative for the wise man (*The Worse Attacks the Better*, 102; cf. Jas 1:26). The wicked (those who try to flee from God) are likened by Philo to a ship tossed about in the sea (*Posterity of Cain*, 22; cf. Jas 1:6-8). We should not be surprised, however, given the sheer size of the Philo corpus and its ethical content, to find it contains themes that parallel those in the Book of James. We do not know whether or not our Author knew the works of Philo, but we can say that both writers used themes that were common in Hellenistic moral discourse (Johnson, 1995, p.41).

Turning to the Aqedah itself, Philo asserts that the divine command comes as a great surprise to Abraham (*On Abraham*, 169). Even though he was born and raised in the midst of idolatry in Ur of the Chaldeans, that land was one which did not practice child sacrifice (*On Abraham*, 188). Hence, there was no precedent for the patriarch to follow. Similarly, since Abraham told no-one of the divine command, there was no crowd to impress, nor was there any person or group of whom he was afraid. Finally, since he was not the ruler of an earthly kingdom, Abraham had no need to appease God so as to ward off the threat of invasion. In other words none of the reasons Hellenist philosophers might propose to explain the practice of child sacrifice applied in the case of Abraham (*On Abraham*, 183-190). Philo thus argued that Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac was unique (*On Abraham*, 196-198).

Philo's retelling of the event 'transforms [the Aqedah] into the willingness of the progressing mind to sacrifice its joy (Isaac)' (Sandmel, 1979, p.62)<sup>23</sup>. Abraham's obedience in the *Aqedah* demonstrated that the patriarch laboured harder than any other human to do the will of God, earning him the reward that God spoke to him as a friend (*On Abraham*, 273; cf. Sandmel, 1979, p.63)<sup>24</sup>. The extent of Philo's esteem of Abraham can be seen in the conclusion of his treatise on the patriarch, 'such is the life of the first author and founder of our nation; a man according to the law, as some persons think, but, as my argument has shown, one who is himself the *unwritten law and justice of God*' [emphasis added] (*On Abraham*, 276). For Philo, therefore, Abraham was a hero who relied completely on God (Mondésert, 1999, p.889).

#### **4.5.3 Abraham in Josephus**

Josephus's task was somewhat more difficult than Philo's as he had to contend with the almost universal scorn and anti-Jewish polemic that followed the first Jewish revolt of 66-73(4) C.E (Mason, 1992, pp.56-57). Consequently, his paraphrasing of the Hebrew Bible is particularly selective revealing his sensitivity to the claims of his protagonists concerning the Jews (Mason, 1992, p.70) as well as his own agenda in promoting the Hellenistic qualities of his Jewish heroes.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *On the Unchangeableness of God*, 4, where Philo says 'If thou wilt know, my mind, what it is to beget not for thyself, learn the lesson from the perfect Abraham. He brings to God the dearly loved, the only trueborn'. offspring of the soul, that clearest image of self-learned wisdom, named Isaac, and without a murmur renders, as in duty bound, this fitting thank-offering'.

<sup>24</sup> Speaking of Abraham's whole-hearted commitment to God, Philo also asserts 'It is the highest praise which can be given to a servant that he neglects none of his master's commands, that never hesitating in his labour of love he employs all and more than all his powers as he strives by sound judgement to bring all his business to a successful issue' (*Who is the heir of Divine Things*, 9).

Josephus' basic approach to the patriarch, Abraham has been summed up by Feldman, 1987, p.137, in this way:

In his portrait of Abraham, Josephus has a striking, unified, and coherent conception. The patriarch emerges as the typical national hero, such as was popular in Hellenistic times, with emphasis on his noble genealogy, his qualities as a convincing speaker, a logician, a philosopher, a scientist, a general, and the supremely good host to strangers<sup>25</sup>.

Indeed, for Josephus, Abraham was 'a man of incomparable virtue, and honored by God in a manner agreeable to his piety towards him' (*Antiquities* 1.17).

Although Josephus makes numerous changes to the biblical record concerning Abraham so as to achieve his aims, (Bailey, 1987, p.157), unlike the author of the *Book of Jubilees* and Philo, the Jewish historian does not try to gloss over the patriarch's weaknesses, hence he openly states that Abraham contrived the device of pretending that Sarah was his sister for his own protection (*Antiquities*, 1.8.1). Abraham, then, is a hero in the Graeco-Roman mould albeit with some human failings. Josephus also departs from earlier Jewish tradition in his treatment of Lot. He excuses the incest between that patriarch and his daughters on the grounds of necessity, arguing that the daughters thought that the rest of mankind had been annihilated in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Antiquities*, 1.11.1).

Josephus's approach to the Aqedah was one of subtle comparison with foundational stories from the Homeric epics and their interpretation by later Greek dramatists. For example, he may have implied that like the Trojan king, Priam, the patriarch Abraham was on the threshold of old age and had a son of promise he was about to lose (Feldman, 1985, pp. 215-

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<sup>25</sup> See Feldman, 'Hellenizations', pp.137-141 for a detailed analysis of how Josephus achieves this in *Antiquities*.

217). Similarly, in his depiction of Isaac, Josephus may have had Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* in view, with its theme of child sacrifice (Feldman, 1985, pp. 219-221; 1987, pp.144, 146). However, one significant difference between the Biblical historical accounts and those of the Homeric epics is the level of detail they provided for the events they recorded. As Auerbach noted in his 1953 study, Homer's accounts were detailed and left nothing to the imagination. Surprise was not one of the epic writer's tools. The Biblical accounts on the other hand provide the bare bones necessary to convey the theological message (Auerbach, 1953, p.11, cited in Feldman, 1985, p.212). Thus Jewish writers needed to provide the missing data, and as we have already seen (see section 4.4), writers such as the author of *Jubilees* had been doing this for at least two hundred years before Josephus wrote. Josephus plays down the theology and theodicy of the biblical account, focusing instead on Abraham's debt to God for all that God had done for him in the past, the adult Isaac's virtues and willingness to be the sacrifice (Feldman, 1985, pp. 213, 218, 226-227; cf. *Antiquities* 1.13.1-4) and Abraham's faith in, and commitment to, God (*Antiquities*, 1.13). But Abraham does not blindly follow God. Josephus presents the patriarch 'in the guise of a . . . Stoic philosopher who believes . . . that it is divine providence (*προνοία*) that ordains everything . . . for God's favoured ones' (Feldman, 1987, p.147).

Josephus, then, goes to great lengths to rationalise Abraham's decision to proceed with the human sacrifice, using the patriarch's speech to his son at the place of sacrifice to argue that Isaac's death would lead to a special departure from the world into the very presence of God (*Antiquities* 1.13). Consequently, not only is Abraham's a rational act, but the God he serves

is not whimsical in his demands. His test of the patriarch's loyalty also reveals the finer virtues of Isaac, the only son of promise.

#### **4.5.4 Summary of Abraham in Philo and Josephus**

Both Authors were concerned to portray the patriarch Abraham in such a way as to be a recognisable Hellenistic hero from history. Whilst they adopt different approaches, they nevertheless go as far as they dare to idealize the patriarch and rationalize his actions. In their portrayal of the *Aqedah* both writers are keen to demonstrate the logic in Abraham's obedience to the divine command and the philosophical and moral benefits accruing from that obedience. It will now be helpful to compare and contrast their approach with that of the writers of the New Testament, including our own Author.

### **4.6 Abraham in the New Testament Outside of the Book of James**

Before examining our Author's use of Abraham and its context, it only remains to consider how the other New Testament writers have used the patriarch. For the sake of convenience I am approaching these in canonical order and make no assertions or assumptions about the dating of these writings.

#### **4.6.1 Abraham in the Gospels and the Book of Acts**

By the time of the New Testament, Abraham was viewed not just as the physical progenitor of the Israelites, but as their hope of future salvation. I have shown that his exemplary status in the Books of the Maccabees was that of the perfect faithful servant under the greatest of trials and temptations (see section 4.3). Hence, those who suffered steadfastly for their beliefs (in the Jewish religion) are designated as true children of the patriarch. The author of

*Jubilees* has added a heavenly dimension to the patriarch's status and reinforced the concept of Abraham being a friend of God, and that of 4 Maccabees gives the patriarch a leading role in welcoming into heaven those who are faithful to the end (4 Macc 13:17). I would proffer the thought that Abraham became a proxy for the faithful Jewish people to the extent that the patriarch's posterity became their main hope of a better future. One can understand, therefore, why first century C. E. Jews should take such great pride in, and draw hope from, their lineage from Abraham. And yet the New Testament writers call this reliance on Abrahamic ancestry into serious doubt from the very start. Both the Matthean and Lukan accounts of John the Baptizer's ministry warn of the presumption of Abrahamic descent and in the case of Matthew, the warning is directed specifically at the Pharisees and the Sadducees (cf. Mt 3:7-9 and Lk 3:7-8). The assertion that 'God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham' (Mt:3:9) paves the way for a radical, even paradigmatic, restatement of what it means to be a descendant of Abraham in the New Testament writings.

There is no questioning of the traditions of Jewish Abrahamic descent in the Gospel of Mark. This gospel's author is content to have Jesus utter an orthodox assertion that the God of the patriarchs is the God of the living and not of the dead, an assertion also placed on the lips of both the Matthean and Lukan Jesus (cf. Mt 22:32; Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37). Similarly the infant narratives of Luke contain traditional references to the divine promises made to Abraham in the songs of Mary (Lk 1:54-55) and of Zechariah (Lk 1:72-75).<sup>26</sup> Both Matthew and Luke, however, after having John the Baptizer prepare the way for the reinterpretation of

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<sup>26</sup> The traditional wording of these two songs suggests they were probably in circulation prior to Luke's Gospel and that the author redacted them for his own eschatological purposes (cf. Nolland, 1989, pp. 74, 91).

Abrahamic descent, place inflammatory statements on the lips of Jesus which would have been sure to have brought both anger and hostility from the Jewish authorities and from those among the people who saw themselves as pious Jews. The Matthean Jesus, responding to the Roman centurion's faith asserts that ' . . . many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness . . . ' (Mt 8:11-12; cf. Lk 13:16), whilst the Lukan Jesus is more specific with his inclusion of the crippled woman healed on the Sabbath (Lk 13: 28), the hated tax collector, Zacchaeus (Lk 19:9) and the righteous poor beggar, Lazarus (Lk 16:22), all of whom, in some way undermine the religious authorities present at these events/story-telling.<sup>27</sup>

The attack on the presumptuous attitude of the religious leaders, though, reaches its climax with the discourse between the Johannine Jesus and the Jewish authorities in the temple (Jn 8:31-59). In this passage, the discourse starts with Jesus asserting that his truth will make his followers free, a claim that has the Jewish leaders responding 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free"?' (Jn 8:33).<sup>28</sup> The tension is between their concept of freedom rooted in their ethnic origin and Jesus' assertion that true descendants of Abraham respond to God's truth

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<sup>27</sup> Whilst only Lk 13:14-17 includes references to religious leaders being present when Jesus uttered his statements, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they were present on the other two occasions. Although Matthew has the centurion coming to Jesus directly, the Lukan account has Jewish elders approaching Jesus on the centurion's behalf cf. Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10. It is also probable that representatives of the Jewish leadership will have been amongst those who complained that Jesus had 'gone to be the guest of one who was a sinner' (Lk 19:7; cf. 19:11 for evidence that a number of people were present when Jesus made his 'son of Abraham' remark regarding Zacchaeus).

<sup>28</sup> I am amongst those who see John's references to 'the Jews' in his gospel as generally referring to the Jewish religious and political leaders (cf. Bultmann, 1971, pp.86-87, 295; Barrett, 1978, pp.171-172).

as revealed by Jesus. Although Jesus acknowledges that his adversaries in this discourse are physical descendants of Abraham, he questions the integrity of their hearts (Jn 8:37-40). The passage ends with the heightened tensions of the Jews trying to stone Jesus for blasphemy and Jesus 'hiding himself' (Jn 8:58-59).

The writer of Acts is concerned not so much with demonstrating that the true descendants of Abraham are those who respond to Jesus, but rather in proving that the God of Abraham is the same God who raised Jesus from the dead, and that since the Jewish authorities were the ones responsible for the death of Jesus, it is they who need to come to terms with the new thing that God had done in and through Jesus. Such references to the patriarch, therefore, are found exclusively in the sermons (Baird, 1988, p.368; cf. Acts 2:22-36; 3:12-15; 4:5-12).

I have shown that three of the four gospel writers (Matthew, Luke and John) have used Abraham in a subversive manner so as to redefine ancestry from Abraham according to their understanding of the Jesus tradition. True descendants of the patriarch are those who hear and respond positively, firstly to the exhortations of the forerunner, John the Baptizer, and secondly to the call of Jesus himself. Other New Testament writers will further develop this departure from traditional Jewish beliefs, but not, as we shall see, our own Author, who will remain within more traditional Jewish exegetical tradition, albeit without embellishing the biblical account.



#### 4.6.2 Abraham in the Pauline Letters

Abraham is only referred to in three 'Pauline' letters, all of which are universally acknowledged to be genuine Pauline compositions, namely: Romans, 2 Corinthians and Galatians. The single reference in 2 Corinthians is in the context of Paul showing that he was descended physically from the same stock as the 'super apostles' who, in Paul's view, had been plaguing the Corinthian church (2 Cor 11:5, 22), and is, therefore, not significant for this particular study, other than confirming what has already been said concerning Jewish pride at their Abrahamic ancestry. It is in the other two letters that we find Paul's distinctive reinterpretation of Abrahamic descent.

I have argued that in early Jewish literature Abraham was declared righteous by reason of his faithfulness to God under testing. In other words his righteousness was a reward for his steadfast commitment to God, especially as depicted in the various accounts of the *Aqedah*. Over time Jewish interpreters including the author of *Jubilees* added circumcision as one of the central planks of Abraham's obedience to the divine commands, hence by the time of Paul this distinctive Jewish rite was vital to a person's inclusion in the divine covenant (Longenecker, 1977, p.204). In Romans 4 and Galatians 3 Paul seeks to sever this traditional Jewish link by arguing that it was not Abraham's *obedience* but his *faith in God's promises* that were accounted as righteousness in the sight of God. Furthermore, since Abraham's righteousness is affirmed before he was circumcised, the patriarch's circumcision was no more than a 'seal of the righteousness he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised' (Rom 4:11a). This opened the way for the apostle to claim that the true seed of Abraham are those who, firstly, show the same kind of faith as Abraham, irrespective of whether they are

physically Jews or Gentiles and irrespective of their circumcision status (Rom 4:11b; Gal 3:7), and secondly 'believe in him who raised Jesus [their] Lord from the dead' (Rom 4:24). Thus Paul also radically reinterprets the Abrahamic traditions, albeit in a different way to the gospel writers. Where they stress the need for a practical response to the new teaching given through John the Baptizer and Jesus, Paul's emphasis is on having the same kind of faith as Abraham but grounded in the resurrected Christ.

### **4.6.3 Abraham in Hebrews**

In the celebrated 'hall of fame' chapter the writer to the Hebrews focuses on the forward-looking dimension of Abraham's faith (Heb 11:8-19). Abraham never received the full extent of the promises made to him, seeing instead only tokens, both with regard to the land, which he dwelt in but did not possess, and his posterity – i.e. that a multitude of peoples would be blessed through him. The author of Hebrews' purpose is to encourage his audience to continue to look (and move) forward and not to return to the Judaism they had left behind (Longenecker, 1977, pp.207-208).

But Abraham does not just appear in Hebrews 11. He is referred to in several earlier passages, with differing emphases. The author argues that Jesus died so as to help the 'descendants of Abraham', and more specifically to help them by destroying the devil, the one who had the power of death, thereby freeing those 'who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death' (Heb 2:14-16).

In his argument concerning the superior priesthood of Melchizedek (and ultimately that of Jesus) the author of Hebrews uses Abraham as a means of demonstrating just how great the

mysterious king of Salem was. The reminder that the patriarch gave tithes to Melchizedek, received a blessing from him and was clearly inferior to him (Heb 7:4-7) is a far cry from the popular image of the patriarch portrayed in *Jubilees* and other Second Temple writings.<sup>29</sup>

The writer to the Hebrews, then, is concerned with reducing the importance of physical descent from Abraham and raising the status of Jesus in all aspects of faith in God.

#### **4.6.4 Summary of Abraham in the New Testament outside of the Book of James**

The New Testament writers surveyed depict and use Abraham very differently from the Jewish writers discussed earlier. The latter, including Philo, a near contemporary of the New Testament authors, placed the patriarch on ever higher pedestals. The New Testament writers, on the other hand, whilst acknowledging the patriarch's status as the progenitor of Israel and the one who would share the feast of the new age with his descendants, focus on redefining the scope of those who would inherit the patriarch's posterity. I have posited that it was not just Paul who argued for a new understanding of who could be the heirs of Abraham. Although the apostle is the one who developed the theme the farthest, Matthew, Luke and John also make this point subversively, whilst the writer to the Hebrews is concerned with demonstrating Jesus' superiority to all aspects of the Judaism(s) of his day.

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<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately there is a lacuna in the Ethiopic manuscripts of *Jubilees* so we do not know how the author (re)interpreted the Genesis account, although it is clear that he did include it since where the text resumes we read '[. . . this tithe was] for Abram, and for his seed, a tenth of the first fruits to the Lord, and the Lord ordained it as an ordinance for ever that they should give it to the priests who served before Him, that they should possess it for ever' (*Jub.* 13.25). See also Wintermute, 1985, p.84, n.13f; VanderKam, 2001, pp.48-49.

One can also note what the New Testament writers have *not* done with Abraham. Whilst arguments from silence can be precarious, the absence of Abraham as an exemplar of resolute obedience in the midst of the sorest of trials (the ultimate in discipleship) contrasts markedly with the earlier Jewish (especially Maccabean) works. It is, of course, Jesus who fulfils this role for the New Testament writers surveyed, especially through his death on the cross.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4.7 Abraham in the Book of James

Abraham, like the other three named exemplars, appears in just one unit of the Book of James. The Author's citing of the patriarch in Jas 2:21-24 forms part of a larger diatribal passage (2:14-26) which also includes the exemplar Rahab. However this diatribal unit may also have a context by reason of a connection to the unit that precedes it (2:1-13). I shall, therefore, briefly look at the preceding unit before considering the diatribe in which the references to Abraham are made.

##### 4.7.1 James 2:1-13 – A Brief Review

The Author had ended his introduction by urging his audience to keep themselves unstained by the world (1:27). Leaving that exhortation ringing in his audience's ears, he commences the main body of his composition by asking whether partiality could really exist alongside true faith in, or as exemplified/taught by, Jesus Christ and by extension, alongside the faith that should be evident in the community which purports to follow Jesus (2:1). James 2:1 is one of the verses outside of the Pauline corpus appealed to in the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate.

Despite its difficult construction (cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.128) most commentators interpret the

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<sup>30</sup> In addition to their accounts of the crucifixion, the Gospel writers have Jesus linking discipleship to taking up a cross (Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27). Paul makes the point specifically in Phil 2:8. Cf. also Heb 12:1-3 and 1 Pe 2:20-24.

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ of this verse as an objective genitive, in other words, as referring to a person's faith *in* Jesus Christ (e.g. Ropes, 1916, p.187; Cantinat, 1973, p.120; Adamson, 1976, pp.101-102; Dibelius, 1976, pp.127-128; Laws, 1980, pp.93-94; Davids, 1982, pp.105-107; Vouga, 1984, pp.70-71; Martin, 1988, p.59; Townsend, 1994, pp.33-34; Richardson, 1997, p.108; Moo, 2000, pp.99-102; McKnight, 2011, pp.174-177). A few commentators, however, see a subjective genitive here (cf. Johnson, 1995, p.220; Wall, 1997a, pp.107-110; Wachob, 2000, pp. 64-65; Witherington, 2007, p.453), or simply want to retain the ambiguity of the Greek original (Brosend, 2004, p.58). A consideration of the meaning of the 'faith' word group in early Jewish literature may help. In both Hebrew and Greek language and thought, the concepts of faith and faithfulness are closely linked so that those who have faith (or trust) in God are faithful to God (e.g. through keeping Torah) and those who are faithful to God are people of true faith (Bauckham, 1999, p.120). As we saw in sections 4.2-4.5, the evidence of Abraham's 'faith' was his obedience and commitment to God in his trials over the course of his life. In other words he did not simply believe (in) God, he demonstrated that belief/trust in the way he met and overcame the challenges of life. He was faithful and committed to God. I argued in section 3:3 that our Author, too, sees πίστις as embracing a total commitment to God and not just a belief in him. Additionally, such commitment has both a vertical (i.e commitment from person to God) and a horizontal (commitment from person to other persons) dimension. In other words it is not enough to be pure in one's cultic duties before God, one must also show care and compassion for others (1:22-27; cf. Isa 1:11-17; Verseput, 1997, p.115). I am inclined, therefore, to side with the minority with regard to this particular verse (2:1), since like, Wachob, I can see: ' . . . nothing in the thoroughly theocentric letter of James that plainly suggests a faith *in* Jesus, in the sense of

the Pauline kerygma' (Wachob, 2000, p.65; cf. also Lowe, 2009, pp.253-257, who argues for a subjective genitive but sees the faith of Jesus Christ as Jesus' trust in God).<sup>31</sup>

The showing of partiality through judging others on their outward appearance (2:2-4) is the way the κόσμος operates, and should, therefore, have no place among the Author's audience, since 'friendship with the world is hostility towards God' (4:4). Furthermore, it is contrary to the way that God views people. Whether they be the (pious) poor (2:5), or a future king of Israel (1 Sam 16:7), God looks at the inward person. Consequently, if they were to show partiality, whether in the context of a liturgical gathering (or possibly a judicial setting; cf. Ward, 1969, pp.87-97), the Author's audience would be in direct conflict with God, and thereby become transgressors of God's law (2:8-9). Whilst the Author probably does not have a specific incident in mind, the way the question is framed in Jas 2:1 may point to his being aware that such practices of partiality are occurring within the communities over which he has teaching oversight (Watson, 1993, p.120). Partiality constitutes a transgression of the royal law, and ultimately leaves the perpetrator at risk of divine judgement (2:8-11), especially where such transgression reveals a lack of mercy (2:13).

Although the arguments throughout Jas 2 are essentially hypothetical (Watson, 1993, pp. 102-104; Richardson, 1997, p.106; Bauckham, 1999, p.59) they nevertheless shed light on practices within the world in which the Author and his audience lived. We learn that

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<sup>31</sup> As Lowe also notes, 'It is somewhat ironic that Dunn (who favours the objective genitive in Paul) sees Jas 2:1 as a probable . . . subjective genitive, while Daniel Wallace (who favours the subjective genitive in Paul), believes Jas 2:1 is [a clear example of an objective genitive]'. (Lowe, 2009, p.240, n.5; cf. Wallace, 1996, p.116).

members of the community have been (or are at risk of being) dragged into the courts and defrauded by the wealthy (2:6) and that the wealthy regularly blaspheme the ‘excellent name that was invoked over [the community]’ (2:7).<sup>32</sup> We are also given an insight into the Author’s view of the law in this unit. It is a royal law (2:8), and whilst the Author cites Leviticus 19:18 as the scriptural evidence for his statement, it is probable that, given the way he consistently draws on his master’s teaching, he has in mind the law of the Kingdom as reinterpreted by Jesus, (Johnson, 1995, p.230; Witherington, 2007, p.460; see also my arguments in section 3:13). The issue of partiality is still in view as it seems unlikely to be mere coincidence that the Leviticus citation itself follows swiftly on the divine command that the Israelites ‘. . . not render an unjust judgment . . . [and] not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice [were the Israelites to] judge [their] neighbour’ (Lev 19:15).<sup>33</sup> And if partiality is still in view, then so is the faith that pertains to Jesus Christ (2:1). This royal law is one that will bring freedom to those who fulfil it (2:12) but judgement on those who fail to show the mercy required by it (2:13; cf. Mt 5:7). As Dyrness noted forty years ago:

Showing mercy is the way that love will express itself in [the] new [messianic] community. This will involve at the very least a welcome for the poor (as for the rich) and it will lead to an active outgoing compassion toward all those in need (see 1:27). Moreover the judgment that God will bring will be directly related to the judgment we pass on those around us (cf. Mt. 6: 14ff: and 18:23-35). (Dyrness, 1981, p.14).

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<sup>32</sup> Most commentators, correctly in my view, see the name as being that of Jesus (cf. Adamson, 1976, pp.114-115; Dibelius, 1976, p.141; Davids, 1982, p.114; Townsend, 1994, p.39; Johnson, 1995, p.226; Wall, 1997a, p.118; Moo, 2000, p.109; Cheung, 2003, p.98; Witherington, 2007, p.459; McKnight, 2011, pp.200-203). An alternative view is held by Kloppenborg, 2007, pp.248-249, who suggests that after the fall of Jerusalem the name of God may have been widely defamed, (cf. the inference in 4 Ezra 10:22 where amongst other things ‘our holy things have been polluted, and the name by which we are called has been almost profaned’). Hence if one argues for a later dating for the Book of James, it is possible that the profaned name may be that of God.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson in fact asserts that ‘the way [James] places this citation [Lev 19:18b] in the context of *προσωποληψία* (2:1, 9) has led most readers to acknowledge that, at least here, James made use of Lev 19:18b within its original context (Lev 19:15)’ (Johnson, 1982, p.391).

This, then, is the background to the celebrated (or should that be notorious) ‘faith –v– works’ unit (2:14-26) to which I will now turn.

#### 4.7.2 A Hypothetical Example (Jas 2:14-17)

2:14 Τί τὸ ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγῃ τις ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν; 2:15 ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν καὶ λιπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς 2:16 εἶπη δέ τις αὐτοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν· ὑπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε, μὴ δῶτε δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος, τί τὸ ὄφελος; 2:17 οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχη ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστίν καθ’ ἑαυτήν.

2:14 What good is it my brothers, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Is this type of faith able to save him? 2:15 If a brother or sister were to be naked, and lacking daily food, 2:16 and if one of you should say to them: ‘depart in peace, be warmed and fed’, but does not give them the necessities of life, what good is that? 2:17 In the same way faith, if it does not have works, is dead.

The change of focus from partiality to faith and works sees the Author develop the theme first introduced in Jas 1:22-25, namely the need for true followers of Jesus to be habitual doers of the implanted word and not hearers only. Whilst the implanted word has power to save the soul (1:21), it can only do so where an active faith is evident in the life of the members of the community, and the Author is determined to ram this message home in no uncertain terms. It would be misleading, though, to see his argument purely in terms of the need for works. As I will show, the Author’s real argument is that vital faith and works are inseparable.

The diatribe begins, then, with the issue to be argued, ‘What good is it . . . if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Is this type of faith able to save him?’ This double question is followed by a hypothetical situation so crass as to make the answer obvious even to pagans (Davids, 1982, p.121; cf. Richardson, 1997, p.107, who suggests that the Author uses extreme examples throughout the composition). But the parable enables the Author to



establish his basic tenet, namely that faith which is not evidenced through works is dead (2:17).

The phrase τί τὸ ὄφελος followed by the subjunctive introduces the Author's argument. His own position is very clear from both the first question 'What is the use (or 'good') of faith without works?' and the way the second question is phrased, since the use of μή at the beginning of the latter anticipates and invites a negative answer. The reappearance of the phrase in Jas 2:16 forms an *inclusio* which frames the issue and the question, 'Can the type of faith that is not accompanied by works save a person?' The use of the article with πίστις in Jas 2:14 is anaphoric, referring back not simply to 'faith' in its generic sense but to the particular type of faith already described – namely 'faith without works' (Wallace, 1996, p.219; Witherington, 2007, p.473). As I will show, the Author does not believe that there is such a faith, but he is prepared to use the term, for the sake of his argument, to describe a belief which argues that one only needs faith in order to be saved and that works are unnecessary for the 'saved person' (cf. Calvin, 1972, p.283, who posits that the Author has allowed his adversary in this passage the word he wants and therefore '... is not speaking out of his own understanding of the word [faith] when he calls it 'faith', but is disputing with those who pretend insincerely to faith . . .').

The Author's ἔργα are the ethical demands of the royal law. Not only do we have a hypothetical example of expected ethical behaviour in these verses, but the whole of Jas 2 has been dealing with the requirements of this ethical code. The Author is not, therefore, referring directly to ceremonial or cultic works such as circumcision, Sabbath keeping or

food laws, nor even to temple sacrifices, although these may be in the background (cf. Verseput, 1997, especially pp.104-109, who argues that 'faith' on its own in James represents piety towards God and hence embraces a person's cultic behaviour). The Author's concern is to remind his audience of what the true and vital faith of Jesus Christ looks like and to encourage them to practice it.

Some commentators, in order to emphasize the distinction between the Author's context and those of Paul in his letters to the Galatians and Romans, call these works, 'works of love/mercy' as opposed to 'works of the law', and suggest they are similar to the rabbinic *gemiluth hasadim* (cf. Adamson, 1976, p.122; Davids, 1982, p.121; Martin, 1988, pp.80-81). Some want to use the word 'deeds' instead of 'works' so as to avoid such confusion (Martin, 1988, p.80-81; Johnson, 1995, p.237 ; Moo, 2000, p.119). Unfortunately the latter approach detracts from the Author's rhetorical acumen in Jas 2:22 as I will show (see section 4.7.4). As to the former group, whilst, the Author's 'works of love' are not dissimilar to the rabbinic *gemiluth hasadim*, and assuming for the sake of argument that some form of *gemiluth hasadim* existed at the time of Jesus (and there can be no certainty on that point), I would suggest that since our Author is primarily obligated to Jesus for his interpretation of Torah and its ethical requirements, his concept of 'works of love' will be more demanding than those of the early rabbinic tradition and any oral traditions on which it may be based (cf. Mt 5:17-48).

The second part of the Author's opening double question relates to salvation. The concept of 'being saved' is not only a Christian one, of course, and it would be presumptuous to think in

terms of a saving faith in Jesus Christ every time it is used in a biblical text. There are no compelling grounds in this passage to link the salvation of which the Author speaks to a belief in the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross (cf. sections 3.8, 3.14). The Author has spent the first half of this chapter showing how partiality contravenes the law of the kingdom and asserting that the breaking of just one commandment constitutes a breach of the whole law, a law which as Jesus confirmed (and our Author agrees) is summed up by the love command (cf. Mt 22:36-40; Mk 12:28-34a). Our Author will now prove that (the) true faith of Jesus Christ is one that demonstrates its validity by how the true adherent keeps that law through his actions. It is probable, therefore, that salvation in the Book of James refers to the eschatological vindication of the righteous that will come with the imminent Parousia of Jesus as the dispenser of God's justice, judgement and reward (5:7-11; cf. Moo, 2000, pp.133-134).

The Author's hypothetical example encourages his audience to place themselves in the situation he describes. It is noteworthy that he includes both 'brother' and 'sister' in this example. It is the only occasion on which he expressly includes the community's women in his composition. His consistent addressing of his audience as ἀδελφοί μου (ἀγαπητοί) throughout may imply that the community remained an essentially patriarchal one.

However, the inclusion of ἡ ἀδελφὴ in Jas 2:15 makes it clear that the Author views any neglect of the women of the community as being just as unacceptable as the neglect of any of the men.

In the example, the brother or sister is both inadequately clothed and lacking daily food (the literal translation of the Greek λειπόμεινοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς). The brethren's situation has been clearly stated as one of great need. What should the community's response be? The answer is obvious to anyone; anything short of providing direct help to the destitute brother or sister would be a shameful response both in terms of the Jewish ethical law and the early Jesus traditions. The Author, with his more rigorous ethical code, is clearly expecting his audience to agree with his implied assertion that the only acceptable response is to provide practical help. After all those versed in the teaching of Jesus are likely to recognise that the exemplary hungry and naked brethren are two of the needy groups in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Kamell, 2010, p.172). Dismissing the suffering person with a religiously charged prayer of departure (Martin, 1988, pp.84-85) is a wholly inadequate and amoral response, and sure to bring divine judgement in the severest of terms (Mt 25:31-46). Furthermore, if Adamson is right in his suggestion that the use of the verb ὑπάρχω may imply that the Author is thinking in terms of the period of destitution being more than a temporary one, then the audience would no doubt be outraged at the thought that a brother or sister could be left in a state of need for any length of time (Adamson, 1976, pp.122-123).

The repetition of the question τί τὸ ὄφελος in Jas 2:16, not only acts as an *inclusio*, it also reinforces the Author's argument and dares his audience to disagree with his assertion, which he is, of course confident, they will not.

Having established the foundation of his case, the Author underlines it with the stark yet provocative conclusion that faith which is not accompanied by action is dead (2:17), a metaphor he will repeat twice more in the course of this diatribe (2:20, 26).

### 4.7.3 A Hypothetical Objection (Jas 2:18-20)

2:18 Ἄλλ' ἐρεῖ τις· σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, καὶ ἐγὼ ἔργα ἔχω· δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, καὶ ἐγὼ σοὶ δεῖξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν. 2:19 σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, καλῶς ποιεῖς καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσοσιν. 2:20 Θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι, ὡς ἄνθρωπε κενέ, ὅτι ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστίν;

2:18 But someone will say: 'you have faith, and I have works'. Show me your faith apart from works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 2:19 You believe that God is one – you do well; but the demons also believe and tremble with fear. 2:20 But do you wish to know, o empty man, that faith apart from works is useless?

Much has been written on the exegetical difficulties raised by Jas 2:18-19. Even Dibelius found the verse one of the most difficult in the New Testament (Dibelius, 1976, p.154).<sup>34</sup>

Why should the Author introduce someone who would seem to be addressing him as if the Author were the one who had faith, and he, the 'someone', the person who had works? This is especially problematic because the one speaking in the second part of Jas 2:18 lays down the challenge that his 'opponent' show their faith apart from works if they can, and the one speaking will show their faith out of their works. Various solutions have been proposed.<sup>35</sup>

The most satisfactory are those which take due account of the subtleties of ancient rhetorical practices.<sup>36</sup> What is clear is that the phrase ἄλλ' ἐρεῖ τις at the beginning of the verse is a standard device in diatribal openings, intended to introduce an imaginary interlocutor for the purpose of advancing an author's argument (Dibelius, 1976, p.150;

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<sup>34</sup> Dibelius has the good grace to say 'I will . . . attempt an interpretation . . .' (emphasis added); (Dibelius, 1976, p.154).

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed analysis of the problem see, inter alia, Dibelius, 1976, pp.149-151, 154-158; Martin, 1988, pp.87-88; Watson, 1993, pp.109-111; Wall, 1997a, pp.138-142; Blomberg and Kamell, 2008, pp.132-134; McKnight, 2011, pp.235-239.

<sup>36</sup> Watson's analysis of Jas 2 is helpful in understanding the subtleties of the use of the diatribe in New Testament times, Watson, 1993, pp.94-121.

Stowers, 1981, p.128; Bauckham, 1999, p.58). Such interlocutor need not be an opponent in the normal sense of the word (although he often is). He can simply be an imaginary slow or stubborn student whom the teacher must be seen to win over in order to demonstrate to all the validity of his own argument (Stowers, 1981, p.81; Bauckham, 1999, p.58). This latter interpretation of the interlocutor's role may be the more appropriate given the Author's teaching role and the overall tenor of the composition as a means for him to reinforce his teaching in the light of the imminent Parousia of the Lord.

The interlocutor's position is succinctly stated in Jas 2:18a, and the Author even allows him to take the high moral ground of Jewish orthopraxy (Witherington, 2007, p.475). The questions 'who has faith?' and 'who has works?', are the wrong questions, hence the interlocutor's basic premise that faith can exist separately from works, is flawed, as our author's retort is intended to demonstrate. He will soon show just how fatally flawed the premise is.

I would posit that the Author has constructed the chiasm of Jas 2:18 with faith framing works so as to provide a rhetorical clue that real vital faith must embrace works to prove its genuineness. The symmetry of the verse is further strengthened through the use of the verbs ἔχειν and δείκνυμι by both parties. Finally both πίστις and ἔργα appear three times. Hence faith and works are inexorably linked in the Author's thought, and neither can lead to salvation without the other.

With his use of the second person singular, the Author is still addressing the imaginary interlocutor in Jas 2:19, the verse in which he undermines the idea that there can be vital faith apart from works.

There are a number of textual variants in Jas 2:19 with respect to the word order of the interlocutor's confession. What is it that the Author has him believe? The formula εἷς ἔστιν ὁ θεός is well-established in Jewish thought, echoing as it does, the *Shema* of Deut 6:4. The order εἷς (ὁ) ἔστιν θεός is, as Johnson notes, closer to the typical Christian confession (Johnson, 1995, pp.240-241). The NRSV translates 2:19a as 'you believe that God is one' whereas the NIV favours 'you believe there is one God'.<sup>37</sup> Whichever text and translation one chooses, the point that the Author is making remains clear, namely that mere mental assent to God's oneness/existence is less than worthless on its own, since even the demons are able to give mental assent to such a confession and their destiny is clearly one of damnation, not salvation.<sup>38</sup> Hence, the concept of a belief which does not include works is not true faith as far as our Author is concerned. It is a case of 'call this belief-without-works what you will, but you must not call it faith, because that is the one thing it most certainly is not'. Dibelius recognizes this in his translation of 2:18b where he has the Author retorting to the interlocutor, 'show me your *faith-apart-from-works* [emphasis added], and I will show

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<sup>37</sup> The ECM sees both variants as of equal merit; see <http://www-user.uni-bremen.de/~wie/ECM/ECM-Variants-James.html> accessed 7th April 2011. Most commentators opt for the translation 'you believe God is one'; see for example Dibelius, 1976, p.149; Laws, 1980, p.125; Martin, 1988, p.89; Johnson, 1995, p.240 Moo, 2000, p.130; Witherington, 2007, p.476; McKnight, 2011, p.240. Those favouring 'you believe there is one God' include, Adamson, 1976, p.121.

<sup>38</sup> The use of a plural verb with the neuter plural δαιμόνια may serve to emphasize that every single demon believes and shudders individually as well as all of them as a collective group, (Wallace, 1996, p.400).

you faith by my works' (Dibelius, 1976, p.149).<sup>39</sup> The Author knows only one kind of faith and that is the faith he himself is advocating – a faith that proves itself by its works. There is no other type of faith worthy of the name. So whilst he speaks of the demons having a creedal type of belief about God, this is not a type of faith (contra *inter alia* Jeremias, 1955, p.370; Dyrness W, 1981, p.16).

Having 'won' the second round of the diatribal contest in such flamboyant style by introducing the demons as exemplars of cerebral creedal belief, one might expect the Author to conclude his argument at this point and rest his case. Instead, he strikes before the interlocutor can get his breath back. ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ, he cries, perhaps as an impassioned plea in case there is still someone in his real audience who doubts his argument concerning the nature of true faith.<sup>40</sup> But why should the interlocutor be addressed as 'empty' or 'vain'? A clue may lie in the choice of verb. Instead of simply asking 'Do you not know . . .?', the Author introduces the verb θελω. This could suggest that the interlocutor (student who is slow on the uptake) is either being stubborn or is refusing outright to contemplate the idea that faith needs works in order to be validated as saving faith. The question may be along the thought lines of 'Do you even want to know . . .?' or, 'Is your mind so closed that you cannot or will not see . . .?' The English adjective 'vain' would fit such an interpretation well. On the other hand, the use later in the verse of ἀργή, a clear play on ἔργα from which it is derived (Cantinat, 1973, p.151; Dibelius, 1976, pp.160-161;

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<sup>39</sup> However, later in his commentary, he (or Heinrich Greeven) asserts 'Jas does know of a faith without works', which seems to undermine his apparently careful translation of 2:18, where he had deliberately omitted the 'my' in μου τὴν πίστιν in his translation (Dibelius, 1976, pp.149, 163).

<sup>40</sup> Wallace posits that 'the use of the vocative with ὦ preceding it . . . is used in contexts where deep emotion is to be found' and cites Jas 2:20 as an example, (Wallace, 1996, pp.68-69).



Martin, 1988, p.90; Moo, 2000, p.132; McKnight, 2011, p. 243)<sup>41</sup> might suggest ‘empty’ as a better translation for κενέ. Either way, belief-apart-from-works is, and always will be, without worth. Moo provides what is, perhaps, the most succinct and clever rendering of the Author’s thought and rhetorical play on words with his ‘faith that does not “work”, “does not work”’ (Moo, 2000, p.132). In fact such faith (or as I prefer to call it ‘belief-apart-from-works’) is less than useless because it will lure its unsuspecting adherents to the same fate as the demons, the ‘ultimate exemplars of belief without praxis’ as Witherington describes them (Witherington, 2007, p.476).

And still our Author is not finished. Whether the interlocutor wants it or not, he is about to receive the final proofs of the argument that vital faith and works are inseparable. The scene is now set for Abraham and Rahab, exemplars from the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition.

#### **4.7.4 The Example of Abraham (Jas 2:21-24)**

2:21 Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ἀνεύγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον; 2:22 βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη, 2;23 καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἢ λέγουσα· ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη. 2:24 ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.

2;21 Our father Abraham, was he not deemed righteous by reason of his works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 2:22 You see that faith was working together with his works, and faith was made perfect by works, 2;23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which said: ‘and Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness and he was called a friend of God’. 2:24 You see that a man is made righteous by (his) works and not by faith alone

Abraham would be an obvious exemplary choice for any community with a Jewish heritage, including those Jewish communities that had become followers of Jesus. By calling Abraham ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν, the Author intends to draw both his audience and the interlocutor to his

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<sup>41</sup> A few scholars see its use as a possible, as opposed to clear, play on words; see Ropes, 1916, p.217; Wall, 1997a, p.138.

case. Every one of the hearers (whether real or imaginary) would aver Abraham as their father, and themselves as his legitimate descendants. There could not have been a more relevant exemplar to unite the Author's audience. McKnight is probably right when he asserts, 'The NRSV's "ancestor" is not enough; Abraham is more than "ancestor." He is *the* ancestor [emphasis in original] – in other words, the "father" of Israel and the father of the messianic community' (McKnight, 2011, p.245).

The Author's argument is constructed as follows:

1. A rhetorical question linking Abraham's justification to his offering of Isaac in the *Aqedah* (2:21).
2. A statement explaining in part how the patriarch's faith and works interacted in that event (2:22).
3. An intertextual reading of Gen 22 as a kind of fulfilment of Gen 15:6 ending with a statement of the patriarch's reward (2:23).
4. A conclusion regarding the means by which people are justified (2:24).

I have chosen, therefore, to examine the Author's argument under these four headings and as far as possible in the order he has used.

#### **4.7.4.1      *A Rhetorical Question about the Aqedah (Jas 2:21)***

The rhetorical question to the interlocutor, 'Our father Abraham, was he not ἐδικαιώθη by reason of his works . . . ?', is this time phrased in a manner that expects or even demands a positive response – 'Yes! Abraham was ἐδικαιώθη by reason of his works'. But what exactly does the Author mean by ἐδικαιώθη by reason of his works? The possibilities are 'pronounced and treated as righteous', 'justified', or 'vindicated' (Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.429).

The passive form of 'δικαιώω' in Jas 2:21 begs the question: who or what is doing the 'justifying'/'pronouncing and treating as righteous'/'vindicating'? Is it Abraham's act of willing offering or is it God? Obviously, in the case of 'pronouncing and treating as righteous', the subject of the verb can only be God. Most translators, though, go with 'justified' (e.g. NRSV, ESV, NASB, NJB, NKJV), although the more conservative NIV prefers 'considered righteous'. Either way we are still left with the question – Was God in any way honour bound to justify Abraham/consider him righteous by reason of Abraham's actions? As I have already shown (see sections 4.3-4.5), Jewish writings increasingly answered 'yes' to this question by interpreting Abraham's overcoming of his trials, as meritorious works which gained eternal blessings for his descendants. It is important to grasp that in these writings, 'Abraham is not considered a justified sinner who has been saved by grace. Rather he is a man whose righteousness is recognised and rewarded by God' (Dibelius, 1976, p.162). Like Job, the patriarch we shall consider later in this study, Abraham was portrayed in early Jewish literature as a man who was righteous and upright in the sight of God, and one who feared God and eschewed evil (Gen 22:12; cf. Job 1:1, 8). The recognition of Abraham's righteousness derives from his active faith, a trusting of God which led him to be obedient to the divine commands throughout his life from his response to God's call to leave the idolatrous city of Ur of the Chaldeans right through to the burying of his wife Sarah, but most of all it is seen in the *Aqedah*, in which Abraham demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice the 'child of promise'. It will be this 'work of faith' that our Author uses to underscore the assertion he has just made in Jas 2:20 that ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστίν. I will conclude the examination of what our Author means by the question 'Our father Abraham, was he not ἐδικαιώθη by reason of his works?' at the end of my exegesis of Jas 2:24.

The *Aqedah* as recorded in Gen 22:1-19 probably represents more than one account of the event, with the earlier account comprising Gen 22:1-14, 19, and Gen 22:15-18 forming a later interpolation, and possibly even a commentary on the earlier text (Moberly, 1988, pp.302-323; cf. Whybray, 2001, p.54; cf. Westermann, 1985, p.363, who concludes 'there is virtual unanimity that vv. 15-18 are a later addition to the narrative of 22:1-14,19'). After his analysis of the passage Moberly asserts:

It may be concluded, therefore, that the consensus view of xxii 15-18 as an addition to the story of xxii 1-14, 19 has not been seriously challenged, and should continue to be maintained as the most likely explanation of the textual peculiarities of structure, style and vocabulary . . . (Moberly, 1988, p.318).

The biblical addition reads:

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."(Gen 22:15-18).

What is noteworthy in this addition is that the divine blessing is expressly stated to have been given on account of Abraham's obedience. Furthermore, it is no mere reiteration of the earlier divine promises in Genesis (cf. Gen 12:1-3; 15:5, 7; 17:2, 4-8), but rather an extension of those promises to Isaac and his descendants. In other words, as Moberly goes on to posit:

A promise which previously was grounded solely in the will and purpose of Yahweh is transformed so that it is now grounded both in the will of Yahweh and in the obedience of Abraham. It is not that the divine promise has become contingent upon Abraham's obedience, but that Abraham's obedience has been incorporated into the divine promise. Henceforth Israel owes its existence not just to Yahweh but also to Abraham. (Moberly, 1988, pp.320-321).

This extension of the promises to Isaac and his descendants is reiterated in a divine revelation to that patriarch in which the promises are expressly linked to Abraham's obedience to God (Gen 26:3-5). In other words, the interpolation at Gen 22:15-18 is not an isolated statement in the Hebrew canon. It reflects how biblical and subsequent Early Jewish tradition increasingly came to view 'Father Abraham' as the epitome of obedience to YHWH and as the nation's hope of salvation (see sections 4.2-4.5).

Abraham's action is described by our Author in Jas 2:21 as that of 'offer[ing his son], Isaac on the altar', i. e. it is as if he had actually gone through with the sacrifice. The biblical account, of course, states that Abraham's hand was stayed from slaying his son (Gen 22:10-12). However, we should note that in the interpolation of Genesis 22:15-18, the 'angel of the Lord' treats Abraham's act as one in which the patriarch did not withhold his only son. (Gen 22:12).<sup>42</sup> In other words, it reads in isolation as if Abraham had physically slain Isaac. Some scholars have suggested that the interpolation at Gen 22:15-18 points to an older tradition behind the biblical text, and in this older tradition, Isaac is actually sacrificed.<sup>43</sup> However, there are no grounds for thinking that our Author was aware of any such traditions.

#### **4.7.4.2      *The Interaction of Faith and Works (Jas 2:22)***

The Author has asserted that, by offering Isaac on the altar, Abraham was justified/considered to be righteous. On the face of it he is arguing that Abraham's justification arose out of his act or 'works'. But how does our author view the role of

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<sup>42</sup> Whilst Abraham had other sons through Hagar and his concubines, Isaac was the only son of the promise God had made.

<sup>43</sup> Zuckerman, building on the work of Spiegel, argues that vestiges of this older tradition can still be seen embedded in the Genesis account. See Zuckerman, 1991, pp.18-20 for his evidence; pp.30-32 for the possible parallels in other Ancient Near Eastern texts.

Abraham's works? I will start by considering what he says in Jas 2:22 where he reinforces his argument that faith and works cannot be separated in the way proposed by the interlocutor (he is still addressing a singular 'you'): βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη.

As Martin argues: 'the partnership of faith and works as if to form one entity is emphasized again' (Martin, 1988, p.93). Adamson, preferring to build on a quote by Hort, asserts: ' . . . this idea of a partner, not instrument, is vital for bringing out the real force of the passage, namely, that the writer is not pleading "for faith plus works . . . but for faith at work"'. (Adamson, 1976, p.130).

Faith and works are co-workers in the Kingdom that Jesus preached, the kingdom that the Author is trying to nurture and strengthen (cf. Mt 7:21-27; 8:13; 9:2 for examples in Jesus' teaching). They are the two rails on which the salvation train must journey into the eschaton. There is no room for a monorail service of 'faith alone' in our Author's theology; nor does he suggest that works are somehow less important than faith, as some commentators have tried to argue (cf. Tasker, 1957, pp.68-69; Cranfield, 1965, pp.340-341; Davids, 1982, p.128).<sup>44</sup> It is not even a simple case of works demonstrating faith as McKnight has rightly highlighted. Wary of the continued attempts by some Protestant scholars to interpret the Author's understanding of the relationship between faith and works as one in which faith is demonstrated by works, McKnight argues:

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<sup>44</sup> Moo cites Tasker and Cranfield as two earlier scholars who argued that συνήργει should be translated as 'assist'. Moo rightly rejects this interpretation, (Moo, 2000, p.136).

Yes works demonstrate faith, but they also perfect and fulfil faith and, as James goes to great pains to emphasize, the two work together to produce a working faith that saves. His emphasis is on their inseparability, not on distinguishing them or on their sequential relationship. (McKnight, 2011, pp.243-244; cf. Ropes, 1916, p.219).

The argument right through this diatribal unit has been that the only type of faith that can be called 'faith' is 'faith-with-works'. The use of the verb *συνεργέω* in Jas 2.22, therefore, is probably deliberate, a rhetorical play on words to reinforce the Author's argument that works are an integral part of an active faith (Catinat, 1973, p.151). Johnson, then, is surely right in asserting: 'This is . . . one instance where the practice of translating *erga* as "deeds" misses an important nuance in James' statement, which reads literally "faith was co-working with his works"' (Johnson, 1995, p.243; cf. Moo, 2000, p.136). Indeed, the real issue seems to be one of theological unease with the English words 'justified' and 'works', an unease which spills over into the decisions made by modern translators on this passage (cf. the differences in Jas 2:20-26 between the NRSV and the (T)NIV translations as noted by McKnight, 2011, pp.232-234). The concept of a 'faith-with-works' or as I shall call it 'faithworks', is identified by most modern commentators as a suitable way of explaining the relationship between faith and works in the Author's thought (Adamson, 1976, p.130; McKnight, 2011, p.244).

But the Author does not stop at calling faith and works 'co-workers'. He goes on to explain in part how the interaction operates, namely that Abraham's faith was made perfect, or brought to full maturity by his works. We see here, the Author drawing on his introductory chapter and especially: *ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργων τέλειον ἔχεται, ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι . . .* (1:4) (Johnson, 1995, p.243). I suggested in the previous chapter that Jas 1:2-4 contained five

important catchwords which together, provide a framework in which to understand his message, and that these reappear at key places in the composition (see section 3.3). In this one verse (2:22) we have no fewer than three of these catchwords, πίστις, ἔργα and cognates of τέλειος (and ἔργον) working together to reinforce the Author's argument concerning the true nature of faith, and although the the other two catchwords (πειρασμός and ὑπομονή) are not actually used, the *Aqedah*, referred to in the previous verse was surely Abraham's greatest πειρασμός (Spero, 2000, p.73), for which he would have needed ὑπομονή and, therefore, provides the context for the use of the other three.

Several commentators see the Author setting faith and works in deliberate balance in Jas 2:22. Davids, for example, argues that Abraham's faith assists his works and that the balance between the two occurs with the statement in Jas 2:22b that Abraham's faith was perfected by his works. Davids, though, objects to the idea of works 'completing' faith as if faith was somehow incomplete. Rather, works perfect faith by bringing it to maturity (Davids, 1982, p.128). Moo circumvents this problem by positing that the phrase should be interpreted as ' . . . Abraham's faith . . . reached its intended goal when the patriarch did what God was asking him to do' (Moo, 2000, p.137). However, Witherington posits:

The verb *synērgēi* in James 2:22 should be seen as an iterative<sup>45</sup> imperfect that implies that faith was working along with works at the same time side by side; it implies that these two things coexisted in Abraham's life over a period of time. (Witherington, 2007, p.477).

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<sup>45</sup> One might want to take issue with the Witherington's use of 'iterative' here, (cf. Wallace, 1996, pp.546-548) although his reference to faith and works coexisting side by side over a period of time is well made.



In other words, although our Author only cites the *Aqedah*, it is not only in this single event that Abraham's faith was made perfect. Rather the tenor of Abraham's life was one in which his faith and works worked together to bring the patriarch's faith to maturity-perfection.

#### *4.7.4.3 Intertextuality and a Patriarch's Reward*

The Author now adds canonical support to his argument. The passage quoted (Gen 15:6) refers to an event that preceded the *Aqedah* by many years, confirming that our Author probably had more than just the *Aqedah* in mind when he proposed the patriarch, Abraham, as an exemplar. Whenever a person is named (whether in antiquity or in our own era) those hearing the name will associate it with a variety of incidents, recollections and memories whether the person is someone they know or a figure from history about whom they have learned. The mere mention of the name 'Abraham', therefore, will probably have evoked a variety of thoughts and feelings in the minds and hearts of the Author's audience. The *Aqedah* was just one, albeit the most celebrated, of the tests which Abraham was deemed to have undergone and overcome during his life. Jewish exegetes, as we have already seen, increasingly came to see it as the epitome of a life of faithfulness and of the patriarch's supreme trust in God (Dibelius, 1976, pp.168-169). It is unlikely, therefore, that the Author and his audience would have viewed the *Aqedah* in isolation from the rest of the patriarch's life, and the use of the plural form 'works' has been suggested by a number of scholars as supporting this interpretation (Davids, 1982, p.127; Wall, 1997a, p.146; but cf. Laws, 1980, p.135, who suggests that the plural 'works' is imposed by the language of the debate – faith versus works – 'rather than from a strictly literal consideration of their content'). For some commentators, this plurality of works enables a link to be made with Abraham's hospitality to the three angels (Gen 18:2-16) through the hypothetical example of the destitute brother

or sister of Jas 2:15-16 (e.g. Ward, 1968, pp.286-287; Wall, 1997a, p.146) and I shall consider that argument further in the next chapter in my assessment of Rahab's reception of the spies, since commentators usually link the two when arguing for a common theme of hospitality (see section 5.6.5.1).

It is now well established that Jewish exegesis in Second Temple Judaism regularly linked texts from different parts of their authoritative writings in an attempt to explain contemporary situations, a practice that subsequently became enshrined in rabbinic exegesis. In his investigation into the exegetical practices of the Qumran scribes and the writers of the New Testament, George Brooke was particularly intrigued by 'the considerable overlap in shared intertextual exegetical combinations' of the two groups (Brooke, 2005, p.93). Rather than suggest that the New Testament writers must have been reliant on the Qumran scribes, Brooke preferred to conclude that there were certain texts which naturally suggested other texts as partners in exegesis and these 'base texts' as Brooke calls them, were used by various Jewish traditions (Brooke, 2005, p.93). Since the *Aqedah* was the event that proved Abraham's faithfulness to God, it was legitimate to link it to other records of the patriarch's faith recorded in the Scriptures. The statement in Gen 15:6: 'And [Abraham] believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness', provided both the most popular and the most natural link because it referred to God's promise of Abraham's posterity, a promise that was put sorely to the test in the *Aqedah* (Laws, 1980, p.134; Witherington, 2007, p.477). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that our Author, like other Jewish writers before him, should both select the *Aqedah* to reinforce his argument, and link that event to the statement of Abraham's faith in Gen 15:6 (Davids, 1982, p.129). I would

add, though, that the fact that the Author has adopted this exegetical practice, says nothing about his specific locus given how widespread such practice seems to have been in the centuries spanning the turn of the eras.

The Author's citation of Gen 15:6 is (with the exception of δέ for καί, and the use of the longer form of the patriarch's name) word for word the same as the wording of the Septuagint (καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην). This, along with other biblical citations which appear to be based in the Septuagint (e.g. 4:6; cf. LXX Prov 3:34) and the quality of the Greek in the composition, may infer that our Author was familiar with the Septuagint (or similar Greek writings) and even used it as his authoritative text. Equally, though, the prominence of the *Aqedah* in Jewish tradition was such that its connected text (Gen 15:6) may have been so well-known that it tripped off the tongue of any serious Jewish teacher or exegete.<sup>46</sup>

The Author concludes his scriptural evidence with the statement that Abraham was called φίλος θεοῦ. This is not part of Gen 15:6; indeed, as Brooke notes:

The label [friend of God in Jas 2:23] is not linked to the gift of the land (2 Chr. 20.7) nor to the election of Jacob/Israel (Isa. 41.8). Since the LXX uses *philos* in neither Isaiah 41.8 nor 2 Chronicles 20.7, it is likely that the epithet in James was derived from neither . . . (Brooke, 2005, p.183).

So what might the Author's source be? Johnson posits that the use of the phrase φίλος θεοῦ is evidence of the Author's rootedness in both Jewish tradition and Graeco-Roman moral discourse (Johnson, 1995, p.243). Johnson goes on to argue that in Hellenistic thought

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<sup>46</sup> There are verses in the New Testament which many Christians can recite as second nature, the most notable of which is John 3:16.

friends are, inter alia, equals who share their knowledge and who hold similar views on things. He then cites Philo's use of Gen 18:17 as evidence of how a first century C.E. Jewish writer drew on this thinking (Johnson, 1995, pp.243-244). If the Author is not using Hellenistic moral discourse, then what other sources might there be? Having excluded the Septuagint as a source for Jas 2:23b (see citation above), Brooke suggests that the most likely source is:

. . . some reworking of the Abraham cycle of Genesis in early Jewish literature. The similarity to the immediate context of CD III, 2 and the occurrence of the designation in Greek-speaking Judaism, especially Philo, may well suggest that James is simply "echoing a familiar description of Abraham which ultimately has a scriptural background". (Brooke, 2005, p.183; cf. Martin, 1988, p.94).<sup>47</sup>

I have already alluded to the influence that the Book of *Jubilees* had on the Jewish literature of our author's era (see section 4.4). Speaking of the death of Sarah, the author of *Jubilees* writes:

This (is) the tenth trial with which Abraham was tried. And he was found faithful, controlled in spirit . . . but he begged a place there so that he might bury his dead because he was found faithful, *and he was recorded as a friend of the LORD in the heavenly tablets'* [emphasis added]. (*Jub.* 19.8-9).

Later on in the work the author identifies Levi as being recorded as a friend in the heavenly tablets and the angel of the presence adds:

All of these words I have written for you, and I have commanded you to speak to the children of Israel that they might not commit sin or transgress the ordinances or break the covenant which was ordained for them so that *they might do it and be written down as friends* [emphasis added]'. (*Jub.* 30.21).

In both the above citations from the Book of *Jubilees* we see the teaching that those who are obedient to God will be recorded in the accounting books of heaven as 'friends of God'. In other words, their works of obedience would be literally credited to their account in heaven,

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<sup>47</sup> The quotation at the end of this citation is from Laws, 1980, pp.136-137

and it is possible that this is how our Author understood καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην in Gen 15:6b (cf. Dibelius, 1976, pp.173-174, who was sure that the Author of the Book of James did indeed view Abraham's righteousness and friendship with God in this way, and I am inclined to agree with him). One further pointer in this direction is the Author's categorical assertion in Jas 1:13 that God does not tempt/test anyone. Genesis 22, of course starts with 'After these things, God tested Abraham' (Gen 22:1). Unless our Author simply ignores that statement, it is probable that he has drawn on a tradition such as that explicated in *Jubilees* which introduces Mastema as the one who does the testing (*Jub* 17.16).

So far the evidence of this diatribal passage points to the Author following Jewish tradition in his use of Abraham as an exemplar. Is there anything at all to suggest that he departed from that tradition in any way? Laws doubts it, calling his use of Abraham as 'simple and traditional' (Laws, 1980, p.133). Dibelius, on the other hand, identifies the Author's emphasis on the inseparability of faith and works as evidence that he has adopted a different stance from his Jewish predecessors (Dibelius, 1976, p.174). It is tempting to agree with him by saying that whereas Jewish tradition viewed Abraham's works of obedience as meritorious, our Author, the teacher, insists that it is faithworks and not just works which brought about Abraham's righteous state in the eyes of God. However, such an argument seems rather thin. After all, the Author has been urging his audience throughout Jas 2 to demonstrate their true commitment to God and Jesus Christ by doing the works of the royal law of liberty. This is hardly different from the covenantal nomism of first century C.E. Judaism described by Sanders in his celebrated *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). In other words, there is

nothing in our Author's argument that could not have come from a Jewish teacher of the first or second century C.E.

#### *4.7.4.4 The Author's Conclusion regarding Justification (Jas 2:24)*

In Jas 2:24, the argument is won; the need for the interlocutor has gone so the Author feels able now to address his audience directly again – ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον. His addition of μόνον to ἐκ πίστεως is significant and has led many commentators over the years to see this verse as a direct attack on the apostle Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone. I briefly outlined the options proffered in this debate in section 2.3, and for my own part, I am inclined to side with those who see the Author addressing some misguided form of Paulinism (Chester, 1994, p.12; Dowd, 2000, pp.196, 202; Moo, 2000, pp.25-26). Since I also indicated in that same section my view that the Book of James was written prior to 70 C.E., it should follow that the Author is unlikely to be responding to any of the Pauline writings, as these were probably not in wide circulation at that time. Rather he is addressing the misapplication of a slogan based on the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. However, we should also remember that in this diatribe the Author has so emphasized the need for works that his audience may mistakenly think that works are all that matter. Our Author, therefore, reminds them in this verse (2:24) that justification does not come by virtue of the works acting on their own either – faith is still vital, and the two are inseparable partners in the journey to eschatological salvation. The ἔργα of this verse, therefore, must, as one should expect from the Author's whole argument, refer back to the faithworks described in Jas 2:22-23, i.e. to Abraham's works of obedience as exemplified in the *Aqedah* as proof of the earlier biblical statement of the patriarch's trust in God found in Gen 15:6.

I started the exegesis of Jas 2:21 by asking what our Author means by ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη. I find a theological tension in the way commentators approach the translation and interpretation of δικαιούται. One inference of the English translation 'justified' is that the works themselves directly justify the person, whereas the translations 'declared/considered righteous' distance the works from the declaration. In other words a declaration of righteousness is clearly an act of a third party (i.e. neither the person doing the works nor the works themselves are the subject of the declaration) whereas the act of justifying can theoretically be seen as an act for which the works are the subject. I have argued that our Author has essentially followed Jewish tradition in his use of Abraham as an exemplar and am, therefore, inclined to the view that he sees the patriarch's faithworks earning merit in the accounting books of heaven.

#### **4.8 Conclusion: What does the Author's Use of Abraham Tell Us?**

I have argued that unlike the other New Testament writers, the Author of the Letter of James has drawn heavily on Jewish tradition in his use of Abraham as an exemplar. This reinforces the notion that his audience is essentially a Jewish one (as the Author claims it to be), whose members will have been familiar with the Abrahamic tradition, including the widespread practice among Jewish exegetes of linking the *Aqedah* to Gen 15:6. The Author's concern at the outset of his composition was that his audience's faith should be such as would enable them to become mature and perfect followers of God and of Jesus Christ (1:1-4). For that to happen they had to expect their faith to be tested (1:2), but if they remained steadfast in their testing then maturity-perfection would indeed come. The *Aqedah* was Abraham's stiffest test. He had already shown his endurance by his steadfast waiting for the

son of promise. His willingness to give that son back to God demonstrated his whole-hearted commitment and obedience to God. We can note that although the Author followed traditional Jewish interpretation of the *Aqedah* with regard to its link to Gen 15:6, there is no appeal to Isaac as a willing victim. Indeed, there is no reference to Isaac's role in the event other than the fact that he was 'offered on the altar' (2:22). In other words, the Author has steered well clear of those traditions, such as that followed by Josephus (see section 4.5.3), which tried to develop Isaac's role in the event. Our Author's primary focus is Abraham and he is concerned to prove how the patriarch's works were instrumental in his justification, and chooses to do so using sources which his audience would have regarded as authoritative. Such sources are unlikely to be limited to the Hebrew Bible (in whatever form) and the Book of *Jubilees* is a good candidate as a possible additional source (see section 4.7.4.3).

Abraham's belief in God is unwavering in our Author's thought. Had the patriarch lacked wisdom, he would have asked God in faith, never doubting (1:5-6a). But he clearly did not lack wisdom because his faith was such that in the very midst of his greatest trial, the Scripture can declare of him 'he believed the Lord and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness' (Gen 15:6).

The Author's use of an exemplary Abraham follows his growing concern for his audience's praxis. What started as a question about partiality in the community (2:1), which may have seemed a rather trivial matter to his hearers, grows into a concern of eternal eschatological significance. The only way to be vindicated in the coming judgement is to demonstrate one's



commitment to God through faithworks, which range from something as simple as feeding and clothing a destitute brother or sister (2:15-16) to the trauma of putting one's dearest love one's life on the line (2:22) or (as we shall see in the next chapter) one's own (2:25). The faith of Jesus Christ in our Author's thought, therefore, embraces every aspect of life, both private and communal.

## CHAPTER 5

### RAHAB

#### 5.1 Introduction

Whereas Abraham is an obvious exemplar of faith in both Early Jewish and Early Christian literature, the Author's choice of Rahab requires some explanation. Indeed, commentators have tended to focus on why he has placed Rahab alongside Abraham rather than look at Rahab's suitability as an exemplar in her own right. The choice of Rahab alongside Abraham is seen as: 'deliberately provocative' (Adamson, 1976, p.133); 'the furthest from Abraham' (Mayor, 1892, p.98); to convey the universality of the 'faith-with-works principle' (Martin, 1988, p.97); to contrast the exemplary righteous man and the 'sinful' woman of the unsavoury past (Dibelius, 1976, p.166; Laws, 1980, p.137); to appeal to proselytes (Perkins, 1995, p.115); to contrast the obvious exemplar alongside the extreme case where the Author's argument might seem to fail (Ropes, 1916, pp.224-225) to paraphrase the views of just a few scholars.

Before considering why the Author has chosen Rahab as an exemplar for his audience and how he has used her in his argument, it will be helpful to examine her story as depicted in the Hebrew Bible, and to consider how this story was subsequently reinterpreted both within Jewish tradition and elsewhere within the New Testament.

## 5.2 Rahab in the Hebrew Bible

Rahab's story is told in Josh 2 and Josh 6:15-25. She makes no further appearances in the Hebrew Bible, neither is she mentioned in the Deuterocanonical literature. However, the name 'Rahab' is used metaphorically in biblical poetry and prophecy to denote both the land of Egypt and a sea monster of primordial chaos (cf. Job 9:13; 26:12; 87:4; 89:10; Is 30:7; 51:9; cf. Day, 1992, pp.610-611) although there is no telling reason to connect these metaphors with the harlot of Jericho.

Rahab the harlot appears suddenly in the account of Josh 2. As the Israelites stand on the threshold of the land of Canaan after years of wandering in the desert, we are told that Joshua sends two spies to reconnoitre the lie of the land (Josh 2:1). They find their way to their destination, the walled city of Jericho, where they are soon recognized for what they are and must rely on the prostitute, Rahab to both hide them and lie about their whereabouts when the king's men come looking for them (Josh 2:1-7). Rahab acknowledges to the spies that the God of the Israelites is the true God and tells of how she and others in Jericho had heard of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and how the Israelites had defeated the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og (Josh 2:9-11). She proposes a bargain with the spies by which they, as a response to Rahab's help and support, are to promise to protect her and all who are in her house when the Israelites attack the city (Josh 2:12-13). The spies agree the bargain and provide Rahab with a 'crimson cord' to hang from her window so that the advancing troops will recognize the 'safe house' when they attack the city (Josh 2:18, 21). The spies duly escape and report their findings and bargain to Joshua (Josh 2:22-24). We are told subsequently that Rahab and all in her house are saved from the destruction of

Jericho, are permitted to live alongside the Israelites, and that their descendants were still in the land (Josh 6:23, 25).

The story raises a number of interesting questions such as why the female prostitute is named and the male spies are not, and why the story should depict Rahab as the person in charge of the situation. Or as Zakovitch has provocatively put it:

Why should the “Book of Wars of the Lord” . . . begin precisely at the house of a harlot? Why does the Jericho prostitute get such a prominent place . . . on the very opening pages of the books of the Former Prophets? (Zakovitch, 1993, p.44).

Rahab is the only named person in the story other than Joshua and, as Sherwood has rightly noted, the Israelite leader appears as something of a background figure who frames the narrative as ‘the son of Nun’ (Sherwood, 2006, p.47). Consequently, we can reasonably conclude that the author-redactor of Josh 2 intends the story to be primarily about Rahab and not about the spies, nor about the leader who sent them.

Whilst the biblical account speaks in terms of Rahab’s father and mother being alive at the time of this incident (Josh 2:13, 18), the narrative is structured in such a way that Rahab is the family decision maker. It may be, as Bird has argued, that Rahab’s family did not live with her, pointing to Rahab’s ‘house’ being a brothel and an inn (Bird, 1989, p.128). Nevertheless, the emphasis of the story is one that places Rahab in charge of the success or failure of the spies’ mission (Stek, 2002, p.38). It is to her that the king’s men make their demands (Josh 2:3). It is Rahab who hides the spies (Josh 2:4a, 6). It is her lips on which the formulaic confession of God is placed (Josh 2:11).<sup>48</sup> In fact, in this chapter, the name, YHWH is only

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<sup>48</sup> For a strong argument that the confession is formulaic see Stek, 2002, pp.28-42.

found on the lips of this heathen harlot (Sherwood, 2006, p.55). It is Rahab's subterfuge that puts the king's men off the scent (Josh 2:4b-5, 7); and it is she who proposes the bargain for her and her family's deliverance even though the spies subsequently lay down certain provisos (Josh 2:12-13, 17-20). It is Rahab who suggests how the spies should avoid detection once they finally leave the city and the biblical text tells us that they follow her advice to the letter (cf. Josh 2:16 & 22-23). The account in Josh 2 provides us, then, with the depiction of a gentile (not Israelite) female (not male) prostitute (not a person/woman of virtue) as the resourceful heroine who paves the way for the Israelite invasion of Canaan, whilst the two male Israelite spies, whom one would expect to receive the plaudits, are depicted as being somewhat inept, and play a secondary, virtually passive role in the story of the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Rahab.<sup>49</sup>

Feminist theologians, understandably, have seized upon this strange story, brought their own distinctive interpretative skills and perspectives to it and provided much food for thought, including the questioning of Rahab's heroic status (McKinlay, 1999, p.57).<sup>50</sup> But feminist theologians were not the first to recognise the unusual aspects of the Rahab story. The Septuagint translator(s), for example, chose to describe the two spies as νεανίσκοι at the beginning and end of the story (LXX Josh 2:1, 23), whereas elsewhere, they are simply ἄνδρες (cf. Josh 2:4, 5, 7, 14, 17). It may be that this was an attempt to explain the apparent ineptitude of the Israelite spies, their passive role and their need for Rahab's resourcefulness

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<sup>49</sup> I am indebted to Adamson for the idea of describing Rahab in this manner, although he uses different descriptors; Adamson, 1976, p.133.

<sup>50</sup> The following are just a few feminist studies of Rahab; Bird, 1989, pp.119-139; McKinlay, 1999, pp.44-57; Nowell, 2008, pp.1-15; Wu, 2001, pp.69-81.

(but cf. Sherwood, 2006, pp.48-49, n.21, who suggests the LXX translators choice of *νεανίσκοι* may have been an attempt at harmonisation of the Hebrew term used at Josh 6:23). If, though, the choice was to explain the spies' ineptitude, we can legitimately ask what was Joshua doing choosing such inexperienced youths for so vital a task, especially given the previous history of Israelite spies sent into the land of Canaan, and the catastrophe that followed their negative report (Num 13:25-14:45)?<sup>51</sup>

Rahab's description of the impact on the local inhabitants of God's mighty works on behalf of the Israelites echoes that depicted in the Song of Moses (Stek, 2002, pp.40-41; cf. Josh 2: 9-11 and Ex. 15:14-15), whilst her profession of YHWH as 'God in heaven above and on earth below' (Josh 2:11), provides 'the only biblical recital of God's saving works that echoes the magisterial confession of Moses in Deut. 4:39' (Wall, 2001, p.230), and this Mosaic statement is made in the immediate context of YHWH having given the Israelites the land of other nations (Deut 4:37-38). It is as if YHWH had prepared the ground beforehand so as to provide the Israelites with a similar test to that which had faced their ancestors after the exodus and which the ancestors had so miserably failed. To be sure, all that Rahab says and does serves to enhance the reputation of YHWH and further his plans for the Israelites, despite the apparent failings of the spies to do their job without help from an outsider. The irony of this account of Rahab and the spies is that when the time came for the Israelites to attack the city, any intelligence that the spies may have gathered proved unnecessary because the battle was YHWH's and not Joshua's (Josh 6:2, 16-17a).

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<sup>51</sup> It has been argued that Joshua chose to send in spies on his own account rather than at the direction of YHWH, and hence this was something of a clandestine initiative even within the Israelite camp – see, for example, Sherwood, 2006, p.45.

Space does not allow us to explore these various issues in depth here. For our purposes it suffices to highlight the unusual choice and status of Rahab in the biblical story, before considering how subsequent Jewish and Christian exegetes have reinterpreted her presence in the scriptural history of Israel.

### 5.3 Rahab in Early Judaism

In the absence of references to Rahab in the literature of Second Temple Judaism outside of Josephus, I have chosen to consider her status in Jewish tradition and legend as well. I recognize firstly how difficult it is to date such material, and secondly that some of it may be post the New Testament era. However, the reference to the prostitute's hospitality in both Josephus (*Ant.* 5.1.2) and *1 Clement* 12.3 strongly support the notion that a tradition had already been created around Rahab by the end of first century C.E. at the latest.

Jewish tradition and legend provides us with two lines of thought on the Rahab story (Cohen, 2007, pp.66-67). The first accepts her harlot status, and focuses on the transformation that her conversion to the Jewish faith achieved. After her conversion, and despite her lurid past, Rahab marries none other than the very Joshua who sent the spies on their Jericho mission and who subsequently ordered the total destruction of the walled city. She is made an honorary member of the tribe of Judah and becomes the ancestor of eight prophets and priests including Jeremiah and the prophetess, Huldah (*b. Meg. 14b-15a*). According to this first legendary perspective, Rahab became a prostitute at the age of ten, at about the time the Israelites left Egypt, and spent the whole of the next forty years of the Israelites' desert wanderings plying her trade around the courts of the Ancient Near East. She is depicted in Jewish legend as one of Ancient Israel's four beauties alongside Sarah,

Abigail and Esther. Such was her beauty and allure that men found her irresistible so that every king and tribal leader in the region purportedly had sexual relations with her (*b. Meg.* 15a; *b. Zeb.* 116b; cf. Ginzberg, 1909, Vol IV, pp.4-5). Her pre-conversion life, therefore, was one of faithlessness, both in terms of her relationships with men and her spiritual allegiances. She is beholden to no man, not even to her father. It is worth noting at this point that the account of her story in the Book of Joshua does not pass any overt moral comment on Rahab's trade; it merely describes her as a harlot.<sup>52</sup> This absence of moral comment is in keeping with other narrative references within the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Gen 38:13-15;<sup>53</sup> Judg 16:1; 1 Kings 3:16-27). In the case of the story in 1 Kings 3, it should be noted that the prostitutes are entitled to come before the king to have their grievances heard and judged, like other citizens within the kingdom. Having said that, prostitution was regarded by the Israelites as a shameful profession, and to treat an Israelite girl as a harlot was a serious offence (Afonso, 2007, p.625).

On this line of exegetical tradition, Rahab's transformation, both spiritual and social, is attributed to her acceptance of Jewish beliefs and she becomes the archetypal gentile proselyte proving that no matter how sinful one's past might have been, a true and complete conversion to the Jewish faith (with salvation) is not only possible, but can result in proselytes flourishing in the Jewish community (Cohen, 2007, p.66).

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<sup>52</sup> Phyllis Bird, however, argues that the harlot nevertheless remained a figure on the margins of society who was tolerated but despised (Bird, 1989, p.119).

<sup>53</sup> The condemnation of Tamar's alleged prostitution is placed in the mouth of her father-in-law, Judah, the very one who had sexual relations with her. He is later forced to confess 'She [Tamar] is more in the right than I . . .' (Gen 38:26).



The second legendary perspective tried to recast Rahab as an innkeeper rather than a prostitute. Cohen suggests that this second perspective is based on a misinterpretation, euphemism, or even double entendre in the Targum (Cohen, 2007, p.66).<sup>54</sup>

The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, presumably with his Graeco-Roman audience in mind, adopted the interpretation that Rahab was an 'innkeeper' by profession (*Ant* 5.1.2). This approach negated the need to explain the otherwise embarrassing idea that Israel was beholden to a Canaanite prostitute for their initial entrance into their purportedly God-given homeland.

Although Cohen may well be right concerning the misinterpretation of the Targum, it remains possible that Rahab was both a prostitute and an innkeeper. Her house was on the outer side of the city wall (Josh 2:15), and is likely to have been a place where travellers and strangers would come to spend the night. The ancient and influential Babylonian Code of Hammurabi required that where conspirators met in the house of an innkeeper, and were not captured and delivered to the court, the innkeeper should be put to death (Bergmann, 1953, para 109, p.27).<sup>55</sup> If this part of the code reflects comparable scenarios that could have been imaginable in the context of our story it would explain the biblical account (Wiseman, 1964, p.8).

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<sup>54</sup> Wiseman suggested another possible explanation for the interpretation of *znh* as innkeeper (instead of prostitute) as follows: 'It is also possible that [the Hebrew word] *znh*, in some of its earliest occurrences, as in the Rahab reference, may be a biform of *zûn* 'to provide food or sustenance' (Wiseman, 1964, p.11).

<sup>55</sup> The Latin translation reads 'Si copa in cuius domo malefici conventicula peregerint, (illa autem) maleficos illos nec comprehenderit nec ad palatium conduxerit, copa haec occidetur'.

Rahab was ordered to bring out the men because their business was hostile (Josh 2:3). The prostitute was not arrested when the spies were not found, possibly because someone (from within her 'house', perhaps) had fulfilled the requirement to notify the authorities of the presence of strangers intending to lodge in the city (cf. Wiseman, 1964, p.9). Whether harlot, innkeeper or both, Rahab looked after the spies, and her actions had become a byword in hospitality, as well as faith, by the end of first century C.E. (cf. Heb 11:31; *1 Clem.* 12.3).

Attempts were also made in Jewish tradition to reduce the role of Rahab in the biblical story, whilst at the same time enhancing those of the two spies. In direct contrast to the Septuagintal description of the spies as νεανίσκοι ('inexperienced' and/or 'naïve') young men, Jewish legend put celebrated names to the spies – the priest Phinehas and the faithful spy from the earlier ill-fated reconnaissance of the land, Caleb (*Tan. B. IV, 62; BaR 16.1* cf. Ginzberg, 1909, Vol IV, pp.4-5). The Hebrew Bible esteems these two men for their commitment to YHWH (Num 25:11-13 & 32:12). This experienced pairing provides Rahab with the reassurance she needs in order to do her part. As she trembles at the approach of the king's men, Phinehas tells her: 'I am a priest, and priests are like angels, visible when they wish to be seen, invisible when they do not wish to be seen' (Ginzberg, 1909, Vol IV, p.5). This legend also provides an explanation as to why the biblical text referred to the hiding of 'him' rather than 'them' (Josh 2:6). In this reinterpretation of the story, Rahab saw something of the wonders of YHWH with her own eyes to add to the wonders about which she had heard (Josh 2:10).

Josephus, too, embellishes his account by asserting that the spies had completed their reconnaissance mission in broad daylight unchallenged and it was only as they were enjoying their evening meal at Rahab's inn that word reached the king that Israelite spies were in the city (*Ant.* 5.1.2). Throughout the short narrative, Josephus places the spies in charge of events as much as he dare without materially altering the basic biblical account. On their return to the Israelite camp they report all that *they* had done (cf. the passive voice in Jos 2:23) in addition to the bargain they made with Rahab, which bargain was reported to the high priest Phinehas and the council of elders for ratification. Whilst Josephus includes Rahab's actions in his account, he tends to play them down (*Ant.* 5.1.2).

We see, then, two diverging streams of Jewish interpretation regarding the role and status of Rahab within Jewish tradition, one that integrates her into the Israelite community as the wife of Joshua and the mother of prophets; the other endeavouring to sanitize her past by depicting her as an innkeeper. Alongside these two streams were attempts as we saw with Abraham in *Jubilees* and other early Jewish works (see section 4.4), to build up the role of Israelite heroes (the spies) at the expense of a foreigner (Rahab).

#### **5.4 Rahab in the New Testament Outside of the Book of James and in Early Post-apostolic Christian Literature**

Although the New Testament writers are at least contemporaries of Josephus, Rahab's prostitution does not seem to have been an embarrassing issue for them. She is mentioned three times – in Mt 1:5; Heb 11:31 and Jas 2:25, and in each case the authors have no compunction in calling her ἡ πόρνη. In so doing, the New Testament follows the Hebrew

Bible in its description of Rahab. She was a prostitute and that perception was not to be swept under the carpet.

Turning to the gospel account first (Mt 1:5), Rahab's appearance, along with three other women of the Hebrew Bible, in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:1-17) has led to much speculation in biblical scholarship. Why were Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba singled out? The following are just some of the suggestions: (1) they were regarded as sinners (cf. comments of Allison Jr, 2001a, p.849), or (2) as foreigners (Allison Jr, 2001a, p.849); (3) their relationships to the fathers of their children were 'extraordinary or irregular' (Levine, 2000, p.142);<sup>56</sup> and (4) their initiative led to the furtherance of God's plan and revealed the work of the Holy Spirit. (Nowell, 2008, p.10). An imaginative interpretation sees the genealogy as showing that whilst the Messiah by definition could not have any gentile male ancestors, the inclusion of four women of non-Jewish origin shows that Jesus could be Messiah for both Gentile and Jew (Bauckham, 1995, p.313).<sup>57</sup> A further thesis sees Matthew including these women because their role in the messianic ancestry had already raised controversy among Jewish exegetes resulting in their glorification in Pharasaic circles by the beginning of the first century C.E. (Huffman, 1992, p.256).

Whatever the reason for the inclusion of these four women in the Matthean genealogy of Jesus (and the exploration of that question is beyond the scope of this thesis), it can be

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<sup>56</sup> Levine has argued that all four women had some connection with illegitimate sex. Tamar with her father-in-law; Rahab, by reason of being a prostitute; Ruth, as a descendant of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter, as well as possible illicit relationship with Boaz (cf. Ruth ch 3); and Bathsheba with David.

<sup>57</sup> In this article, Bauckham explores the issue of whether or not Tamar was a Gentile as well as how the Matthean account can marry Rahab off to Salmon when Jewish tradition links her to Joshua.

reasonably deduced from Matt 1: 5 that by the time of the New Testament, Rahab's status in Jewish tradition had been accepted by at least some Christian communities (Dibelius, 1976, p.166).<sup>58</sup>

The author of Hebrews includes Rahab, ἡ πόρνη in his chronological list of people from the Hebrew Bible who had demonstrated their faith and commitment to God through their actions. She is, in fact, the last named person whose specific act of faith ('receiving the spies in peace') is set down by the author. Subsequent names listed are merely those whom the author states he could talk about if space and time permitted, before listing a catalogue of actions that demonstrated faith in action and the reader is left to speculate to which heroes/heroines of the Jewish faith these actions might refer (Heb 11:31-38; cf. Hewitt, 1960, pp.184-187; Attridge, 2001, pp.1252-1253).

Rahab makes her first appearance in non-canonical Christian literature in the Book of *1 Clement*, in which the author acknowledges her prostitute status, praises her faith and hospitality (*1 Clem.* 12.1, 3) but then spiritualises the crimson cord (cf. Josh 2:18) as the saving blood of Jesus (*1 Clem.* 12.7) and asserts that she was a woman of prophecy (*1 Clem.* 12.8). Sixty or so years later, Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho (111), allegorises the scarlet cord in a similar way to Clement.

## 5.5 Summary

We can see from this brief review of Rahab in the writings considered above that all the scriptural references to Rahab, both those of the Hebrew Bible and those of the New

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<sup>58</sup> There are no compelling reasons to deny that Matt 1:5 is referring to the Rahab of Jericho of Josh 2.

Testament, are clear that she was a prostitute, and make neither apology nor excuse for her pre-conversion profession. Our review of Rahab's story in the Book of Joshua reveals a resourceful woman whose decisive actions not only assisted the Israelite cause in the invasion of Canaan but brought salvation to her and her household, albeit on the face of it by means of dubious ethical practices, including lying, deception, treachery and in the matter of her 'bargain' with the spies, implied blackmail. We have also seen that it is possible that Rahab's 'house' may have served both as an inn and a brothel, thereby providing some early Jewish traditions with a means of sanitizing the whore of Jericho so as to minimize embarrassment. Other strands of Jewish exegesis, however, chose to integrate her into the Israelite nation as a proselyte converted to the Jewish religion. By the end of the first century C.E, post-biblical Christian writers acknowledged Rahab's harlotry but chose to focus on her faith and hospitality. We can see that whilst the biblical accounts of Rahab consistently refer to her as a prostitute and focus on her faith in God, Jewish exegesis developed differing perspectives to explain her part in the story of Israel, and post-biblical Christian exegetes followed similar lines of argument. Hence, Rahab became the archetypal Jewish proselyte, but also the archetypal convert in Christian interpretation. Christian exegesis since New Testament times has tended to sanitize the Rahab story usually through spiritualizing events and projecting them forward into the Christian story of redemption and hope, so as to turn attention away from Rahab's life as prostitute to the wonders of divine grace extended to human beings. More recent research, however, especially within parts of the feminist school of interpretation has preferred to focus on Rahab's stated profession of 'prostitute' and what that means for both the story in its original context and its message for contemporary society, Christianity and biblical scholarship.

## 5.6 Rahab in the Book of James (Jas 2:25)

### 5.6.1 Rahab – A Surprising Choice

2:25 ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἐτέρᾳ ὁδῷ ἐκβαλοῦσα;

2:25 In the same way, was not also (or even) Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out another way?

As we saw in the previous chapter the Author carefully developed his argument concerning the nature of vital faith in the unit Jas 2:14-26, culminating (seemingly) with the archetypal example of faithworks, 'Father Abraham' (2:21-24). He has made his case and reinforced it. Surely nothing else need be said. And yet our Author is not finished. He brings another piece of evidence to the debate; not any further points of argument, rather another exemplar from Israel's history. The word ὁμοίως tells us not only that this second example will be of the same type as Abraham, rather than just something similar (Davids, 1982, p.132), but also that it will be of equal weight in his argument (Martin, 1988, p.96). In other words, it will be some-one whose faithworks were such as were able to demonstrate their commitment to God and thereby their justification. . He does not choose one of the more obvious heroes of the Hebrew Bible such as Moses or David, but Rahab the Harlot.

The contrast between these two exemplar choices is staggering. On the one hand Abraham, the epitome of righteousness and faithfulness, so much a friend of God that he is party to divine thoughts and intentions (Gen 18:17-20); and on the other, a Canaanite prostitute, plying her trade in a condemned city which is destined for obliteration by divine command. Had this been Paul arguing for justification by faith alone, one might have quickly deduced that these two contrasting figures had been chosen together so as to emphasize that faith

and not righteous works is the effectual means of being justified in the sight of God. But this is not Paul, and what is more, our Author has been arguing for justification on the basis of faithworks, rather than by faith alone. Indeed, as Dibelius and others have noted, the Author makes no direct reference to Rahab's 'faith' in this verse, nor to her reward (Dibelius, 1976, p.166; Vouga, 1984, p.91; Martin, 1988, p.96; Moo, 2000, pp.142-143).<sup>59</sup> Her faith is to be understood as implied by the argument already presented in the previous verses (Dibelius, 1976, p.166), or by the nature of her works (Wall, 1997a, p.143), and in any event, in the account of Josh 2 with which the implied audience will be familiar.<sup>60</sup> His emphasis in Jas 2:25 is on Rahab's faithworks – in other words, he focuses on what Rahab did. It is as if, having vigorously challenged and rejected a version of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith (alone), our Author now dares to step into that Pauline lion's den to present a trophy of divine grace as a partner for righteous Abraham in order to seal his own argument that true justification depends on faithworks and not just on faith.

### **5.6.2 Rahab's Unique Contribution**

I have already alluded to the contrast between the exemplary choices the Author has placed before his audience and all subsequent readers and hearers of the text, and I will return to that shortly. But to talk in terms of contrast before looking at Rahab as an exemplar in her own right is to jump the gun. Too often she is seen purely as some kind of foil for Abraham (cf. Wall, 1997a, p.154, who commences an excursus entitled "The Example of Rahab" with: 'Commentators on James have long neglected the example of Rahab in favor of Abraham'). Abraham is deemed to be the main exemplar; Rahab the (almost expendable) afterthought

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<sup>59</sup> Abraham's reward in the unit Jas 2:14-26 is to be called the friend of God (2:23).

<sup>60</sup> In fact Wall goes so far as to suggest (and it is too far in my opinion) that the Author has deliberately edited out Rahab's faith so as to focus on what she did, (Wall, 1997a, p.155).



(cf. Witherington, 2007, p.479, who calls her a 'secondary', albeit 'daring' example). I say 'almost expendable' because several scholars see James as using the Hebrew Bible to bear witness to itself, for which a minimum of two witnesses would be necessary in accordance with the legal principle laid down in Deut 19:15 (Cantinat, 1973, pp.158-159). However the relegation of Rahab to the status of an ancillary exemplar is to do both Rahab and our Author a disservice. It is true that the Author has devoted just one verse to Rahab whereas the Abraham example is given four, but with Abraham, he was still developing his argument. Having completed his argument at the end of Jas 2:24, he would expect his audience to approach the Rahab example along similar lines to those he has just employed for Abraham.

It is a question, then, of what Rahab brings to the Author's argument that is not evident in exemplary Abraham. In other words does Rahab's story have value in itself, a value not found in the story of Abraham, however broad one perceives the scope of Abraham's story in the Author's argument to be? I would posit that it most certainly does. One essential difference between the the two stories is that of physical deliverance. Had Rahab not exercised her faithworks in receiving and sending out the spies, she would have been destroyed with the rest of Jericho. In other words, her faithworks saved her physical life (not to mention the lives of her extended family). With that physical deliverance came the hope of a new future initially alongside the chosen people of God (Josh 6:23) and ultimately through eschatological salvation as part of the people of God. As Johnson notes, Josh 6:25 speaks of Joshua 'sparing' or 'saving alive' Rahab and her family, hence her faith[works] brought about her 'salvation' in its wider sense (Johnson, 1995, p.245). Abraham's own life had not been at risk in the *Aqedah* although that of his son, of course, had been. Had

Abraham failed to offer Isaac as commanded then the Abrahamic covenant most likely would have been in jeopardy and with it the future of Israel's covenantal relationship with God, but the patriarch's physical life was not at risk, as far as we can tell from the biblical account. His test, therefore, was of a different kind to that of Rahab and, consequently, it misses the mark to place too much emphasis on what the two exemplars might have in common. That is not to say that Abraham and Rahab did not have anything in common, or that the things they share are not significant. Indeed, I will consider that aspect shortly too, but at this juncture, I want to assert that Rahab's exemplary status in the Book of James can, and does, stand on its own as an example of faithworks that leads to salvation. After all, the Author started this section of his composition with a question to tease out the type of faith that saves a person (2:14), and Rahab's faithworks most certainly achieved salvation in all its facets, and consequently serves the Author's purpose admirably.

### **5.6.3 An Examination of Rahab's 'Works'**

The use of the word ὁμοίως at the beginning of Jas 2:25 informs us that the Author is about to introduce another example like Abraham who will demonstrate the same truth (Dibelius, 1976, p.166; Popkes, 2001a, p.209; McKnight, 2011, p.256).<sup>61</sup> That does not mean, however, that Rahab's works will necessarily be the same as Abraham's, but rather they will be of the same kind. This is best taken to mean that her acts will be faithworks, just as Abraham's were. Rahab's works are described by two verbs, ὑποδέχομαι and ἐκβάλλω and whilst they are connected to the same event, I will argue that they are two separate faithworks in the

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<sup>61</sup> All three writers have different views as to what that 'truth' is. For Dibelius, it is that faith apart from works is dead; for Popkes it is that justification is by works; whilst for McKnight the emphasis is on the inseparability of faith and works.

eyes of the Author who again uses the plural of ἔργον as he did with his Abraham example in Jas 2:21.

The primary meaning of ὑποδέχομαι is 'to receive into one's house' or 'welcome' (Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.1879), although BDAG suggests the NT meaning of the word is the more precise 'to welcome hospitably' (Danker, 2000, p.1037). The Greek verb, though, resonates with other meanings in wider Greek literature, including concepts such as 'bear patiently' (*Odyssea. 13.310; 16.189*, cited in Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.1879) and 'accept as a responsibility', or 'take responsibility for' (*hymnus ad Cererem.226*, cited in Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.1879).

The Author describes the second part of Rahab's faithworks as sending the spies away 'a different way' (ἐτέρα ὁδῶ).<sup>62</sup> One may well ask in what way this action can be construed as a faithwork. The departure of the spies from Rahab's house was a necessary event if the spies were to bring back their report to their leader, Joshua. Once they were outside of Jericho, how could Rahab have any responsibility for them? The use of ἐκβαλοῦσα to describe how Rahab sent the spies on their way points to the answer. It suggests an almost physical 'chucking out' to use Witherington's expression (Witherington, 2007, p.479). Elsewhere in the Bible it is used to denote the ejecting or casting out of people and even demons (cf. its use in LXX Gen 3:24; LXX Deut 29:27; Mt 8:16; Mk 9:47; Jn 2:15 et al). Did the spies, perhaps,

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<sup>62</sup> Exactly what the Author means by 'sending them out another way' is unclear, cf. Popkes, 2001a, pp.209-210, who states: „Sachlich allemal wichtiger (than the receiving of the spies) ist das ἐτέρα ὁδῶ ἐκβαλοῦσα. Diese Handlung ist der jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur außer Jak und 1Clem 12 unbekannt. Der Referenzpunkt von »anders« ist unklar „anders“, als sie gekommen waren, oder: „anders“, als Rahab den Häschern sagte?‘.

want to linger in Rahab's house longer than they ought through fear of being caught by the king's men? And did Rahab, therefore, have to 'take responsibility for' their departure and make sure that they got away safely? As noted in the resumé of the Josh 2 account (see section 5.2), after departing from Jericho, the spies followed Rahab's advice to the letter both as regards to where they should go to avoid detection, and as to how long they should wait before returning to the Israelite camp (cf. Josh 2:16 & 22). The fact that our Author focuses on the 'sending out' as well as the 'receiving' of the spies suggests that he saw Rahab as having an active role in ensuring the safety of the spies after their departure from Jericho. Rahab did, of course, have a vested interest in their safe return to the Israelite camp since she needed them to tell Joshua about the bargain they had made with her. Two captured and/or dead spies would surely have led to a dead Rahab, either at the hands of the Jericho authorities on account of her treachery, or during the subsequent Israelite assault on the city.

It is not clear how our Author viewed the spies in the Rahab story. He uses the term ἄγγελοι to describe them rather than that of the Septuagint which prefers the terms νεανίσκοι and ἄνδρες (Davids, 1982, p.133). It may be that the Author has simply adopted the term found in contemporary Jewish exegetical circles or that he may have wanted to encourage his audience to draw a comparison with Abraham's receiving of ἄγγελοι into his 'house' as recorded in Genesis 18 (see section 5.6.5.1 regarding the possible function of hospitality in the Author's argument). However, as with the Abraham example where the role of Isaac is not alluded to because the Author wishes to focus on the faithworks of Abraham, so with

Rahab, the role of the spies is ignored so the Author can focus on what Rahab did in order to secure her justification.

#### 5.6.4 The Contrast Between Rahab and Abraham

The Author phrases his question in Jas 2:25 in exactly the same way as he phrased the question in his Abraham example, and in both cases the question is rhetorical, expecting, indeed, requiring, the answer 'yes':

Αβραάμ ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη . . . (2:21)

Ραὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη . . . (2:25)

The wording of the two rhetorical questions highlights the labels the Author applies to the two exemplars. Abraham is 'our father', whereas Rahab is 'the harlot'. The contrast is both stark and arresting and many commentators have rightly concluded that the Author has deliberately chosen contrasting exemplars in order to prove his argument. The debate is over what purpose the contrast serves. For many, it is intended to show that the grace of God covers the whole spectrum of humanity. By choosing the righteous Jewish patriarch and the sinful Gentile prostitute, the Author demonstrates that his teaching on justification by faithworks is of universal application to both Jew and Gentile (Adamson, 1976, p.134; Laws, 1980, p.137; Martin, 1988, p.97; Moo, 2000, p.143; Blomberg and Kamell, 2008, p.140). Johnson wonders whether the contrast includes the balancing of a female exemplar with that of a male to reflect the hypothetical example with which the Author had started his argument in Jas 2:15-16 (Johnson, 1995, p.245). Other interpretations as we saw at the outset of this chapter include: to appeal to proselytes (Perkins, 1995, p.115); and to contrast the obvious exemplar alongside the extreme case where the Author's argument might seem to fail (Ropes, 1916, pp.224-225). Whatever view one espouses, it is clear that the Author

has chosen to provide a deliberate contrast and has signalled that intent in his structuring of this pericope.

### 5.6.5 The ‘Similarities’ Between Rahab and Abraham

Having briefly highlighted the contrast between the two exemplars, I turn now to consider the perceived similarities between them, starting with hospitality.

#### 5.6.5.1 Hospitality

Both Abraham and Rahab were renowned in Jewish and early Christian tradition for their hospitality (Dibelius, 1976, pp.166-167; Johnson, 1995, p.248; Moo, 2000, p.143; Wall, 2001, pp.225-226).<sup>63</sup> Many commentators pick up on this renown and see hospitality as an important link between the two exemplars (Dyrness W, 1981, p.14; Davids, 1982, p.133; Johnson, 1995, p.248; Wall, 1997a, p.153; Moo, 2000, p.143; Witherington, 2007, p.479; McKnight, 2011, pp.256-257). Indeed a few commentators see an allusion or connection between the Author’s reference to Abraham being a ‘friend of God’ and the patriarch’s entertaining of the disguised angels in Genesis 18 (Ward, 1968, p.286; Dyrness W, 1981, p.14). Furthermore given his direct reference to Rahab’s receiving of the spies some commentators propose a link to the hypothetical example of the needy brother or sister of Jas 2:15-16 (Dyrness W, 1981, p.14; Johnson, 1995, p.245). An additional element in this argument is the Author’s choice of ἄγγελοι in place of the Septuagint’s νεανίσκοι and ἄνδρες in the Josh 2 account to refer to the spies. The Author had had no qualms in calling Rahab a πόρνη so why did he depart from the Biblical text with regard to the description of

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. the following primary sources: Philo, *Abr.* 167; *Abot* 7; *T. Ab.* 1.3; 4.1-11; *Gen. Rab.* XLXIX, 4; LV, 4 LXI, 5; 1 *Clem.* 12.

the spies? For some this is a literary cue for his audience to make the connection with the story of Abraham's visitors that enabled the patriarch to show true hospitality.

I think it worth examining whether these connections within the Book of James are more than superficial. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Author's emphasis on the need for faithworks for salvation has caused discomfort to many commentators owing to its apparent challenge to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The danger with such intertextual tensions is the risk that theological agendas can become too dominant in scholarly debate.

By using the verb ὑποδέχομαι in Jas 2:25, the Author appears to refer directly to Rahab's hospitality. She provides the spies with lodgings and security in a time of critical need. On the face of it, therefore, Rahab has been merciful and shown kindness to strangers. But let us stop for a moment and try and look again at the Rahab story from a perspective that questions the motives of both Rahab and the spies.

In the Septuagint account of this story the two spies κατέλυσαν ('spent the night') in Rahab's house. Mckinlay, for example, posits that the text of Josh 2 implies the spies made full use of the facilities available in the house of Rahab including those of prostitution (McKinlay, 1999, pp.45-46), and Phyllis Bird has no doubt that Rahab was a common (not 'temple') prostitute and the spies did more than physically sleep in her house (Bird, 1989, pp.127-128).

Sherwood draws attention to the meaning of Rahab's name, being to 'stretch out' or 'open wide', as possibly having sexual connotations (Sherwood, 2006, p.50), and further notes that the spies had been sent to Jericho secretly from Shittim (Josh 2:1), the very place where the

Israelites had committed mass sexual infidelity with the women of Moab and received the severest of divine punishments (Sherwood, 2006, p.50; cf. Num 25). Beek, on the other hand sees no indication of sexual relations in the Josh 2 account at all (Beek, 1982, p.37). Most Jacobean scholars simply ignore the possibility that there may have been sexual relations between the spies and Rahab or any other prostitutes who may have been in the same 'house'. Insofar as they comment on Rahab's profession, it is either to suggest that Rahab's house was also an inn or that Rahab's faith shows her to be a reformed character, and although, she gave lodgings to the spies, she did not actually 'entertain' them, to use a euphemism (Wall, 1997a, p.153). Several scholars draw on the work of Wiseman in noting that the Hebrew term *znh* could be interpreted as describing one who traded with, or otherwise had friendly (non-sexual) relations with, people from outside the kinship group (Wiseman, 1964, pp.9-10; cf. Campbell, 1972, p.243). It should be noted, though, that Wiseman still concludes his linguistic study by acknowledging that '[this analysis] does not imply that the traditional Christian . . . view that Rahab was "a harlot" is necessarily wrong (cf. Jas. 2:35 (sic) [25]; Heb. 11:31)' (Wiseman, 1964, p.11). The English verb 'sleep' does, of course, have a variety of meanings, including to sleep physically; to be dead; to be dormant; to have intimate sexual relations with another person (cf. COD, 1982, p.994). This provides a variety of hermeneutical options for the reader of a text in English. The Greek verb καταλίω, however, would appear to have no such connotations, with its primary meaning relating to 'destroying' or 'ending' things (Liddell and Scott, 1940, pp.899-900).<sup>64</sup> What we can say, as Wiseman intimated with his citation of the references to Rahab in both James

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<sup>64</sup> By way of aside, the two very different meanings of the verb καταλίω would seem most apposite for Rahab. Had she not allowed the spies to spend the night under (and on) her roof, then she would have been destroyed in the carnage that raised Jericho to the ground.



and Hebrews, is that as far as our Author was concerned, Rahab was most certainly a πόρνη. Furthermore, our Author makes no apology for Rahab's harlotry and does not talk or even hint at her repentance for her past (Popkes, 2001a, p.209). Instead he focuses on her faithworks as if to say, 'no matter what a person's past, it is their faithworks that count with regard to their ultimate salvation'.

Rahab was a citizen of Jericho. The spies were enemies of her city and had been entrusted with a task aimed at making it easier for the Israelites to attack Jericho and destroy it (Josh 2:1). By receiving the spies in the way that she did, Rahab turned traitor against the regime which had allowed her to operate her prostitution business from premises built into the city wall. When challenged to bring out the spies, she lies and misleads the authorities (Josh 2:3-6). Is this really the type of 'hospitality' our author would wish to engender in his audience? Is he really urging his audience to emulate the same kind of deceit and betrayal that Rahab showed? Is Jas 2:25, therefore, really about hospitality? I recognize that both early Jewish and early Christian traditions drew out Rahab's hospitality and faith as exemplary virtues to be emulated by the community of faith, but the context in which our Author has chosen to use the Rahab story suggests that he is not following such traditions as I now propose to show.

One of the problems we face in interpreting the Rahab story is the question why the spies go to Rahab's house in the first place (McKnight, 2011, p.256 n132). There can logically only be two reasons; either they went there with the intention of having sex; or, Rahab's house served the dual purpose of inn and brothel and the spies were seeking lodgings. Either way,

a business transaction would be envisaged and Rahab would receive payment for the service(s) provided. In other words, the receiving of the spies into her house was not an act of hospitality on the part of Rahab. Rahab, therefore, was not being generous when she first received the spies. The point at which the spies' presence in Rahab's house moved beyond a business transaction was in Rahab's decision to hide them and to lie to the authorities, but even then she was quick to barter for her own life and that of her family. In other words, by hiding the spies, and taking responsibility for their mission, Rahab was not acting out of the goodness of her heart, but out of a desperate attempt to survive.

In accordance with the ancient and widespread concept of covenant, Rahab transferred her allegiance from the king of Jericho (and the deities that oversaw the city's prosperity) to the God of the invading Israelites (Campbell, 1972, pp.243-244). Her control of the mission extended to advising the spies what to do on their departure, advice which the narrative tells us was followed to the letter. Rahab, in effect, did all within her power to ensure the spies would get back to the Israelite camp safely, because therein lay her and her family's only chance of survival. Had the spies been captured and forced to reveal the harlot's treachery, Rahab's own future and that of her family would have been bleak, to say the least. If the spies had been killed, Jericho would still, in all probability, have been attacked and Rahab would have perished along with all of its other inhabitants. Hence, her strong survival instinct cannot and should not be excluded from consideration. Indeed, the Josh 2 narrative points to self-interest and self-survival as strong, even driving, motives for Rahab's decision to help the spies. The formulaic confession of her trust in YHWH (Josh 2:11) and its implied awareness of what God had done for the Israelites on their journey to the borders of

Canaan (Josh 2:10) is followed immediately by her request for reciprocal *hesed*, a point that is picked up by Josephus as he has Rahab earnestly impressing upon the spies the great danger that she and her family had placed themselves in by helping them (*Antiquities* 5.1.2).

Whether Campbell is right in asserting that Rahab's decision was not a 'spur of the moment [thing] . . . but a well-calculated political engagement' (Campbell, 1972, pp.243-244), depends on the point at which Rahab decided to throw in her lot with the Israelites. In making the change of allegiance, Rahab had no guarantee that she would survive the ensuing attack on the city. She relied on the integrity of two seemingly inept foreign spies. Even if they returned safely Rahab was relying on the agreement of their leader Joshua to honour the bargain she had made with the spies. Even if Joshua agreed to the bargain, Rahab was then reliant on not being destroyed in the heat of battle. In effect, Rahab was really trusting in God. She had heard of God's mighty works and she believed that God could and would protect her.

I would posit, therefore, that for the Author of the Letter of James, Rahab, by her faithworks of receiving and sending out the spies, demonstrated that she had completely and irrevocably committed herself to the God of Israel and, metaphorically speaking, had burned all her bridges to Jericho, its authorities and its people who, in the Joshua account, represent the enemies of God who are to be eradicated from the face of the earth (cf. Josh.6:17a, 21). Rahab showed herself to be a true friend of God by removing all vestiges of friendship with the world (4:4). It is this aspect of total trust in, and commitment to, God, I suggest, rather

than any concept of hospitality that interests our Author in his argument concerning the nature of vital faith.

Independent of the hospitality argument there remains the issue of the connection between Rahab's faithworks and our Author's earlier arguments. I will deal first with the idea that there is, or may be, a connection between Jas 2:25 and the brother and sister of Jas 2:15-16 (Johnson, 1995, p.245; Moo, 2000, p.143). The brother and sister of Jas 2:15-16 are part of a hypothetical argument which the Author uses to ridicule the idea that a belief-apart-from works could possibly be considered as constituting a saving faith. The example he gives is deliberately extreme so that his audience can only respond that such a situation is unthinkable even in heathen circles. The Author wants his audience on his side from the start and the use of such a hyperbolic example is designed to achieve that aim. He will not, therefore, produce an example which might in any way be construed as being an attack on anyone within his audience in the matter described, i.e. the dismissing of a clearly needy brother or sister with empty words. Yes, it is true that the Author is attacking those within or connected to his audience who promote a 'justification by faith alone' agenda, but he is not suggesting for one moment that anyone in his audience is guilty of the heartlessness towards a brother or sister in need which he is describing in his hypothetical example. If my interpretation is correct, one may want to ask the reason why the Author used that particular example. The answer probably lies in the previous pericope. The Author had concluded it with the warning that '... judgement is merciless for the one who does not show mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement' (2:13). This statement and its context provides a natural hypothetical example for his next subject concerning the nature of true

faith, and it will enable him to commence his argument powerfully and succinctly, but without risking alienating anyone in his audience before they have heard him out. His audience can hear what he is saying in the knowledge that he is not accusing them of such outrageous behaviour. Consequently, I would suggest that there is no intentional link between Jas 2:25 and Jas 2:15-16.

It has also been suggested that the Author still has the issue of partiality in mind and that Abraham and Rahab represent the rich and the poor person depicted in Jas 2:2-4 (Wall, 1997a, p.144). Were Abraham to enter the Author's communal audience in fine robes, be given a seat of honour, and then seen a poor person being pushed to the margins, how would the patriarch have responded? Albeit, probably a later tradition than our composition, one might expect Abraham to take the fine robe off his own back, give it to the poor man, and invite him to swap places (cf. Ward, 1968, p.288; *Yashar, wa-yera* 42b). However, given what our Author has to say about 'the rich' in Jas 2:5-7 and his choice of Abraham in 2:21-24, it seems unlikely that he would want to cast Abraham in the role of the wealthy man of Jas 2:2-4, in any case.

#### **5.6.5.2 'Proselytes' and 'Outsiders'**

Several scholars allude to the proselyte or original gentile status of Abraham and Rahab as being a factor in the Author's choice of these two exemplars (Laws, 1980, p.216; Perkins, 1995, p.114; Moo, 2000, p.143).<sup>65</sup> The obvious question is why the Author, who is purportedly writing to the Jewish diaspora, would want to highlight such statuses.<sup>66</sup> I would

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<sup>65</sup> Moo doubts its relevance in the Book of James, although acknowledging that the proselyte status of these two exemplars became popular in later Christian and rabbinic writings.

<sup>66</sup> Laws, of course, sees the composition as written to gentiles from Rome; (Laws, 1980, pp.20-38).

suggest that it is more accurate to describe Abraham as an outsider among the people with whom he dwelled, rather than a proselyte. He spent the years after his call from Haran to the land of Canaan as the leader of a nomadic people who did not own the lands through which they travelled and in which their flocks grazed, enabling the writer of Hebrews to depict the patriarch as one who:

‘by faith . . . stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Heb 11:9-10).

Abraham’s outsider status and his separation from the world can be seen in several Genesis narratives including his sojourns in other lands (Gen 12:10-20; 20), his refusal to accept a reward from the King of Sodom (Gen 14:17, 22-24), and his insistence on paying for the burial site for Sarah (Gen 23:4-16). The patriarch is not beholden to anyone other than God.

Although a resident of Jericho, Rahab too was an outsider, her house in the outside wall providing vivid imagery of her status on the margins of city society. And even when she is rescued from the debris of Jericho, she and her family find themselves placed ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς Ἰσραηλ (LXX Josh 6:23). Indeed, if one adds her status as a woman, she is triply marginalized in the account of the Book of Joshua (Frymer-Kensky, 2002, p.35, cited in Nowell, 2008, p.6).

The Author has addressed his Letter to the twelve tribes in the Diaspora, i.e. to those living outside of the Jewish homeland. Diasporan Jews were generally content to remain in the towns and cities of their birth but tended to live within their own communities and follow

the distinctive requirements of Torah (Gruen, 2010, pp.77-96). They, therefore, remained foreigners or outsiders in the eyes of other groups who had assimilated themselves more fully into the pervading Graeco-Roman culture. I suggest, therefore, that the status of ‘outsiders’ provides a more suitable link between the patriarch Abraham and the harlot, Rahab for both the Author’s audience and his argument.

### **5.6.5.3 Definitive Tests of Faith and Commitment**

Just as the *Aqedah* was the greatest test of Abraham’s faith in, and commitment to, God, and served to define the patriarch’s faith in later traditions (both Jewish and Christian), so Rahab’s decision to hide the spies and aid them in their escape from Jericho defined her life of faith. She staked everything, including the well-being of her family, on the bargain she made with the spies. She trusted that in the heat of battle the invading army would remember that bargain and would bring her safely out of Jericho. From the time she decided to hide the spies to the time she was brought out alive from the doomed city, Rahab had to rely on God. Hers was a total and unequivocal commitment to God. There was no room for ‘double-mindedness’ (cf.1:6-8), nor for compromise with the doomed world around her (cf.4:4). Rahab’s faith, like that of Abraham, had been tested to the full, and like the faith of Abraham, it was not found wanting.

## **5.7 An Apt Aphorism (Jas 2:26)**

2:26 ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.

2:26 For just as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

In the final verse of Jas 2 we see the Author summing up his argument with an aphorism that draws on his earlier summary statement in Jas 2:17, leading Davids to conclude, correctly, that the section dealing with the exemplars (2:21-26) reinforces the Author’s main argument

that appeared at the beginning of the pericope in Jas 2:14-17 (Davids, 1982, p.133; cf. Wall, 1997a, p.157).

There have been numerous attempts to read more into this aphorism than the Author probably intended, especially from those who object to the idea that he appears to be likening faith to the body and works to the spirit. Dibelius was clearly exasperated by such efforts (Dibelius, 1976, p.167). Moo is similarly dismissive (Moo, 2000, p.143; cf. Ropes, 1916, p.225; Wall, 1997a, p.157). There is actually nothing new in the Author's conclusion. He has already made his point both implicitly and explicitly (McKnight, 2011, pp.257-258). The aphorism, therefore, basically means what it says, and what it says is wholly consistent with the tenor of the Author's argument throughout the unit, namely that faith and works are not merely co-workers; they have no independent life of their own because they are both essential for a vital living faith. Davids puts it graphically and succinctly, ' . . . a body without its life-force is simply a rotting corpse' (Davids, 1982, pp.133-134).

## 5.8 Summary and Conclusion

The rhetorical structure of Jas 2:25 mirrors that of Jas 2:21 and contains a blatant and deliberate contrast between Abraham the acknowledged father of the faithful and Rahab the harlot; 'saint and sinner', we might be tempted to say. It is so easy to focus on the great man of faith and sideline the despised and marginalised woman from the doomed city, and many commentators have done so. But Rahab did something that Abraham was never called to do; she entrusted God with her own life. She decides to take responsibility for the safety of the spies, first by hiding them and then by helping them escape back to their camp via the safety of mountain hideouts having first struck a bargain with them based in *hesed*. Rahab,



thereby, provides the Author with a second, but different type of example of what a total commitment to God looks like. Rahab forsakes the doomed world around her and entrusts her uncertain future (humanly speaking) to God, her only friend (cf. 4:4).

Like Abraham, Rahab is an outsider, but her marginalisation occurs not only within the doomed community that she forsakes and betrays but also within the community of faith which she joins, at least at the start of her new life away from Jericho (Jos 6:23).

## CHAPTER 6

### JOB

#### 6.1 Introduction

5:11 ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας· τὴν ὑπομονὴν Ἰὼβ ἠκούσατε καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε, ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρμων;

5:11 Indeed, we call them blessed who hold firm. You have heard of the steadfast endurance of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is full of mercy and compassionate.

James 5:11 contains the only reference in the New Testament to the patriarch Job. That is not to say that the Book of Job was not known or used by other New Testament writers. Paul quotes from it in writing to the Corinthian church (Job 5:13 in 1 Cor 3:19) and at least alludes to it (if not quotes from it) in writing to the church at Rome (Job 41:11 (LXX 41:3) in Rom 11:35).

The proverbial ‘patience of Job’ derives from the KJV translation of the above verse, ‘Ye have heard of the patience of Job . . .’ Johnson opines, ‘It would seem that James has considerable responsibility for shaping the perception of “endurance/patience” as the most memorable feature of Job’ (Johnson, 1995, p.319), and yet another commentator can start his study of the Author’s use of Job with the phrase ‘Job was not a patient man’ (Chute, 1941, p.51, cited in Gray, 2004, p.406). Although the quote is from a literary-theological study of Job, Gray rightly notes that Chute had widespread support for her statement among biblical scholars of her day, and as I shall show, there are still many contemporary scholars who would

concur that whilst the Book of Job depicts the patriarch as having a number of qualities, patience is not readily discernible amongst them. We must consider, therefore, why there has been such a widespread perception that Job was not a particularly patient person yet our Author felt able to highlight this virtue in the patriarch.

I shall start this investigation as I have with the previous two exemplars by looking at the depiction of Job in the Hebrew Bible. I shall then consider how the patriarch is viewed in early Jewish writings and thought before turning to the Letter of James, where I shall first provide the wider context, with particular reference to the unit(s) Jas 5:1-11.

## **6.2 Job in the Hebrew Bible**

There are diverging opinions amongst scholars as to the dating, authorship and unity of the Book of Job. Its composition as a series of poetic discourses at apparent variance to the prose narratives that frame them lies at the heart of the debate. One commentator succinctly describes the book as follows:

The [narrative] story depicts a blameless Job who patiently accepts grievous loss [and who] persists in his integrity by worshipping the one who gives and takes away [whilst] the poetic debate presents an entirely different hero, one who lacks patience and openly attacks the deity for injustice. (Crenshaw, 2001, p.331).

A simplified structure of the composition will help in understanding the issues.

Chapters 1 and 2 of the book act as a prose-narrative prologue which briefly describes the events leading up to the lengthy discourses between Job and his three friends (Job 3-31). There follows speeches by a new protagonist, Elihu (Job 32-37), two divine speeches separated by a short response of penitence from Job (Job 38-

41), Job's final response (Job 42:1-6) and a prose-narrative 'happy ending' epilogue (Job 42:7-17).<sup>67</sup>

The Prologue alternates between earth and heaven thereby providing the reader with a full view of what is happening and why. The hero, however, along with his wife and friends, are left completely in the dark and must consider the traumatic events which occur in the light of the contemporary cultural understanding. The opening description of Job depicts the perfect human being. Job is 'blameless, upright, fears God and turns away from evil' (Job 1:1). The narrator's depiction is soon reinforced in the first of the heavenly scenes by God himself who uses the exact same words to describe his servant in his opening discourse with the Accuser<sup>68</sup> (Richardson, 2006, p.216; cf. Job 1:8). The Accuser questions Job's reasons for honouring God and is given permission to strike at all that Job has (Job 1:12). One calamity after another is reported to Job, culminating in the news that all his children have been killed in a natural disaster. Job's response is that of the perfect follower of God (Job 1:21). A second heavenly exchange between God and the Accuser follows, in which the Accuser is permitted to strike Job himself but not so that Job would die. Job is duly struck down with a very visible disease and this is enough to lead his wife to question how the patriarch can maintain his integrity of belief in God after such suffering (Job 2:9). Again, Job's response is that of the perfect follower of God (Job 2:10). The prologue ends with three friends of Job sat in silence near him observing his great suffering on a dung heap (Job 2:13). The scene is

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<sup>67</sup> The main body of speeches include an interlude (Job 28) on the merits of wisdom and there is a short narrative at the end of the cycle of speeches between Job and his three friends before the start of Elihu's speeches.

<sup>68</sup> The Hebrew describes this protagonist as *ha-satan*, suggesting a (temporary) function rather than a personal name (Pierce, 2010, pp.1196-1200). I have elected, therefore, to use the term 'the Accuser' rather than the name 'Satan' in this section of the study.

now set for a dialogue between Job on one side, and his three friends on the other, to explore what has happened and why.

Given the depiction of Job in the prologue as the perfect follower of God, one might expect the speech cycles to start with Job's affirmation of his integrity and trust in God. Instead, they begin with Job cursing the day of his birth in graphic detail (Job 3). Although Job does not actually curse God (an act that would have led to the Accuser winning his wager with God and, in the context of Jewish law, would also have brought instant capital punishment on Job, cf. Lev 24:10-16), his outburst stretches the credibility of the narrator's earlier assertion that in all his reaction to his sufferings 'Job did not sin with his lips' (Job 2:10c). As the dialogue unfolds we see further statements that seem at variance with the prologue's depiction of the patriarch. Indeed, virtually every speech by Job includes a complaint about how God has left him in his trouble or even brought the trouble on him. For example, in the course of his third speech (in response to Bildad) Job gives 'free utterance to [his] complaint' (Job 10:1) and asks why God is contending with him (Job 10:2). He even asks of God, 'Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands and favour the schemes of the wicked' (Job 10:3). Other examples of his complaining include Job 6:4; 7:11-21; 9:22-24; 16:7-9; 19:6-12. After reading these, one might legitimately question the earlier assertion that Job 'did not sin with his lips' (Job 2:10).

It is not only the depiction of Job in the poetic speech cycles that causes commentators to question the unity of the Book of Job. The prose-narrative epilogue is also not without its difficulties. Firstly, in expressing his anger against Job's three friends, God asserts that Job

had spoken what was right regarding Godself (Job 42:7), an assertion which, as I have shown does not fit comfortably with some of Job's claims in the speech cycles in which he basically accuses God of acting unjustly towards him (cf. Job 6:4; 9:23; 10:17; 16:7-9; 19:6-12). Likewise, whilst Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar are clearly told they have spoken wrongly, no mention is made of the young man, Elihu, despite his attack on Job being even more vehement and vitriolic than that of Job's three friends. A third point that is claimed to undermine the unity of the work is the complete absence of the Accuser from both the speech cycles and the epilogue. Bearing in mind that the premise of the prologue is predicated on the Accuser's challenge to God regarding Job's integrity, it is surprising that the epilogue makes no mention of the Accuser's defeat and humiliation.

All of these apparent inconsistencies raise the question of whether the Book of Job is the work of one or several authors/redactors and, if the work of more than one author/redactor, the time period over which the work was composed. The debate over these issues continues (cf. Gordis, 1966, p.73; Dhorme, 1967, pp.xxxi-xxxii; Kidner, 1985, p.76; Clines, 1989, p.lviii, for arguments in favour of unity and single authorship/redaction; Driver and Gray, 1921, and Tsevat, 1980, for arguments against).<sup>69</sup> Whilst that debate is outside the scope of this study, Crenshaw's following observation is helpful:

A striking feature of the [B]ook [of Job] is the use of a framing story to enclose the poetic debate. Widely employed in the ancient Near East, this practice enabled authors to provide essential data for understanding philosophical reflections and for appreciating proverbial sayings just as a simple frame enhances a work of art, these brief narratives focus attention away from

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<sup>69</sup> For a detailed explanation of the various apparent contradictions, including an assertion that some elements within the prologue only make sense when read in conjunction with the dialogue in the speeches, see Hoffman, 1981, pp.160-170.

themselves and offer a perspective from which to view the poetic debate.  
(Crenshaw, 2001, p.332).

What I have shown in this brief review of the scholarly study of the Book of Job is that there are real issues concerning the integrity of the composition's unity.

It is not surprising that commentators should also differ on the date of the composition.

Dates ranging from the time of Moses through to the Hellenistic period have been proposed.

The weight of opinion, though, tends to view the work as being substantially composed or brought together in its current form between the seventh and second centuries B.C.E.

(Clines, 1989, p.lvii). A date during the Persian period is suggested by a number of leading Joban scholars for the following reasons. Firstly, the reference to the Adversary's role in Job is similar to that stated in Zechariah 3:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 (Hurvitz, 1974, pp.19-20; Crenshaw, 2001, p.332), whilst the Book of Malachi seems to have been influenced by Job (Dhorme, 1967, p.clxvii). Secondly, Job refers to the afterlife but in a way that suggests that he does not accept it (Gordis, 1966, p.217; cf. Job 10:20-22). Thirdly, the Book of Job includes phraseology that has to date only been found in biblical and non-biblical works that are known to have been written during the Persian period (Hurvitz, 1974, pp.20-30; Crenshaw, 2001, p.332).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Hurvitz makes the valid point that a suitable starting point for identifying such works is to look at those that refer to known persons and historical events and he cites the Books of Esther, Ezra and Chronicles as examples in the Hebrew canon, (Hurvitz, 1974, p.17). He also opines that the use of older words and phraseology in the Book of Job is not indisputable evidence of early composition, but may be the result of the author either choosing to place his hero in an earlier period or using the bones of an earlier tradition for his work, (Hurvitz, 1974, pp.30-32).

If a post-exilic date for the Book of Job is accepted, then the book may not contain the earliest reference to Job. That honour possibly rests with the Book of Ezekiel, where Job is mentioned twice alongside Noah and Dan(i)el in Ezekiel 14:14, 20.<sup>71</sup> In the Ezekiel references, Job is held up not as an exemplar of patience or steadfast endurance but as a paragon of righteousness, with the prophet asserting that even if Noah, Dan(i)el and Job were in the land of the prophet's audience, they would not be able, through their righteousness to save anyone but themselves. The implication of this statement is that by their righteousness these three patriarchs had saved their families and especially their children in their own times. Whilst it is clear from the Genesis account of the flood that it was Noah who found grace in the eyes of God and whose righteousness led to the salvation for all who entered the Ark with him, the biblical account of Job and the Ugaritic epic of Danel are not so clear on this point.<sup>72</sup>

Job's righteousness is also clearly seen in the Book of Job such that one commentator can describe this Joban virtue as 'extraordinary' (Richardson, 2006, p.216). Indeed, the statements concerning the patriarch in Job 1:1, 8 caused problems for rabbinical exegetes owing to the implication that Job was more righteous than Abraham (*b. B. Bat. 16a*). In Gen 17:1 God says to Abraham 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be [or 'become'] blameless.' The inference is that Abraham was not yet 'blameless' and this contrasts with the double statement of Job 1:1, 8 in which both man, and more importantly, God declare

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<sup>71</sup> It is widely agreed that the 'Dan(i)el' of these verses is not the Daniel of the biblical book of that name but the Danel found in the Ugaritic epic of *Aghat*; see for example, Day, 1980, pp.174-184; Crenshaw, 2001, p.544.

<sup>72</sup> For an argument that this may have been the case in older accounts of the Joban story and in the incomplete Ugaritic *Aghat* epic, see Zuckerman, 1991, pp.31-32.



Job already to be 'blameless' and, hence, the perfect exemplar of how to walk before God (*b. B. Bat. 16a*).

Irrespective of whether or not the Book of Job or the reference to the patriarch in the Book of Ezekiel is the earlier, many commentators believe that there was a much older oral tradition concerning Job on which the authors of both books drew (Clines, 1989, p.lvii). Hoffman, who argues strongly for a single authorship can, nevertheless, say, 'I share the widely accepted view that the prose plot is based on a popular legend whose hero was Job the righteous (see Ezek. xiv 14)' (Hoffman, 1981, p.161). For some that older tradition forms the basis for the narrative-prose prologue of the Book of Job and depicted the patriarch as 'Job the Patient', whereas the poetic dialogues depict him as 'Job the Impatient' (Dibelius, 1976, p.246).<sup>73</sup> Others have argued that the poetic dialogue is the older composition (Zuckerman, 1991, p.26).

The argument for an older tradition of this patriarchal story is further strengthened by the existence of a number of compositions from the Ancient Near East that deal with the problems of unjust suffering and theodicy. Several of these, in their written form, are earlier in date than even the earliest date proposed for the Book of Job.<sup>74</sup> However as Crenshaw

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<sup>73</sup> The terms 'Job the Patient' and 'Job the Impatient' are adopted from Harold Louis Ginsberg's entry on the Book of Job in Skolnik, 2007, p.343.

<sup>74</sup> Crenshaw cites the following as some of the parallel stories in the ancient world:

**'Man and his God'** – a Sumerian second millennium text about a sufferer who complains to his gods.

**'I will praise the God of Wisdom'** – a Babylonian work in which the sufferer acknowledges that no-one can discern the will of the gods yet the sufferer trusts in them, does his cultic duties and is restored.

**The 'Babylonian Theodicy'** (about 1100 BCE) – a poem in which a sufferer debates with a friend and ends with a plea that the shepherd [god] will once again pasture his flock as he should.

notes, none of these are exact parallels of the story of Job. The biblical book whilst adopting the traditional genre of debate and framing narrative of the earlier works adapts them and develops them in a distinctive way (Crenshaw, 2001, p.333).

It is clear, therefore, that the Hebrew Bible depicts Job as a paragon of righteousness both within the Book of Job and in the prophecy of Ezekiel. His status as a paragon of patience or steadfast endurance is not readily evident other than in the narrative framework passages of the Book of Job.

### 6.3 Job in the Literature of Second Temple Judaism and Rabbinic Thought

There is a single reference to Job in the deuterocanonical corpus, in the 'Praise of the Ancestors' passage of Sirach. Interestingly, the reference appears immediately after Ben Sira praises Ezekiel and immediately before his reference to the twelve (Minor) prophets. Some have interpreted this as suggesting that Job was viewed as a prophet in the early Jewish period (Richardson, 2006, p.214). Equally of interest is what Ben Sira has to say about Job in the Hebrew version, which is to draw attention to the patriarch holding fast 'to all the ways of justice' (Sir 49:9).<sup>75</sup>

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**'The Admonitions of Ipuwer'** from the Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty (first quarter of the second Millennium) – a work in which the author wonders whether the divine herdsman has either fallen asleep or loves death because of the chaos around him in society.

**'The Dispute of a Man and his Ba'** from the same period has a man overwhelmed with life's misery trying to persuade his soul to join him in suicide.

**The 'Epic of Keret'**, from Ugarit, tells of a hero who loses his wife and children, but who eventually finds favour with the gods and receives a new wife and new children, (Crenshaw, 2001, pp.332-333).

<sup>75</sup> One should note, however, that the LXX has taken the Hebrew consonants to mean 'enemies' which has the same root as the name Job, and therefore does not refer to the patriarch in any way, rendering this verse instead as, 'καὶ γὰρ ἐμνήσθη τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐν ὄμβρῳ καὶ ἀγαθῶσαι τοὺς εὐθύνοντας ὁδοῦς'. However, 'Job' is the more likely interpretation (Coggins, 1998, pp.81-82).

The most notable of the early Jewish writings about Job is the *Testament of Job* (*T. Job*). It is in this work that the patriarch's patience (μακροθυμία) is celebrated. The patriarch, in a scene reminiscent of the Gideon story (Judg 6:11-32), resolves to destroy the emblems of idolatry in a local temple. However, he is warned by an angel that if he does so he will suffer greatly at the hands of the Accuser (specifically named 'Satan'), but equally that if he can show steadfast endurance in his suffering he will gain eternal renown (*T. Job* 2.1-4.8). The telling of the tale is in the mouth of the dying patriarch as he recounts elements of his life story and counsels his children (hence 'testament' in *T. Job*). He urges his children to exercise patience in all things because patience is better than any other virtue (*T. Job* 27.7). He can claim (or even boast) that he was thoroughly involved with endurance (ὑπομονή) (*T. Job* 1:5), thus his 'exemplary endurance is the central concern of *T. Job*' (Gray, 2004, p.412). Job's funeral sees the poor, the widows and the orphans – groups he had consistently helped in an exemplary manner during his lifetime (*T. Job* chs 9-13) – mourning his passing with great lamentation (*T. Job* 53. 1-7). *T. Job*, therefore, is clearly a potential source for our Author. Doubts concerning both the date of this composition (a date range between 100 B.C.E. and 150 C. E. has been proposed) and the degree of Christian interpolation in the final redaction, make it difficult to determine any clear dependency of the Book of James on *T. Job* (Gray, 2004, pp.406-424, esp. pp. 408-412).

The oral provenance of elements of the early rabbinic traditions is notoriously difficult to date. In exploring the rabbinic traditions surrounding the patriarch Job, I intend only to identify the broad themes of rabbinic thought that developed over time. I make no claims regarding whether any of these traditions were known to our Author or to the author of *T.*

*Job*. Having established those limitations, I will now briefly consider the portrait of Job in the rabbinic tradition.

The two main problems for the rabbis were the apparent superiority of Job's righteousness over that of Abraham in the Hebrew Bible (see section 6.2; cf. *b. B. Bat. 16a*) and the fact that Job was a gentile. How could a gentile possibly be more righteous than Father Abraham? Several answers were proffered to overcome these problems. Some focused on the statement in Job 2:10 that in facing all the calamities that befell him, Job 'did not sin with his lips'. The rabbis concluded from this that Job must have sinned in his heart (*b. B. Bat. 16a*). Others accused the patriarch of blasphemy and suggested that the reason he received a double portion at the end of his sufferings was because he would not be able to enter the afterlife, and God, therefore allowed him extra blessing in this life (*b. B. Bat. 15b*). Yet another suggestion was that Job was a fictitious exemplar of perfection, and, therefore, not strictly comparable to Abraham (*b. B. Bat. 16a*). Despite these concerns the rabbis still esteemed Job's ethical qualities, focussing on his righteousness, generosity and hospitality, with barely a mention of his patient endurance.

My brief review of Second Temple Jewish literature and rabbinic thought reveals that only the *Testament of Job* and (possibly) a single verse in Sirach provide evidence for a Job of patient endurance, and yet this quality, and not the much more prominent quality of righteousness, is taken up both by our Author and by the Christian writer Clement at the end of the first century C.E. (*1 Clem. 26.3*).

## 6.4 The Context of Job in the Book of James

### 6.4.1 Introduction

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Jas 5:11 provides the only instance in the New Testament where the patriarch Job is expressly referred to. Before looking at the verse in detail, however, I shall place it in its wider context, so as to understand better its function. Although the subsequent verse (5:12) commences with *Πρὸ πάντων δέ, ἀδελφοί μου*, its content appears to have no relevance to the preceding verse or unit, suggesting that Jas 5:11 is probably the end of a unit which begins in Jas 5:7 (contra Amphoux, 1981, pp.390-400; Wall, 1997a, p.248). James 5:7 contains *οὖν*. The Author uses this term just five times in his composition. In the four other instances (4:4, 7, 17; 5:16) he uses the term in the sense of 'in the light of this' thereby linking what he is about to say with what he has just said. There is no reason to doubt his use of the term in the same way here. How far back *οὖν* refers, however, is disputed by scholars. For some, Jas 5:7-11 is the end of a section starting at Jas 4:11 (or 4:13) dealing with judgement and/or warnings against arrogance, and especially the arrogance born of wealth (Amphoux, 1981, p.399; Crotty, 1992, pp.53, 56; Moo, 2000, p.vii; Cheung, 2003, p.82; McKnight, 2011, p.55). For these commentators, *οὖν* refers back to that whole section. For others the section commencing at Jas 4:11(13) ends at 5:6 and Jas 5:7-11 becomes the start of the composition's ending (Davids, 1982, p.181; Wall, 1997a, p.248; Popkes, 2001a, pp.viii-x; Witherington, 2007, p.532), or even a hinge between the previous section and the one that follows (Johnson, 1995, pp.311-312). Despite these differing opinions, almost all commentators are agreed that Jas 5:1-6 and 5:7-11 are at least sub-units within the composition and that is how I shall treat them. I will show the relevance of this opening unit of Jas 5 to this study of Job in the next section.

Even amongst those who see Jas 5:7-11 as part of a separate section from that containing Jas 5:1-6, there is wide agreement that the two sub-units are linked. Davids, for example, is adamant that 'one cannot read 5:7-11 separately from 5:1-6' (Davids, 1982, p.181). However, whilst I too see the two units as being closely linked, I shall nevertheless treat them separately for the purpose of this study.

#### **6.4.2 Prophecy of Judgement Against Rich Landowners (Jas 5:1-6)**

5:1 Ἄγε νῦν οἱ πλούσιοι, κλαύσατε ὀλολύζοντες ἐπὶ ταῖς ταλαιπωρίαις ὑμῶν ταῖς ἐπερχομέναις. 5:2 ὁ πλοῦτος ὑμῶν σέσηπεν καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια ὑμῶν σητόβρωτα γέγονεν, 5:3 ὁ χρυσὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ὁ ἄργυρος κατίωται καὶ ὁ ἰὸς αὐτῶν εἰς μαρτύριον ὑμῖν ἔσται καὶ φάγεται τὰς σάρκας ὑμῶν ὡς πῦρ. ἔθησαυρίσατε ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις. 5:4 Ἴδου ὁ μισθὸς τῶν ἐργατῶν τῶν ἀμησάντων τὰς χώρας ὑμῶν ὁ ἀπεστερημένος ἀφ' ὑμῶν κράζει, καὶ αἱ βοαὶ τῶν θερισάντων εἰς τὰ ὦτα κυρίου σαβαὼθ εἰσεληλύθασιν. 5:5 ἔτρυφήσατε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐσπαταλήσατε, ἐθρέψατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγῆς, 5:6 κατεδικάσατε, ἐφονεύσατε τὸν δίκαιον, οὐκ ἀντιτάσσεται ὑμῖν.

5:1 Now listen you rich people, weep and howl for the misery that is coming upon you. 5:1 Your wealth has rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten; 5:3 your gold and silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you, and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure in the last days. 5:4 Behold, the wages kept back by you from the workers who mow your fields cry out, and the cries of the reapers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts. 5:5 You have lived in luxury on the earth and indulged yourselves; you have (over)fed your hearts in a day of slaughter. 5:6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous who did not resist you.

These opening six verses of Jas 5 are amongst the most damning in the New Testament. The broadside against the rich landowners who withhold wages from/defraud their workers is breathtaking, and despite the Author's negative attitude to the rich (see section 3.5), it still comes as something of a shock. Some commentators have used the term 'farmers' to describe the rich people of this section (cf. Wall, 1997a, p.223; McKnight, 2011, p.381). I would suggest that 'landowner' is a more appropriate term for the following reasons: Firstly, the inference from this passage is that the rich owners of the lands probably did not do any of the farm work themselves. Indeed, they were possibly absent landlords such as those featured in Jesus' parables (e.g. Mt 21:33-43; Lk 12:42-48). Secondly, the Author uses the

Greek term ὁ γεωργὸς as a positive exemplar in Jas 5:7 and the contrast between the landowners of Jas 5:1-6 and the farmer of Jas 5:7 could hardly be greater. It seems unlikely that he would have used the same Greek term in Jas 5:1 had he chosen to define the rich more precisely there. Thirdly, the landowners are accused of ‘living in luxury on the earth and indulging [themselves]’ (5:5), which is at odds with the usual picture of the farmer.

The Author directed strong words against the wealthy in Jas 1:10-11, and indirectly in Jas 2:1-7, 13; 4:2-4. He is clearly on the side of the poor whom God has chosen to be ‘heirs of the kingdom’ (2:5), and his audience had suffered at the hands of wealthy protagonists who seem to have abused the courts to obtain unjust judgements against some of them, as well as blaspheme ‘the excellent name . . . invoked over [them]’ (2:6-7). I suggested in Chapter Three (section 3.5), that the Author did not view the wealthy as part of the messianic community. The language of this unit reinforces that suggestion. It warrants a detailed analysis for the simple reason that in the Hebrew Bible the exemplar Job is described as the wealthiest patriarch of his era (Job 1:3), and in *T. Job* he is the wealthiest of kings (cf. *T. Job* 9-13; 28.5-6). Hence if the Author only has condemnation for the rich, we need to understand why he has chosen to use Job despite his wealthy status in the world.

It is accepted by commentators that Jas 5:1-6 is prophetic in language and structure and powerfully reminiscent of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, (see for example, Ropes, 1916, p.282; Dibelius, 1976, p.235; Martin, 1988, p.172; Johnson, 1995, p.308; Moo, 2000, pp.210-211; Brosend, 2004, p.131; McKnight, 2011, p.381). I will show that the unit has a close affinity with the Book of Isaiah, and especially with Proto-Isaiah.

The wealthy, against whom the Author rails, are exhorted to κλαύσατε ὀλολύζοντες (5:1) because of the miseries that lie ahead for them. Johnson notes that the Septuagint uses the verb ὀλολύζω exclusively in the context of laments in response to disasters visited on the people by YHWH for their apostasy, and this serves to underline the strong prophetic nature of this unit (Johnson, 1995, pp.298-299; cf. Moo, 2000, p.210; Brosend, 2004, p.132). Eleven out of the eighteen occurrences of this verb in the Septuagint appear in the Book of Isaiah, with nine of those occurrences in Proto-Isaiah.

These opening verses of Jas 5 evoke traditional language in the Hebrew Bible for the coming of the 'Day of the Lord' (Dibelius, 1976, p.235; Martin, 1988, pp.172-173; Moo, 2000, p.210). Indeed McKnight can assert, 'Before James even uses the word "day," as he will in 5:3, his readers recognize that he is warning of the Day of the Lord' (McKnight, 2011, pp.384-385). Prophecies of this 'Day' abound in the Hebrew Bible. Septuagint Isaiah 13:6, for example, reads: ὀλολύζετε ἐγγὺς γὰρ ἡ ἡμέρα κυρίου καὶ συντριβὴ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔξει' (Wail, for the day of the LORD is near and a destruction will come from God), and at least one commentator is convinced that our author has this verse in mind (Witherington, 2007, p.524). Septuagint Joel 2:11 speaks of the hosts that gather at God's command in preparation for the slaughter to come on the Day of the Lord, a day on which people will reap what they have sown (cf. Ob 15). Our Author is preparing his audience for severe prophetic judgement – a judgement which has no vestige of mercy for those against whom the prophecy is directed.



James 5:2-3 echoes classic Hebrew parallelism in its description of the calamities that will soon come.<sup>76</sup> The concept of riches 'rusting' and clothes becoming 'moth-eaten' is grounded in Jewish prophetic and wisdom traditions (cf. Job 13:28; Isa 51:8; Sir 29:10; 42:13; Let Jer 1:9-10; cf. Davids, 1982, p.176 Brosend, 2004, p.133), and in the time of Jesus it would seem to have been in common usage given the Matthean Jesus' exhortation, 'But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes . . . ' (Mt 6:20). Indeed, it is possible that our Author had this element of Jesus' teaching in mind (Brosend, 2004, p.133).

Given the prophetic imagery of this unit, there are no real grounds for arguing that the Author's statement concerning precious metals rusting away reveals his ignorance and lowly status (contra Windisch, 1951, p.31). What we have here is a prophet's poetic licence in making the point that even the most long-lasting of earthly riches are impermanent and ultimately worthless when a person is called upon to give an account of their life before the divine judge.

Such language can also be found in the Jewish wisdom tradition. Sirach, for example, instructed his readers to 'Lose silver for the sake of a brother and friend, and do not let it corrode under a stone unto destruction' before urging them to store up true heavenly treasures more profitable than gold (Sir 29:10-11). Alluding to this, Brosend states that the rich whom our author addresses have not followed this advice but instead have laid up judgement for themselves (Brosend, 2004, pp.133-134; cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.236, who notes

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<sup>76</sup> For detailed comments on the extent of this parallelism see Dibelius, 1976, pp.236-238.

‘the rust bears witness that the money remains lying around and that therefore the rich man has neglected his duty to give alms’).<sup>77</sup> Given the Author’s views as to what constitutes true religion (1:26-27), his general attitude to the rich (as already discussed above and in section 3.5), his status as a teacher (cf. 1:5; 3:1, 13-18) and God’s preference for the poor (2:5), it is likely that he would wholeheartedly endorse Sirach’s teaching and, consequently, see the unused riches of the wealthy as evidence of their sin of omission in almsgiving (contra Ropes, 1916, p.285, who considers the idea ‘far-fetched’).

We see, then, a passage whose judgement language is, to say the least, savage. And yet that judgement is to become even more severe in Jas 5:4. Like the blood of Abel (Gen 4:10), the wages of the workers are depicted as crying out to God for justice to be done (Davids, 1982, pp.177-178). The Mosaic Law required that such wages be paid at the end of the day because workers relied on them to buy their daily food and meet other basic needs (cf. Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14-15; Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5; Tob 4:14; Sir 34:22). The requirement in Deut 24:14-15 is particularly pertinent in this context, being the fullest example of this Biblical tradition (Dibelius, 1976, p.238). The wages due to the workers are still in the hands of the landowners, and it is as if they know they ought to be in the hands of the workers. Consequently, both the cries of the anthropomorphic injustice and those of the harvesters come into the ears of – not just ‘the Lord’ or ‘God’ but into the ears of κύριος σαβαωθ. Elsewhere in his composition, the Author refers to God as θεός, κύριος, κριτής and in one

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<sup>77</sup> Johnson citing Jas 2:6 suggests there is a role reversal here. Where the rich are placing the poor in the dock in Jas 2:6, soon it will be their turn to be in the divine dock (Johnson 1995:300).

place as πατήρ τῶν φώτων, but only here has he used a traditional descriptive Septuagintal nomenclature for God.

It is possible that the Author has Is 5:7-9 in mind here (especially 5:9 – see NA<sup>27</sup> and UBS<sup>4</sup> apparatus) and he is simply using the divine nomenclature found in LXX Isaiah. However, it should be noted that where the Septuagint uses the transliterated form of the Hebrew YHWH Šĕbā’ôt, it is almost always in the context of God’s judgement on either his erring people or his and his peoples’ enemies. Such judgement is severe, and in a number of cases is pronounced in advance as an irrevocable divine decision, such that those against whom the pronouncements are made are beyond redemption and hope. Davids, drawing on the Sabaoth name writes: ‘The term “Lord Sabaoth” used here can only heighten the sense [of imminent divine judgment] by referring to the majestic power of the prophetic God of Isaiah and the judgment which did follow his prophecy’ (Davids, 1982, p.178). However, I would go further and posit that the very term ‘Lord Sabaoth’ speaks of divine judgement in its severest form.<sup>78</sup>

The context of Jas 5:4 alone admits of a severe judgement on those who are responsible for the injustices that have reached the ears of God, but in the context of judgement by κύριος σαβαωθ it leaves no room for repentance and forgiveness and the day of divine retribution

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<sup>78</sup> In an unpublished paper presented at the ‘Old Testament in the New Testament’ UK seminar in 2010, I argued that the transliterated term κύριος σαβαωθ (Hebrew YHWH Šĕbā’ôt) was used almost exclusively in the context of severe judgement, especially within Proto-Isaiah. Such judgement outside of the Book of Isaiah included that to be inflicted upon Jericho (Jos 6:17), the divine instruction to King Saul, through Samuel to annihilate the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:2-3), David’s confrontation with Goliath (1Sam 17:45) and Jehu’s destruction of the house of Ahab in accordance with the word of God through Elijah (2 Kings 10:16-17). All four of these events can be construed as evidencing the pronouncing of an irrevocable divine judgement on those who were subsequently killed.

will soon be upon them. Hence Jas 5:5 acts, *inter alia*, to reinforce the horrors of that judgement as those who had lived in luxury on the backs of the poor,<sup>79</sup> will find that they have only succeeded in fattening their own selves for the divine slaughter that will accompany the imminent day of judgment (Davids, 1982, p.179).<sup>80</sup>

The concluding verse in this small unit (5:6) is unclear with regard to the identity of τὸν δίκαιον. Much of earlier Christian tradition saw a veiled reference to Jesus here but this seems unlikely, given both the immediate and wider contexts and the probability that the verse is a continuation of the previous statement. Others see a reference to James the 'brother' of Jesus (Martin, 1988, p.182). This possibility cannot be ruled out. However, since the use of the singular τὸν δίκαιον need not refer to an individual but may simply mean the poor collectively, this is the most likely of the three options (Brosend, 2004, pp.135-136). Whilst the poor probably did die at the hands of the rich, both by murder and by starvation, the Author may not have had actual physical murder in view. He has probably followed paraenetical tradition by referring to the judicial murder of the poor by the rich as described in Sir 34:22 (Davids, 1982, pp.179-180; Johnson, 1995, pp.304-305, who is particularly struck by the clarity of the statement in Sirach). These wealthy landowners have acted in a way that deprived their workers of their livelihoods and that was tantamount to letting them starve (Deut 24:14-15). They had been merciless in their use of the courts to destroy the righteous

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<sup>79</sup> The description of the rich landowners' sin in this verse brings to mind Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Lk 16:19-31; so Davids, 1982:178, who states 'whether or not James knew Luke's parable, he has painted its setting beautifully'; see also Martin, 1988, pp.179-180; Moo, 2000, p.217.

<sup>80</sup> For the debate over whether the ἐν in ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγῆς should be translated as 'for' or 'in' (the/a) day of slaughter), and whether or not it refers to a future judgement against the rich for their past actions against the poor see Davids, 1982, pp.178-179; Martin, 1988, pp.180-181; Johnson, 1995, pp.303-304.

poor and now they would experience for themselves the truth of Jas 2:13 that judgement will be 'merciless for the one who does not show mercy'.

In the light of the above analysis of Jas 5:1-6, it is difficult to see how any of the wealthy landowners being addressed can possibly be members of the messianic community. Can we then say that the Author has no time at all for the rich? Before drawing any final conclusions we need briefly to consider the status of the merchants who are the focus of our Author's condemnation in Jas 4:13-17 and then, the teaching of Jesus as reflected in the Synoptic Gospels.

Opinion is divided on the status of the merchants. Wall, for example, sees both the merchants and landowners as exemplars of evil people who are friends of the world and therefore enemies of God. They demonstrate this hostility both by their arrogance and their hostility to the God-chosen poor (Wall, 1997a, pp.223-224). In this assessment Wall draws on Johnson's thesis that Jas 4:4 is the heart of the Book of James (Johnson, 1985, pp.166-183). Johnson's own assessment of the two groups of wealthy people in his subsequent commentary is based also on the way in which the Author addresses his audience. As we saw in our initial consideration of the *topos* of the rich and poor (3.5) the Author employs the term ἀδελφοί at regular intervals when directly addressing his audience. However when the Author addresses the merchants in Jas 4:13, they are simply οἱ λέγοντες and the wealthy landowners in Jas 5:1 become οἱ πλούσιοι. This, along with his belief that Jas 4:13-5:6 is part of a section dealing with the pride against which God is opposed (4:6), leads Johnson to conclude that both the merchants and the landowners are outside the Author's audience

(Johnson, 1995, pp.291-292). Maynard-Reid proffers the idea that the Author's attack is against the three different elements of the status of wealthy people in that era; their financial activities in Jas 2:5-7; their merchant activities in Jas 4:13-17 and their landowning activities in Jas 5:1-6. Most rich people of the time, he argues, would operate in all three spheres (Maynard-Reid, 1987, pp.68-69; cf. Tamez, 1990, pp.21-26).

Other commentators, however, see a sufficient difference between the merchants and the rich landowners as to argue that the former are both separate from the latter and a part of the Author's audience community. Davids, for example, states

While [Jas 5:1-6] has similarities to the warnings to the rich . . . the tone is quite different, for now it is not a paraenetic tone, an exhorting tone or even a warning tone . . . but a sharp, cutting cry of prophetic denouncement. Their doom is coming: woe to them! (Davids, 1982, pp.174-175).

Cantinat seeing a progression from those on their way to riches (4:13-17) to those who have arrived in the world of wealth (5:1-6) posits: 'Dans la nouvelle invective il n'y a que condamnation de la conduite incriminée. Nulle indication n'est donnée d'un moyen de conversion (cf. 4:15) et nulle maxime générale (cf. 4:17) ne vient adoucir la brusquerie de l'ultime remarque (5:6b)'<sup>81</sup> (Cantinat, 1973, p.219).

For some commentators, therefore, the Author is exhorting the merchants to repent of their arrogant presumption whilst having only condemnation and the promise of judgement for the landowners. Indeed, Moo asserts:

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<sup>81</sup> 'In the new invective, there is only condemnation of the conduct of the accused. No indication is given of a means of conversion (cf.4:15) and there is no general maxim (cf. 4:17) to soften the bluntness of the final remark (5:6b)' (my translation).

. . . the differences between 4:13-17 and 5:1-6 are greater than the similarities. The former is written in the dialogical style of the diatribe, with questions, answers, and exhortations to repent. James 5:1-6, however, has none of that. James's style is that of the prophets pronouncing doom on pagan nations. He unrelievedly attacks these people, with no hint of exhortation. (Moo, 2000, p.210).

Brosend, in a more guarded assessment, says ' . . . we . . . see . . . a dramatic change in tone, a likely change in audience, and a probable shift in the anticipated outcome from repentance (4:13-17) to punishment (5:1-6)' (Brosend, 2004, p.131). Before clarifying my own position, I will turn to Jesus' teaching on the rich in the Synoptic Gospels.

I argued in Chapter Three that that the Author's teaching is replete with echoes of the Jesus tradition especially as it is recorded in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain (see section 3.13). The sayings of Jesus regarding the rich in the Synoptic Gospels reveal a harsh attitude towards them (cf. Mt 19:23-25; Mk 10:25; 12:41; Lk 6:24; 12:16; 14:12; 16:19; 18:25) and we see a similar attitude in the Book of James. (Johnson, 1995, p.185). Jesus' teaching about rich men and entrance into the kingdom of God caused consternation among his disciples, at least initially (cf. Mt 19:23-26; Mk 10:23-27; Lk 18:24-26). Its retention in the three Synoptic Gospels is testimony to its continued importance to subsequent followers of Jesus, and given that the context of the saying was one in which a rich man had been asked to sell all he had and give it to the poor, the idea of rich people hanging onto their wealth may well have seemed offensive to teacher-disciples of the Jesus tradition such as our Author. Furthermore, Acts 4:34-37 suggests that a common practice of those with lands or property who joined the first disciples of Jesus after Pentecost, was to sell what they had and give some or all of the proceeds to the apostles for distribution amongst those

who had need. Wealth, then, is seen as a hindrance to membership of the messianic community in the early Jesus tradition and the Author of the Book of James reflects this belief.

As for my own position, I am struck by the fact that the warnings to the merchants of Jas 4:13-17 have nothing of the bitter condemnatory and final irrevocable judgement found in Jas 5:1-6. Furthermore, the asserting of what the merchants ought to be saying (4:15) suggests that the Author does not cast them off completely. Hence, whilst the two passages may well be parallel, and probably part of a larger section dealing with the arrogant pursuit and retention of wealth, Jas 5:1-6 is not simply a continuation of Jas 4:13-17, although the use of Ἄγε νῦν in both Jas 4:13 and in Jas 5:1 strongly suggests that the Author intended to link the two sections (Dibelius, 1976, p.235). I concur, therefore, with those who argue that the Author offers some hope of repentance to the presumptuous merchants.

If, as I have argued, and most commentators agree, the wealthy landowners are not part of the Author's audience, how does he expect his message to reach them? Like the Hebrew prophets he is emulating (cf. Isa 14:29; 23:1, 4, 6; Ob 2; Zeph 2:3, 12), the Author is using apostrophe, the device of addressing the absent oppressor for the benefit of the prophet's/writer's own oppressed audience (Blomberg and Kamell, 2008, p.220), some of whom are likely to be the very ἐργάται and θερισάντοι whose wages have been withheld by the landowners. The Author's purpose is to reassure his audience that those who treat the poor unjustly will be duly punished by the one who is the judge of all the earth (Martin, 1988, p.176, Moo, 2000, p.210). Such punishment will occur at ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου



which will be soon (5:8), so the audience must endure the current sufferings and injustices with steadfastness and patience (5:7-8, 10-11).

### 6.4.3 A Call to Patient Endurance Pending the Imminent Parousia (Jas 5:7-11)

5:7 Μακροθυμήσατε οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἕως τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου. ἰδοὺ ὁ γεωργὸς ἐκδέχεται τὸν τίμιον καρπὸν τῆς γῆς μακροθυμῶν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἕως λάβῃ προῖμον καὶ ὄψιμον. 5:8 μακροθυμήσατε καὶ ὑμεῖς, στηρίξατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἤγγικεν. 5:9 μὴ στενάζετε, ἀδελφοί, κατ’ ἀλλήλων ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε· ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν. 5:10 ὑπόδειγμα λάβετε, ἀδελφοί, τῆς κακοπαθίας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας τοῦς προφήτας οἱ ἐλάλησαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου. 5:11 ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας· τὴν ὑπομονὴν Ἰὼβ ἠκούσατε καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε, ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρμων.

5.7 Therefore, be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold the farmer waits patiently for the precious harvest of the earth until it receives the early and late rains. 5.8 Therefore, be patient, strengthen your hearts, because the coming of the Lord draws near. 5.9 Brothers, do not grumble against one another so that you will not be judged. Behold the judge (has been and?) is standing at the door! 5.10 Brothers, take the example of the hardship and endurance of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 5.11 Indeed, we call them blessed who hold firm. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is full of mercy and compassionate.

In the opening section of Chapter Three, I suggested that aural rhetoric is important in the Book of James. Whether the composition was an encyclical or homily committed to writing for circulation, the Author would have been concerned at how his message would be *heard* by his first hearers. Yes, they may have been able to look at it again as part of a ‘teaching session’ (cf. 3:1), but the first hearing of a well-constructed composition can leave a profound mark on its audience.<sup>82</sup> Witherington, therefore, has good grounds for suggesting that an orator knew that what he said towards the end of his speech would more likely stick in the minds of his audience, and that this placed ‘a premium on a discourse’s final argumentation and the peroration that follows it’ (Witherington, 2007, p.522). One does not need to agree with Witherington’s assertion that the composition is a homily and that Jas 5:7 begins the peroration, to recognize that the writer or compiler of a paraenetic encyclical

<sup>82</sup> Speeches such as Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’, Winston Churchill’s ‘Never in the field of human conflict....’ and Lincoln’s ‘Gettysburg Address’ spring to mind.

would want to ensure that the climax of his message would be memorable. The Author's condemnation of the rich landowners in Jas 5:1-6 is, I suggest, a rhetorical highpoint of the composition and would have had a significant impact on the whole audience on its first airing. Having seized the audience's attention with such a rhetorical flourish, what would the Author want to say next? I would posit that the next words would be of paramount importance to his whole argument. The opening exhortation μακροθυμήσατε of Jas 5:7 is, therefore, significant, especially as in a few short verses it is repeated (5:8), reinforced by its cognates μακροθυμῶν in Jas 5:7, μακροθυμίας in Jas 5:10, and strengthened by the return of the complementary, yet vital quality of ὑπομονή and its cognate ὑπομείναντας in Jas 5:11.

Commentators are divided on whether the Author is using the two verbs μακροθυμέω and ὑπομένω and their cognates synonymously or whether he intends them to stand for different virtues. Those seeing the terms as synonymous include Dibelius, 1976, p.242; Davids, 1982, p.182, who suggests the Author may be using synonyms for stylistic, theological or even redactional reasons; Haas, 1989, pp.117-118, who, although he sees the different words (he adds καρτερία to the other two) as largely synonymous nevertheless argues they are 'not used arbitrarily . . . [but each word] occurs in a specific context and is connected with a specific idea of suffering' although ὑπομένω and its cognates also take on a general meaning; Moo, 2000, p.222 and McKnight, 2011, pp.403-404. Commentators who interpret the words as having different meanings include Martin, 1988, p.190; Johnson, 1995, pp.312-313, who suggests that the change from μακροθυμέω to ὑπομένω reflects a change from passive 'waiting' to active 'putting up with' similar to the quality that God

shows as he puts up with sinful behaviour until the appointed time of judgement. Brosend notes:

. . . while [these] terms cluster around the same family of meaning, they do not mean the same thing. NT usage suggests *makrothumeo* is used to describe the attitude we are to have in our dealings with persons . . . while *hypomonew* is used for the attitude required when confronting difficult situations. (Brosend, 2004, p.142).

Ropes, whilst stating that μακροθυμέω has ‘more the meaning of patient and submissive’ and ὑπομέν[ω] that of ‘steadfast and constant endurance’ nevertheless sees the words as ‘nearly synonymous’ (Ropes, 1916, p.293). As I will show in my exegesis of Jas 5:11, there are strong grounds for believing that the Author is using the two words differently (see section 6.5).

A second point of note in this new unit is a clear change in addressee. The Author returns to addressing the ἀδελφοί, and this address is repeated in both Jas 5:9 and Jas 5:10, reinforcing the idea that this part of the composition is only for those whom the Author regards as being his ‘brothers’ and, therefore, true members of the messianic community.<sup>83</sup> This designation clearly excludes the rich landowners of Jas 5:1-6 and possibly the merchants of Jas 4:13-17 too.

Thirdly, given the sudden switch of emphasis in both audience and subject matter together with the use of οὖν elsewhere in the composition (4:4, 7, 17; 5:16) the οὖν of Jas 5:7

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<sup>83</sup> Johnson sees the triple use of the term in close proximity as emphasizing the change of addressee from the rich landowners to the Jacobean audience, (Johnson, 1995, pp.311-312).

probably relates back primarily to the climactic and prophetic tirade in Jas 5:1-6, rather than to the whole of the earlier composition (contra Ropes, 1916, p.293 and Wall, 1997a, p.251).

Finally, the eschatological dimension comes fully into focus as the audience is urged to be patient until the Parousia of the Lord. The pattern of the Author's severe denunciation of the rich landowners followed by words of consolation for the community of faith (who we can reasonably assume to be mainly poor) 'is very much in keeping with the classical prophets from Amos to Zechariah' (Brosend, 2004, p.141). God has seen the injustice of the greedy and oppressive rich and heard the anguished cries of the oppressed poor and he will soon come. The Author, therefore, exhorts the ἀδελφοί to be patient. He does not want them to fall short now, not when the day of reversal is so close at hand. This is no time to give up waiting for God to deal with the injustices of life, and it is certainly not the time to turn away from the community's faith and praxis (cf. 5:19-20). The Lord's Parousia is imminent (cf. 5:7, 9) and the Author's audience must be ready for it.

The question arises as to whose coming is envisaged by the Author and his audience. The term ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου in a contemporary Christian context would undoubtedly be interpreted as a reference to the final coming of Jesus as Lord, and many commentators interpret it as such within the original context of the composition (cf. Ropes, 1916, p.293; Dibelius, 1976, pp.242-243; Davids, 1982, p.182; Martin, 1988, p.190; Johnson, 1995, pp. 313-314; Wall, 1997a, pp.251-252; Moo, 2000, p.221). Their arguments that Jesus is the κυρίος of Jas 5:7 are based on a combination of factors. Firstly is the belief that the term ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου was a formulaic term early in the New Testament period for the

return of Jesus. Secondly, the term ἡ παρουσία is not used in the Septuagint with reference to either the Messiah or God, and its appearance in a couple of Jewish texts (*T. Jud.* 22.2 and *T. Abr.* 13.4) is suspect, quite possibly arising out of Christian interpolation (cf. Ropes, 1916, p.294; Dibelius, 1976, p.243). Thirdly, the belief that the Book of James is undoubtedly a Christian work, albeit with Jewish influences. However, a reference to the coming of God rather than Christ as judge should not be altogether excluded (cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.242; Wall, 1997a, pp.251-252). After all, the most recent reference to κύριος was in Jas 5:4 in which the Author asserted that the cries of the oppressed workers εἰς τὰ ὄτα κυρίου σαβαὼθ εἰσεληλύθασιν, and as I have shown, the term κύριος σαβαὼθ was Isaiah's preferred term for the God who brings vengeance on his enemies and punishment to his erring people (see section 6.4.2). The concept of the cries of the oppressed being heard by God is well documented in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Ex 22:27; Isa 5:7; Hos 8:2) and ultimately echoes the cry of the Biblical world's first injustice by man to man (Gen 4:10). Finally, the Author has already declared that there is only one lawgiver and judge (4:12) and the context there is clearly one in which the lawgiver and judge is God. Having said that, though, the Author's designation of Jesus as both Χριστός and κύριος (1:1; 2:1) point strongly to a belief that Jesus is the Messiah of God, and as such, the one expected to come to inaugurate the final eschatological hope of a new creation (Riesner, 2001, p.1255; cf. 1:18).

Irrespective of whose Parousia is imminent, the Author wants his audience to grasp what he is saying and we see, at the beginning of Jas 5;7b, the second of the four occasions of the use of ἰδοὺ in this fifth chapter. The term ἰδοὺ is used just six times in this composition and is intended to capture the audience's special attention. We first meet it in Jas 3:4, 5 in the

Author's discourse on the tongue; next we see it in Jas 5:4, the central verse in his condemnation of the rich landowners and then three times in this current unit (5:7, 9, 11), underlining the importance of what he now has to say.

For some commentators the Author's example of a farmer waiting patiently for the harvest is an image drawn from the community's own rural experience in Palestine, reinforcing their belief that the composition was written against a (first century C.E.) Palestinian background (Davids, 1982, pp.183-184; Witherington, 2007, p.536). For others, a Palestinian setting may still be in view but this verse doesn't necessarily show it as the Author could simply have drawn on traditional material found in the Hebrew Bible (Dibelius, 1976, pp.243-244; Johnson, 1995, p.315). What is more significant is what the imagery is intended to convey to the audience. The verb μακροθυμέω implies a waiting that is in expectation, rather than some vague hope, and this will be reinforced in the next verse with the promise of the Lord's coming. The Author describes the harvest as τίμιον (precious, costly, highly valued; cf. Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.1794), from which one might infer that the harvests were intermittent. However, the purpose of the image is to stress the farmer's reliance on God. After all, the farmer can do nothing to make it rain other than call upon God in prayer (cf. 5:17-18). He can, however, ensure that he has done that which is humanly possible to give the crops the best chance when the rains do come. Similarly, the Author's audience cannot do anything to change the external circumstances (whatever these may have been) other than to pray to the Lord and wait upon God to act. Also, whilst the audience cannot hasten ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου, any more than the farmer can hasten the harvest, they can emulate the farmer, by doing their part and ensuring they continue to fulfil the νόμον βασιλικὸν (2:8), in

anticipation of the eschatological harvest and the coming of God's reign (cf. Johnson, 1995, p.315, who makes a not dissimilar point in his discussion of the imperative *στηρίξατε* in Jas 5:8, suggesting that the Author is urging his audience to be more active in their waiting by doing the right things; cf. also Wall, 1997a, p.251, for more on the possible link between the imagery of Jas 5:7 and an eschatological harvest).

The call in Jas 5:8 is one of strengthening the *καρδία*. Such strengthening of heart allied to patient resolve should not be interpreted as a stoical 'grin and bear it' plea by the Author (Wall, 1997a, p.252). The resolve required is an internal one that can only derive from the community's faith(fulness) grounded in the *λόγος ἀληθείας* (1:18). In other words, it is a question of, what do they really believe, and will they live it out? The issue for the Author is whether or not his audience is prepared to wait for God, because there is no place in his teaching for direct action to change the external circumstances that make life difficult by, for example, attacking those responsible for injustice. Equally, it is not a question of how long they will have to wait, but are they willing and able to see out the period of waiting, however long or short it may be (Davids, 1982, p.184; cf. Martin, 1988, p.192). The verse provides encouragement to bolster the exhortation, namely, that the Lord is not only going to come (5:7), but his coming is near (Moo, 2000, p.223; cf. Witherington, 2007, pp.536-537, who argues that the nearness of the Lord is spatial more than temporal, and that the Author was not necessarily expecting an imminent return but still wanted his audience to be prepared; similarly Moo, 2000, p.224, suggests that the Author's statement should be construed in the context of salvation history so that the next event would be the Parousia. Both proposals,

however, may be reading into the text later Christian interpretations arising out of the delay in the Parousia).

Dibelius dismissed Jas 5:9 with, 'This verse is quite isolated, so there is no need to find some sort of connection between the warning not to "grumble against one another" and the preceding saying' (Dibelius, 1976, p.244). That has not stopped subsequent commentators seeking connections. A popular idea posits that the Author has placed this verse in its current position quite deliberately so as to make it clear that whilst the audience may (understandably) want to moan about how the rich merchants and landowners (of 4:13-5:6) have oppressed them, this groaning must not under any circumstances extend to the negative moaning and groaning against other members of the community – otherwise Christ, the judge standing at the door, will judge the community (Davids, 1982, pp.184-185; cf. Martin, 1988, p.192; Moo, 2000, p.225; Witherington, 2007, pp.537-538). Others have tried to discern a rhetorical connection, not persuasively in my view, since such connections seem too contrived (cf. Brosend, 2004, pp.143-144). Nevertheless, the change of exhortation from μακροθυμήσατε to μὴ στενάζετε may not be unconnected.

Having urged the community to patience, and provided a reason for it, the Author can now tackle the issue of possible grumbling within his audience in a way that that will have more chance of being heard – especially by the grumblers themselves. There is a (strong) echo of the Jesus tradition in this exhortation (cf. Mt 7:1-2). The way it is phrased suggests that both the Author and his audience believed that those who complain against their brethren can expect judgement from God (cf. Mt 5:22).



The question as to the identity of the κριτής arises again in this verse. It is easy to make a connection with Rev 3:20 and think of Jesus in that role, yet as Johnson warns us, despite the strong eschatological connection with other New Testament texts and the close proximity of the term κριτής in this verse to the reference to ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου in Jas 5:7, the manner in which κριτής is used in Jas 4:12 should caution us against being too dogmatic in arguing that Jesus is the judge depicted in Jas 5:9 (Johnson, 1995, p.317).

We see in Jas 5:10 the only occasion on which the Author uses the word ὑπόδειγμα, and it is a ὑπόδειγμα τῆς κακοπαθίας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας. The obvious such example for a Christian would be Jesus, both his suffering in life as well as his passion and crucifixion, but the Author makes no reference, or even allusion to the one whose slave he purports to be (1:1). One possible reason is that he is seeking to provide exemplars who like his audience had human weaknesses (5:17), and, therefore can be emulated, whereas he has already described Jesus as Ἰησοῦ[ς] Χριστο[ς] τῆς δόξης (2:1), and thus beyond emulation by mere sinful mortals. Another possibility is that Jesus is understood both by the Author and his audience as being the exemplar par excellence by reason of his faithfulness to God earning his elevation to Ἰησοῦ[ς] Χριστο[ς] τῆς δόξης, so it need not be stated here. A third possibility is that our Author did not want to name an individual at this juncture; that will come in the next verse. In any event no specific person is named as an example to follow; instead the Author points to a group called the προφήτηςwhom he defines as οἱ ἐλάλησαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου.

The use of *κακοπαθεία* and *μακροθυμία* together may be intended to convey the idea of enduring suffering with the 'enduring' being 'active' and the 'suffering' 'passive' (cf. Johnson, 1995, pp.312-313). The emphasis, therefore seems very much on exemplars who had come through the suffering without giving in (Davids, 1982, p.186).<sup>84</sup> The *κακοπάθεια* and *μακροθυμία* also appear to be linked to the prophets having spoken in the name of the Lord (Martin, 1988, p.193). It is as if the Author is saying, 'Had they not spoken in the name of the Lord they would not have suffered'. The prophets' suffering arose out of their faithfulness to God, because they did the right thing by the Lord. This is not the same as a person suffering because of what (s)he *is* or *believes* but rather because of what (s)he *does*, which is consistent with the Author's view of the nature of vital faith (2:14-26). The concept of the 'suffering prophet' developed out of the experiences of prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Early Jewish literature built further on this model with *The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* and by the time of the New Testament, the model had become proverbial such that both Jesus and his followers use it (cf. Mt 5:11-12; Lk 6:22-23; 13:33; Acts 7:51-52; 1 Thess 2:14-15), and do so especially against the Jewish authorities (Mt 23:34-37; 11:47-51; cf. Laws, 1980, p.214, who suggests, however, that it was 'in the course of their lives, rather than in their deaths, that the prophets serve as an *example of patience* [emphasis in original]'; Johnson, 1995, p.318).

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<sup>84</sup> In any event, *κακοπαθεία* and *μακροθυμία* form a hendiadys so that the meaning is something like 'endurance under suffering' or 'patience in affliction', (Davids, 1982, pp.185-186; Johnson, 1995, p.318).

Since the Author is surely referring to the prophets of the Hebrew Bible in Jas 5:10, the κύριος of this verse is undoubtedly God and not Jesus, since ‘the prophets never spoke in the name of Jesus’ (Brosend, 2004, p.144 n163).

This unit started with the picture of the patient farmer waiting for the harvest (5:7) as an exhortation to the audience to wait patiently for the Lord’s imminent coming (5:8) which will bring swift judgement on the greedy and unjust rich (5:1-6). It will end with a reminder of the blessed state of those who endure suffering for the sake of their commitment to God, starting with the prophets of the Hebrew Bible (5:10), and culminating with the patriarch Job as an exemplar, *inter alia*, of ὑπομονή.

## 6.5 Job: Ὑπομονή and Reward (Jas 5:11)

Before looking at how the Author is using the patriarch, I must deal with the first part of Jas 5:11 as this has an important bearing on the function that Job fulfils. Firstly, we should note that we have our fourth and final ἰδοὺ of this fifth chapter, and this introduces not just another important statement but the conclusion of the unit dealing with how the messianic audience is to react to the injustices of the wealthy landowners and to the imminent Parousia of the Lord. Secondly, we have one of the Author’s rare uses of the first person plural. Previously, he has only used it in his discourse on the use of the tongue (3:1-13) and in Jas 4:15, where he is putting the words in the mouths of the merchants. The ‘we’ in μακαρίζομεν suggests that the Author is confident his audience will agree with the statement he is making regarding those who endure being blessed. The aorist form of the

participle ὑπομείναντας<sup>85</sup> suggests that it is not those who are currently showing steadfastness under duress who are considered blessed (by God) but those who were found faithful at the end of their lives and who, therefore, received their reward (Davids, 1982, pp.186-187; Martin, 1988, p.193). This is wholly consistent with the Author's statements in the composition's introduction, where it is the one who has stood the test who will receive the crown of life (1:12). Similarly, in his opening exhortation, the quality of ὑπομονή is not the final goal, but a stepping stone to being τέλειος and ὁλόκληρος (1:2-4).

We may well ask, who are the 'blessed' who endured?<sup>86</sup> The Author has just held up the prophets 'who spoke in the name of the Lord' as exemplars and it is natural to think in terms that this thought is carried over to Jas 5:11. But are these the only people the Author has in mind? In answer to these questions, it should first be noted that the Author has chosen to use the word ὑπομονή in Jas 5:11 rather than μακροθυμία, which he has just used in Jas 5:10 in relation to the prophets and had previously used, along with its cognates, in Jas 5:7, 8. Ὑπομονή is one of his catchwords which made its first appearance in the opening *gradatio* of Jas 1:2-4 (see section 3.3). It has much more a meaning of 'steadfastness', 'endurance', or even 'consistency' than the concept of 'patient waiting' more readily recognised in the English word 'patience'. Indeed, I would suggest that the use of the English word 'patience' has led to a misinterpreting of the quality that Job, according to our Author, possessed. The word 'patience' can conjure up the idea of waiting quietly until the desired event happens or

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<sup>85</sup> Davids writes concerning the textual variants in this verse, '... some texts substitute the present for the aorist, misunderstanding that the reference is to past worthies, for those in the present have yet to earn this blessedness', (Davids, 1982, p.187).

<sup>86</sup> Martin is right to reject the translation 'happy' rather than 'blessed' as the former term tends to suggest 'an emotional reaction based on circumstance and not on God's faithfulness', (Martin, 1988, p.193).

until the time is right. The plea to be patient is one that we often hear a parent saying to her child and it is easy to see patience as something people grow into as they mature. It is an everyday quality for everyday life. The alternative renderings of ‘steadfastness’ or ‘endurance’, immediately suggest more adult and mature qualities such as resolve, determination, consistency. In applying the quality to Job, therefore, it may be better to focus on the Greek word ὑπομονή, rather than any English translation.

The word ὑπομονή as used in the Book of James, and as we shall see in other writings of the time, implies a context in which the one who is waiting for an outcome (from God) is doing so against a background of testing and trouble. In other words ὑπομονή occurs in the midst of πειρασμός another one of the Author’s catchwords (see section 3.3). This seems to have been a relatively late meaning of the word, since in the translation of the Hebrew Bible in the Septuagint ὑπομονή tended to be used to translate Hebrew words meaning ‘hope’ (cf. 1 Chron 29:15; Ezra 10:2; Ps 9:19; 62:6; 71:5; Jer 14:8; 17:13). On the other hand, Sirach’s use of the word has a range of meanings from ‘hope’ (Sir 17:24) and ‘nerve’ or ‘strength to endure’ (Sir 2:14) to ‘waiting’ and ‘patience’ (cf. Sir 16:13; 36:21(15); 41:2; 51:8). It was not until the Book of 4 Maccabees that we see its clear link in Jewish literature to testing and persecution, although such a link may possibly be inferred from its earlier uses (cf. Dan 12:12; 2 Macc 6:19). In this encomium, the martyred Jewish mother and her seven sons are extolled in such a way that their ὑπομονή for their philosophy (the Jewish religion) is deemed to have brought about the downfall of the tyrannical occupying forces:

θαυμασθέντες γὰρ οὐ μόνον ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνδρείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν αἰκισαμένων αἴτιοι κατέστησαν τοῦ καταλυθῆναι

τὴν κατὰ τοῦ ἔθνους τυραννίδα νικήσαντες τὸν τύραννον τῇ ὑπομονῇ ὥστε καθαρισθῆναι δι' αὐτῶν τὴν πατρίδα (4 Macc 1:11).

All people, even their torturers, marvelled at their courage and endurance, and they became the cause of the downfall of tyranny over their nation. By their endurance they conquered the tyrant, and thus their native land was purified through them (cf. Moore and Anderson, 1998, pp.253-258 who posit that this work shows how the sufferers' self-control defeated the uncontrolled passions of the absolute tyrant).

The word ὑπομονή and its cognates reappear throughout the work to describe the martyrs' steadfast resistance in the face of the most horrendous of tortures, and the author of that work clearly implies that this virtue is essential if one is to endure to the end. In 4 Macc. 9:8, for example, we read:

ἡμεῖς μὲν γὰρ διὰ τῆσδε τῆς κακοπαθείας καὶ ὑπομονῆς τὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἄθλα ἔξομεν καὶ ἐσόμεθα παρὰ θεῶ δι' ὃν καὶ πάσχομεν.

For we, through this severe suffering and endurance, shall have the prize of virtue and shall be with God, on whose account we suffer.

And in 4 Macc 5:23:

σωφροσύνην τε γὰρ ἡμᾶς ἐκιδιάσκει ὥστε πασῶν τῶν ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν κρατεῖν καὶ ἀνδρείαν ἐξασκεῖ ὥστε πάντα πόνον ἐκουσίως ὑπομένειν.

But it [the Maccabean martyrs' philosophy] teaches us self-control, so that we master all pleasures and desires, and it also trains us in courage, so that we endure any suffering willingly.

4 Macc 17:12 speaks of a prize for those who had been 'tested for their endurance' (cf. Jas 1:12). The final reference in the work (4 Macc 17:23) has the ruling tyrant holding up the martyrs to his own soldiers as an example (ὑπόδειγμα) for their own powers of endurance (ὑπομονή). Clearly, ὑπομονή was a prized virtue in 4 Maccabees (cf. other references to virtue in 4 Macc 7:21-22; 9:30; 15:30; 16:17, 19; 17:4, 17) and was probably highly valued in those Maccabean influenced communities determined to practice pure religion.

4 Maccabees was most probably written in the first century C.E. possibly in Antioch during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberias (Elliott, 2001, pp.790-791), so it is feasible that the Author's audience may have been one of the messianic communities influenced by the work, even if the Author's own definition of 'pure religion' was somewhat different to that exemplified and praised in the Maccabean literature (cf. Jas 1:27; 2 Macc 6:18-20, 31; 7:1; 4 Macc 8:2). In any event stories of the Hasmonean heroes such as the martyred seven sons would have been popular in Jewish and Christian circles during New Testament times, and it is possible and even probable that the Author had such people in mind in Jas 5:11 in addition to the prophets of Jas 5:10, and possibly other heroes from the Hebrew Bible who had steadfastly demonstrated their commitment to, and faith in, God (cf. Ropes, 1916, p.298; Dibelius, 1976, p.245; Davids, 1982, p.186; Martin, 1988, p.193, who all see a connection between Jas 5:11 and 4 Macc 9:8 specifically or the Hasmonean heroes more generally; Moo, 2000, p.226, who asserts, 'Reference to the fortitude of martyrs as a model for others to imitate became very popular in the wake of the Maccabean Revolt . . . James . . . adopts this martyrological tradition to encourage strength under trial'; cf. also Heb 11).

Υπομονή is also found in the New Testament outside the Book of James. It is used by Paul in a similar way as that found in 4 Maccabees (cf. Rom 5:3; 2 Cor 6:4-8a; the [Pseudo-]Pauline 2 Thess 1:4). It is placed on the lips of the Lukan Jesus both in his discourse on the end times and the fall of Jerusalem, a context that clearly denotes a time of great trials for, and testing of, the faithful (Lk 21:19), and In the parable of the sower, where he teaches that the quality of ὑπομονή is present and, seemingly, essential to enable the seed that falls on good ground to bear its fruit (Lk 8:15). For the writer to the Hebrews, ὑπομονή is needed if his audience is

to fulfil the will of God and receive what God had promised (Heb 10:35-36). Finally, those who want to be faithful when all others are worshipping the Beast will need ὑπομονή in order to do so (Rev 13:10; 14:12).

We can see, therefore, that in both Jewish and Christian writings of the first century C.E., the word ὑπομονή was widely used to denote the quality of the enduring perseverance needed to hold fast to one's faith in the midst of the sorest of trials (cf. Haas, 1989, pp.118-125, who argues that its use in *T. Job* denotes a standing firm in battle). We should note, however, the word's earlier usage in the Septuagint in translating several Hebrew words meaning 'hope', since as 4 Maccabees also shows, those martyrs who had the quality of ὑπομονή also had a strong hope that they would receive divine blessing after their deaths (4 Macc. 9:8; 17:17). In other words, the quality of ὑπομονή went hand in hand with an eschatological hope that justice would ultimately be seen to be done, with the oppressors punished and the faithful rewarded, the very thing our Author has been asserting in his composition.

It is in Jas 5:11b that our Author introduces Job as his third named exemplar. As with Rahab (see section 5.6.3), there are two elements to Job's exemplary role. He is not only the exemplar of ὑπομονή, he is also one through whom the audience can see the τέλος κυρίου (5:11b), and this second element may be the more important.

But first, our Author has just held up the prophets of the Hebrew Bible as exemplars of suffering and patience (5:10), and has undoubtedly included them among the ὑπομενοντας whom he and his audience deem blessed (5:11a). His naming of Job as an individual



exemplar of ὑπομονή may infer that he sees the patriarch as a prophet too. As noted above (see 6.3), Sirach 49:9 places Job between Ezekiel (49:8) and the twelve minor prophets (49:10) in the list of worthies. This has led some commentators to suggest that Job was numbered among the prophets (Johnson, 1995, p.319; Richardson, 2006, pp.215-219, who argues that Job was a sapiential prophet and that our Author uses him as an example of ‘the prophetic faithfulness of one subjected to non-judgmental suffering’).

Turning to what the Author says about Job, we can note that he uses the term ἠκούσατε rather than ἀνέγνωτε to denote how his audience had learned about τὴν ὑπομονὴν Ἰὼβ. This probably points to previous teaching and/or story-telling, either within the community, or possibly in the local synagogue. Our Author like other teachers of his era will have been well acquainted with Joban stories within the Jewish wisdom traditions. But to which Joban tradition is he referring? Job is held up as one who had ὑπομονή rather than μακροθυμεία. If one translates the former term as ‘patience’ then, as we saw in section 6.2, patience is not an attribute easily associated with the patriarch in the Book of Job. Had our Author pointed to Job’s integrity or his righteousness, there would be no problem in accepting his exemplary status, but given the complaints that Job makes in his defences (cf Job 6:4; 7:11-21; 9:22-24; 10:1; 16:7-9; 19:6-12 *et al*) it is not obvious that patience was one of his virtues (cf. DeSilva, 2012, for a more detailed study of the patriarch’s apparent lack of patience). A patient Job, however, as was shown earlier, is depicted in *T. Job* and many commentators see that work as the Author’s source (cf. Davids, 1982, p.187, who confidently asserts, ‘It appears certain . . . that James is citing Job, not from the canonical record, but from the expanded traditions which the community had heard, such as the one which is recorded in *Test. Job*’; Martin,

1988, p.194; Johnson, 1995, pp.319-320; Wall, 1997a, p.256; Witherington, 2007, p.538; DeSilva, 2012, pp.12-20, who argues a strong case for seeing significant dependence on *T. Job*). However, Gard has highlighted the way in which the Septuagintal account of Job softens the patriarch's complaints such that a case for a patient Job becomes plausible if the Septuagint (or some form of it) served as the Author's authoritative text (cf. Gard, 1953, pp.182-186). This softening of the Joban complaints against God, though, is probably insufficient to establish Job as a paragon of 'patience' from the Septuagint alone (Johnson, 1995, pp.319-320).

A further option is that the Author is referring to the legend of the patriarch as represented in the narrative framework of the Book of Job. In these bookends Job is depicted as the perfect Godfearer or follower of God (cf. Dibelius, 1976, pp.126, 238, 246, who seems to have held this view given his omission of reference to *T. Job* in his analysis, although he was clearly acquainted with the work). Whilst this is possible, we are still left with the lack of evidence of a 'patient' Job outside of *T. Job*. For example, the two references to the patriarch in the Book of Ezekiel clearly endorse the concept of Job as a paragon of righteousness, but provide not a shred of evidence of his 'patience' (Ezek. 14:14, 20), and whilst we may not be able to date the references to the patriarch in rabbinic literature, the references to the patriarch therein, likewise focus on his righteousness (see section 6.3).

We have seen that if 'patience' is indeed the virtue that the Author wishes to promote in citing Job as an exemplar, then he is unlikely to have drawn on the canonical accounts and the most appropriate source would seem to be *T. Job*. But what if, instead of translating

ὑπομονή as 'patience' we translate it as 'endurance' (NRSV; NASB; NLT), or 'perseverance' (NIV; NJB; NKJV) or 'steadfastness' (ESV, 2007 update)? Although, Job complained to God and to his three friends about God's dealings with him, the patriarch never went so far as to reject God as his Lord. His charges against God gradually turn into a plea and desire to place his case before God and meet him face to face. There was never any intimation that Job would switch his allegiance to another deity. In other words he was steadfast in his commitment to God even in the darkest hour, and a steadfast commitment to God is a vital virtue to our Author, as we have already seen in our analysis of his use of Abraham and Rahab. This interpretation of ὑπομονή has been enough for several commentators to argue that the Book of Job was our Author's main source (cf. Ropes, 1916, p.299, who cites Job 1:21-22; 2:9-10; 13:15; 16:19 and 19:25-27 as possible sources; Adamson, 1976, pp.192-193 infers this is the case rather than states it; Moo, 2000, pp.229; Richardson, 2006, p.226). Care, though, is needed since, as DeSilva notes, 'the distance between Job and the virtue of "endurance" is widened . . . in the Septuagint translation of Job . . .' (DeSilva, 2012, p.3). So whilst the patriarch's complaining is toned down in the Septuagint, its depiction of his relationship with the quality of endurance suggests that it may not have been a source for our Author after all. However, as DeSilva goes on to show, it was the framing narrative rather than the poetic dialogues that caught the imagination of early Jewish exegetes, beginning with the Septuagint's expansion of the opening frame of the story (DeSilva, 2012, p.4).

So where does this leave us? Of the written sources, *T. Job* is the most likely single written source for our Author. It draws mainly from the narrative framework of the Septuagint Book

of Job which appears at Job 1-2; 42:7-17, and on LXX Job 29-31 which ‘provides *T. Job* 9-16 with numerous concepts and phrases by which to amplify Job’s wealth, piety and generosity’ (Spittler, 1983, p.831). However, since our Author refers specifically to what his audience had *heard* about the patriarch, and not what they had *read* about him, we cannot exclude the possibility that our Author is drawing on oral traditions of the era, either exclusively or in addition to *T. Job*.

Whilst his audience ἠκούσεν of the ὑπομονή of Job, the Author asserts that they εἶδεν the τέλος κυρίου. It has been suggested that the use of these two verbs may deliberately echo the words of Job recorded in LXX Job 42.5 after his encounter with God (Adamson, 1976, p.193; Martin, 1988, p.194). More feasible is the idea that the Author is using a literary convention with the verb ὁράω being used metaphorically to convey the idea that having heard about something, the hearer now understood/perceived that thing or some other connected element (cf. Danker, 2000, p.720, entry 4a).

Although he has held up Job as an exemplar of ὑπομονή, the Author’s purpose in doing so is to draw his audience’s attention to τὸ τέλος κυρίου. Both Biblical translators and biblical commentators are divided on whether to translate τέλος as ‘purpose’ or words of similar effect (cf. NAB; NRSV; NKJV; NJB; ESV; Mitton, 1966, pp.189-190), or as ‘end’, ‘outcome’ or other such words (cf. NIV; NASB; NLT; GNB; CEV; Dibelius, 1976, p.246 n31; Davids, 1982, p.188; Witherington, 2007, pp.538-539; DeSilva, 2012, p.14). The argument for translating the word as ‘purpose’ seems to be that in the Book of James it is only the faithful who have died in their faith, who are called ‘blessed’, and there is no room in the Author’s theology for

temporary ὑπομονή. Since Job was blessed in this life, τέλος must mean ‘purpose’ (Martin, 1988, pp.194-196). One problem with this interpretation is the identification of the divine purpose. The Book of Job starts with God boasting of Job’s piety and the Accuser laying down a challenge which God can hardly refuse. In *T. Job*, it is Job’s decision to tear down the idols, with the divine role limited to that of warning Job of the consequences of such action. A second problem is discerning how God’s purpose demonstrates the two divine attributes of πολύσπλαγχνός and οἰκτίρμων which the Author tells us this τέλος revealed.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, most commentators interpret τέλος as meaning ‘end’ or ‘outcome’ of the Joban story, namely the granting of a new family and the double blessing in both possessions and lifespan (cf. Adamson, 1976, p.193; Dibelius, 1976, pp.246-248, who identified several ancient non-biblical texts in which τέλος clearly conveys the meaning of ‘end’ or ‘outcome’ of a story or a person’s life; Laws, 1980, p.216; Wall, 1997a, pp.258-259; Moo, 2000, pp.229-230; Witherington, 2007, pp.538-539; McKnight, 2011, pp.421-422, although a few like Davids, 1982, p.188 and Johnson, 1995, p.321, have both meanings in view). With the majority (and in my view preferred) interpretation, the divine πολύσπλαγχνός and οἰκτίρμων become evident. Furthermore, whilst οἰκτίρμων is not widely used in the Bible, when it is used, it describes a κυρίος whose divine mercy is at the very heart of Jewish thought with regard to the way God views his people Israel (cf. in the LXX, Ex 34:6; Deut 4:31, 30:3; 2 Kings 13:23; 2 Chr 30:9, 36:15; Neh 9:17; Ps 78:38; Isa 14:1; Lam 3:32; Joel 2:13 *et al*; nb. πολύσπλαγχνός is a *hapax legomena*).

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<sup>87</sup> There is some textual uncertainty over punctuation here. Should εἶδετε read ἴδετε as in the majority Byzantine texts? If so, a full stop after κυρίου would leave the final part of the verse being translated along the lines of ‘Behold, the Lord is compassionate and merciful’ (Dibelius, 1976, pp.247-248).

With the exemplar Job, therefore, the Author is moving his focus on to what happens to those who show ὑπομονή in their afflictions, namely τὸ τέλος κυρίου (5:11b). Whilst the meaning of the term is, as we have seen, ambiguous, the context points towards what God did at the end. Jas 5:11a focussed on those who endured steadfastly and the example of Job reinforces that focus. However, what the citing of Job primarily achieves is providing an example of someone who both endured his afflictions and whose end was known. All that the messianic community could know for certain about the prophets and the other heroes who had endured affliction, is that they had died. The nature of their reward was a matter of faith, a matter of believing the promises of God. There was no concrete evidence of their ultimate fate. With Job, however, the Author and his community had the evidence of Scripture to show the extent of God's compassion and mercy and the assurance that those who endure to the end of their trials will indeed be blessed.

## 6.6 Job – Just an Exemplar of Ὑπομονή?

I must now answer the questions why the Author has chosen Job as a named exemplar, and how he is using the patriarch.

The Author has spoken negatively against the rich throughout his composition (cf. 1:10-11; 2:5-7; 4:13-17) culminating in his prophetic tirade of judgement against the wealthy landowners (5:1-6). He has urged his audience to do the right things (5:7-8, 10) and avoid the wrong ones (5:9) – so that they will be found faithful at the soon-to-be-revealed eschaton. And yet, at the culmination of his exhortation, he cites an exemplar who is depicted in both the Hebrew Bible and *T. Job* as fabulously wealthy (cf. Job 1:3; *T. Job* 9-13). How could our Author prophesy so vehemently against the rich of his day and yet hold up a wealthy

exemplar such as Job? Has he simply ignored Job's wealthy background or might the patriarch's wealthy status be one of the reasons the Author has chosen him?

A major purpose behind the Hebrew Bible's account of the patriarch in the Book of Job was to show that Job's love for God was not dependant on God's prior material blessing and that he would continue to commit himself to God whatever the circumstances (cf. Job 1:8-12; 2:3-7 in the framework narrative). As the story unfolds we learn that Job had been a wealthy man who had used his wealth both wisely and compassionately, themes that are given a more significant treatment in *T. Job* (cf. *T. Job* 9-12; DeSilva, 2012, p.6).

Our Author cares for his audience as a community, a community in which the members not only help those who ask for help but actively look out for the needs of others (cf. 2:15-16; 3:13-17; 5:19-20; see also sections 3.3, 3.4). The 'Testament' Job was proactive in his care for widow and orphan, hungry and destitute:

. . . [having] designat[ed] 7,000 [sheep] to be sheared for the clothing of orphans and widows, the poor and the helpless. . . cho[sen] 3,000 [camels loaded with good things for distribution] to the helpless, to the destitute, and to all the widows . . . maintain[ed] twelve . . . tables set for the widows . . . and [had] fifty bakeries . . . for the ministry of the table for the poor (*T. Job* 9.2-10.7).

In addition the 'Testament' Job expressly states:

At evening, as [a day worker] was about to leave for home, he would be compelled to take wages from me as I would say, "I know you are a workingman counting on and looking for your wages. You must accept." Nor did I allow the wage earner's pay to remain at home with me in my house. (*T. Job* 12.2b-4; cf. [Jas] 5:4).

He is the opposite of the rich depicted in the Book of James. Had Job adopted the same 'wisdom' as his friends, he may have seen the poor as authors of their own troubles by reason of their sin, a view possibly held by the wealthy of the Book of James about the Author's struggling messianic audience (Richardson, 2006, p.220). Where the wealthy of the Author's day oppressed the poor and dragged them into court, Job was a champion and a stalwart of justice, not just for the poor but also for the foreigner who had entered his community (cf. 2:6; *T. Job* 10.1). Where the rich landowners of the Book of James held back the wages of their day workers (5:4), the 'Testament' Job goes out of his way to force his dayworkers to receive the wages due to them and he even emphasizes the fact that the wages would not remain with him overnight.

But Job's exemplary role may not end here. He was not only a righteous man with a proper attitude to wealth, he was also someone who 'did not sin with his lips' (Job 2:10; cf. Richardson, 2006, p.224). God also confirms the patriarch's right speech (Job 42:7). He would have qualified, therefore, as a τέλειος ἀνὴρ δυνατὸς χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα (3:2), whose wisdom was manifest for all to see in the fruit of his life (cf. 3:17-18).

At this point we should remember that, at the outset of his composition, our Author declares that the whole purpose of the testing of faith(fulness) is so that a person might ultimately become τέλειος (1:2-4), and that is how Job is depicted by both human narrator and God (Job 1:1, 8). And yet, Job becomes despised and rejected by family and friends owing to the disasters that overtake him. The assumption of those who see Job in his plight, including the patriarch's three 'wise' friends, is that Job has undergone these disasters because he has sinned. This assumption, based on the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs seems still to have



been present and possibly rife in New Testament times (cf. John 9:2). It has been argued that the Author has used Job to make the point once again that people can suffer without any just cause, but that such people must still hold fast to God (Richardson, 2006, pp.218-219). Whilst Job indeed demonstrates this truth, it does not seem to be the main purpose behind the Author's choice of the patriarch at this juncture in his argument, since he has already made his point about those who suffer unfairly in citing the prophets who carried out their calling from God (5:10). Their example plus that of others who showed endurance already demonstrates clearly that those who commit themselves fully to God can expect to suffer unjustly for their faith. Indeed, this is reinforced by the Jesus tradition, since the macarisms of Mt 5:10-12 are probably behind both Jas 5:11a and the earlier statement of Jas 1:12 (cf. Johnson, 1995, p.319; Moo, 2000, pp.227-228; Richardson, 2006, pp.220-221).

Job was that rare exception – a righteous wealthy man who suffered unjustly. In his response to Richardson, referring to the apparent contradictory concept of the righteous rich enduring suffering, Koestenberger writes:

The rich, because of their wealth, are typically the ones who impose suffering on the poor rather than being the victims of suffering. I believe that it is precisely at the intersection and resolution of these two paradoxical aspects of Job's exemplary function that one arrives at a deeper understanding of James's appropriation of Job. I submit that it is not merely as a *righteous rich* person that Job serves as an exemplar but as a righteous rich person *who endures non-judgmental suffering* [emphases in original]. (Koestenberger, 2006, p.292).

I would go further and state that Job was 'a righteous wealthy person *who having been brought low* endures non-judgmental suffering', and in his humiliation he is (or perhaps becomes) well aware that 'the rich [would] disappear like the flower of the field' (1:10). As

such he is a shining example to a messianic community that may have judged others by their outward appearance and ostentatious wealth (2:1-5).

The Law has an understated role in the Book of James. The Author tells his audience that they do well to keep the royal law (the law of Lev 19:18, as reinterpreted by Jesus; cf. 2:8; section 3.14). As we have seen from the excerpts quoted earlier (*T. Job* 9.2-10.7), the patriarch did just this and could therefore claim to be someone who *really* kept the law of the kingdom (cf. Jas 2:8-13).

Finally, the Author had earlier urged his audience to ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύξεται ἅφ' ὑμῶν (resist the devil and he will flee from you – Jas 4:7). The 'Testament' Job does just this and after a titanic struggle, the Accuser becomes weary, admits defeat and confesses that it is Job's endurance that has enabled him despite being only flesh and blood (as against the Accuser as 'Spirit') to overcome (*T. Job* 27.3-7).

In all of these ways, the wise and compassionate use of wealth, care for the community's disadvantaged, speech ethics, display of the fruit of wisdom, doing the royal law, resisting the devil, Job proves to be the perfect exemplar for the Author's audience, so whilst in Jas 5:11 he wanted his audience to focus on the outcome of Job's testing, the Author is also indirectly pointing them to all the other exhortations in his composition. The messianic community will need to demonstrate all of the virtues displayed by Job if they are to emulate him and receive the crown of life at the Lord's Parousia.

## 6.7 Summary and Conclusions

I have explored Job's depiction within various ancient writings and concluded that apart from in *T. Job* the virtue that is ὑπομονή is not readily discernible. I have suggested that ὑπομονή, when applied to the patriarch, is best understood as steadfast endurance rather than the more celebrated 'patience' of the KJV. Job's inclusion in the same unit as the prophets of the Hebrew Bible may infer that our Author viewed him as a sapiential prophet. I have also posited that although the Author refers to Job's ὑπομονή, this is only part of the patriarch's function, an equally (and possibly more) important function being to show the audience that God is both compassionate and merciful and will indeed reward those who remain faithful to him by enduring to the end.

I have argued that the Author, despite his condemnation of the rich, may have chosen Job because he used his wealth to help the poor. The patriarch also fulfils an exemplary role in the other areas of life that the Author views as important for the community's well-being. Job was considered a wise man. His concern for obeying the ethical law of the Kingdom was exemplary, whilst his speech ethics met the demanding requirements of Jas 3:2. In his darkest moment when he was tested to the full by the Accuser, he remained steadfast and his protagonist was forced to depart the scene. In short, Job was the perfect exemplary model for the Author and his audience, achieving the end our Author set down at the beginning of his composition – he was τέλειος καὶ ὀλόκληρος ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενος (perfect and complete in every way, lacking nothing; Jas 1:4).

## CHAPTER 7

### ELIJAH

#### 7.1 Introduction

Elijah completes the list of named exemplars in the Book of James. After Abraham, Moses and David, the prophet is the fourth most frequently cited Hebrew Bible character in the New Testament (Bock, 1992, p.204).<sup>88</sup> His status in Jewish tradition was legendary and his eschatological connection with the coming of the messiah widely anticipated (see sections 7.3 and 7.4). The Gospel writers associated the prophet with John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Jesus (cf. Mt. 17:10-12; Mk 9:11-13; Lk 9:28-36), with the Matthean Jesus making the connection clear by asserting that Elijah had come in the person of the Baptizer (Mt 11:11-14). Yet outside of the Gospels, Elijah is only mentioned twice in the New Testament; in Romans, where Paul refers to the prophet's complaint to God against Israel as those who had killed the prophets (Ro 11:1-4; cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14), and here in the Book of James, as an exemplar, *inter alia*, of effective prayer. Two burning questions, therefore, are why the prophet should be so prominent in the Gospels and yet essentially ignored elsewhere in the New Testament, and why our Author should want to use him. Before considering the prophet's exemplary role in the Letter of James, I shall follow the pattern of the previous exemplar chapters. I will start by considering the prophet's depiction in the Hebrew Bible, focussing primarily on the narrative purportedly framed by the prayers of Jas 5:17-18 (1 Kings 17-18) and its aftermath (1 Kings 19), before examining other references to the prophet

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<sup>88</sup> Bock cites the frequency of citation as Abraham 80 times, Moses, 73, David 53, and Elijah 29. However, Bock does not indicate his methodology for counting the citations. See fn 18 in section 4.1 above for an indication of the issues.

in the Hebrew Bible. I will then look at his depiction in the deuterocanonical and other literature of the Second Temple period, and finally, at his portrayal in the New Testament outside of the Book of James. This will be followed by an exegetical study of the unit in which our Author refers to Elijah (5:[12]13-20) before an exploration of the Author's use of the prophet.

## **7.2 Elijah Against the World (1 Kings 17-19)**

Elijah's first appearance in the narrative of 1 Kings is sudden, dramatic and explosive (Provan, 1995, p.132). The narrator provides barely any background either to the prophet's origins or to his calling. The reader must discern what (s)he can from the opening verse of 1 Kings 17; from the prophet's nomenclature as ὁ Θεσβίτης in LXX 1 Kings 17:1; from his formulaic oath that the rain would cease until he, the prophet says otherwise; and, finally, from his name. In reverse order, the prophet's name means 'Yah(weh) is my God' and thus speaks volumes of his status in the story (Dietrich, 2001, p.245; Provan, 1995, p.132). He is God's man through and through. There is no place in Elijah's heart or thinking for Baal, for Asherah, or any other so-called deity. He is and will be vehemently opposed to the syncretistic practices of the Northern Kingdom which Ahab had allowed to flourish through his marriage to the Sidonian princess, Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31-33). Indeed, this marriage seems to have hastened the crisis and, perhaps, caused the Deuteronomist editors to insert the Elijah story at this point in the Book of 1 Kings (Dietrich, 2001, pp.234, 245), especially as the announcement of the drought fulfils the warnings of the Pentateuch as regards part of the punishment for idolatry (Warrington, 1994, p.225; cf. Lev 26:19-20; Deut 11:16-17). The narrator emphasizes that the prophets of Baal and Asherah eat at Jezebel's (not Ahab's) table, and it is she, therefore, who is their patron (1 Kings 18:19), and she who effectively

rules the kingdom on behalf of her gods, although the Deuteronomist editors (and, therefore, YHWH), will hold Ahab responsible (cf. 1 Kings 16:32-33). The change of scene and protagonists from 1 Kings 16 to 1 Kings 17, therefore, prepares the reader for a life and death struggle between prophet and king for the hearts and religious loyalties of the people (cf. Provan, 1995, p.132).

Prophecy was a familiar practice in the Ancient Near East, the essential difference between biblical prophets and other prophets in the region being the assertion by the former that they represented the only true God (De Vries, 1985, p.xxix). It is possible that Elijah was the first biblical prophet to embrace and preach monotheism as opposed to henotheism (cf. Dietrich W, 2001, p.245, who posits that 'exclusive worship [of one deity] must have been unusual at that time'). Hence the formulaic oath placed on the prophet's lips in 1 Kings 17:1 serves, *inter alia*, to reinforce the theological struggle between prophet and king (cf. Fritz and Hagedorn, 2003, pp.182-183, who suggest that the superscription at 1 Kings 17:1 'provides a new dimension for all the other narratives [in the Books of Kings], since they are now part of the struggle between prophet and king over the acceptance of YHWH'). The questions to be decided are twofold: Firstly, is the king's word 'law' in Israel or is the prophet a true prophet of YHWH? And, secondly, if Elijah is a true prophet of YHWH, is YHWH stronger than Baal and the rest of the Canaanite pantheon? The unfolding story will answer both these questions so as to leave no doubt either in the minds of the people or in those of the narrator's audience.

Finally, what is the significance, if any, of Elijah being ὁ Θεσβίτης? This aspect of Elijah's introduction to the narrative remains disputed. Some scholars want to emend the biblical text so that Elijah comes from a recognized ancient town or region, but all efforts at trying to identify 'Tishbe' ultimately fail to convince (cf. Sweeney, 2007, pp.210-211, for a synopsis of the debate). If, as seems likely, Elijah came from the tribal lands of Transjordan, then the court in Samaria and the peoples west of the Jordan will probably have viewed him as a semi-foreigner and, therefore, as less than a true Israelite (Sweeney, 2007, p.211). The religious loyalties of the Transjordanian tribes were suspect in the minds of the other Israelite tribes almost from the start of the settlement of Canaan (cf. Jos 22:10-29). That a man probably perceived as an outsider should presume to speak on behalf of YHWH can only add to the tensions between prophet and king.

The narrative of 1 Kings 17 neither states nor implies that Elijah prayed at the beginning of the drought. The prophet's oracle regarding the withholding of rain is essentially a message from God; indeed one can call it YHWH's challenge to Baal, since whilst the human protagonists are Elijah and Ahab, the real struggle is that between YHWH and Baal for the hearts of the people who have been seduced by Jezebel's promulgating of the Canaanite religion (cf. Dietrich, 2001, p.245). The withholding of rain was a direct challenge to Baal's purported authority over the elements. To the followers of Baal, drought represented the time of the year when Baal submitted to Mot, the god of death (Provan, 1995, p.132). The events of 1 Kings 17-18, therefore, will also show that YHWH is not only Lord of the elements, but also that he is Lord of death, and not only in Israel, but in the heartland of the Canaanite pantheon (Provan, 1995, p.133; Sweeney, 2007, p.212).

The direction of the story is one in which the challenge both to Baal's status as a god and to Elijah's faith in YHWH increases with each act. In the initial period of the drought Elijah is fed by ravens within the borders of Israel, thereby demonstrating to both the prophet and the narrator's audience that YHWH was the creator-God in control of the situation within the boundaries of Israel (1 Kings 17:2-6). The instruction directing the prophet to Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-9) raises the stakes of the challenge, since the town was but a few miles from Sidon and hence in the very heartland of Baal worship, where one might expect that Canaanite deity to be at his strongest. Yet it is YHWH's power that feeds the woman, her family and Elijah whilst the drought continues (1 Kings 17:14-16), and it is YHWH's power that raises the son (1 Kings 17:22). Baal can do nothing; he can neither stop the drought, nor feed the people in his so-called domain, nor can he stop YHWH demonstrating his power. YHWH's faithful provision and responses to the prophet's needs and requests can only strengthen Elijah's own faith and resolve for the climax to come in the struggle on Mount Carmel, where the prophet will publicly call upon YHWH to prove that he is indeed both the God of the people's forefathers and the one true God in the land.

The story of the death and reviving of the widow's son functions at several levels in the narrative. As stated above, Baal had to subject himself to Mot, the god of death, each year (the period of drought). By raising the boy in the midst of drought, Elijah demonstrates not only that he is a true prophet, and one who prevails in prayer, but also that his God, YHWH, is the one true God with power to defeat death (1 Kings 17:20-22; cf. Fritz and Hagedorn, 2003, p.185).



Like the messenger of a king in the Ancient Near East, Elijah is portrayed as the embodied representation of his master; hence his actions are directed by YHWH. It is on YHWH's command that the prophet announces the drought (1 Kings 17:1); goes to the Wadi Cherith (1 Kings 17:5), and to Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-10); promises the woman that her food would not run out (1 Kings 17:16); presents himself to Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-1); and runs before the king's chariot to Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46). Dietrich is correct, therefore, in asserting 'the narrative lays great store by ensuring that each change of scene is directed by a divine order' (Dietrich, 2001, p.245; cf. Fritz and Hagedorn, 2003, p.188, who posit that 1 Kings 18:1-2a 'place[s] all the events under the order of YHWH, to stress once more that Elijah does not act on his own account but only carries out the orders given by YHWH'). Hence, Elijah is not just called 'man of God' (1 Kings 17:18, 24) he proves that nomenclature to be true through his obedience to the divine commands and by his divinely-inspired acts.

The contest on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal is the climax towards which the narrative has been moving. It is probable that there had been tensions and disputes between the Phoenicians and Israelites for some years over who had sovereign control over the area around, and the holy place on, Mount Carmel (Dietrich, 2001, p.246). Whilst the marriage between Ahab and Jezebel will have helped smooth relations between their two nations over this issue, Elijah's choice of this particular mountain as the site for the contest of the two deities possibly serves to heighten expectation as to determining to which deity (and therefore to which nation) Mount Carmel truly belonged.

The narrative reports that the people had gathered on Mount Carmel by order of the King (1 Kings 18:20). Ahab himself, though, is either absent or, if present, remains silent throughout the whole contest. Either way, he is as impotent as the god he has espoused. Elijah's sarcastic goading of the prophets of Baal for their failure to stir their god (1 Kings 18:27), only reinforces the chasm between the impotent 'god' who was unable to respond to the challenge of YHWH at Zarephath, and the creator-God, YHWH, who had caused his prophet to be fed by the ravens, and who will shortly transcend the laws of nature in order to respond to Elijah's fervent prayer. The drenching of the sacrifice (1 Kings 18:33-35) heightens yet further the contrast between the absent Baal and the soon-to-be-revealed God of the universe, because not only is Baal unable to end the drought, he has allowed Elijah to use precious water (perhaps from Ahab's private vats) to bring glory to YHWH, rather than to himself as the supposed rain god.

The drought had arisen at the direction of YHWH as a punishment for the people's apostasy (Provan, 1995, p.132; Fritz and Hagedorn, 2003, p.182). So once the people publicly acknowledge YHWH as the one true God and turn over the prophets of Baal to Elijah for summary execution (1 Kings 18:39-40), the time for ending the drought has arrived and after directing the king to go and eat, Elijah climbs once again to Carmel's summit (1 Kings 18:42b). Whilst 1 Kings 18:42 does not state that Elijah prayed, the prophet's action of 'bow[ing] himself down upon the earth and put[ting] his face between his knees' can reasonably be interpreted as prayer (De Vries, 1985, p.217). The arrival of the rain validates the prophet's initial boast (1 Kings 17:1) and completes the routing of Baal. 1 Kings 18 ends with the ecstatic spirit-filled Elijah running triumphantly before the king's chariot and the

reader must surely think that all is now well in the Northern kingdom. But things are not as they seem. 1 Kings 19 opens with King Ahab dutifully reporting events to his wife. What will Jezebel do? Flee back to the palace of her father in Sidon? After all, her chosen prophets are all dead; her god is still asleep or in the clutches of Mot, yet the queen seems more angry than frightened. Despite hearing of 'all that Elijah had done', she issues a threat to Elijah in the form of a formulaic oath (1 Kings 19:2). Surely the prophet will laugh in the face of her messenger as he laughed on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:27)? But no, he flees; he runs away and hides because he is afraid (1 Kings 19:3). But why should this perfect and obedient prophet, who had done all that YHWH had asked, and in so doing had witnessed miracle after miracle (1 Kings 17:6, 16, 22; 18:38), suddenly become afraid of, and run away from, a woman, whose power and influence should have been on the wane? It may be that after his victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah thought that the war, and not just a battle, had been won. He may have expected Jezebel and all her court to flee the country and King Ahab to complete the people's Carmel affirmation that 'the Lord indeed was God' (1 Kings 18:39), by removing the symbols of the Canaanite religion, and re-establishing the worship of YHWH in the land. But Jezebel does not wilt. When Elijah hears of her threat to have him killed within the day, he flees to Judah; but not to Jerusalem and the Judahite court but to its southernmost outpost of Beersheba, where he leaves his servant (1 Kings 19:3) before going out into the desert in order, it seems, to die (1 Kings 19:4). However, whilst Elijah saw himself as a finished failure, his God had other plans. Elijah is again miraculously fed (1 Kings 19:6), enough to enable him to make the journey to the mountain of God, Horeb-Sinai where, like Moses before him, he experiences a theophany (1 Kings 9b-13) and is

recommissioned for YHWH's work (1 Kings 19:15-17).<sup>89</sup> The chapter ends with Elijah anointing Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:19-21).

Although the story of Elijah continues in the Books of Kings with his condemnation of Ahab in the matter of Naboth's vineyard and with other events in his life, my focus is on the three chapters that I have briefly summarized because they are the ones that pertain to the prophet's exemplary role in the Book of James. Before I turn to that, though, I will examine Elijah's depiction in the Book of Malachi, the deuterocanonical corpus, other Second Temple writings, and the New Testament outside of the Book of James.

### 7.3 Elijah in Malachi, the Deuterocanonical Corpus and Other Second Temple Literature

The Book of Malachi ends with the following divine promise:

Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse. (Mal 4:5-6).

This promise was reiterated by Sirach (Sir: 48:10), who depicts Elijah as a virtual superman (Sir 48:1-9). For Sirach, also, those who saw Elijah were blessed and (in translation from the Greek) 'have fallen asleep in love, for we also shall certainly live' (Sir 48:11).<sup>90</sup> The concept of Elijah as one who adorned others with his love seems at odds with the canonical accounts of his life. After all, and as Sirach notes in his eulogy of the prophet, Elijah, *inter alia*, was a 'prophet like fire' (Sir 48:1); 'brought a famine on the people' (Sir 48:2); and 'by his zeal

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<sup>89</sup> There are a number of striking similarities between Elijah and Moses in the Hebrew Bible, cf. De Vries, 1985, p.210; Sweeney, 2007, pp.221-222, 229).

<sup>90</sup> In translation from the Hebrew the verse reads 'Blessed is he who sees you and dies, for you give life, and he will live'(Collins, 2001, p.695).

made them few in number' (Sir 48:2); 'brought down fire from heaven' (Sir 48:3); ' . . . sent kings down to destruction' (Sir 48:6); ' . . . anointed kings to inflict (divine) retribution' (Sir 48:8). These hardly seem to be attributes of one who adorned those who saw him, with his love. So where is the connection between these two depictions of Elijah? Some scholars point to the association of the prophet's return with an eschatological resurrection as found in later tradition (Collins, 2001, p.695). However, 'it is very doubtful whether any source other than the Hebrew Bible itself underlies [the] brief portraits [found in Sirach's composition, "Praise of the Ancestors" (Sir 44-49/50)]' (Coggins, 1998, p.79). If Coggins is correct we must ask on what basis Sirach has associated Elijah with life, when the narratives in the Books of Kings seem to portray him as the prophet of divine judgement. Part of the answer may lie in the hope expressed at the end of the prophecy of Malachi, quoted above. Elijah's coming will bring reconciliation within the nation prior to the eschatological judgement that will vindicate the faithful and establish God's reign. The prophet who turned the hearts of the Israelites from idolatry to YHWH-worship on Mount Carmel, thereby bringing a measure of reconciliation between YHWH and the people (the end of the drought ensued) will once again be a reconciler for the nation. Furthermore, as post-exilic biblical writers such as Malachi reflected on the trauma of the Exile and the theological reasons for it, Elijah's outspoken and uncompromising stance against idolatry would surely have endeared the prophet to the nation's consciousness. Indeed, by the second century B.C.E., it is Elijah's zeal for the Law (i.e. total commitment to YHWH) that is given as the reason for his unique earthly departure (1 Macc. 2:58).

Elijah's prayer ministry is also acknowledged by the first century C.E., with his prayer for rain, and the raising of the woman of Zarephath's son part of a list of effective biblical prayers in 4 Esdras 7:106-111. Whilst this section of the deuterocanonical book was probably written after the destruction of the second temple, its dating is close enough to that of the Book of James to demonstrate that our Author was not alone in highlighting Elijah's effectual praying (Charles, 1913, p.542) during the first century C.E.

Elijah is possibly the 'sheep' depicted in 1 Enoch 89.52 whom the other sheep tried to kill, but who was rescued and taken to heaven (Bock, 1992, p.203). If that is the case, then the emphasis in 1 Enoch would seem to be on Elijah's calling as prophet, and especially as a prophet called by God to warn those who had gone astray (1 Enoch 89:51-53), another role that our Author has probably adapted for his own use (see section 7.7). Other references to the prophet in Second Temple literature include Elijah's prophecy against King Ahaziah in *Mar. Is.* 2.14<sup>91</sup> and his feeding by ravens in *2 Bar.* 77.23 in the context of the author of that work explaining how he could order an eagle to send a message to the captives in Babylon.

Finally we have the retelling of the story of Elijah by Josephus for his Roman audience.

Whilst the Jewish historian generally follows the biblical account, he does embellish the story in a number of places. For our purposes, the following embellishments are of note. He asserts that: Elijah was from Teshbon in Gilead (*Ant.* 8.13.2); the beginning of the drought was by means of an oath of confirmation (and makes no reference to prayer) (*Ant.* 8.13.2);

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<sup>91</sup> Charles argues that the '*Martyrdom of Isaiah*' existed independently of the later Christian compilation '*The Ascension of Isaiah*' which included the '*Vision of Isaiah*' and '*Testament of Hezekiah*' (Charles R H, 1913, pp.155-156; see also Knibb, 1985, p.143).

there was independent written evidence that a drought took place around this time (*Ant.* 8.13.2); the people not only acknowledged that the Lord was the only God, they also denigrated the Canaanite gods and were therefore willing to seize the prophets of Baal and hand them over to Elijah for execution (*Ant.* 8.13.6); when Elijah went up Mount Carmel a second time, he sat down and leaned his head upon his knees, rather than between them, again with no inference that the prophet prayed (*Ant.* 8.13.6); ‘someone’ as opposed to an angel, fed the prophet after he had fled from Jezebel. We see in Josephus, therefore, an attempt at rationalising the biblical account so as to make it more palatable to the reasoning of his Graeco-Roman audience.

We see from this short review that, except in Malachi, Elijah was not a major character in the literature of the Second Temple period whether we talk in terms of the Hebrew Bible itself (outside of the Books of Kings), the deuterocanonical corpus or other Jewish literature of that period, and yet, as we now turn to the New Testament, we see the prophet with a more prominent role, albeit only in the gospels.

#### **7.4 Elijah in the New Testament outside the Book of James**

For the Synoptic Gospel writers, Elijah returns in the person of John the Baptizer (cf. Mt. 11:14; 17:10-13; Mk. 9:11-13; Lk. 1:17).<sup>92</sup> Indeed, Matthew even has John dress like Elijah (cf. LXX 2 Kings 1:8; Mt 3:4).<sup>93</sup> According to the Synoptic Gospels some people think that

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<sup>92</sup> Luke refers to John coming ‘in the spirit of Elijah’, perhaps allowing for further Elijah figures before the Parousia, including Jesus himself given the similarities between Elijah and Jesus that Luke draws out in his narrative; (Bock, 1992, p.205). Also, it is the Jesus of Luke who draws a parallel between himself and Elijah (and Elisha cf. Lk. 4:23-27).

<sup>93</sup> The evangelist, John, however, has the Baptizer expressly denying that he is either Elijah or the prophet-like-Moses (Jn. 1:21). Debate on what John meant is beyond the scope of this work.

Jesus may be Elijah (Mt. 16:14; Mk. 6:15; 8:28; Lk. 9:8, 19). All three of the Synoptic writers place Elijah with Moses at the scene of the transfiguration of Jesus (Mt. 17:3; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30). Whilst Christian tradition posits that Elijah's appearance on that occasion is as a representative of the prophets with Moses as the representative of the Law, the similarities between the canonical stories of these two characters in the Hebrew Bible should not be overlooked. Both men are depicted within those stories as men who are wholly committed to YHWH and who proclaim his word faithfully. Moses is the first great prophet of the Deuteronomistic history (Deut. 18:15-22). Whilst Elijah may not be 'the prophet' referred to in Deut 18:15, he is depicted in the Hebrew Bible as a prophet whose mouth spoke everything that YHWH commanded (cf. Deut. 18:18), and consequently was firmly in the line of Yahwist representatives. We can also note that Moses and Elijah were the only figures in the Hebrew Bible who spoke with God on the sacred mountain 'Sinai-Horeb', hence their presence at the transfiguration serves to highlight that Jesus is the promised 'prophet like Moses' (Allison Jr, 2001a, p.866). At the cross of Calvary, those watching the crucifixion mishear Jesus' citing of Ps 22:1, interpreting it instead as a cry for Elijah to come and rescue him in his time of great need (Mt. 27:46-49; Mk. 15:34-36).

The gospels seem to suggest that Elijah figured strongly in the consciousness of both the ordinary people and the authorities. They await (or, in the case of the authorities, possibly fear) the arrival of Elijah to prepare the nation for the coming of Messiah and the 'Day of the Lord'. And yet, as noted earlier, the only reference to Elijah outside of the gospels and the Book of James is in Paul's Letter to the Romans. Here the apostle uses the prophet's complaint that he is the only person who was faithful, and God's revelation of the seven



thousand who had not 'bowed the knee to Baal' as evidence of God's grace towards his people Israel (Rom. 11:1-6).

It may seem surprising that given the prominence afforded to the prophet in the gospels, subsequent writers did not also allude to him more. However, Luke's attempts to show how Jesus was superior to the Baptizer (Nolland, 1989, p.34), and the Johannine Baptizer's assertion that Jesus must increase whilst he himself must decrease (Jn. 3:26-30) may provide a clue as to why later New Testament writers chose largely to ignore Elijah in their works. It is significant, therefore, that our Author should choose to use the prophet, and I explain the significance when we look at how the Author has used him.

## **7.5 Context of the Reference to Elijah in James (Jas 5:12-16)**

For most scholars, Jas 5:17-18 is part of the final section of the composition beginning either in Jas 5:12 or Jas 5:13. Those who favour Jas 5:13 as the start of the section tend to treat Jas 5:12 either as an isolated unit (Francis, 1970, p.121, who regards Jas 5:12 as the second of three closing admonitions; Adamson, 1976, p.193; Dibelius, 1976, p.248), or as the end of the previous unit (Forbes, 1972, p.153; Amphoux, 1981, p.399; Wall, 1997a, p.248). Those favouring Jas 5:12 as the beginning of the final section provide a variety of theses regarding its function; it commences a section in which speech of varying kinds is a significant theme (Crotty, 1992, p.56; Johnson, 1995, p.326; Moo, 2000, p.231); it deals with remaining important practical issues of everyday life (Laws, 1980, p.218); it is the first part of a standard epistolary ending in Hellenist times (Davids, 1982, pp.181, 188-189; Brosend, 2004, pp.149-150). Scholars are as divided on this issue as they are with regard to the structure of the composition as a whole.

I argued in Chapter Six that Jas 5:11 constituted the end of a unit (see section 6.4.1). The Author's prophetic invective against the wealthy landowners had served to encourage his audience that the great reversal would occur in the Parousia which was close at hand. The prophets served as exemplars of the endurance that the community would need and the end of the story of the sapiential prophet, Job, provided clear evidence that the Lord would show the same compassion and mercy to all in the messianic community if they copied these exemplary heroes and endured to the end.

In the meantime, however, life goes on, and must be lived in the right way, according to the kingdom values established by Jesus and interpreted and developed by our Author. Laws, I think, is not far wrong with her descriptive unit titles of 'The Coming of the End' for Jas 5:(1)7-11, and 'Life in the Present – Religious Conversation' for Jas 5:12-20 (Laws, 1980, pp.194, 218). Whilst speech is a topic that figures prominently in the composition (cf. 1:22, 26; 3:1-12; 4:11; 5:9, 12), it is not the overarching theme within this last unit (contra Johnson, 1995, p.326). Earlier in his composition the Author went to great lengths to underpin his message that vital faith requires works (2:14-26), and works are at least as important as words in these final verses; the sick person must send for the elders, who must both pray over, and anoint, the sick person (5:14); the community members are to confess their sins to one another, and pray for one another as part of the repentance that will bring divine wholeness (5:15). Those who see a member of the community erring in their way of life are to take such action as will encourage the potential apostate to return to the right paths (5:19-20). A 'multitude of sins' (5:20) cannot be covered without faithworks. Thus the conclusion of the composition is full of exhortation to mutually supportive action.

Having given an overview of the closing verses that surround the Author's citing of Elijah, I turn now to consider them more fully, so that I can place the Elijah portrayal in a clearer setting.

5:12 Πρὸ πάντων δέ, ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ὀμνίετε μήτε τὸν οὐρανὸν μήτε τὴν γῆν μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ὄρκον· ἦτω δὲ ὑμῶν τὸ ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ οὐ οὐ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπὸ κρίσιν πέσητε.

5:12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear neither by heaven nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no", so that you do not fall under judgement.

At first sight it is not obvious how Jas 5:12 fits into its context. It neither seems to follow on logically from the previous verse, nor does it naturally lead on to the one that follows. It could quite easily be taken out, and the remaining text would still make sense. Indeed, if taken out, the question occurring at the beginning of Jas 5:13 can be seen to follow on from Jas 5:11 in that having spoken of Job and his suffering in an exemplary way, the Author asks his own community whether any of them is suffering, and then prescribes the remedy, prayer. So what purpose does Jas 5:12 serve in its context?

In the wider context of the composition and the recent assertion of the imminence of the Parousia, an exhortation not to swear oaths, seems less significant than the more relevant call to patience and endurance in the previous unit (cf. Moo, 2000, pp.231-232) and yet Jas 5:12 commences with πρὸ πάντων, a phrase which usually implies that what is about to be said is of the utmost importance. If, as I and a number of other scholars assert, Jas 5:12 begins the composition's conclusion, then the phrase may well have a much wider purpose (cf. Moo, 2000, pp.231-232). Indeed, it would seem to serve at least two functions; firstly, as a pointer to all the remaining exhortations, of which the forbidding of the swearing of oaths

is but the first (Laws, 1980, p.220; Brosend, 2004, pp.149-150). The address to ἀδελφοί μου occurs only here in this last unit and yet it surely applies just as much to the exhortations to come regarding prayer (5:13-15), confession (5:16) and turning back the errant brother (5:19-20), as to the prohibition of the swearing of oaths. A second function is to mark the transition to the composition's conclusion (cf. Laws, 1980, p.218; Martin, 1988, p.198; Johnson, 1995, p.326).

The stated exhortation is that the community shall not fall under judgement. The Author has already urged his audience not to grumble against one another lest they come under divine judgement (cf. Ropes, 1916, p.300, who expressly links Jas 5:12 to Jas 5:9). The Author has also reminded them that God will soon come in judgement (5:9b). Having encouraged his audience to be both patient and steadfast, he now reverts to his exhortations regarding the right action that will avoid the imminent divine judgement on the wealthy landowners also falling on the messianic community (cf. Johnson, 1995, p.326). In so doing, he fixes on a maxim that is widely viewed as originating with Jesus, and which finds its more familiar form in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Davids, 1982, p.189; Brosend, 2004, p.151; Mt 5:34-37).

The swearing of oaths only becomes necessary where people cannot be relied upon to tell the truth and this is a particular problem for oral societies, where written agreements are not the norm (Minear, 1971, p.13; Adamson, 1976, p.195; Brosend, 2004, pp.152-153; Witherington, 2007, p.541). As someone who has already warned his audience of the dangers of the tongue (3:1-12), the Author now urges them to show their distinctive speech-ethics by avoiding the use of oaths and speaking plain truth instead. In other words, the 'yes'

of their mouths should reflect the ‘yes’ of their hearts, and likewise, their ‘no’ should be equally as guileless.

5:13 Κακοπαθεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν, προσευχέσθω· εὐθυμεῖ τις, ψαλλέτω· 5:14 ἄσθενεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν, προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἀλείψαντες [αὐτὸν] ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου. 5:15 καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα καὶ ἐγερεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος· κὰν ἁμαρτίας ἦ πεποιηκώς, ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ. 5:16 ἔξομολογεῖσθε οὖν ἀλλήλοις τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ εὐχεσθε ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων ὅπως ἰαθῆτε. Πολὺ ἰσχύει δέησις δικαίου ἐνεργουμένη.

5:13 If anyone of you is suffering hardship let him pray; if anyone is cheerful, let him sing praises. 5:14 If anyone of you is ill, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray for him, anointing him with (olive) oil in the name of the Lord. 5:15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick one and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will forgive him. 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another in order that you might be healed. The efficiently working [prayer, petition] of a righteous man can achieve much.

The Author moves on to the next everyday life concern, that of how to respond to the emotional contrasts of life. The key is to bring God into the situation either through prayer or praise (Davids, 1982, p.192). It is prayer, though, that will receive the greater emphasis in the coming verses (Martin, 1988, p.200; Johnson, 1995, p.329), culminating in the example of the prophet, Elijah.

Although Jas 5:12 begins this final unit of the composition, the κακοπαθεῖ of Jas 5:13 may well pick up the exhortation of Jas 5:10 (Brosend, 2004, p.153). Having spoken of the way in which the prophets suffered and the manner in which the patriarch Job endured his trials, the Author now prescribes a remedy for any in his audience who are suffering – the remedy is to pray. In the coming verses, the prayer is to be for the restoration of an ailing person. In Jas 5:13, however, our author leaves the subject of prayer unstated leading at least one scholar to suggest that the scope of such prayer is unascertainable (Moo, 2000, p.235). The wider context, however, would seem to suggest the sufferer is being urged to pray for the

strength to endure his troubles (Martin, 1988, p.206). It is unlikely, though, that those who are suffering are doing so by reason of their stand for 'the faith' (contra Davids, 1982, pp.191-192). Our Author does not make such a connection – in fact, he does not expect all members of the community to be suffering. Some may be cheerful, or feeling good and these are encouraged to sing praises (cf. Johnson, 1995, p.329). Furthermore, there is no censure for this group for feeling good whilst others in the community are struggling. It is more likely, therefore, that the Author is referring to the everyday struggles and trials that his audience faces as it strives to live out the royal law, rather than to any outside persecution by reason of their stand for 'the faith'. Indeed, it is probable that the examples cited in Jas 5:13-14 are typical hypothetical situations which the Author envisages occurring in a messianic community's everyday life (Brosend, 2004, p.153).

The connection in the enjoinders of Jas 5:13 is God. Pray to God! Praise God! Whatever the situation, let God be approached in some appropriate way. The backdrop would seem to remain one in which ὁ κριτὴς ἔστηκεν πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν. God should not, therefore, be left out of the audience's response to their circumstances, because just as he hears the cries of the oppressed labourers in the rich landowners' fields (5:4) so he will hear the cries and praises of the messianic community.

Traditionally, the verb ἀσθενέω in Jas 5:14 has been interpreted as 'to be sick' and a variety of healing practices have been developed from this verse across the spectrum of the Christian Church. Whilst the verb can and often does refer to a physical illness in the Bible, it is not the only way in which it is used. In Rom 8:3, the Law was ἡσθένει, whilst in 2 Cor 13:3,

Christ is οὐκ ἄσθενεῖ towards the Corinthians. In Rom 4:18 and 14:1, Paul uses the verb in relation to faith. From these verses it is evident that a broader sense of weakness can be in view in the New Testament. Given the wider context of proving one's faith through patient endurance and long-suffering, we cannot rule out the possibility that our Author was using the verb in its wider sense to cover not just physical sickness but also mental and spiritual weakness and failure (cf. Hayden, 1981, pp.258-266, who argues that the Author has spiritual rather than physical weakness in mind; Moo, 2000, pp.236-237 who recognises this possibility, but ultimately rejects it; Warrington, 2004, pp.347-351, who explores the wide use of the term in first century C.E. literature).

The distinction between physical, mental and spiritual sickness as pervades western society today did not apply in the ancient world (Brosend, 2004, pp.160-161). People were ill or they were well, and if ill, the emphasis was one of being made whole, which was also, of course, a central feature of Jesus' own healing ministry embracing as it did the healing of physical, mental, and spiritual sickness along with demonic possession. Indeed, as Brosend argues, there does seem to be a 'seemingly indiscriminate, mixing of sin, sickness, confession, healing and forgiveness . . .' in Jas 5:13-16, although probably not 'with a little salvation and resurrection thrown in for good measure' as he goes on to argue (cf. Brosend, 2004, p.155; see also Seifrid, 2000, pp.34-35, who is convinced that the Christian's final salvation and resurrection are the outcome to which the Author alludes; Dibelius, 1976, p.254, who was equally as adamant that neither salvation nor resurrection are intended to be implied from these verses).

Although, the boundaries of what constituted sickness in the ancient world were more blurred than in our own day, the enjoinder to call for the church elders and for them to anoint the ailing person with oil 'in the name of the Lord' does seem to suggest that the Author primarily has bodily sickness in mind (Ropes, 1916, p.308; Martin, 1988, pp.209-210; Moo, 2000, pp.242-243). However, the healing process is one that brings wholeness, so that if the sickness has been the result of sin (5:15), forgiveness is available (cf. Johnson, 1995, p.333, who suggests that by using the verb ἐγείρω the Author is thinking of healing on more than one level).

Much has been written about both the practical and liturgical significance of this passage. There is no need to rehearse in detail the various arguments here as these can be found in any of the major commentaries on the Letter of James. A broad outline will suffice for our needs. The three main subjects of discussion are the role of the πρεσβύτεροι, the function of the oil, and the use of the Lord's name. I shall look at each briefly in turn.

The term πρεσβύτερος was well established within Early Judaism, initially referring to those who were the elder or older ones in the community (cf. Gen 18:11; Job 32:4, 6), and in due course, those who were leaders of communities (cf. Num 11:16; Judg 11:5-10; 1 Sam 16:4; cf. Johnson, 1995, p.330). The term is used in both senses in the deuterocanonical corpus (cf. 1 Macc 14:9; Sus 1:29), and in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark it is used to refer to community leaders (cf. Mt 21:23; Mk 14:53). It occurs several times in the Book of Acts and as Martin observes, when Paul visits the church leaders in Jerusalem, James the Just is surrounded by πρεσβύτεροι (Martin, 1988, p.207). It is not surprising, therefore, that our



Author should use this term to describe the leaders among his audience (Laws, 1980, p.226).<sup>94</sup> As to the function of the *πρεσβύτεροι* in the context of healing, they may be seen within the Author's audience as those authorised by reason of their position to call upon God in prayer on behalf of the sick person and the conduit through whom the divine response would come (Dibelius, 1976, pp.252-253, who, however, sees this as a Christian development and questions whether any Jewish group would have seen their leaders in this light). The practice of praying over the sick was well-known within Early Judaism (Ropes, 1916, pp.304-305; Davids, 1982, p.193; cf. *b. B.Bat. 116a-b*). Whether this was so as to counter the possibility of community members either approaching pagan magicians for healing and/or adopting superstitious practices is a moot point (Ropes, 1916, pp.305-307).

The use of oil in anointing the sick was not uncommon in the Ancient Near East (Davids, 1982, p.193; Seifrid, 2000, p.33). Its use within Judaism may have been carefully controlled so as to avoid people gaining a wrong impression as to the source of any healing (Adamson, 1976, p.197). Its use by those in the Author's audience may be medicinal (Johnson, 1995, p.331), or not (Dibelius, 1976, p.252; Davids, 1982, p.193), symbolic (Martin, 1988, pp.208-209;<sup>95</sup> Moo, 2000, p.242; Warrington, 2004, pp.354-357), or not (Laws, 1980, p.227).

However, I share the reservations expressed by Brosend about such distinctions having been

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<sup>94</sup> The argument that the use of the term *πρεσβύτεροι* alongside *ἐκκλησία* speaks of a late dating has some merit. Its use in the letters of the NT is confined to those that are deemed to be the later compositions (cf. 1 Tim 5:1, 2, 17, 19; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1, 2; 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1). But this is not conclusive or even compelling evidence for a late dating of the Book of James. The Author has used both *συναγωγή* (2:2) and *ἐκκλησία* (5:14) in this short composition to describe his audience, and his use of the latter term is probably in its broadest sense of those who come together to form an assembly of believers (Johnson, 1995, p.330). Regarding the use of these two terms in relation to an assembly see Brosend, 2004, pp.158-159.

<sup>95</sup> To be fair to Martin, he proffers this as a tentative suggestion after having asserted that there is a danger of reading too much into Jas 5:14 with regard to the healing practices of the Early Church.

a part of the Ancient Near Eastern mindset.<sup>96</sup> What can be said is that thus far, the Author has not introduced anything new that was not already practised within the Judaisms of his day (Laws, 1980, pp.229-230).

The new element in the Author's exhortation comes with the invoking of the name of the Lord. Given the awe in which the name of the God of Israel was held in Judaism, it seems unlikely that the Author would encourage his audience to anoint the sick person in the name of YHWH. Κύριος in Jas 5:14, therefore, is almost certainly the Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός of Jas 1:1 and Jas 2:1. Such invoking derives (as I will show later in this chapter) from Jesus' teaching, both from that concerning prayer as found in passages such as Mt 18:19-20, and from his promises concerning the powers with which his followers were, and would be endowed (cf. Mt 10:8, 28:18; Mk. 3:14-15, 6:7; Lk 9:1, 10:17, 19). The actions, however, must be done in faith, since it is ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως to which the Lord will respond (cf. 1:5-8; 5:17-18).

In a society in which sickness, if allowed to spread, could bring serious health problems or even death to others, the temptation to isolate and even ostracise the sick person is very great (cf. Lev 13-14 regarding ostracism for various skin diseases). The mere fact, therefore, that the Author urges his audience to gather around the sick person is an act of faith in itself as well as one of solidarity with the sick person (Johnson, 1995, pp.342-343).

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<sup>96</sup> Laws opines 'it would . . . be wrong to distinguish between the "medical" and the "religious" elements of James's picture'; (Laws, 1980, p.227), whilst Brosend goes further by asserting 'Asking if the anointing with oil was intended medicinally, pastorally, symbolically, or sacramentally is to begin in the wrong place, assuming distinctions not present in the ancient Mediterranean world. Instead . . . the meanings cluster in ways unfamiliar to us' (Brosend, 2004, p.160).

The Author asserts that not only does ἡ εὐχή τῆς πίστεως elicit from the Lord power to save from death, but also that the Lord will raise up the ailing person. This ‘raising up’ will include the forgiveness of sins. Given the context, this may not be a *carte blanche* for all sins previously committed, but rather a forgiving of those sins committed during the period of sickness, or perhaps those which may have led to the sickness in the first place. If the former, then there may be a link here to the suffering Job, who complained bitterly against God during the extremity of his troubles, and yet after the divine rebuke, is restored through God’s compassion and mercy (cf. Job 38:1-42:10).

Κάμνοντα in Jas 5:15 is one of the many New Testament *hapaxes* in the Book of James. Originally the verb κάμνω meant ‘to work’ or ‘to toil’. The emphasis was on hard toil such that οἱ καμνόντες was used as a euphemism for the dead, i.e., ‘those that have toiled – and have finished toiling’ (Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.873). The use of the present participle by the Author, therefore, may point to a belief that the suffering one will die if the sickness is not stemmed. This idea is strengthened by the use of the verb σώζω, with its primary meaning of ‘saving from death’ (Liddell and Scott, 1940, p.1748). Given the possible link to the patriarch Job referred to in the previous paragraph, it is also worth noting that the only place that the verb κάμνω is used in the Septuagint is in Job 10:1 where the patriarch complains κάμνων τῆ ψυχῆ μου στένων ἐπαφήσω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τὰ ῥήματά μου λαλήσω πικρία ψυχῆς μου συνεχόμενος (Weary within, I will let loose my words upon him in groans; I will speak, tormented by the bitterness of my soul). Perhaps the use of the verbs κάμνω and στένω in

this Joban verse reinforces the idea that Job continues to be an influence in this passage of the Book of James. In any event, the assertion that sins will be forgiven demonstrates yet again the compassion, mercy and bounty of the God who gives all things generously (cf. 1:5, 17; 5:11).

The exhortation to confess sins to one another (5:16a) could be in a context of people who are suffering together and who may have committed sins by reason of their weakness during this period of suffering. In such a situation, confession would indeed be ‘good for the soul’ because it would enable the ‘sinners’ to express their problems among brothers and sisters who are suffering similar things – an environment for mutual empathy and support, which serves to encourage prayer for one another. Of more import, perhaps, is that this is another example of the Author’s concern for the well-being of the community.

There can be little doubt the statement at the end of Jas 5:16 (Πολὺ ἰσχύει δέησις δικαίου ἐνεργουμένη) serves as an introduction to a man whose fervency in prayer caused even the elements to respond to the petitions he made to the same merciful and compassionate God who had showered such blessings on the complaining yet ultimately persevering Job, and who would do so again on any among the Author’s audience who were suffering.

Effective prayer, however, requires effort because it is a product of righteous living and righteous living requires full observance of the royal law (2:8) and a whole-hearted commitment to God (Warrington, 2004, pp.360-361). The use of ἐνεργουμένη in Jas 5:16b, therefore, may serve as a final rhetorical play on the catchword ἔργα.

The scene is now set for our final exemplar's entrance, the prophet Elijah, probably the greatest of the 'Former Prophets'.

## 7.6 Elijah as an Exemplar of Prayer (Jas 5:17-18)

5:17 Ἡλίας ἄνθρωπος ἦν ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν, καὶ προσευχῆ προσήύξατο τοῦ μὴ βρέξαι, καὶ οὐκ ἔβρεξεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἑνιαυτοὺς τρεῖς καὶ μῆνας ἕξ· 5:18 καὶ πάλιν προσήύξατο, καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς ὑετὸν ἔδωκεν καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐβλάστησεν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς.

5:17 Elijah was a man like us in every way, and he prayed that it would not rain and it did not rain on the earth for three and a half years. 5:18 Then he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

There could be no more fitting exemplar with which the Author could conclude his composition than Elijah. The prophet's very name (My God is Yah[weh]) rings out the message that the messianic community must strive to maintain a steadfast commitment to God in the midst of an idolatrous world with all its snares and temptations. Not only was he one of the prophets οἱ ἐλάλησαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου (5:10), in the story framed in Jas 5:17-18, he is the very mouthpiece of YHWH. Finally, as the acknowledged prophet of the end times (see sections 7.3, 7.4), Elijah is one to emulate as the Author and his audience await the Parousia of the Lord (5:7-8).

As I have argued (see section 7.2), the story within the framework of the drought (1 Kings 17:1-18:46) reveals Elijah as the perfect representative of YHWH. He appears in that narrative as a man with virtually superhuman powers, an image which is reinforced in 2 Kings, first as the prophet calls down fire from heaven on the soldiers of King Ahaziah – not once, but twice, as a witness of his divine commission (2 Kings 1:9-12), and then as he miraculously departs the world by fiery chariot in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-11). This image is

developed to mythical proportions in the Book of Sirach (Sir 48:1-11). And yet, our author commences his citation of the prophet's faithworks by stressing that he was a person just like himself and like his audience. Yes, Elijah was a prophet, a mighty prophet who did great things for God, but ultimately he was a human being subject to the same weaknesses as other humans (however cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.257, who sees the Author simply stressing Elijah's humanity without any more subtle implications). The portrayal of the prophet in Sirach is set aside by our Author in favour of a fallible mortal with frailties and doubts who sinks to the point of seeing himself as a failure and asking to be allowed to die (1 Kings 19:4; cf. Seifrid, 2000, p.37). This depiction of the prophet is clearly at odds with the way the Author has portrayed his other three exemplars. Here he seems to adopt a position which none before him have taken, neither in the Hebrew Bible nor in the deuterocanonical corpus, nor in other Second Temple literature; nor is such a portrait of the prophet found elsewhere in the New Testament. On the basis of our current sources, therefore, it is possible that our Author is being creative and original in his use of his sources, in order to reinforce his message.

I have also argued (see section 7.2) that although the two framing events to which the Author alludes (1 Kings 17:1 and 1 Kings 18:42) do not expressly state that Elijah prayed, the stories framed by them do indeed reveal the prophet as a man of fervent and effective prayer (cf. Adamson, 1976, p.201, who agrees with the effectiveness of the prophet's prayers but not that they were particularly fervent), firstly in the matter of the woman of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17:20-22) and then at the climax of the contest of prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:33b-38), where we see the prophet calling upon God to show his

power by accepting the drenched offering with the fire of heaven (Laws, 1980, p.235; De Vries, 1985, pp.210, 222, 236; Provan, 1995, p.135).

Why then does the Author draw attention to Elijah's prayerfulness, but then omit the specific biblical references to his life-changing prayers in favour of two events in which prayer at best can only be implied from the biblical text (Warrington, 1994, p.218; Moo, 2000, p.248)? Some have suggested that given the link to Jas 5:13-16, the barrenness of the land is analogous to the sickness of the ailing person of Jas 5:14 (cf. Davids, 1982, p.197; Martin, 1988, p.213; Moo, 2000, p.248). This is possible, but a more likely connection is to the earlier metaphor of the farmer waiting for the Early and Latter rains so as to receive the earth's precious harvest (5:7; cf. Johnson, 1995, p.337). When alluding to the prayer for rain on Mount Carmel, our Author not only states it rained but adds to the biblical account in this way, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐβλάστησεν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς (5:18b). We modern readers may be familiar with images in wildlife documentaries showing the impact of a deluge on arid land. We can recall, perhaps with wonder, those graphic pictures of new life springing up from apparent nothingness. The Early and Latter rains would have a not dissimilar effect on the semi-arid lands of Palestine-Syria to which our Author possibly alludes in his metaphor of the patient farmer (5:7). We can note that in that verse too our Author links the divine watering of the land with the production of καρπὸν. The earth yields its fruit in the seemingly most barren of environments when the heavens (clearly a metaphor for God in Jas 5:18) pour out their torrents of water. Where God blesses, he does so abundantly and the earth cannot fail but to be fruitful. The Author thereby reinforces his assertion, first made in his introduction that the Lord is both in control of all things (and the Elijah narrative in 1 Kings 17-18 has been all

about this) and is lavishly generous in his blessing of those who place their trust in him (1:5, 17; cf. Johnson, 1995, p.337).

The Author asserts that the drought in the Elijah narrative lasted for three and a half years, perhaps with the intention of reinforcing the effectiveness of Elijah's initial prayer. This was no temporary stoppage of rain, but a sustained period of drought which threatened the life of both woman and beast (1 Kings 17: 12; 18:5). The biblical account does not stipulate a specific period for the length of the drought, stating merely that God commanded the prophet to present himself to Ahab 'in the third year of the drought' (1 Kings 18:1). The period of three and a half years, however, is also found on the lips of the Lukan Jesus (Lk 4:25), suggesting that this period for the length of the drought was well established in Jewish tradition by the time of the New Testament. It may have been a round figure (half of seven) meant to depict judgement (Davids, 1982, p.197; Moo, 2000, p.248), or some sinister apocalyptic purpose (Laws, 1980, p.237; cf. Thiering, 1981, pp.41-42).

The drought story also enables the Author to reinforce his warning about those who are double-minded (1:8; 4:8). Those in his audience familiar with the biblical account would remember Elijah's plea to the people gathered on Mount Carmel, 'How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him' (1Ki 18:21). Furthermore, the Author's stinging indictment *μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὃς ἐὰν οὖν βουλευθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται* (You adulteresses. Do you not know that friendship with the



world is hostility towards God? Therefore, the one who would be a friend of the world proves to be an enemy of God – 4:4), would, likely, still be ringing in their ears.

The Author has referred to specific rather than general prayer. Elijah was not simply a person of prayer, but someone who prayed for specific things to happen (cf. 1 Kings 17:1, 20-21; 18:36-37). One specific request, of course, was for the raising of a dead boy (1 Kings 17:20-21), so the community, having been told that Elijah was a man just like them, can take great reassurance and confidence from his example as they pray for the healing of a sick brother or sister (5:14-16). Elijah was also ‘an obedient prophet, led by the word of YHWH because he [did] not act on his own initiative but follow[ed] the orders of YHWH’ (Fritz and Hagedorn, 2003, p.183). He was, therefore, also a righteous man, and as the Author’s audience reflected on his story they would surely see in Elijah, the perfect exemplar of the truth that πολλὴ ἰσχὺεὶ δέησις δικαίου ἐνεργουμένη (5:16b).

As stated earlier (see section 7.2), God had decided that the people of the Northern Kingdom should be punished by reason of their idolatry in turning to Baal, the so-called ‘god’ of the elements, and Elijah acted as God’s conduit for both announcing and fulfilling the divine decree (cf. Lev 26:19-20; Deut 11:16-17). Divine authority, therefore, brings with it divine power. If the prophet is to be a true exemplar of prayer for the Author’s audience, then they, too, need the same divine authority as the prophet had, and access to the same divine power. Since the Author has chosen to stress the prophet’s humanity by asserting that he was a man with the same human frailties as the members of the messianic community, it must follow that the Author believed that his audience had the full authority

of God to ask for the divine healing of the sick through the power vested in the glorious Lord Jesus Christ (2:1), the name in which the prayer was to be made and through which it would be answered.

### 7.7 Elijah and the Wanderers (Jas 5:19-20)

5:19 Ἀδελφοί μου, ἐάν τις ἐν ὑμῖν πλανηθῆ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἐπιστρέψῃ τις αὐτόν, 5:20 γινωσκέτω ὅτι ὁ ἐπιστρέψας ἁμαρτωλὸν ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ σώσει ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκ θανάτου καὶ καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν.

5:19 My brothers, if any of you wanders away from the truth and someone turns him round, let that person 5:20 know that the one who turns a sinner from wandering from the way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

At first glance, this final aphoristic exhortation (the final part of which is probably based on Proverbs 10:12, cf. Dibelius, 1976, p.27; Martin, 1988, p.219; Bauckham, 1999, pp.65-66; Moo, 2000, p.250; Witherington, 2007, p.548; McKnight, 2011, p.460 *et al.*) seems to bear no relation to what has just been said. It also appears to be a strange way in which to end a letter (if the Book of James is indeed a letter). However, first impressions can be misleading and I suggest that is the case here. We have seen that the previous two verses provide an example in Elijah to reinforce the message of Jas 5:13-16 regarding the impact of prayer. These last two verses of the composition serve as both a conclusion to this theme and a summary of the faithworks that underpin a true messianic community of mutual care and support (cf. Wall, 1997a, p.271, who sees the second function as the more important; McKnight, 2011, pp.423, 452-453, who sees Jas 5:19-20 as unconnected to Jas 5:13-18, but recognises the strong pastoral and communal dimensions of this closing statement). The prayer of faith must be accompanied by faithful action. The prayer of Elijah that preceded the drought was offered with a purpose. The intention was to prove to the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom (and to the deuteronomist editors' audience) that YHWH was the true

and only God. The outcome of the contest on Mount Carmel was that the Israelites turned from Baal to YHWH as evidenced firstly in their formulaic assertion, 'the LORD indeed is God; the LORD indeed is God' (1 Kings 18:39), and secondly as they backed up their profession of allegiance to YHWH by seizing the prophets of Baal and delivering them to Elijah for summary execution (1 Kings 18:40). One can say, therefore, that Elijah was instrumental in bringing back the wandering Israelites from the way of error and apostasy (Baal) to the way of truth and salvation (YHWH). This 'two ways' theme has simmered throughout the composition almost from the beginning, bubbling up at regular intervals. It appeared first in Jas 1:2-8 with the contrast between those striving for maturity-perfection and the double-minded unstable person; resurfaced again in the contrast between those who endure to the end and receive the crown of life (1:12) and those who fall victim to temptation and find themselves on the road to death (1:14-15). The contrast between those who have genuine faithworks and those who only say they have 'faith' occupied Jas 2:14-26, and in Jas 3:13-18 we see the contrast between the two kinds of wisdom, the one from God and the other from the devil. The theme is crystalised in Jas 4:4 with the Author's acerbic assertion regarding friendship with the world. In these concluding verses of the composition (5:19-20) the way of error is again depicted as a way that leads to death, a way on which any member of the messianic community could easily find themselves if they wander from the truth (not a belief system but right praxis, cf. Martin, 1988, p.218; Johnson, 1995, p.337; Witherington, 2007, p.547). However, our Author reassures his audience that there is still a way back and, in effect, urges his hearers to be those who look out for others who stray and to lead them back into the way of truth, for this is how the caring (messianic) community is expected to live (cf. Laws, 1980, p.241; Davids, 1982, p.199; Hartin, 1999, pp.50, 104). It is not enough,

therefore, just to pray for a weak brother or sister, especially where that person has wandered from the way of righteousness and wisdom onto the road of folly (cf. Martin, 1988, p.219). The faithful brother or sister will, like Elijah, seek to turn the sinner back onto the right way and where (s)he succeeds, (s)he will bring life where there would otherwise be death, for it is only inside the faithful believing community that hope and salvation are found, and will be found at the Lord's coming (cf. Davids, 1982, pp.199-200).

Much has been written concerning whose sins are covered by the restorative action of the loving brother or sister. Are they the sins of the rescuer (cf. Ropes, 1916, pp.315-316; Adamson, 1976, pp.203-204; Brosend, 2004, pp.156-157; Witherington, 2007, p.549), those of the sinner (cf. Martin, 1988, p.220; McKnight, 2011, pp.455-457, who argues that the grammatical structure of Jas 5:20 is such that the two αὐτοῦς should be construed as applying to the same person, of which the more likely is the wanderer), or both (cf. Dibelius, 1976, pp.258-259, and Laws, 1980, pp.238-242, who both argue that the communal dimension of the Author's concern is such that the concept of the wider covering of sin is both attractive and intended). I have argued that the Jesus tradition, and especially that found in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), underpins the Author's teaching. Fundamental to Jesus' teaching in that Matthean passage is the idea that those who would be his followers are required to treat others as they wish to be treated themselves (Mt 7:12), hence the request for forgiveness in 'the Lord's Prayer' is linked to having forgiven others first (Mt 6:12, 14-15; cf. Mt 7:2 regarding a similar teaching on judging others). Also, those who respond by emulating God in caring for others will receive divine blessing (cf. Mt 5:7, 9). Add to this our Author's depiction of God as the generous and bounteous giver (1:5, 17), and

I agree with Dibelius and Laws that the the multitude of sins covered may include those of the converter as well as those of the wanderer.

The composition thus ends with hope for those who struggle to overcome their trials and temptations of whatever nature. Those who stray are not to be cast out. The messianic community seeks to restore them, a teaching which is given more flesh in Mt 18:15-22 (Dibelius, 1976, p.260; Martin, 1988, p.218; Johnson, 1995, p.338), and we can note that this Matthean passage includes the promise of answered prayer and the presence of Jesus in the community's midst (Mt 18:19-20).

## **7.8 Summary and Conclusions**

The very name 'Elijah' ('My God is Yah[weh]') underpins the Author's demand for total commitment to, and trust in, God. His use of this end-time prophet reinforces his assertions concerning the power and impact of prayer (5:13-16b). The Author departs from Jewish tradition in stressing the prophet's human frailty rather than his superhuman feats (cf.5:17a; Sir 48:1-10). It was as a mere man that Elijah achieved remarkable results through prayer. Whilst the Author has not chosen the obvious examples of the prophet's prayer life – the raising of the woman of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17:20-22), and the receiving of a drenched offering (1 Kings 18:36-38) – his choice of the 'prayer' events at the beginning and end of the drought encourages his audience to reflect on the wider story of Elijah's struggle against the idolatry of his day, a struggle which saw the assembled Israelites on Mt. Carmel turn back to YHWH from Baal both in word and action (1 Kings 18:39-40).

The Author embellishes the biblical account of the ending of the drought by adding that the earth yielded its harvest (cf. 1 Kings 18:42-45; 5:18b), possibly with the intention of reinforcing his earlier metaphor of the patient farmer (5:7) and his claims concerning the generosity of God (1:5, 17; 5:11).

Elijah was probably an outsider from across the Jordan. Although he received support from the woman of Zarephath, and appeared to gain a servant at some point (cf. 1 Kings 18:43-44) he was essentially on his own during the three and a half year drought. He certainly felt alone as he faced the Mount Carmel challenge (cf. 1 Kings 18:22) and as he reflected on what he saw as a failed mission (1 Kings 19:10, 14). Yet God had not finished with him (1 Kings 19:15-17). And God has not finished with those who wander from the truth (5:19). They can be brought back, and that task belongs to those who have stayed true to the Lord. If they do that work and succeed, then a multitude of sins will be covered (5:20).

## CHAPTER 8

### FOUR EXEMPLARS – A UNITY OF PURPOSE?

#### *Summary and Conclusions*

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to explore how the Author of the Book of James has used his four named exemplars, Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah; to determine whether or not there are any common elements or threads in his choices and/or in the events/stories cited or alluded to; and to assess in what way the Author's use of his exemplars might assist us in understanding the composition. I argued that in naming an exemplar and citing an event an author (or speaker) cannot prevent an audience's collective mind reflecting on the wider story. Indeed, as we saw (see section 4.7.4.3) early Jewish exegetes did exactly that as they interpreted the *Aqedah* as a summary of Abraham's life of faith and obedience rather than as a single event. Consequently, I explored the exemplars' wider stories in the Hebrew Bible as well as in a variety of Early Jewish and Christian literature so as to provide a framework in which to assess the way in which the Author of the Letter of James has used his exemplars.

I shall set out my findings as follows: firstly, I will review what my investigation has revealed about the four exemplars, focussing on those elements which unite them and which provide common threads. I will then consider what we have learned about the themes and interests of the Author from the wider study before looking at what the Author's use of the exemplars

tells us about himself and his audience, and thereby identify the significance of the four exemplars for the Author's overall message.

## **8.2 Common Threads Linking the Four Exemplars Identified**

Even a cursory reading of the Letter of James reveals that Abraham and Rahab were held up by the Author as exemplars of vital faith, i.e. faith-at-work, or as I have chosen to call it faithworks, Job as an exemplar of steadfast endurance, and Elijah as an exemplar of effective prayer. Although we have these three different emphases, there are also several common threads. As noted in Chapter One, Johnson sees the four Hebrew Bible characters as examples of how faith is 'brought to perfection' through its different constituents (obedience and hospitality, endurance and prayer; cf. Johnson, 1988, p.644). I have questioned the idea that Rahab serves primarily as an exemplar of hospitality, arguing instead that she mirrors Abraham in demonstrating what a total commitment to God looks like (cf. sections 4.8 and 5.6.5.1). Whilst there is merit in Johnson's thesis that the four characters exemplify the bringing of faith to perfection (see section 3.3), I am convinced that the links between the four go beyond this. My thesis is that the four exemplars share at least three qualities that are vital both to the life of faith of the individual but especially to that of the community. Firstly, the four exemplars demonstrated through their faithworks that they were wholly committed to God; secondly, they were, or became, outsiders who turned their backs on the values of the world (κόσμος) by reason of their commitment to God; and thirdly, albeit a subsidiary thread, they faced their trials (πειρασμοί) largely on their own without any significant outside human help, thereby demonstrating their trust in, and reliance on, God. I will elaborate on each of these in turn.



### 8.2.1 A Whole-Hearted Commitment to God

The Author had started his composition with an exhortation to his audience to rejoice in their different kinds of *πειρασμοι* (1:2), because such testing is part of the journey towards maturity-perfection (1:3-4), an important goal for the messianic community as it awaits the imminent Parousia of the Lord (5:7-8). He placed before his audience four exemplars. In their own way each of these faced extreme *πειρασμοι* on their own journeys toward maturity-perfection. I would posit that these *πειρασμοι* were defining moments in (if not the defining moments of) their lives. It is hard to imagine Abraham facing a greater challenge than that of being asked by the very God who had called him out of the land of idolatry, to offer the only son of promise on the altar of human sacrifice. Likewise, Rahab had no greater test than that of deciding what to do about the Israelite spies in her house with the fate of the city of Jericho seemingly in her hands, and her own future in peril. There can be no more daunting challenge than being handed over to the evil and sadistic whims of the Accuser as was Job's lot (or even knowingly taking on Satan as is the case of Job in *T. Job*), and suffering the calamities endured by that patriarch. As for Elijah, there was no greater test of his faith than the period of drought culminating in the contest on Mount Carmel in which he single-handedly challenged the powers of a nation state and its deities. In overcoming these extreme *πειρασμοι* each of the four exemplars proved their whole-hearted commitment to God. They were prepared to forsake everything to remain faithful to God. As part of that sacrificial attitude, they had rejected the *κόσμος* and its values and showed themselves to be true friends of God.

Abraham's obedience in the *Aqedah* event highlights the lengths to which friends of God must be prepared to go to demonstrate the reality of their trust in God (2:23). Nothing less than a whole-hearted commitment could have enabled him to come through that test. The Author invoked the example of Rahab to serve the same purpose as Abraham, namely to be an outstanding example of faithworks (2:25). By hiding and guiding the Israelite spies as she did, Rahab demonstrated clearly where her loyalties lay. She turned her back on the world she knew and placed her trust fully in the God of the Israelites. There was no hint of double-mindedness in either her actions or words (cf. 1:6-8). By her faithworks she proved beyond doubt that she was fully committed to God and to his agenda, namely the total destruction of Jericho and the taking of the land by the Israelites. In human terms her situation was desperate and precarious. She was reliant on two apparently inept Israelite spies for her and her family's future safety. She could not have faced any greater test of her faith than the test depicted in the account of Josh 2. Like Abraham, Rahab was tested to the extreme, and like Abraham, she clearly showed herself to be a friend of God (even if she was not called that), and equally that she was an enemy of the κόσμος as represented by the city of Jericho (cf. 4:4). The Author holds up Job as one who had ὑπομονή. Although in the canonical story the patriarch complained bitterly about his afflictions and about God's dealings with him, he refused to curse God or to renege on his commitment to God. He too was a friend of God, because he alone spoke about God aright (Job 42:7). Job, therefore, is the third exemplar of testing *in extremis*, and the third exemplar who comes through the test with faith intact and commitment to God strengthened. Elijah's task may seem somewhat less daunting than those of the other three exemplars, but it required immense courage to stand alone on Mount Carmel against the religious powers of state in front of an unpredictable people,

especially after a period of some three years during which the prophet was, to all intents and purposes, a fugitive. From his announcement of the judgement of drought (1 Kings 17:1) to his final supernatural departure (2 Kings 2:11), the prophet showed himself to be YHWH's man through and through, a true friend of God and an enemy of the κόσμος in all its guises – syncretism, evil leadership and injustice (cf. 1 Kings 17- 21). Thus we have four exemplars, four extreme tests and four life-defining moments.

### **8.2.2 The Exemplars as Outsiders**

Each of the exemplars was, or became, an outsider by reason of their commitment to God. Although Canaan was to become the home of the Israelites, it was never Abraham's 'home' despite the divine promise that one day it would be given to his descendents. Abraham led a nomadic life and was to all intents and purposes an outsider in the land as is made poignantly clear in the account of Sarah's burial. First, the patriarch asserts to the Hittites 'I am a stranger and an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight' (Gen 23:4). Then he insists that he buy the cave (and field) of Machpelah so that they legally become his possession, but only as a burial place. In doing this the patriarch showed that although he would not himself see the land promise fulfilled, he believed that his descendants one day would do so (Gen 23:5-20). Abraham, thus, remained an outsider amidst the peoples among whom he dwelt (cf. Heb 11:8-10).

Rahab was also an outsider. As a prostitute she was on the margins of Canaanite society. Her house was in the outside wall of the city, so she could not, physically, have been any further away from the centre of Jericho society, and even when she is rescued and brought out of

the doomed city, she finds herself placed outside the Israelite camp (Jos 6:23). As a woman, as well as a harlot and a foreigner, Rahab was three times an outsider and yet she could still show a whole-hearted commitment to the God to whom she had so recently switched her allegiance.

Although Job was a key member of his community with many apparent friends prior to his testing, he soon finds himself ostracised after the second bout of satanic attacks as can be seen in Job 19:14-19. In *T. Job*, this once fabulously wealthy and admired king is reduced to an unwanted beggar on a dung hill (*T. Job* 20.7-22.2). Job, thus, becomes an outsider during this period of testing, an outsider whose best friends turn on him, and whose wife urges him to curse God.

Although an Israelite from across the River Jordan, Elijah was very much an outsider in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The queen had instituted Canaanite worship as the national religion and the king reaffirmed it with his building of idolatrous shrines (1 Kings 16:32-33). The prophet was deemed by King Ahab to be the cause of the nation's drought problems and was sought by him everywhere (1 Kings 18:10, 17). Even those whom he might call friends are afraid to be associated with him (cf. 1 Kings 18:7-14, in which Obadiah, though a brave man himself as evidenced by his hiding of a number of God's prophets, fears for his own life on account of his association with Elijah).

Abraham had turned his back on the idolatrous city of Ur and sought instead the way of the Lord, upping tents and moving on as divinely led for many years until the supreme test of his

commitment to God in the *Aqedah*. Rahab had turned her back on the whole of her past life, including the idolatrous city in which she lived, and entrusted herself instead to the God of the invading army. Job's city turned its back on the patriarch and Job found himself a lone voice against the wisdom of the κόσμος until God vindicated him and restored him and his fortunes, and did so in front of the very 'friends' who had represented the wisdom of the κόσμος. Elijah became public enemy number one in the eyes of the Israelite court yet still championed the cause of YHWH on the mountain of idolatry, thereby helping to turn a people back to their true God. Four exemplars who kept themselves unstained by the world and its wisdom (1:27) but at the cost of being seen as outsiders.

### **8.2.3 The Exemplars Facing their Πειρασμοι Alone**

Although there may have been other people mentioned in the exemplars' stories, each exemplar faced their πειρασμοι without any significant help from others. Thus Abraham does not appear to have said anything to Sarah about the divine test in the account of the *Aqedah* in the Hebrew Bible. In other words, Abraham had no-one to whom he could turn in his time of greatest need. Although, later Jewish interpretation develops the concept of an adult Isaac as a willing victim (see section 4.5), both the biblical account and that of the *Book of Jubilees* appear to leave Isaac in the dark until the last moment (cf. Gen 22:7-8, 9b; *Jub.* 18.1-8). Abraham, therefore, was totally reliant on God to see him through the trial and, if necessary, to raise Isaac from the dead so as to fulfil the earlier promise concerning his posterity (cf. Gen 17:19-21; 21:12).

Although the Israelite spies played some part in Rahab's deliverance from Jericho and she persuaded an unspecified number of her family to join her in the 'safe house', she, too, was

essentially alone, both with regard to the decision to betray Jericho into the hands of their enemies, and during the period between the departure of the spies and her own deliverance. She had no access to any other adherents to the God of Israel. She had to rely fully on God to see her through those difficult days.<sup>97</sup>

Job, too, is found facing his trials alone, not only was he deserted by his wife, but his three supposed friends increasingly turned on him (*T. Job* 34, 41.1-2) and, in his final trial, he was subjected to a blistering Satan-induced attack against him by the young Elihu (*T. Job* 41.3-42.2). Hence this patriarch, too, became a man on his own, with no human being to turn to for help and comfort. His only hope was that God would vindicate him.

Elijah saw himself as a man alone carrying out the orders of YHWH (1 Kings 18:22). As he reflected on what he saw as a failed mission, he complained that he alone stayed loyal to YHWH, although God soon corrected him on that point (19:10, 14, 18). Nevertheless, Elijah is portrayed within the narrative of 1 Kings as one man against the world.

Our Author then has presented his audience with four very different exemplars who faced and overcame four very different, yet extreme, tests of their faith and commitment but what is the message that he wishes to convey through them collectively?

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<sup>97</sup> It would have been a minimum of two weeks, but probably longer, between the time the spies left Jericho and the day Rahab was brought out of the city (cf. Jos 2:22; 3:1-2; 4:19; 5:10; 6:2-4).

### 8.3 What Does the Author's Use of the Four Exemplars Tell Us?

Following the majority of modern scholars, I argued that Jas 1 serves as an introduction to the themes that are important to the Author: the journey to maturity-perfection through the testing of faith (1:2-4); the need for divine wisdom so as to avoid the double-minded folly that comes from following the wisdom of the κόσμος (cf. 1:5-8, 12-16); the eschatological reversal of the rich and the poor (1:9-11); the generosity of God to those he has called to himself (1:5, 17-18); speech ethics (1:19); and the importance of being 'doers of the word' and not just 'hearers' (1:22-27). All four exemplars overcame their faith tests, showed their wisdom and single-minded commitment to God, cared for those in need, spoke God's word or the right words about God and proved themselves to be true doers of the implanted word.

I turn now to some general observations regarding the Author and his audience. The Author is clearly comfortable with using exemplars named in the Hebrew Bible. His choice of both Abraham and Rahab to further his argument for the necessity for faithworks, suggests that he has a good grasp of Jewish exegetical tradition. His selection of Job places him firmly within that tradition since this Biblical patriarch is unlikely to have attracted attention outside of Judaism and/or Christianity.<sup>98</sup> His citing of Elijah as an exemplar of prayer suggests a familiarity with Second Temple Jewish texts. Furthermore, a comparison of his use of his exemplars with that of other New Testament and contemporary Jewish writers is illuminating. Where other New Testament writers seek to play down the significance of Abraham (see section 4.6), our Author follows traditional early Jewish exegetical practice

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<sup>98</sup> I use the terms 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' in their broadest senses so as to embrace all possible variations between the extremes of the two.

albeit without the embellishments (see sections 4.3-4.5). Likewise, where other New Testament writers seize on Elijah's endtime role in the guise of John the Baptizer and as a witness to Jesus in the Transfiguration story (see section 7.4), our Author prefers to stress the prophet's human frailties (5:17) whilst alluding discreetly to a different and more traditional interpretation of his endtime role as reconciler of God's people (cf. 5:19-20 and Mal 4:5-6). However, like the other New Testament writers, our Author has no compunction in calling Rahab a harlot. He is neither tied resolutely to Jewish exegetical tradition, nor has he embraced the reinterpretations of other New Testament writers.

The composition itself displays evidence of Hellenistic influence in the rhetorical and literary devices the Author uses to convey his message. Although some of the *topoi* covered can be found in Hellenistic paraenesis, the Author's treatment does not follow Hellenistic practice. For example, his concern for morals is devoid of any interest in the customs and practices required for getting on in the world (Johnson, 1995, p.81). For him it is purity of communal life, rather than individual advancement that are important (Johnson, 1995, pp.82-83). The deity he depicts is clearly the God of Israel. In short 'there is nothing in the thought and teaching of [the Author] that does not find resonance in the world of Judaism' (Hartin, 1999, p.7).

The Author not only states an allegiance to Jesus Christ (1:1), he demonstrates he has a sound grasp of Jesus' teaching, and this permeates the whole composition. There is no substantive evidence that the Author was an adherent of the gospel(s) as set out in the Book of Acts, in the Pauline/Pseudo-Pauline Letters, in the Petrine Letters, in the Johannine



corpus, or in the Book of Hebrews. That is not to say that he opposed such gospel(s) but that his focus in this composition is elsewhere. The closest points of contact are undoubtedly with the Synoptic traditions and especially with the Sermon on the Mount/Plain. Furthermore, the Author closely follows the ethical teaching of Jesus both with regard to those elements of Jewish tradition he emphasizes and those he chooses to ignore or play down (cf. Bauckham, 1999, pp.96-107). Indeed, for our Author, the law (νόμος) would seem to be the Torah as reinterpreted by Jesus and the word (λόγος) the message of the kingdom as preached by him, and thus the Letter of James naturally abounds with echoes of the Jesus tradition (cf. sections 3.14-15). Consequently, we can say with some degree of confidence that the Author was a follower of Jesus Christ albeit in his own distinctive way.

Turning to the composition's audience, the Author's references to his exemplars are brief and to the point. He sees no need to provide any background to either the exemplars' identities or their stories. We can reasonably deduce from this that his audience will have been familiar with the exemplars and their stories whether as reflected in the Hebrew Bible and/or in wider Jewish tradition (e.g. the traditions reflected in *T. Job* concerning Job's steadfastness, 4 Ezra regarding Elijah's effectual prayers and the *Book of Jubilees* with regard to Abraham being the friend of God, even if these actual works may not have been available to our Author). The Author's depiction of God, his eschatological vision and his understanding of the nature of true religion are all strongly Jewish in character. All of these point to a primarily Jewish audience as the recipients (cf. Sandt, 2007, p.40).

This Jewish audience would seem to have a measure of understanding of the Author's teaching. They are already aware that the testing of faith produces ὑπομονή (1:3). They know what the Author means by 'the crown of life' (1:12). They have received the implanted word' (1:21). They have (or claim to have) τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης (2:1). The Author's exhortations are of the kind one would expect a wisdom teacher to give when he is reminding his students that their lives need to reflect the teaching they have already received and purportedly learned and which distinguishes them from other communities (cf. Botha, 2005, pp.394-395).

It is difficult to assess to what extent the Author had specific problems within his audience's own context(s) in mind. We should remember that he will not have been living in a remote vacuum and was almost certainly part of a (messianic) community himself, and even if he is not James the Just in Jerusalem or one of his followers, as I have posited, he probably resides in another centre such as Caesarea, Antioch, Alexandria, or even Rome. In other words, he could see at first hand the kinds of problems that his audience could have been facing, and may have simply used his own local community as the litmus paper for what he felt needed to be said to his diasporan audience, as any good wisdom teacher might be expected to do.

Turning to the significance of the exemplars, I posited in Chapter Three that there were five main catchwords introduced by the Author in Jas 1:2-4 (πειρασμός, πίστις, ἔργον, ὑπομονή, and τέλειος) and that their interaction was such as to suggest that there was no single overarching theme (see sections 3.3 and 3.11). I now posit that the nearest that the Author comes to an overarching theme is the way in which those five catchwords interact. Πίστις

will be tested – it is in the very nature of faith that it has to be. It will be tested in many different ways (1:2). The faithful servant of God will face her πειρασμοί with ὑπομονή (1:3; 5:11) whilst at the same time (and this is important) she continues to do the ἔργα that demonstrate true faith (2:14-26), and all of this has the ultimate goal of becoming τελεία (1:4; cf. 2:22). This life of faithworks requires a whole-hearted commitment to God with no room whatsoever for compromise with the values of the κόσμος (cf. Cheung, 2003, pp.222-223). I have argued that Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah are all fine examples of how these five catchwords can come together.

If the audience chooses to emulate these exemplars, they, like them, will be outsiders within the wider community. They are not those who have separated themselves physically from the wider world, but members of a messianic community called to live their communal life in the midst of the κόσμος. Furthermore, the Author's definition of true religion includes the call to be unstained by the κόσμος rather than separated from it (1:27). In other words, the recipients are almost certainly not part of a Qumran style community which has withdrawn itself from the outside world (see section 3.10).

Just like the Author's four exemplars, the Audience are being challenged as to where their true loyalties lie – are they with the idolatrous practices and the associated lifestyle promoted by the secular and religious authorities to which they may be humanly subject, or with the God who will soon come in judgement and final redemption (cf. 5:8-9)?

Although the πειρασμοί of the exemplars were extreme, it does not have to follow that the recipients themselves were facing such extremity, or even, for that matter, persecution. The

context of the composition remains one of everyday concerns and trials. It is about caring for the disadvantaged (1:27) and the sick (5:14-16); about not toadying to the wealthy, but emulating God by reaching out to the poor and needy (2:1-13). It is about exercising the correct speech ethics (3:9-10; 5:12); refraining from judging or grumbling against others within the community (4:11-12; 5:9); caring for one another (5:13-20). In short, our Author is concerned about the types of everyday issues that affect the messianic community and which could lead to its disintegration if temptation and sin are allowed to go unchecked (1:13-15; 4:1-4, 7-10). Indeed, the communal dimension of the composition is paramount and must not be ignored or played down (cf. Hartin, 2006, p.469, who asserts that the whole of Jas 5:13-20 shows that the community has ‘an overriding responsibility for one another’; cf. section 3.4). Those who fall and go astray from the way of truth (that is the way of right praxis, not right doctrine) must be sought and restored because mutual love, concern and support are vital to the messianic community’s continued well-being (5:19-20). Against this background of the struggles of everyday life, the extreme examples from the stories of Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah serve as an encouragement of just how powerful the implanted word is for those who accept it (1:21), and allow it to do the work that God has ordained (1:17-18). However, it is only those who welcome the word with meekness who will receive the divine grace necessary for overcoming their *πειρασμοί* (cf. 1:21; 4:6), hence the audience must humble themselves before God and submit their lives to divine scrutiny through the word (cf. 1:25; 4:7a, 8a) and rid themselves of all sinful practices (1:21a; 4:8b).

If the four exemplars can demonstrate their faithworks in the most difficult of circumstances, the messianic community can surely show theirs in the lesser struggles of

everyday life, albeit in a hostile environment that is the κόσμος. After all, as the Author reminded his audience at the end of his composition, Elijah was a human being just like them (5:17), and by inference so were the other three exemplars, even Father Abraham. Furthermore, the audience has one further benefit not available to the exemplars – the Parousia of the Lord is near (5:7-9). There is no reason, therefore, why the audience cannot emulate the exemplars' faithworks until the glorious yet terrible appearance of the Lord when they, if they remain faithful, will be both vindicated and rewarded for their faithfulness to God, just as each of the exemplars was rewarded, Abraham by being called a friend of God, Rahab, by her deliverance from the doomed city, Job with a double blessing and Elijah with a supernatural departure from the κόσμος.

I have suggested that there is a subsidiary thread in the stories of the four exemplars, that of standing alone. Just as the extreme circumstances of the exemplars should act as an encouragement to the audience in their everyday struggles, so the exemplars' solitary status can be contrasted with the mutual communal support available to each and every member of the audience. In other words, the exemplars faced πειρασμοί in all respects much tougher than the Author's audience are ever likely to face, and yet they persevered to the end, and overcame without any obvious human assistance. If they could achieve all that without any meaningful support from other human beings, how much more should the Author's audience be able to meet and overcome their πειρασμοί when they have each other for mutual care and support? How vital, then, that the community members do not turn on

each other but instead support each other in all circumstances, even going so far as seeking to bring back any who stray away (cf. 4:1-4, 11; 5:9; 16, 19-20).

There has been some speculation as to the absence of Jesus as a named exemplar in the Letter of James, especially in the context of the exemplary suffering referred to in Jas 5:10-11 (cf. Ropes, 1916, p.298; Laws, 1980, pp.216-218; Davids, 1982, p.186). In order to address this question one must first of all decide who Jesus was for the Author and his community. Although the Jesus tradition features significantly in the composition there are no concrete references to the death and resurrection of Jesus. We simply do not know what role these events play in the Author's theology and teaching. However, we can note (1) the Author asserts that he himself is a slave of both God and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1); (2) Jesus in some way shares in the divine glory (2:1); (3) Jesus is the name through which the community is to seek healing (5:14) and (4) Jesus may be the divine agent who will appear at the Parousia (5:8). Together these imply that Jesus is not just another prophet and/or wisdom teacher but someone who has gained approval and glory in the sight of God and in such a way as can eternally benefit the members of the new messianic community to whom the Author writes. I argued in section 3.8 that the gospel message preached by John the Baptizer and by Jesus are more likely to be in view than the kerygmatic gospel of the Book of Acts and other other New Testament writings, given the the moral context of Jas 1:21. In other words salvation for our Author may be the eschatological vindication that comes to those who will be found faithful at the Parousia, such faithfulness being evidenced in the way the community has treated the marginalised and the helpless in their midst, by how they have cared for one another, and by their active rejection of the values of the κόσμος

(cf. 1:27; 2:1-13; 4:1-12; 5:13-20). In short their collective salvation is strongly linked to how they have fulfilled the royal law that Jesus both taught and exemplified.

Returning to the question of Jesus' exemplar role, or more accurately the apparent lack of such a role in the composition, it may be that Jesus serves as the unnamed perfect exemplar for the Author and his audience. If as almost all scholars over the past one hundred years have asserted, the Author is a follower of Jesus, why does he not make more direct references to him? One possibility, which we saw in Chapter Three (see section 3.13), and which I find attractive is that the Author was writing to a mixed Jewish audience rather than to a 'Jewish-Christian' or 'Christian-Jewish' one and did not want to alienate those who were not followers of Jesus. After all, the Author has written in a no-nonsense style – we might say he is not averse to calling a spade, a spade – and since he has stated that he is writing to ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ (1:1), there is no compelling reason to doubt his statement. As Bassett noted in the last quarter of the nineteenth century:

It is really painful . . . after reading this address with which the letter is inscribed, to find critics, like postmen who are ill-skilled in deciphering hand-writing, conveying the letter to every house except that of the person whose name is specified on the envelope. (Bassett, 1876, cited in Allison Jr, 2001b, p.534).

If as I have suggested, the Author was James the Just or one of his followers writing shortly after his death, then Jewish Christians would, in the main, still be members of the local synagogue, even if they saw themselves as a separate community (cf. 2:2 and 5:14). As to their location, there is insufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions, but, as Davids, 1982, pp. 28-34, has suggested, an audience comprising one or more groups in Syria-Palestine shortly before the Jewish revolt of 66-74 C.E. seems as good an option as any.

I posited earlier in this chapter that the Author has presented his exemplars as frail human beings so as to encourage his audience in their everyday trials. His description of Jesus as τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης (2:1), strongly suggests that he and, probably the messianic community within his audience, viewed Jesus as the ascended and glorified Lord. Consequently, it was inappropriate to bring him back down to earth as a suffering exemplar (cf. Cantinat, 1973, p.238, who also posits that the Author wanted to use only exemplars from the Hebrew Bible; cf. Adamson, 1976, p.192, who suggests the Author saw Jesus as in a class of his own).

In Chapter Six (see section 6.6), I argued that Job was not only upright and blameless, as depicted in the prose narrative framework of the Book of Job, but that he also fulfilled all the various qualities urged on the audience by our Author in his composition. This frail human patriarch, therefore, and not the ‘glorious Lord Jesus Christ’, serves as the perfect *human* exemplar for our Author’s audience. The wealthiest man of his region puts to shame the wealthy of all the Ages by his care and concern for the needy and his resistance to all that the Devil could throw at him. He also speaks the right words and demonstrates the wisdom from above.

I have argued that whilst Job fulfils admirably the exemplary function of one with ὑπομονή as do the unnamed prophets of Jas 5:10, the story of Job has the added benefit that we know what happened at the end of the patriarch’s time of testing – the reward of a double blessing from God. The Author’s assertion that his audience had not only *heard* about Job’s



story, but had also *seen* the outcome is intended to reinforce in his audience's minds that God is still the compassionate and merciful God who delivered Job from his sufferings and rewarded him (5:11; cf. 1:5, 17-18). He will do likewise for all who show the same ὑπομονή in the midst of their own πειρασμοί and who persevere to the end.

## 8.4 Conclusions

I have argued that the four named exemplars have three things in common; (1) they were tested to the extreme, but remained loyal to God, thereby demonstrating their whole-hearted commitment to him; (2) they were, or became, outsiders in their communities by reason of their commitment to God; (3) they faced their trials in full reliance on God without any significant human assistance. Although only Abraham was specifically called a 'friend of God', the other three exemplars proved they too were friends of God by both their whole-hearted commitment and their rejection of the world's values. Their function was not only individually to exemplify specific aspects of a life wholly committed to God, but together to show the power of God's grace and the extent of his mercy and compassion for those who endure to the end. The extremity of their trials and their human frailties make them true human exemplars for the messianic community struggling to embrace fully the more stringent demands of the royal law based in the teaching of Jesus. The community is urged to emulate the faithful commitment and endurance of the four exemplars in the lesser trials of everyday life until the imminent Parousia of the Lord, when the great reversal will occur in which the wealthy landowners will receive due judgement for their arrogance, greed and oppression, and the faithful messianic community will receive the crown of life.

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