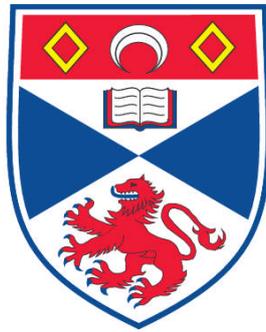


**THE SOTERIOLOGY OF JAMES IN LIGHT OF EARLIER JEWISH
WISDOM LITERATURE AND THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

Mariam J. Kamell

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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**THE SOTERIOLOGY OF JAMES
IN LIGHT OF EARLIER JEWISH WISDOM LITERATURE
AND THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

By

Mariam J. Kamell

A Thesis Submitted in Completion of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Divinity

April 2010

St Mary's College

University of St Andrew

DECLARATION

I, Mariam Kamell, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 88,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2005, and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in April 2006; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2005 and 2010.

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ABSTRACT

The epistle of James has been neglected in NT studies, caught between its relationship with Paul and the claim that it has no theology. Even as it experiences a resurgence of study, surprisingly no full-length survey exists on James as the epistle of “faith and works.” Approaches to James have neglected its soteriology and, in consequence, its theological themes have been separated or studied only in connection with Paul. As “moral character,” however, “faith” and “works” fit within a coherent theology of God’s mercy and judgment.

This study provides a sustained reading of James as a Jewish-Christian document. Because James presents the “faith” and “works” discussion in context of “can such faith save?” (2:14), the issue becomes one of soteriology and final judgment. Both the “law of freedom” and the “word of truth” demand faithful obedience—the “works.” Moreover, God’s character and deeds in election form the basis for human “works” of mercy and humble obedience, while future judgment is in accordance with virtuous character.

It has been established that James shares methodology and concerns with prior wisdom literature. This thesis therefore examines key ideas developing across the Jewish literature and Jesus’ teaching as presented by Matthew, and highlights developing views of God saving and judging his people. Within the first two chapters, James gives a high view of God’s work in calling and redeeming, providing wisdom to his people, and instilling the long-anticipated new covenant that they might live in obedience, humility and purity in accordance with his character and will. Because of God’s saving work, he justly judges those who fail to live mercifully, while his mercy triumphs for those who obey. God begins the work and sustains those who ask; but only those who submit to the “perfect law of freedom,” whose faith works, receive mercy when God enacts his final justice.

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I will always be grateful to my academic mentors. Dr. Barnes, your words of encouragement after a difficult undergrad thesis experience have never left my ears. Dr. Neumann, you taught me that the languages were to be enjoyed and that the academic life is a privileged life. Dr. Blomberg, you opened doors and allowed me the experience of co-authorship, made introductions, and did everything you could to encourage me onward. Prof. Bauckham, you took me sight unseen, believed in my project, and even expressed curiosity to discover my results—the highest complement you could have paid. And Dr. Macaskill, taking a half-formed thesis in the middle of major restructuring and a student in the midst of a life-crisis was not an easy task, but you did it ungrudgingly.

Other people in St Andrews made the last four years the experience it has been. St Mary's friends: office-mates Ivan, Andrew, Phil, Paul, and Narges; prayer-group Gisela, Amber, and Julie; others walking life with me, Kathleen, Emily, Dimali. The St Mary's ladies, Susan, Margot, and Debbie, for helping me with forms, deadlines, and stories—thank you! Colin and Linda, you made St Mary's library a destination in itself. David and Katriona, you opened your home as a place both to work and retreat. Verena, I do not deserve as good a flatmate and friend as you have shown yourself to be the last two years: the laughter, tears, adventures and rapeseed field hijinks have made you a sister. And Nina and Vicki, you two have become so much more than co-workers becoming life-long friends of a rare sort. Stephanie, a friend longer than any, your faithfulness is a gift.

I would never be here without the support of my entire family. Lisa, Andrew, and Sonya, I love you all and am the luckiest youngest sibling out there. Aunt RoseLee, you have patiently read and edited endless papers and chapters: every student should be lucky enough to have an English professor in the family! Any grammar mistakes remaining are entirely my own. Mom, you made this entire educational extravaganza possible. You have supported me financially, emotionally, and spiritually, you have set a beautiful example of marital fidelity and love despite the dominance of the “in sickness” part for 24 years, and you have always pushed me beyond my comfort zones and challenged any complacency on my part. I am at this point largely because you made it feasible and wouldn't let me settle for giving less than my all.

Ultimately, there is one person who is not here to see this, but who—from the time I was little—always believed I could do anything I set out to do. Without my father's unconditional support for me, his unflinching endurance through years of illness and decline, his unflagging devotion to God, and even his encouragement to move overseas despite his lessening health, I would never have had either the courage or confidence to tackle this. Although it grieves me beyond words that he is not here to see the culmination of a lifetime's support, I know he saw it in his mind and never doubted its fulfilment. I never imagined finishing this without his presence, and that makes this moment very bittersweet. My father was a model of faithfulness, love, and uncomplaining endurance that I will carry with me through all of life. Truly, Dad, you stood the test and won the crown of life from the Lord you loved, and this thesis is dedicated in your memory.

DEDICATED

*TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER*

WILLIAM MICHAEL KAMELL
2 April 1945 – 16 October 2008
A Man of True Faith

Μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν,
ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο
τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν
James 1:12

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INTRODUCTION

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Within the last twenty years the epistle of James has undergone a significant increase in attention within the academy. Whereas earlier, nearly the only full-length publications on James were commentaries within series, the epistle now garners consideration as the subject of theses and book studies. Problematically, much of this attention has come through either the lens of inherited Pauline problems or the confines of atomistic questions. When James is read with a priority on Paul's faith through grace, the epistle is forced to jump through a variety of interpretive hoops before being found to contradict or agree with Paul.¹ In contrast, when scholars focus strictly on historical-critical questions, the text's coherence and message is lost in a forest of technicalities. Niebuhr has, therefore, called for a "New Perspective" on James: "Wie bei der ‚new perspective on Paul‘ so führen auch bei der neuen Sicht auf Jakobus verschiedene Blickwinkel und Beleuchtungen zur genaueren Wahrnehmung eines Gesamtbildes mit Vorder- und Hintergrund, scharfen Konturen und weniger klaren Strukturen, Farbtupfern und Grauzonen."² The purpose of this thesis is to place James within a literary context that illumines how the text uses a variety of key terms in order to draw conclusions about a Jacobean theology of salvation.

This thesis seeks to bring James' unique voice into the biblical-theological dialogue in regard to soteriology. Surprisingly little writing outside of articles has focused on the connection between faith and works particularly in relation to salvation, an issue at the

¹ Cf. Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (London: Routledge, 1999), 113, who observes "James has so often been read from a Pauline perspective, i.e., a perspective which gives the Pauline letters priority over the other collection of letters in the New Testament, the seven so-called 'catholic' letters, among which James usually appears first. This Pauline perspective on James goes back to a very early date. The fact that James was one of the slowest of the New Testament works to gain general acceptance as canonical probably had much to do with the fact that in 2:14-26 James appears to flatly contradict Paul's doctrine of justification by faith."

² Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "A New Perspective on James? Neuere Forschungen zum Jakobusbrief," *TLZ* 129 (2004), 1017.

forefront of NT studies. Because of a general tendency to give priority to the Pauline teaching regarding justification and salvation, the epistle of James has suffered indignities ranging from neglect to outright misinterpretation, particularly following Luther's dismissal of it as a non-apostolic work.³ Recent works continue to struggle to deal with James outside of an apologetic for his agreement with Paul.⁴ Even if one maintains a commitment to canonical unity, if that unity is held to the detriment of varied voices within the canon and to the creation of a "canon-within-a-canon," then we must question whether the conclusions to which these commitments have led are valid.⁵

This thesis therefore seeks James' unique contribution in a shifting landscape of NT studies regarding the nature of covenant and grace. It strives to understand how James, as a wisdom text following the teachings of Jesus, instructed its hearers in a godly life that God will approve at the final judgment.⁶ As Richard Bauckham and others have argued,⁷ James is an example of NT wisdom and as such employs language and grammar within the epistle that reveal its dependence upon both earlier wisdom literature and the teachings of Jesus, particularly those encapsulated in the Sermon on the Mount. James scholars have historically engaged with James using a paradigm of Judaism derived from Pauline scholarship, but for the purposes of this thesis the Pauline question belongs to the

³ E. Theodore Bachmann, ed., *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament I*, Vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 395-97. His famous comment, "Darumb ist sanct Jacobs Epistel eyn rechte stroern Epistel gegen sie," appears only in introduction to the 1522 edition of the "Septembertestament."

⁴ See, in contrast, the solution of Patrick J. Hartin, *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 3, that James does not have to be "an embarrassment to the hegemony of Pauline Christianity," but "becomes a marvelous representative of another branch of early Christianity." This seems to be the other answer to the "problem" of James, wherein it simply represents a different branch of Christianity that developed alongside Paul's—but eventually "lost."

⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 438, warns that, canonically speaking, "the problem does not turn merely on an original intentionality of each author who may or may not have been aware of the other witness, but on their function within a canonical collection for the Christian who accepts both writings as authoritative scripture," adding that "the scriptural norm of the church is the canonically shaped witness and not an original historical setting" (442). He also adds, however, "both witnesses function normatively within sacred scripture and thus neither can be denied an individual integrity" and calls for interpretations which

⁶ "Soteriology" in this thesis refers to what is needed to receive a positive outcome from God's judgment and subsequent life, whether earthly life as in the early literature or eternal life later.

⁷ Cf. Bauckham, *James*; John A. Burns, "James, the Wisdom of Jesus," *CTR* 1 (1986); John S. Kloppenborg, "The Emulation of the Jesus Tradition in the Letter of James," in *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, ed. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

larger conversations about how Judaism functions—and how Christianity functions within Judaism—particularly views of God’s initial grace and the community’s covenantal responsibility.

The epistle of James concerns itself with the relationship between the conduct of believers and their salvation. This thesis therefore explores how the author of James understood the outworking of eschatological salvation with wisdom literature as the background. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to the paradigms that dominate NT studies on the process of salvation and its covenantal and character aspects.

B. LITERATURE SURVEY

It is remarkable that no full-length English language study on faith and works, much less on God’s judgment and mercy, in James exists. A great number of articles compare Paul and James on justification or attempt to unravel James’ doctrine from 2:14-26—with Paul more or less explicitly as the dialogue partner.⁸ In a classic study, Via concludes that while “theology should proceed as a dialogue among perspectives . . . [.] must not one finally choose between Paul and James?”⁹ While this traditional position toward James has been given less emphasis in recent years, scholars still posit an argument

⁸ See, for instance: F. F. Bruce, “Justification by Faith in the Non-Pauline Writings of the New Testament,” *EvQ* 24 (1952), 66-77; Joachim Jeremias, “Paul and James,” *ExpTim* 66 (1955), 368-71; Rolf Walker, “Allein aus Werken: Zur Auslegung von Jakobus 2,14-26,” *ZTK* 61 (1964), 155-92; D. O. Via, “The Right Straw Epistle Reconsidered: A Study in Biblical Ethics and Hermeneutic,” *JR* 49 (1969), 253-67; Ulrich Luck, “Der Jakobusbrief und die Theologie des Paulus,” *TGl* 61 (1971), 161-79; W. Nichol, “Faith and Works in the Letter of James,” in *Essays on the general epistles of the New Testament*, ed. W. Nichol, et al. (Pretoria: NTWSA, 1975), 7-24; H. P. Hamann, “Faith and Works. Paul and James,” *LTJ* 9 (1975), 33-41; J. C. Lodge, “James and Paul at Cross-Purposes? James 2,22,” *BibInterp* 62 (1981), 195-213; Robert V. Rakestraw, “James 2:14-26: Does James Contradict the Pauline Soteriology?,” *CTR* 1 (1986), 31-50; M. Hengel, “Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 248-78; Mark Proctor, “Faith, Works, and the Christian Religion in James 2:14-26,” *EvQ* 69 (1997), 307-32; Robert H. Stein, “‘Saved by faith [alone]’ in Paul versus ‘not saved by faith alone’ in James,” *SBJT* 4 (2000), 4-19; Sharyn Dowd, “Faith that Works: James 2:14-26,” *RevExp* 97 (2000), 195-205; C. Ryan Jenkins, “Faith and Works in Paul and James,” *BibSac* 159 (2002), 62-78; Kerry Lee Lewis, “A New Perspective on James 2:14-26” (paper presented at ETS, Providence, Nov. 19 2008).

⁹ Via, “Right Straw Epistle,” 267.

between the authors.¹⁰ Whether Paul and James disagreed, however, matters less than properly understanding James on his own, not on Pauline, terms.

The question regarding James' relationship with Jesus' teaching also poses a difficult question for interpreters.¹¹ For instance, Deppe's *The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James*¹² and Hartin's *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*¹³ have both impacted scholarly discussion regarding the relationship of James to Jesus' teaching. Although Deppe limits the number of conscious parallels and argues that James omits any Christology, his work has helped to refine what scholars evaluate as quotation and allusion. Hartin's volume helped remove the quest for exact citation even as he situated the epistle of James in relation to the early gospel traditions—if with a preference for Q^{Mt}. Bauckham's study into the wisdom of James opened a new way of understanding the so-called allusions, presenting the comparison with Sirach and Proverbs as the base for understanding how James used the Jesus tradition.¹⁴ Though the discussion continues, a consensus is developing that James transmits the Jesus tradition, whether through quotation of early material or a reformulation of it.¹⁵

¹⁰ E.g., Scot McKnight, "A Parting Within the Way: Jesus and James on Israel and Purity," in *James the Just and Christian Origins*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 83-129.

¹¹ M. H. Shepperd, "The Epistle of James and the Gospel of Matthew," *JBL* 75 (1956), 40-51, for example, early on admits that "the reflection in James of the gospel Beatitudes . . . show closer affinities with the Lukan than with the Matthean form" (43), but concludes that the epistle "was composed in a Church where Matthew, and Matthew alone, was accepted as the Gospel" (49). See Alicia Batten, *What Are They Saying About the Letter of James* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 72-83, who gives this topic its own chapter in her survey.

¹² Dean B. Deppe, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James* (Chelsea, Mich.: Bookcrafters, 1989).

¹³ Patrick J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Bauckham, *James*.

¹⁵ Cf. Burns, "James, the Wisdom," 113-35; Peter H. Davids, "James and Jesus," in *Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 63-84; Wesley H. Wachob, and Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Sayings of Jesus in the Letter of James," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton, and Craig Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 431-50; Wesley Hiram Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, SNTSMS 106 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Richard Bauckham, "James and Jesus," in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission*, ed. Bruce Chilton, and Jacob Neusner (Louisville: WJK, 2001), 100-37; *Ibid.*, "The Wisdom of James and the Wisdom of Jesus," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2004), 75-92; John S. Kloppenborg, "The Reception of the Jesus Traditions in James," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2004), 93-141; Kloppenborg, "Emulation of the Jesus Tradition," 121-50; Paul Foster, "Q and James: A Source-Critical Conundrum" (paper presented at SBL, New Orleans, Nov. 21 2009).

Similarly, growing interest can be seen in what James has to say about wealth and the believer's relation to it.¹⁶ This theme has, unsurprisingly, been picked up with greater frequency in a two-thirds world, liberation context. For instance, Maynard-Reid's *Poverty and Wealth in James* asserts that for James "the rich are outside the sphere of salvation and faith" and that to argue otherwise is simply "to placate the wealthy Christians within our own contemporary communities."¹⁷ Likewise Elsa Tamez' *The Scandalous Message of James*¹⁸ resists an "interception" of James that does not take seriously the eschatological necessity of caring for the poor, the requirement of a faith that works and is not at home with wealth. This challenge from two-thirds world authors has sparked dialogue; Friesen¹⁹ explores early Christian views of poverty as either "Injustice or God's Will"; Edgar²⁰ investigates the social context of the original audience; and Felder²¹ examines the issue from a wisdom/legal perspective to conclude that James is a strongly Jewish-Christian document.

Alongside the theme of social justice highlighted in James 1:27, the other ethical cruxes of speech ethics (1:26) and moral purity (1:27) have also received attention. For instance, Baker's *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* repeatedly sweeps through a catalogue of literary backgrounds "to compile, as much as is reasonably possible, all the available ideas which could have been known by the author of the Epistle of James and

¹⁶ Batten, *What Are They Saying*, 64, surveying the key topics in modern Jacobean scholarship, notes "James contains some of the strongest critique against wealth in the Christian Testament," and notes the tie with apocalyptic studies, such as Patrick A. Tiller, "The Rich and Poor in James: An Apocalyptic Ethic," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, ed. Benjamin G. Wright, III, and Lawrence M. Wills (Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 169-79.

¹⁷ Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, Reprint ed. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 63; 44. He adds in an endnote, while calling Martin one who seeks "to placate the contemporary wealthy," that "Martin is obviously engaging in eisegesis. . . . For James, it is not the 'vast majority' of the rich of his day who are condemned—it is all of them."

¹⁸ Elsa Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works is Dead*, Rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 2002). See also Tiller, "Rich and Poor in James," 169-79.

¹⁹ Steven J. Friesen, "Injustice or God's Will: Explanations of Poverty in Proto-Christian Communities," in *A People's History of Christianity: Christian Origins*, ed. Richard A. Horsely (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 240-60, pp. 244-47 on James.

²⁰ David Hutchinson Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

²¹ Cain Hope Felder, "Wisdom, Law and Social Concern in the Epistle of James" (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1982).

which could have influenced his thoughts and assumptions regarding speech-ethics.²² Baker reveals the high priority the author has for speech-ethics, arguing for the author's inherently Christian position even with James' strong link with wisdom literature in this theme.²³ The issue of moral purity within James has also received full-length attention with Lockett's *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James*.²⁴ Lockett warns that "purity is a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition in order to achieve perfection," as "perfection and purity are distinct yet dynamically related concepts in James."²⁵ He seeks to build a taxonomy to understand purity in James in a greater depth than so-far explored,²⁶ providing a coherent explanation for the identity of ὁ κόσμος from which the readers were to separate themselves as the moral sphere, "the entire cultural value system."²⁷ His work provides an alternative to those who erroneously see James as encouraging a sectarian worldview.²⁸

It should be clear by this point that the studies of James tend to circle similar questions,²⁹ but a full-length attempt to study its theology regarding the Christian life in

²² William Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995), 4.

²³ See also Paul S. Minear, "Yes or No: The Demand for Honesty in the Early Church," *NovT* 13 (1971), 1-13; R. A. Culpepper, "The Power of Words and the Tests of Two Wisdoms: James 3," *RevExp* 83 (1986), 405-17; Luke Timothy Johnson, "Taciturnity and True Religion: James 1:26-27," in *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God*, ed. Luke Timothy Johnson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 155-67.

²⁴ Darian Lockett, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James* (London: T&T Clark, 2008).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 143-44.

²⁶ E.g., J. H. Elliott, "The Epistle of James in Rhetorical and Social Scientific Perspective: Holiness-Wholeness and Patterns of Replication," *BTB* 23 (1993), 71-81.

²⁷ Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 117.

²⁸ David J. Roberts, "The Definition of 'Pure Religion' in James 1²⁷," *ExpTim* 83 (1972), 215-26; answered by Bruce C. Johanson, "The Definition of 'Pure Religion' in James 1²⁷ Reconsidered," *ExpTim* 84 (1973), 118-19; posited again by Paul Trudinger, "The Epistle of James: Down-to-Earth and Otherworldly?," *Downside Review* 122 (2004), 61-63. Also seen in Ben Witherington, III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 246, who posits that James "is trying to inculcate a community with carefully controlled boundaries, as is shown by the attempts to carefully limit behaviour, relationship, and speech. . . . [James] is also suggesting battenning down the hatches."

²⁹ There are several other key topics in current James research. For example, the debate over James' structure continues to flourish outside of commentary study (cf. Gary M. Burge, "'And Threw Them Thus on Paper': Recovering the Poetic Form of James 2:14-26," *SBT* 7 [1977], 31-45; Timothy B. Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora: Discursive Structure and Purpose in the Epistle of James* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993]; Lauri Thurén, "Risky Rhetoric in James," *NovT* 37 [1995], 363-84; Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Der Jakobusbrief im Licht frühjüdischer Diasporabriefe," *NTS* 44 [1998], 420-43; Mark E. Taylor and George H. Guthrie, "The Structure of James," *CBQ* 68 [2006], 681-705; Duane F. Watson, "An Assessment of the Rhetoric and Rhetorical Analysis of the Letter of James," in *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, ed. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg [London: T&T Clark, 2007], 99-120). Likewise,

relation to a doctrine of salvation, within a full wisdom and Christian context, has not been put forward. The closest would be Konradt's *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief*.³⁰ Konradt's book arrives at some similar conclusions as this thesis, acknowledging the importance of the rebirth imagery in 1:18 and the *consequent*, inherent move towards obedience, concluding, "Die Annahme des Wortes besteht in Hören und Tun, wobei das Tun dem Gedanken der 'Kraft' des Wortes entsprechend als Folge, ja als integraler Bestandteil rechten Hörens erscheint."³¹ Methodologically, however, he tends to use the background literature to support his exegesis rather than create the framework for the epistle's thought. Likewise, even while concluding that "Im Gericht wird nicht die Quersumme aus guten und schlechten Taten gezogen, sondern ewiges Leben empfängt der, der am Ende im Bereich des 'Lebens' angetroffen wird,"³² he fails to ground this conclusion within James' theology of judgment and mercy, a failure perhaps derived from underestimating the theological freight of these terms in the wisdom literature. Despite the overlapping of themes and conclusions regarding initial rebirth and subsequent new life, Konradt's thesis also does not subsequently capture the importance of James 2:12-13 for final judgment.

the question of genre and James' relation to wisdom and apocalyptic literature has provoked further study (cf. Ernst Baasland, "Der Jakobusbrief als neutestamentliche Weisheitsschrift," *ST* 36 [1982], 119-39; Todd C. Penner, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology: Re-reading an Ancient Christian Letter* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]; Matt Jackson-McCabe, "A Letter to the Twelve Tribes in the Diaspora: Wisdom and 'Apocalyptic' Eschatology in the Letter of James," *SBLSP* 35 [1996], 504-17; Ithamar Gruenwald, "Ritualizing Death in James and Paul in Light of Jewish Apocalypticism," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 465-86; Patrick J. Hartin, "Who is Wise and Understanding Among You? [James 3:13]: An Analysis of Wisdom, Eschatology, and Apocalypticism in the Letter of James," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, ed. Benjamin G. Wright, III, and Lawrence M. Wills [Atlanta: SBL, 2005], 149-68).

³⁰ Matthias Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief: eine Studie zu seiner soteriologischen und ethischen Konzeption* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 304. Conversely, "Wer nicht zum Tun vordringt, hört vergeblich."

³² *Ibid.*, 310.

C. METHODOLOGY

1. *Clearing the Ground*

This thesis, therefore, seeks to fill what appears as a glaring lacuna regarding themes of faith, works, judgment and mercy within James' own theological system. Several assumptions will have to be made for the sake of space. Issues of date and authorship are not relevant to this particular argument; for the sake of simplicity I assume an early date (mid-40s-early 50s) for the composition.³³ Likewise, I refer to "James" as the author the text claims, assumedly the James related to Jesus as half-brother or cousin.³⁴ These assumptions are both argued widely elsewhere and not directly relevant to the argument of the thesis.³⁵ It does not seem essential to contend these points here.³⁶

Chapter one of this thesis begins with a survey of selected wisdom texts, which form the base for the later discussions. In each text examined, the key terms discussed below are investigated for that text's distinctive contribution to a developing theology. Chapter two contains a close reading of Matthew, giving first an overview of his use of the key ideas, then several close textual studies. While using the same themes as in chapter one, Matthew will receive greater attention as a theological first-century setting of the life

³³ Cf. Ben Witherington, III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 401; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 22, regarding at least the source material; Bauckham, *James*, 25, in accepting James as the author; William F. Brosend, *James and Jude* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 25. Although arguing for pseudonymity, Dale C. Allison, "The Fiction of James and its *Sitz im Leben*," *RB* 108 (2001), 566, sets James in a "place and time, whether that time was before or after Matthew, [that] was still seeking to keep relations irenic" between Jews and Christians.

³⁴ Cf. Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: James* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 32-35; Brosend, *James and Jude*, 5; Moo, *James*, 22; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 401; Bauckham, *James*, 16-21; J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1897), v, xlvi. While Niebuhr, "New Perspective on James?," 1030, acknowledges the intended referent of "James" as the brother of Jesus, he warns, "Solange sich eine überzeugende Motivation und eine geschichtlich plausible Funktion für die Wahl des Pseudonyms 'Jakobus' nicht sowohl am Text als auch mit Blick auf die überlieferten frühchristlichen Quellen im Einzelnen nachweisen lässt, bleibt die Beweislast in der Verfasserfrage angesichts des eindeutigen Zeugnisses des Briefpräskripts m.E. bei den Bestreitern der Herkunft vom Herrenbruder (gegen Popkes 68)."

³⁵ See the summary of current scholarship in Batten, *What Are They Saying*, 28-43.

³⁶ J. H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1916), 52, after a lengthy discussion of authorship, concludes: "For the significance of the Epistle of James in the history of early Christian thought it makes not much difference whether it was written by James the Lord's brother about the year 60, or by another Palestinian teacher fifty years later."

and sayings of Jesus, sayings which James also resets. The second half of the thesis focuses on James itself. Chapter three surveys chapters 1 and 2 of the epistle where most of its theology is found. It is argued there that James 2:12-13 form the crux of its soteriology.³⁷ Finally, chapter four includes the last three chapters of James and the practical applications of the theology in James 1-2.

2. *Comparative Genre*

James has a well-established reputation as NT wisdom literature. In both grammatical form and style of argumentation, James is a wisdom text. As Witherington observes:

While on the surface James appears beguilingly simple, it expects a lot of the audience in order to achieve full understanding. For example, this text presupposes the ability to pick up allusions to earlier sapiential material (some of it in the Septuagint, some of it from the teaching of Jesus), the ability to understand how sapiential material functions in deliberative rhetoric as part of argumentation by exhortation and the ability to make logical connections between remarks when one or another premise of an enthymeme is left out.³⁸

As the prime example of NT wisdom, James reveals dependence not only on the Septuagint wisdom writings but also on the teaching of Jesus, transforming and grounding them together in a new setting.³⁹ James is not “simple” wisdom like Proverbs, however. Penner argues for reading James as an apocalyptic letter, dramatically focused on the eschaton.⁴⁰ Likewise Jackson-McCabe, Tiller, and Hartin all view the boundary between wisdom and apocalyptic as blurring to varying degrees by the time the epistle was drafted.⁴¹ James clearly focuses on eschatological judgment, but since wisdom was heavily influenced

³⁷ Jacob Neusner, “Sin, Repentance, Atonement and Resurrection: The Perspective of Rabbinic Theology on the Views of James 1-2 and Paul in Romans 3-4,” in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 432, observes, “Both for James and for the Rabbinic sages, the matter of salvation by faith and works proves only tangential to the matter of atonement. It is not the focus of the doctrine of repentance, only an axiom built into that doctrine.”

³⁸ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 390.

³⁹ See also Baasland, “Der Jakobusbrief,” 119-39.

⁴⁰ Penner, *James and Eschatology*.

⁴¹ Jackson-McCabe, “Letter to the Twelve Tribes,” 504-17; Tiller, “Rich and Poor in James,” 169-79; Hartin, “Who is Wise?” 149-68. See also John J. Collins, “Wisdom, Apocalypticism and Generic Compatibility,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo Perdue, Bernard B. Scott and W.J. Wiseman (Louisville: WJK, 1993), 185, who concludes that “in the context of Judaism at the turn of the era, wisdom was polymorphous,” arguing that “the traditional form of the wisdom instruction could be adapted to an apocalyptic worldview” (181).

by apocalyptic eschatology by this time, that fact that does not supersede its wisdom status.

Certain common assumptions across wisdom texts make them fruitful for comparison with James. For one, they assume that they are written for an established community, a group already sharing a common worldview.⁴² These are intended to guide people in wise living, in how to benefit both themselves and the community. Theologically, basic teachings are assumed as already in place and therefore not necessary, for the shared background provides the common assumptions and allusive backdrop.⁴³ Much can be gleaned, instead, from a brief allusion or word picture. Another key to wisdom texts is that they are intended for communities and not strictly for individuals, although they help to teach the individual's place within the community.⁴⁴ Although people succeed or fail on their own deeds, it also becomes clear that each person's actions affect others so that how one interacts with these others reveals one's state as wise or foolish, a part of the community or not. A third factor to consider is the major themes consistent across the texts: Wisdom is to be sought and studied and obeyed, the poor are to be helped, the wealthy are not to be arrogant, the foolish ignore and fail to apply—at their own peril—the teachings of wisdom, a careless tongue is a danger, idolatry in any form is strictly forbidden, and so on. All of these topics appear in James as well as in the earlier texts, thematically tying James into the wisdom tradition.

3. Comparative Texts

Using varied wisdom texts to build a framework for our discussion of James helps to remove James from its usual forced conversation with Pauline theology. The diversity

⁴² James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, Revised ed. (Louisville: WJK, 1998), 12, notes, "In some circles of the wise, the fear of Yahweh functioned as the compass point from which they took moral readings." He later adds that "Wisdom addresses natural, human, and theological dimensions of reality, and constitutes an attitude toward life, a living tradition, and a literary corpus" (15).

⁴³ This in answer to Luther's complaint that James' "purpose is to teach Christians, but in all this long teaching it does not once mention the Passion, the resurrection, or the Spirit of Christ. He names Christ several times; however he teaches nothing about him, but only speaks of general faith in God." In Bachmann, ed., *Luther's Works*, 396.

⁴⁴ This becomes remarkably clear in texts such as 4QInstruction.

of texts reveals patterns around the key ideas in James, patterns that may illumine how the different terms are used in James. This comparison also helps to qualify preconceptions about the terms explored here, building new paradigms to bring into NT scholarship.

The three main wisdom texts at the center of tradition can also be seen to build on each other: Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon.⁴⁵ These will gain the most detailed survey as they would almost certainly have been available to James, likely through the Septuagint, and would have influenced him as a wisdom teacher. Witherington observes that “the language [of James] is very Septuagintal: only thirteen words in James are not found in the Septuagint. . . . [I]hat it shows familiarity with the Septuagint and seems especially indebted to Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon and Proverbs is important for discerning the voice and character of this document.”⁴⁶

In addition to these texts four others are included: first the Qumran text 4QInstruction, followed by Pseudo-Phocylides, 4 Maccabees, and the Epistle of Enoch in conjunction. These texts, which may or may not have been available to James, show the development of wisdom thought in distinct ways up to the period in which the epistle was most likely authored. 4QInstruction provides us with an example from the Qumran literature, one that may well have had wider exposure than an explicitly sectarian piece. Although fragmentary, enough of the text survives to give us an example of Judean proto-sectarian wisdom instruction meant for community life and reflecting a wisdom piety from

⁴⁵ These three texts have all been widely seen in the background of James. Others, such as Ecclesiastes and Job were initially considered for this study but were not ultimately helpful in drafting a trajectory of thought. The Wisdom Psalms likewise were not included, partly from a lack of consensus of which ones should be included. For example, James L. Crenshaw, *The Psalms: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 94, questions “the very category,” Roland Murphy, “A Consideration of the Classification ‘Wisdom Psalms’,” in *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 156-67, chooses seven, and R. N. Whybray, “The Wisdom Psalms,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, ed. John Day, Robert Gordon and H.G.M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158, offers a potential 16. For the sake of space and focus the three main biblical/apocryphal texts with the closest relation to James have been chosen.

⁴⁶ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 388.

a period shortly before our main text.⁴⁷ Pseudo-Phocylides attempts to pass for Greek wisdom, much like the Wisdom of Solomon, revealing the logic and beauty of what is inherently Jewish thought.⁴⁸ Fourth Maccabees, in contrast, is proudly Jewish within a Hellenized context, standing against any forms of idolatry or concession to the “world” that leads one away from wholehearted obedience to the Lord.⁴⁹ And the Epistle of Enoch (chs. 91-107 [92-105]) is the most apocalyptic of the wisdom texts, wisdom in its emphasis on righteousness and the two ways a person can choose, but overtly eschatological in its focus.⁵⁰

Finally, as noted above, there is a general consensus that James is heavily dependent upon the teaching of Jesus, arguably either from Matthew or Q. Whether the text of (or behind) Matthew stands behind James, this thesis will use Matthew’s final form to give one gospel a full interaction, while acknowledging parallels in the other synoptic gospels where relevant. Often scholars explore the *logia* of Jesus in isolation before applying their results to James, whereas the desire here is to see the progression of the overall theology in which the *logia* are framed, thus seeing one development of the gospel tradition alongside James. One question here concerns how Jesus’ teaching shapes or changes the tradition thus far explored.

⁴⁷ Whereas Robert Eisenman, *James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Penguin, 1997), creates an idiosyncratic reading of James as the Essene Teacher of Righteousness, few others see any strong links between the two communities.

⁴⁸ Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 101, notes that “The examples of Sirach and *Pseudo-Phocylides* prove particularly interesting comparisons with James.” The latter text, much like James, begins with a prologue and summary (vv. 3-8), which “functions to set forth the principles and presuppositions of the work as a whole and in turn anticipates the expansion of these themes in the rest of the work.”

⁴⁹ H. Anderson, “4 Maccabees: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 532, describes it as “a philosophical exercise on the subject of devout reason’s mastery over the passions,” a theme James shares in terms of withstanding temptation and desires.

⁵⁰ George W. E. Nickelsburg, and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 10, calls this “testamentary instruction,” in which the author’s “idiom is that of the two ways, typical of biblical and post-biblical wisdom literature.” He describes the main section: “A few verses of two-ways instruction (94:1-5) serve as a bridge to the main section of the epistle, which spells out (by condemnation) the way of wickedness followed by “the sinners” and encourages “the righteous” to be steadfast in the hope of vindication” (11). M. Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in Its Jewish Context*, trans. L. M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 63, estimates: “Enoch’s letter (92-105) . . . was probably composed about 100 B.C.E.”

Regarding the background literature, Chris VanLandingham's *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* argues for a much more literal judgment by works than is often presented in both Early Judaism and Pauline studies, concluding that, while initial (forensic) justification is by faith, the final judgment is based on works, and God acts in mercy and covenant with the "righteous," never sinners.⁵¹ Meanwhile, a recent master's thesis by Kerry Lewis⁵² concludes that for James works—at least works of charity—are commanded if one wishes to receive salvation in the end. He argues that James views faith and works as two separate entities that *together* bring about salvation, taking at face value the conclusion of James 2:26: as the body and spirit are separable but useless alone, so also faith and works are separable but useless when divided.⁵³ Given the shifting nature of discussions about soteriology in Paul and NT studies more generally, this thesis seeks to develop a more robust picture of the soteriology of wisdom literature, Matthew, and ultimately James, in order to bring James into the conversation.

4. Comparative Terms

Out of close study of James, six key terms rose as crucial to understanding his theology of salvation and the shape of the Christian life. They are introduced in James 1-2 in pairs that interact and illumine each other, while in James 3-5 their uses are broadened. These are the *word* and *Law* (λόγος and νόμος), *faith* and *works* (πίστις and ἔργον), and *judgment* and *mercy* (κρίνω/κρίσις and ἔλεος). These six terms, oddly far more than the verb σώζω, occupy the center of James' discussion of the Christian life and the criteria for surviving the promised final judgment.

⁵¹ Chris VanLandingham, *Judgment & Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 335. He concludes: "The Last Judgment will then determine whether a person, as an act of the will, has followed through with these benefits of Christ's death. If so, eternal life will be the reward; if not, damnation."

⁵² Kerry Lee Lewis, "An Exegetical and Theological Investigation of James 2:14-26 in Light of the New Perspective on Paul" (Masters Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2007).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 27-28; See also Lewis, "A New Perspective on James 2:14-26" (paper presented at ETS, Nov. 19 2008), 16-17.

The identity of the νόμος in James has sparked a great deal of scholarly discussion.⁵⁴ The perceived disagreement between James and Paul, resulting in James' dismissal by the scholarly community,⁵⁵ has left any conversation about the law in James a defensive maneuver. So, for example, Davids argues:

Even if James assumed the value and validity of the law, he is not a legalist. He never argues that the essence of Christianity is anything other than a commitment to God in Christ or a reception of grace from God. The regeneration of the Christian comes through God's action in his word (1:18). Salvation comes through the 'implanted word' which must be 'received in meekness' (1:21). God gives grace to the repentant (4:6). None of these sentiments is at all at variance with Paul.⁵⁶

Such discussions are concerned to show that James and Paul do not, in fact, disagree with each other in regard to the role of the law in the Christian life, with the burden of proof falling on James and not necessarily hearing his independent voice. James uses the terms λόγος and νόμος as the base for understanding how the believer ought to live; how, in effect, faith acts. To understand the "works" that James seeks from his audience, it seems wisest to start with the object of obedience. Both λόγος and νόμος are essential to this thesis, since we cannot know what James deems the right "works," much less how one will be judged by the "law of freedom," without clarifying what he means by the law.

James links the terms "law" and "word" together in a way that makes them nearly interchangeable. Λόγος appears in 1:18, 21, 22, and 23 and then, within the same pericope, seamlessly switches to νόμος in 1:25, which term then continues through the

⁵⁴ O. J. F. Seitz, "James and the Law," *Studia Evangelica* 2 (1964), 472-86; M. J. Evans, "The Law in James," in *Vox Evangelica XIII: Biblical and Historical Essays from London Bible College*, ed. Harold H. Rowdon (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1983), 29-40; H. Frankemölle, "Gesetz im Jakobusbrief," in *Das Gesetz im Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 175-221; Martina Ludwig, *Wort als Gesetz: Eine Untersuchung zum Verständnis von "Wort" und "Gesetz" in israelitisch-frühjüdischen und neutestamentlichen Schriften. Gleichzeitig ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Jakobusbriefes* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994); Martin Klein, "Ein vollkommenes Werk": *Vollkommenheit, Gesetz und Gericht als theologische Themen des Jakobusbriefes* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995); Von Corrado Marucci, "Das Gesetz der Freiheit im Jakobusbrief," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 117 (1995), 317-31; Maurice Hogan, "The Law in the Epistle of James," *SNTU* 22 (1997), 79-91; Matt Jackson-McCabe, *Logos & law in the Letter of James: the law of nature, the law of Moses, & the law of freedom* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Pierre Keith, "La Citation de Lv 19,18b en Jc 2,1-13," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2004); Benedict Viviano, "La Loi Parfaite de Liberté: Jaques 1.25 et la Loi," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 213-26.

⁵⁵ Readily perceivable through surveying the indexes of NT ethics or theology books.

⁵⁶ Davids, *James*, 50.

rest of the epistle. The words, therefore, must be investigated in tandem. It is not enough to state that James intends full Torah-obedience because he urges obedience to the νόμος; we must first undertake to understand what he intends by λόγος. Likewise, the two words are too closely linked in his text to simply say λόγος means “Gospel” and νόμος “Torah” and forgo consideration of how he uses them and modifies them into one unit. A clear understanding of both terms, then, forms the basis for subsequent argument on the criteria for future judgment and salvation.

The conjunction of faith and works is, of course, at the heart of at least Luther’s dislike of the epistle.⁵⁷ The central claim, “faith without works is dead” (2:26), supported by the example of Abraham, who was justified not simply “by faith alone,” appears to contradict Paul in Romans or Galatians. Johnson argues, “James’ entire outlook is distinctive. He has a relational or, perhaps better, a covenantal perspective, in which the speech and actions of humans are fundamentally qualified by the speech and actions of the God who chose to be involved with humans.”⁵⁸ Verbally, James 2:14-26 forms the crux of this discussion. Out of sixteen occurrences of πίστις in the epistle, eleven appear in this passage along with all three occurrences of πιστεύω. Likewise, out of the 15 uses of ἔργον in the epistle, twelve occur in this passage. A preliminary understanding of the works of faith, however, and the nature of faith itself, ought to be sought from wisdom literature, and, even more importantly, from Jesus’ teaching. This background sets James within a strongly canonical tradition and confirms the necessity of hearing his unique contribution.

Finally, the themes of “judgment” and “mercy” are located at the center of James’ theology of final judgment. James 2:12-13 establish his understanding of God’s relationship to humanity. It becomes apparent that human actions both in judgment and in

⁵⁷ As in Bachmann, ed., *Luther’s Works*, 396: “this James does nothing more than drive to the law and to its works.”

⁵⁸ Johnson, “Taciturnity,” 165.

mercy affect how God responds, ultimately revealing God's justice. In James, there are two main horizons for the quality of mercy—the present and the eschatological—and the two at times overlap. The former becomes apparent in how people are expected to act (caring for the poor, not cheating your workers, etc), while the latter often coincides with issues of salvation and judgment. Both Jesus and James use ἔλεος much as their Hebrew forebears did, as a legal term in the context of a covenantal requirement.⁵⁹ Mercy is a function of justice,⁶⁰ and within James, the legal and the gracious aspects of it are both brought to the fore. In the intersection of “judgment” and “mercy,” the call for faithful obedience to the word of truth comes to its fulfillment.

⁵⁹ Bultmann (in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 Vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76], 2:483) calls James' use of ἔλεος in 2:13 a “traditional Jewish formulation,” as contrasted with Mt. 18:33, where “God's mercy is now thought of as preceding man's.”

⁶⁰ This is true in classical Greek as well as in the Jewish literature and NT (see *Ibid.*, 478, 486).

CHAPTER 1: WISDOM BACKGROUNDS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“The starting point, content, and goal of Israel’s wisdom was ‘fear of the Lord’—the proper respect for and awe before God based on an accurate perception of who God is and who human beings are in the presence of God.”⁶¹ Harrington’s definition roots what can often be seen as a pragmatic genre into its theological grounding, for through the “fear of the Lord” theme, wisdom effortlessly equates ethics and covenant, character and theology. Proverbs 1-8 places the “fear of the Lord” at crucial moments (1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13) to contrast with various evil lifestyle choices, while 9:10 parallels it with knowing the Holy One (MT: **יְהוָה**). Sirach resumes this theme in chapter 1, celebrating the fear of the Lord as the crown and root of wisdom (1:18, 20), even while issuing a warning very much like James 1:6-8 in Sirach 1:28: “Do not disobey the fear of the Lord; do not approach him with a divided mind (ἐν καρδίᾳ δισση).” Wisdom literature contextualizes obedience in a covenant context such that the entirety of one’s life is worship.⁶²

In this chapter we will explore a variety of wisdom literature through the focus of the key terminology. The different literature, however, offers diverse emphases so, while all the themes will be examined for each book, the purpose will be two-fold: to build overall patterns while also to seek the individual emphases of the texts.

A. PROVERBS

Proverbs forms our base text as quintessential wisdom. Van Leeuwen calls Proverbs “the foundational wisdom book of the Bible. . . . [raising] the theological

⁶¹ Daniel J. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

⁶² Carole R. Fontaine, “Wisdom in Proverbs,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott and William Johnston Wiseman (Louisville: WJK, 1993), 112: “Not only is ‘fear of the Lord’ the proper relationship of creature to creator that orients all subsequent action and knowledge, but such fear is also the ‘beginning of wisdom’ ([Prov.] 1:7; 9:10; 15:33a). . . . While wisdom’s worldview *does* concern itself with a search for order in the world and human activities, wisdom is itself *more* than the voice of that order, and that order is both flexible and provisional. Wisdom’s world order can never *be* static, because neither Israel’s God nor its people are static. . . . All causation is negated when Israel’s God wills it so.”

question of the relation of ordinary life in the cosmos to God the creator.”⁶³ Von Rad suggests a court setting for Proverbs,⁶⁴ positing an inherent religious context even when the wisdom appears secular, for “there was never a question of what we would call absolute knowledge functioning independently of [the sage’s] faith in Yahweh. . . . The teachers were completely unaware of any reality not controlled by Yahweh.”⁶⁵ Crenshaw concurs that God “spoke to [the sages] principally through their observations of the creation and of human behavior and their godly reflections, informed by faith, on what they saw.”⁶⁶

Crucially, Proverbs concerns itself with the two paths that a person chooses between: wisdom and folly.⁶⁷ Crenshaw categorizes them as “two distinct groups of pilgrims,” wise and foolish, and “all people fell into one or the other category. In the view of sages, no middle ground existed for those who participated in folly, or in wisdom, only minimally. Moreover, *an ethical undersanding of the two categories prevailed: The wise were righteous, and the fools wicked.*”⁶⁸ Wisdom was not a neutral category, but an ethical-theological statement of one’s loyalty to Israel’s God.

1. *The Word and The Law*

Λόγος appears fifty five times in the LXX of Proverbs, thirty of those translating the Hebrew term לִבְרָא. The majority of the uses take the most basic meaning of both

⁶³ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Proverbs,” in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 171. He later adds, “The attempt to deny the significance of the Wisdom literature for Christian theology (Preuss 186-90) has more to do with a fear of ‘natural theology’ and a focus on salvation history narrowly conceived than it does with a proper understanding of Proverbs and its role in the canon. . . . Christ’s insistence that he is ‘the way’ cannot be understood except against the background of Proverbs” (176-77). This argument allows for a particularly Christological reading of the two-ways texts when we arrive at the NT and other early Christian writings.

⁶⁴ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. J. D. Martin (London: SCM, 1972), 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶⁶ James L. Crenshaw, “The Acquisition of Knowledge in Israelite Wisdom Literature,” *Word and World* 7 (1987), 247.

⁶⁷ Cornelis Bennema, “The Strands of Wisdom Tradition in Intertestamental Judaism: Origins, Developments and Characteristics,” *TynB* 52 (2001), 65, sees Proverbs as an example of wisdom “under the influence of the prophetic tradition. . . . Wisdom is depicted as the source of right ethical behavior (see especially Pr. 1-9); acceptance or rejection of Wisdom and her teaching leads respectively to (long) life, peace and blessing or to death and disaster.”

⁶⁸ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 67, emphasis mine.

terms, referring simply to speech—wise or foolish—that reveals a person’s nature. In the prologue and in Wisdom’s speeches, however, several uses are more theologically loaded. The term νόμος, meanwhile, appears twelve times in the LXX of Proverbs,⁶⁹ sometimes as a translation of תּוֹרָה (cf. 4:2; 13:14; 28:4, 7, 9x2; 29:18) and twice of מִצְוֹת (6:20), although in 6:23 both Hebrew terms appear together as the “commands of the law.” Often it is paired with some verb of “keeping” or “guarding,” indicating the active nature of one’s relation to the law.

Several times, particularly in the introduction of the book, νόμος refers to the father/instructor’s “teaching,” as in 4:2 (cf. 6:20⁷⁰): “I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching (תּוֹרָתִי; νόμον).” In the very next verse, however, the author recalls his own teacher warning them to obey his *words* in the same sort of command: “Let your heart hold fast my words (דְּבָרַי; λόγος); keep my commandments (מִצְוֹתָי; ἐντολάς⁷¹), and live (MT 4:4b; LXX 4:b-5a).” For the author, the link is readily made between “holding” the teachings and obedience. Obedience to this juncture of νόμος, λόγος, and ἐντολάς brings life (cf. 4:10). That the instruction is meant to be internalized (תְּבַלְלֵנִי, εἰς σὴν καρδίαν) is made clear here, shaping the very heart of the person (see again 4:21-23). Throughout Proverbs it becomes clear that character, not mere conformity to a set of rules, is in view.

⁶⁹ Three of those are unparalleled in the MT: 3:16α, 9:10α and 13:15b. On the latter two, Johann Cook, “Law and Wisdom in the Dead Sea Scrolls with Reference to Hellenistic Judaism,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. F. García Martínez (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 332 argues, “these passages have an identical addition (to know the law is the sign of a sound mind) which is part of the systemic application of exegetical perspectives by the translator. . . . The translator namely warns the readers of the inherent ‘dangers’ of foreign wisdom (the Hellenism of the day). One of these prominent dangers was the devaluation of the law of Moses.”

⁷⁰ R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 102-3, observes a parallel with Deut. 6:6-8 and 11:18-19: “All three passages use similar though not entirely identical, imagery in enjoining unremitting attention and obedience to teaching just given or about to be given: parental teaching in the case of Proverbs and the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy. They all employ language in which the heart is the repository of the teaching . . . and they all stress that the teaching in question must be borne in the mind at all times . . . One may perhaps cautiously speak of a *convergence* of wisdom and Deuteronomistic teaching at this point.”

⁷¹ ἐντολή generally refers to specific commands, νόμος more broadly to the Law.

In the introduction, then, we see an easy alternation between νόμος and λόγος. Both terms refer to the sum total of Wisdom’s instructions, the way a person should live in order to be considered wise and righteous (cf. 6:23; 13:14). The equation also functions to elevate the importance of the teacher’s “words,” with obedience as imperative as to the divine law (cf. 5:7⁷²). Bullock claims, “It may not be an overstatement to say that one who keeps wisdom’s teachings also keeps the Torah,” adding that Proverbs is:

. . . more than an endorsement [of Torah], it is a digest of practical instructions on how to be God’s people, broken down into the ethical bites of wisdom theology, and applied microcosmically to the individual. In other words, Proverbs presents the moral urgency of wisdom in the language of Torah-keeping and thus highlights both the authority and the urgency of the moral life, which is the bottom line of Torah theology.⁷³

While Bullock does overstate Proverbs’ focus on Torah, he does well to highlight the moral aspect of wisdom’s call to obedience. In Proverbs, obedience to the νόμος /λόγος shapes a person’s character into the godly shape of the wise person.

Toward the end of the book there are several uses of νόμος that seem to refer more traditionally to the Law as Torah. For example, 28:4 depicts a battle for influence between the wicked and righteous. Here the הַתּוֹרָה appears to refer to Israel’s Torah and not merely the teaching of the sage or Lady Wisdom.⁷⁴ In an allusion to the commandment of obedience in children, 28:7 determines that those who “keep the law are wise children” versus those who shame their parents through gluttony. This allusion helps strengthen the conclusion that in Proverbs 28 the “law” refers to the Decalogue at least.⁷⁵

Both the teacher and Lady Wisdom herself expect that the wise student will not only listen to their instructions but will—in taking them to heart—obey them. Their

⁷² This sentiment, $\mu\eta\ \acute{\alpha}\kappa\upsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma\ \pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\eta\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, bears remarkable likeness to James’ command in 1:22 that his readers be $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha\iota\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\upsilon$ and not $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\rho\omicron\alpha\tau\alpha\iota$ only.

⁷³ C. Hassell Bullock, “Wisdom, The ‘Amen’ of Torah,” *JETS* 52 (2009), 13. He also makes several assumptions regarding the purpose of Torah.

⁷⁴ Robert Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 26, calls this one of the “only possible references to the Mosaic Law” in Proverbs, including as other possibilities 6:23; 19:16; 28:4ff; 29:18.

⁷⁵ Sir. 3:1-16—also expanding upon Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16—indicates that this imperative of the Decalogue held special importance in the wisdom texts.

“words” are equated to commands and to instructions, but the precise identity of the content is not specified except the commands to guard one’s tongue and remain on the path of wisdom rather than straying into folly (e.g., 4:24-27). Ultimately, νόμος and λόγος in Proverbs do not refer to remarkably separate entities. While the rest of Proverbs gives the content of the “words” of the wisdom teachers and while obedience to “the law” is encouraged (e.g., 28:7, 9), Proverbs does not specifically allude to covenant laws like circumcision or do more than make brief mentions of sacrifice (15:8; 21:3, 27; each time concerned with the internal state of the person doing the sacrificing rather than the ritual).⁷⁶ The words, commands, and instructions of Proverbs are intended to encourage obedience to the ways of God through the transformation of a person’s desires and heart.

2. Faith and Works

As a traditional wisdom text, Proverbs concerns itself with the proper behavior of the audience within the community setting. “Faith” in terms of “belief in God” never occurs: that idea is firmly encapsulated by the concept of the “fear of the Lord.” The “fear of the Lord” marks one as part of the community of the righteous, having the disposition to behave in a way pleasing to the Lord rather than driven by selfish motives. One might say that the “fear of the Lord” is Proverbs’ terminology for “belief” in God.⁷⁷

Regarding the common terminology of faith, אֱמוּנָה appears 12 times,⁷⁸ referring to truthful speech and faithful behavior nearly equally. The related אֱמוּנָה appears four times (8:30; 13:17; 14:5; 20:6), the first relating to a craftsman and the last three to faithfulness. These terms are the most likely background for the NT πίστις terminology, as Lindsay

⁷⁶ Fontaine, “Wisdom in Proverbs,” 111, posits Proverbs “reflects a difference in emphases and interests. It has been rightly noted that, in the absence of traditions about covenant and election, wisdom theology is creation theology, but this is not the only place in the Hebrew Bible where such theology is found.”

⁷⁷ Weiser, TDNT 6:183, comments “A consideration of faith in the OT cannot overlook the astonishing fact that two basically different and even contradictory groups of meaning are used for man’s relation to God, namely, fear on the one side and trust on the other. . . . They were close, and even shaded into one another, so that the fear of God could often be quite simply an expression for faith.”

⁷⁸ Prov. 3:3; 8:7; 11:18; 12:19; 14:22, 25; 16:6; 20:28; 22:21; 23:23; 29:14.

notes, “The πιστ- word group in the LXX consistently represents the Hebrew root אָמַן of the MT.”⁷⁹ Πίστις appears seven times,⁸⁰ twice as translations of אָמַן, and consistently refers to truthfulness and faithfulness. Πιστός, meanwhile, has ten occurrences,⁸¹ communicating someone trustworthy, truthful, faithful. This confirms that Proverbs is not concerned primarily with intellectual faith but in virtuous character.⁸² This could possibly reflect an understanding that, as Yahweh is the “faithful” God in Deut. 7:9,⁸³ so his people are expected to behave accordingly. Regardless, Proverbs proves a rich mine for the expectations for the correct behavior of the people who fear God.

The actions prescribed and proscribed in Proverbs are quite varied, but there are certain common themes: careful speech, humility, avoiding temptation, generosity to the poor, and other smaller themes such as child rearing, laziness versus industriousness, interactions with one’s neighbors, etc. Crenshaw explains: “If true wisdom consists of the appropriate deed for the moment, then different situations called for varied responses.”⁸⁴ Proverbs gives different explanations for poverty and different times to speak, but overall trends are readily discernable. The variety of themes is common across wisdom traditions, as is the lack of covenantal signs such as circumcision or dietary regulations. The latter actions may have been assumed or they may not have been deemed as essential in a

⁷⁹ D. R. Lindsay, *Josephus and Faith: Πίστις and Πιστεύειν as Faith Terminology in the Writings of Flavius Josephus and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 21. He continues: “It is obvious that the πιστ- word group in the LXX (especially the verb πιστεύειν) was meant to be understood in light of the Hebrew אָמַן. The contribution of the LXX to the development of the πιστ- word group as faith terminology, therefore, cannot be fully appreciated apart from the Hebrew root אָמַן.” See also D. R. Lindsay, “The Roots and Development of the πιστ- Word Group as Faith Terminology,” *JSNT* 15 (1993), 103-18.

⁸⁰ Prov. 3:3; 12:17, 22; 14:22—2x; 15:27, 28.

⁸¹ Prov. 2:12; 11:13, 21; 13:17; 14:5, 25; 17:6, 7; 20:6; 25:13; only in 14:25 does it translate אָמַן.

⁸² Prov. 20:6 combines ἄνδρα πιστόν with ἔργον in describing the rarity of a faithful man. This is the only use of these two terms in the same proverb (πίστις and other πιστ- roots never occur with ἔργον).

⁸³ Bultmann, TDNT 6:185.

⁸⁴ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 13.

“liberal” court setting. Regardless, the emphasis is on moral and ethical imperatives of daily life over covenantal, legal commands.⁸⁵

One of the most common themes in wisdom is speech and the related topics of boasting and anger. Several examples stand out. For example, Proverbs 10:19 observes: “When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but the prudent are restrained in speech.” The correlation between verbosity and sin is well remarked in Proverbs, and in general taciturnity is praised as the path toward wisdom (cf. 17:27⁸⁶). The wise exhibit careful, considered speech and exemplify control over their emotions. Supporting this, Proverbs 19:11 observes: “Those with good sense are slow to anger,⁸⁷ leading to the conclusion that a quick temper is not compatible with the fear of the Lord, and neither is careless speech. Likewise, merely by restraining one’s speech, one avoids a number of sins, such as boasting (Prov. 27:1⁸⁸). To boast about a future, uncertain time marks one a fool. This proverb also ties to the prophetic warnings against prideful humanity (“all flesh is as grass,” Isa. 40:6-8). Speech demarks a distinction between the wise and prudent person living out the “fear of the Lord” and the fools who fail to moderate their behavior, and it proves a perfect litmus test for pride.

One responsibility people have interpersonally is to forgive and not gossip, shown most frequently with the concept of “covering.” The Hebrew verb כסב appears eleven times in the book, nearly every time in relation to speech.⁸⁹ The proper use of “covering” appears in 10:12b, where it is love that fails to disclose another’s wrongdoing: “love covers

⁸⁵ The exceptions may be 15:8 (“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is his delight”); 21:3 (“To do righteousness [חַדְקָה] and justice [מִשְׁפָּט] is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice”); or 21:27 (“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when brought with evil intent”). In these verses the concern focuses on the behavior and attitude of the one bringing the sacrifice in order to find acceptance in God’s eyes, not the ritual.

⁸⁶ This parallels the second two-thirds of James 1:19: the wise are both slow to speak and slow to anger. Prov. 17:27 is followed immediately by the recognition that even a fool can be considered wise if they hold their tongue.

⁸⁷ Cf. Jas. 1:19.

⁸⁸ LXX of 27:1a: μὴ καυχῶ τὰ εἰς αὐριον. James echoes this warning nearly exactly in Jas. 4:13-16 and uses the same for verb for boasting in verse 16, καυχάομαι.

⁸⁹ Excepting 24:31 and possibly 12:16, 23; 26:26.

all offenses.”⁹⁰ “Covering” is to the benefit of another, promoting forgiveness while denying the opportunity for gossip. This interpretation is supported in the next two uses of **כסב**, which refer specifically to slander and gossip (10:18; 11:13). Likewise, throughout chapter 17 there are many examples of the damage done by an uncontrolled tongue,⁹¹ summarized in the breakdown of community in 17:9: “One who forgives an affront fosters friendship, but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend.”⁹² This text shows that a person hides (**מכסב**, **κρύπτει**) sin by not participating in gossip, a point driven home by the Hebrew of the second phrase, **וְשָׁנָה בְּרִבָּר**, wherein someone busily “repeats words.” Gossip and slander destroy the community, but covering sins allows for redemption and peace.

As with boasting, the wise consistently act in humility while the proud merely mark themselves for destruction. Again, a plethora of verses are available for this point, but perhaps the best is Proverbs 18:12:

לְפָנֵי־שֹׂכֵר יִגְבַּהַּ לִב־אִישׁ וְלִפְנֵי כְבוֹד עֲנָה
 πρὸ συντριβῆς ὑψοῦται καρδία ἀνδρός καὶ πρὸ δόξης ταπεινοῦται
Before destruction one's heart is haughty, but humility goes before honor.

This verse combines the promise of humiliation in 11:2 with the pledge of elevation for the humble in 15:33.⁹³ Proverbs 18:12 presents the two “before” scenarios as though those are the only two options for a person’s internal state—pride and humility—as well as the only respective outcomes. One of the marks of a wise person is humility (**עֲנָה**;

⁹⁰ τοὺς μὴ φιλονεικοῦντας καλύπτει φιλία; cf. Jas. 5:20 (καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν); 1 Pet. 4:8 (ἀγάπη καλύπτει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν).

⁹¹ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 49, notes, “The final malevolent communicator is the gossip (v. 9), who destroys a community already threatened by transgression,” a situation which also concerns James.

⁹² This example of a *person* covering sins may provide support for the human agent interpretation of James 5:20c.

⁹³ James repeats this theme in the same language (ὑψ—, ταπειν—; 1:9-11; 4:6-10), although here the ὑψ—root is used to describe the prideful person rather than for the honoring of the humble. The principle of 18:12 is directly echoed again in 29:23: “A person’s pride will bring humiliation (**לְשׂוֹן**; **ταπεινοῖ**), but one who is lowly (**לְפָנֵי**; **ταπεινόφρονος**) in spirit will obtain honor.” See also 16:19: “It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor (**πραῦθυμος μετὰ ταπεινώσεως**), than to divide the spoil with the proud.”

ταπεινότητι), which leads to glorification. Meanwhile self-sought glory only leads to humiliation and destruction (11:2; 15:33; 18:12; 29:23). The ταπεινοί—precisely the ones who do not seek honor—are the ones who in the end receive it, presumably from God as well as their neighbors. While Proverbs does not have a fully developed theology of the *‘anāvim*, here we see the first contrast of the עֲנָוִים and גְּבוּרִים. This does not imply that the humble could not be rich, but they are characterized by humility before God, allowing him to elevate them rather than resting secure in their own wealth.⁹⁴ The prideful set themselves up for “destruction,” possibly in an eternal sense through the destruction of themselves and their family line.

Another way of discerning the righteous from the wicked occurs in their treatment of the poor. As 29:7 observes: “The righteous (צַדִּיקִים; δίκαιοι) know the rights of the poor; the wicked have no such understanding.”⁹⁵ The righteous work on behalf of the poor, enacting justice for them and ensuring that their rights are not taken by those who have no such concerns (cf. 13:23). Similarly, twice Proverbs states that “those who oppress/mock the poor insult their Maker” (14:31; 17:5). The attitude and actions one takes for or against the impoverished reveals one’s state before the Lord. Poverty itself, however, is not a state of righteousness in Proverbs. While some righteous may be poor, poverty more often results from laziness (13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4). Regardless, the righteous defend the rights of the helpless in their society while the wicked use them for their own benefit.

Thus, regarding the categories of “faith” and “works,” faith is the fear of the Lord which leads to a disposition of obedience and wisdom. The person who has the fear of the Lord lives righteously, cares for the poor, and guards their tongue, submitting themselves

⁹⁴ See also Prov. 11:28, which begins with the warning that “Those who trust in their riches will wither.” This group is again contrasted with the righteous (צַדִּיקִים; δίκαιοι)—who will flourish.

⁹⁵ Cf. Lev. 19:15.

to the words of the teacher and of the law. Moreover, the righteous and the wicked correspond to the humble and the prideful, each category revealing themselves through their actions and words.

3. *Judgment and Mercy*

Throughout the text of Proverbs there is a *quid pro quo* relationship between God's judgment or mercy and human actions of sin or righteousness. Progressing from the prior section, clear categories of the righteous and the wicked prevail here. Notions of eschatological justice are not the concern of the editor(s) of Proverbs, instead judgment and mercy are typified within the span of a person's life.

In chapter 10, the author repeatedly contrasts the wicked and the righteous. Verse 2 notes, "Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness (רִצְדָּקָה; δικαιοσύνη) delivers from death (מָוֶת; θανάτου)." Righteousness opposes injustice in an unexpected life-or-death contrast. Proverbs does not have a concept of eternal life, so this ideal of continued life would be continued earthly life.⁹⁶ This proverb concludes that righteousness could actually save one's life in times of danger. For the editors of Proverbs, righteousness works to a tangible goal, as seen in 11:18: "The wicked earn no real gain, but those who sow righteousness get a true reward."⁹⁷ The language of earning and sowing suggest long-term character and habits upon which this evaluation takes place, a judgment in which there are only two categories.

We also see a correspondence rule that, as one lives, so one will be rewarded or punished (cf. 11:18, 19, 30). Perhaps the clearest statement of this contrast is in 10:16:

⁹⁶ Roland Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 29, advises, "Concretely 'life' means riches and honor (22:4), a good name (10:7; 22:1), a long existence of many years (3:16; 28:16)." He cautions, however, "Life is more than merely material goods; these are seen as sacramentals, signs of the Lord's blessing (10:22). . . . the perspective of Proverbs is life in the here and now."

⁹⁷ This foreshadows James' conclusion in Jas. 3:17: those who "sow peace" will reap a harvest of righteousness. This verse also has the phrase ποιεῖ ἔργα as in Jas. 1:22-25, but here it is the ungodly who do works of wickedness. Their works reveal their sinful natures in contrast to the fruit of those who sow righteousness.

“The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin.”⁹⁸ Here the contrast is between wages (פְּעֹלָה) and harvest (הַבְּרִיאָה), the one being something the righteous actually earn through their faithful behavior, the other the inevitable outgrowth of the choices of the wicked. Longman explains the rewards: “This verse assumes that both the righteous and the wicked may gain some material substance, but contrasts the value it has for them. Money in the hand of the righteous person is a positive thing, but money in the hand of a wicked person is a negative thing.”⁹⁹ Intriguingly God is not the obvious active agent in either blessing or punishing the groups. Rather, sin or life are the expected outcomes for one’s chosen path.

Proverbs 22:22-23 and 23:10-11 both present God taking action in defense of the poor, promising to bring judgment upon the oppressors. By failing to help the helpless, the wicked earn reciprocal treatment from God, just repayment for their deeds (cf. 24:11-12). Moreover, one cannot hide one’s deeds of wickedness from God. The author cautions that God will repay “all” according to their deeds, implying that both righteousness and wickedness will be repaid accordingly. Likewise, Proverbs 24:11-12 also implies its opposite, that if a person does seek to rescue those going astray or being persecuted, they themselves will be rewarded for their efforts.¹⁰⁰

Proverbs 21:13 presents the necessity of mercy toward the poor if one desires mercy oneself: “If you close your ear to the cry of the poor (לֵךְ; ἀσθενούς), you will cry out and not be heard.”¹⁰¹ While Longman sees this as referring to human reciprocity,¹⁰² Waltke sees this as stating the same negative principle of James 2:13, contending that “The

⁹⁸ This statement is most closely echoed by Paul in Rom. 6:23, who, however, subverts the proverb so that “life” is no longer a wage but simply a gift; death is the only earnable wage. Prov. 10:16 also has echoes in both Jas. 1:12, wherein the believer wins a crown of life through endurance, and in 5:1-6, wherein the rich earn judgment through their persecution of their workers.

⁹⁹ Tremper Longman, III, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 236-37.

¹⁰⁰ If this refers to seeking those who stray, it may sit in the background of Jas. 5:19-20.

¹⁰¹ Interestingly, James F. Davis, *Lex Talionis in Early Judaism and the Exhortation of Jesus in Matthew 5.38-42* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 52-53, fails to list this proverb among the examples he gives from Proverbs (20:22; 25:29; 25:21-22).

¹⁰² Longman, *Proverbs*, 393.

merciful obtain mercy (3:3-4; 19:17; Matt. 5:7; Luke 6:38), but the callous will not be pitied (cf. Ps. 109:6-20; Matt. 18:23-35; 25:31-46; Jas. 2:13).¹⁰³ Whether the secondary mercy here is human or divine, the sage notes that those who show mercilessness to the helpless (cf. 22:9), earn mercilessness for themselves. A person's lack of mercy *towards the weak* brings about their own powerlessness to attain a hearing in their time of need—from fellow humans or God.

Proverbs 28:13, meanwhile, summarizes the principle of confession James expands: “No one who conceals (סִתְּמוּם; ἐπικαλύπτων) transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy (צַדִּיק, ἀγαπηθήσεται).” This contrasts with Proverbs 17:9: whereas one should cover another's offenses to avoid gossip, to hide one's own is sinful. Murphy concurs: this is the “only verse in Proverbs calling for confession” and observes that Proverbs allows one to “‘cover’ the faults of another (Prov. 10:12), but not one's own sins.”¹⁰⁴ The text leaves open whether confession occurs at the interpersonal level with forgiveness as the reciprocal action¹⁰⁵ and may function on two levels: both person-to-person as well as human-to-divine, since this language typifies the human-divine relationship elsewhere.¹⁰⁶

In brief, the book of Proverbs has several themes that help guide our understanding of early wisdom beliefs regarding “judgment” and “mercy.” First, righteousness alone brings life while wickedness earns death. While much of Proverbs distinguishes what deeds make a person righteous or wicked, the distinctions between the righteous and the wicked become clear as life is lived out. Secondly, “covering” can be used to hide sin and intentional harm, but for the righteous, covering means hiding another's sins in forgiveness so that they do not become the subject of gossip or slander

¹⁰³ Waltke, *Proverbs 15-31*, 178-79.

¹⁰⁴ In Longman, *Proverbs*, 492.

¹⁰⁵ E.g. Num. 5:7.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. Lev. 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; 1 Kings 8:33-36; etc.

but can resume life in the community. Lack of forgiveness or concern for the poor, meanwhile, are the two activities linked most directly to threats of judgment and a reciprocal lack of mercy. Judgment is most often defined as the overturning of one's social status or an early death, while mercy most often relates to helping people in distress.

B. SIRACH¹⁰⁷

Another traditional wisdom text, Sirach continues many of the same themes as Proverbs, albeit in a more poetic fashion.¹⁰⁸ Unlike Proverbs, Sirach gives historical anecdotes and as a result “the year 180 is generally assigned as the date of the work.”¹⁰⁹ As the first chapter makes clear, the “fear of the Lord” links closely with wisdom, the sign that marks the elect from birth (1:14) to death (1:13). In “keeping the commandments” (1:26), wisdom and the fear of the Lord intersect as the key to life and blessing.¹¹⁰ Wisdom is a semi-divine character, proceeding from God and participating in creation, and Torah is something that proceeds from and even partly embodies this divine wisdom.¹¹¹ Sirach

¹⁰⁷ Because of the corrupt nature of the various Hebrew manuscripts as well as the likelihood that the author of James would have been familiar with Sirach in its Greek version, the decision was made to reference the Hebrew only where it particularly helps. See Louis Francis Hartman, “Sirach in Hebrew and in Greek,” *CBQ* 23 (1961), 444, who notes, “The textual history of Sir is probably more complicated than that of any other book in the Bible.” Regarding the Hebrew texts, see Pancratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); also *Ibid.*, “Reading the Hebrew Ben Sira Manuscripts Synoptically: A New Hypothesis,” in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 95-111. The Greek text for Sirach comes from Joseph Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965).

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism: An Aspect of Second Temple History,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition: Volume Two, Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E.P. Sanders, A.I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson (London: SCM Press, 1981), 14, describes the author as “a devout scribe, [who] might be considered a typical representative of the theocratic point of view.” Regarding the tone, Menahem Kister, “Some Notes on Biblical Expressions and Allusions and the Lexicography of Ben Sira,” in *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages: Proceedings of a Second International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, and the Mishnah, held at Leiden University 15-17 December 1997*, ed. Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 160, argues, “The language of the Book of Ben Sira stands at a crossroads in the history of the Hebrew language and Jewish culture. Essentially, Ben Sira writes in the biblical wisdom tradition. Many of his verses can be regarded as a continuation of Proverbs, both in content and style. . . . Ben Sira is not imitating the biblical style and language, although much of his book is clearly *modeled on the Bible*. Ben Sira composed his book in a post-biblical world of changing culture and language, focused on the study and interpretation of the Bible.”

¹⁰⁹ Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 65.

¹¹⁰ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 144, avers, “Ben Sira identified all wisdom with the fear of the Lord and fulfilling the law (19:20).” Alexander A. DiLella, “The Meaning of Wisdom in Ben Sira,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott and William Johnston Wiseman (Louisville: WJK, 1993), 133 f.n. 1, concurs.

¹¹¹ Bullock, “Wisdom,” 16-17, concludes that, while earlier wisdom texts identified wisdom “*with* Torah,” “in Ben Sira the circle is completed when wisdom is identified *as* Torah” (emphases his).

idealizes the Torah as an aspect of God's wisdom, a transition that has implications for all of the themes.

1. The Word and The Law

As with Proverbs, the majority of the 70 uses of *λόγος* in Sirach refer to “speech” rather than to a specific content.¹¹² Correct speech evidences wisdom (cf. 4:24; 9:17; 20:27; etc): where the fool interrupts and speaks many words, the wise use their words carefully to gain respect. *Νόμος*, however, gains a new priority in its 30 appearances. As Schnabel observes, the new equation of wisdom and Torah means that now a person's wisdom relates to their obedience to the Torah, the revelation of God's wisdom.¹¹³ The Prologue establishes this identification as all three references therein are genre specific: the Law and the Prophets (0:1, 5, 20). The role of the wise person becomes the study of the law and texts of wisdom with the obligation to pass on such understanding, while to keep the law reveals wisdom.¹¹⁴ The author consistently reiterates themes such as “whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom” (15:1); “in all wisdom there is the fulfillment of the law” (19:20); and the wise person “will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant” (39:8).

¹¹² Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 39. He finds 73 occurrences of *λόγος* including two not counted by Hatch and Redpath (36[33]:3; 47:22), summarizing: “54 times it refers to sapiential concepts with regard to ‘speech ethics’. In 5 passages it denotes the word of God in creation (39,31; 42,15; 43,5.10.26) or (48,3,5; cf. 45,3), and in one passage it refers to a prophetic utterance (48,1). It does not refer to the Torah of Israel.”

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹⁴ Alexander A. DiLella, “Fear of the Lord as Wisdom: Ben Sira 1,11-30,” in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 122, calls this the “great Deuteronomic equation found in such texts as Deut 4,5-6; 6,1-5.24; 8,6; 10,12.20; 13,5; 17,19; 31,12-13: to fear the Lord = to love the Lord = to serve the Lord = to walk in his ways = to keep the commandments/Law = to worship the Lord = to be wise.” Bennema, “Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 63-64, observes that in the “retrospective post-exilic perspective of the Chronicler, a gradual change emerged in the concept of the source of wisdom. . . based on the Mosaic paradigm of Deuteronomy 4:5-6, the (observance of the) Torah had become the locus (or even source) of wisdom, i.e. the (observance of the) Torah had become the means of acquiring or demonstrating wisdom.” He later continues, “The book of *Sirach* probably functions as the best representative of (the continuation of) the Torah-centred wisdom tradition,” even while it had been “influenced by the Spirit-centred wisdom tradition in the OT” as well (68).

One of the few theologically loaded uses of λόγος occurs in 42:15b, commencing the recitation of Israel’s story: ἐν λόγοις κυρίου τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ.¹¹⁵ This statement recalls the creative power of God’s λόγος. Referring to Genesis 1, this verse is a reminder of God’s speech-creation pattern.¹¹⁶ Likewise, Sirach 43:26, ἐν λόγῳ αὐτοῦ σύγκειται τὰ πάντα, now intimates that God’s “word” functions as an active agent maintaining creation. Just as God’s spoken word brought everything into existence, so it also sustains life.

In Sirach 17:11, the author calls the law a νόμον ζωῆς, a phrase repeated in 45:5 in a context referring specifically to the giving of the Law at Sinai.¹¹⁷ A phrase such as this may well refer to Deuteronomy’s refrain that obedience to the law brings life and blessing while disobedience corresponds to death and destruction (especially Deut. 27-30).¹¹⁸ This “law of life” from God to his people is seen positively as what allows them to have life as God’s people, set apart. The commands the author mentions, however, are simply to “avoid evil” and one “concerning the neighbor” (17:14), a pair perhaps seen as the summary of the Torah as a whole.¹¹⁹

The brief retelling of the Abraham story alludes to the law and indicates some flexibility in Israel’s legal history. Whereas Paul argues that Abraham could not have been justified by the law because he came *before* the law (Gal. 3), Sirach 44:20 proclaims that

¹¹⁵ NRSV adds “and all his creatures do his will.” P. W. Skehan and A. A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 484, translate 42:15d as “he accepts the one who does his will,” noting that “this colon is missing from most Gr MSS” and the Hebrew is confusing (487).

¹¹⁶ James 1:18 fits within a recognized wisdom tradition of God’s creative word.

¹¹⁷ Cook, “Law and Wisdom,” 325, notes that “The law of life in these contexts certainly does not fall outside of the semantic fields of the torat Moshe. However, it has more to do with wisdom and understanding—how to live a wise life. Perhaps one could deem the law of life as an indirect reference to the law of Moses.” He then adds, “it is not immediately clear what the law of Moses meant to Ben Sira,” but qualifies, “Even though Sira does not seem preoccupied with the detail of the law of Moses, this does not mean that the stipulations are insignificant to him. . . . It would therefore be incorrect or at least unsubtle to state that Sirach has no interest in things cultic. However, it should be clear that this is not his main interest” (326).

¹¹⁸ Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 282. They note “the Law is Israel’s true knowledge and wisdom, which no other society can match. . . . ‘The law of life’ . . . is described in Deut 30:11-20.” See also Sir. 32:24, “The one who keeps the law preserves himself, and the one who trusts the Lord will not suffer loss.”

¹¹⁹ These are the exact commands in Jas. 1:27. This summary shows the importance of neighbor love within the covenant.

Abraham συνετήρησεν νόμον ὑψίστου. Though ben Sira will *subsequently* glory in the giving of the “law of life” (45:5), that does not inhibit him from announcing that Abraham kept the νόμος. Skehan and DiLella call this a reference “to Abraham’s unquestioning obedience to God’s commands.”¹²⁰ Seemingly any revelation of God, whether before Sinai or after and whether a “Go” (Abraham) or ⚡ (the Decalogue), requires obedience.

Before the giving of the Torah, Abraham kept the law because he obeyed God’s call, avoided evil, and cared for his neighbor.

Finally, in 51:18-20, the author describes his own quest for wisdom, announcing in 51:19b: καὶ ἐν ποιήσει νόμου διηκριβασάμην.¹²¹ Here the νόμος is closely related with wisdom: as he sought and studied wisdom, he acted in accordance with the law.¹²² Also noteworthy is the connection to purity, for in 51:20 he comments “in purity (ἐν καθαρισμῷ) I found her.” Obedience to the law, moral purity, and wisdom herself are all intimately interconnected as they will be again in James.

2. Faith and Works

Sirach assumes that anyone who studies it seeks to honor the Lord and to learn how to please him. The text makes clear, however, that these students stand in potential danger of being misled by false teachers.¹²³ Sirach’s presentation of wisdom and practical life appears as the only correct one for those who wish to live in God’s favor.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 505.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 572-73, follow the Hebrew of 11Ps^a for the whole of this poem about wisdom. In that text verses 13-20a “form the *aleph* to *kaph* lines of the alphabetic acrostic.”

¹²² The expression ποιήσει νόμου bears close relation to James’ discussion of “doing the word/law” in 1:22-25.

¹²³ Randall A. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 76, observes: “Ben Sira stresses that his counterparts research unauthorized subjects. Apparently the forbidden material is somewhat attractive and has led to experimentation. Ben Sira urges his students to stay with his instruction.” Collins, “Wisdom, Apocalypticism,” 172, confirms, “Ben Sira, who was surely familiar with early apocalyptic speculation, unequivocally rejected it.”

¹²⁴ Blenkinsopp, “Interpretation and Sectarianism,” 24-25, notes the tension in this time period: “Conflict was also inevitable in the matter of laws governing ethnic, cultic and ethical qualifications for membership; hence the remarkable emphasis on the contractual basis of participation in the restored community. In such a situation, then, interpretation was not just one of several forms of literary and intellectual activity going on at that time. It was, on the contrary, decisive for the way the community was to understand itself, who was to belong to it, how it was to go about its business.”

Ultimately, the world divides into the righteous and the sinners, and as Argall notes, “The category to which a particular individual belongs is determined by that person’s deeds.”¹²⁵

In the LXX of Sirach, the noun πίστις appears 10 times, the adjective πιστός 13, and the verb πιστεύω 11. In each, God is the only correct object of faith, the only one who is ultimately and completely trustworthy. Accordingly, however, the one who seeks to be wise should be faithful, both toward others and toward God. Lindsay notes:

Πίστις in Sirach, then, is almost exclusively a religious term describing a relationship of faithfulness and obedience toward God. It is ἐν πίστει that a person is sanctified, approved by God, pleasing to God or even redeemed by God. Πίστις is also a virtue—a virtue which endures forever. And even πίστις in relationships with friends has direct implications for one’s relationship to God.¹²⁶

“Faith,” then, is a covenant term signifying faithfulness and obedience. Faith and works are not contrasting terms; fidelity reveals itself in life. This relationship of *faithfulness* is essential to one’s safety in time of judgment, and Sirach, like Proverbs, offers both generalities and specifics to the path of wisdom.

As we saw above, the covenant of Abraham with God entailed law-keeping (44:20). Equally important in the author’s eyes, however, is Abraham’s faithfulness when tested, shown by the continuation ἐν πειρασμῶ ἐυρέθη πιστός. Without that faithfulness, the covenant would have been voided. Ultimately, Sirach places the responsibility to faithfulness on the shoulders of each individual (Sir 15:15): ἐὰν θέλῃς συντηρήσεις ἐντολὰς (מִצְוֹת)¹²⁷ καὶ πίστιν ποιῆσαι εὐδοκίας. Sirach equates

¹²⁵ Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 139. He observes this in context of the importance of opposing phenomena in Sirach in relation to a person’s status in the overall picture, noting, “Ben Sira teaches that the *categories* of sinners and the just have their place within the opposite (נוֹכַח) phenomena of creation (Sir 33:14). As there are opposites of evil and good, death and life, so sinners and the just (cf. 11:14).”

¹²⁶ Lindsay, *Josephus and Faith*, 46.

¹²⁷ Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 34, observes that the term for commandments (מִצְוֹת) occurs 10 times in Sirach. More broadly, “In the OT, especially in Deut, מִצְוֹת is used as the designation of a corpus of decrees and commandments, even as designation of the law as a whole. . . . In the deuteronomic and chronistic context מִצְוֹת is often used in sequences of terms for law and commandments which synonymously refer to the whole of, or part of, the law.” After examining the evidence in Sirach, he concludes “that probably all 10 occurrences of מִצְוֹת in Sir refer to the revealed law of God which, in the historical context, would be

keeping the commandments with acting faithfully, and he makes it quite clear that obedience is a choice individuals make. The ones who choose to practice faithfulness demonstrate their wisdom and the truth of their commitment to God.¹²⁸ Schnabel states, “Wisdom and law are one since they are both the expression of God’s will for life. To keep the commandments is practiced wisdom, and to be wise means to obey the law—both are proof of one’s fear of the Lord and of one’s desire to commit one’s life to God in submitting to his will concerning all areas of life.”¹²⁹ The Greek gives the intriguing expression πίστιν ποιῆσαι, capturing the idea that faith is *enacted*. Likewise, this faithfulness is a matter of choice, a disposition to will and desire (θέλησις) obedience.

Even while Sirach commands one to keep the law, it continues in the wisdom contents of the law: protecting the poor, guarding one’s tongue, humility, and monotheism among others. Circumcision only makes one appearance in the history section (44:20, Abraham), while sacrifice is discussed in moral terms of acceptability to God (e.g., not in idolatry [30:19] and not when stolen [34:21-24; 35:15], but in obedience [7:31] and righteousness [35:9]). A person’s moral state whether in harboring wrath or in oppressing the poor potentially controls whether atonement is effected by the sacrifice. Again, the concern of the author is the practicalities of obedience.

identified with the Mosaic law” (35). See also Alexander A. DiLella, *The Hebrew Text of Sirach: A Text-Critical and Historical Study* (Hague: Mouton, 1966), 126.

¹²⁸ This person stands in direct contrast to the person who blames God for their sins, saying “It was the Lord’s doing that I fell away” (15:11ff; cf. Jas. 1:13-15). Sirach states his anthropology in 13:11-20, making it unambiguous that he holds each person accountable for their choices to sin or be faithful, whereby each is rewarded by their choices (v. 17): “Before each person are life and death, and whichever one chooses will be given.” See Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 75.

¹²⁹ Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 82. Sir. 33:2 foreshadows the imagery of James 1:5-8, warning, “The wise will not hate the law, but the one who is hypocritical (ὑποκρινόμενος) about it is like a boat in a storm.” James uses the term διακρινόμενος and describes that doubter as a “wave of the sea,” but later he warns that the wise will be ἀνυπόκριτος (Jas. 3:17). Likewise, the “woes” (Sir. 2:13-14) are pronounced against the timid, the lazy, the sinner “who walks a double path” (ἐπιβαίνοντι ἐπὶ δύο τρίβους, cf. Jas 1:8, 4:8), the fainthearted “who have no trust,” and those who have “lost your nerve.” All of these face “the Lord’s reckoning (ἐπισκέπτηται ὁ κύριος)” (2:14).

One consistent “work” within Sirach is that of almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη) and its active ability to save a person from trouble or even death.¹³⁰ For instance, Sirach 3:30 notes that “almsgiving atones for sin” (also 3:14), in 17:22 almsgiving is compared to “a signet ring with the Lord,” while 40:17 states that “almsgiving endures forever.” Sirach 29:12 and 40:24 twice present the efficacy of almsgiving for saving a person:

σύγκλεισον ἐλεημοσύνην ἐν τοῖς ταμείοις σου καὶ αὕτη ἐξελεῖταί σε ἐκ
πάσης κακώσεως
Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from every disaster. (29:12)
ἀδελφοὶ καὶ βοήθεια εἰς καιρὸν θλίψεως καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀμφοτέρω ἐλεημοσύνη
ρύσεται
Kindred and helpers are for a time of trouble, but almsgiving rescues better than either.
(40:24)¹³¹

Skehan and DiLella observe that “almsgiving, which is a religious as well as a social obligation, is a central teaching of the Judaism of Ben Sira’s day.”¹³² More than an obligation, however, almsgiving—showing mercy—has an almost salvific aspect to it. However, 13:24 reveals that “wealth no longer indicated divine favor,”¹³³ revealing an ambiguity in the topic of wealth through which almsgiving provides the path.

In other aspects, Sirach upholds traditional wisdom topics. The author cautions against reckless speech and sluggish ἔργα in 4:29. Moreover, humility in speech and attitude before God is both commended (11:4) and warned (11:21), the latter reminding the reader of God’s ability to overturn the established order in an instant. This calls the reader to trust in God’s justice, recognizing the unstated precept that wealth cannot safeguard from disaster. Likewise, recognizing God as the just judge, Sirach 7:6 warns against stepping into that role: “Do not seek to become a judge (κριτής), or you may be unable to root out injustice (ἀδικίας); you may be partial (εὐλαβηθῆς ἀπὸ

¹³⁰ Ἐλεημοσύνη appears 13 times in Sirach, 12 referring to human acts of charity and one to God’s nature (17:29). Sir. 7:10 warns “do not neglect to give alms” in its list of sins, and 12:3 states that “No good comes to one who persists in evil or to one who does not give alms.” The other uses are in 16:14; 29:8; 31:11; 35:3.

¹³¹ Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 463, translate it as “Kindred and helper for times of stress; but better than either, charity that rescues,” leaving it ambiguous who enacts the “charity”!

¹³² *Ibid.*, 472.

¹³³ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 147.

προσώπου)¹³⁴ to the powerful, and so mar your integrity.”¹³⁵ This warning is rooted in a long tradition calling for the complete integrity of judges, not favoring either the rich or the poor (Lev. 19:15), but especially safeguarding the rights of the oppressed and the alien (Deut. 1:16; Prov. 31:9). The second line pushes one to see the “injustice” not only as societal but individual, a fault in the person that will bring that one under judgment.

In a section much like Hebrew’s “Hall of Faith” (chapter 11), Sirach 44-50 recounts the faithful (and unfaithful) of Israel. The faithful are noted for “pleasing God” (Enoch in 44:16) and being “perfect and righteous” (Noah in 44:17). Moreover, from Abraham onward people are praised for “keeping the law” and the covenant (44:20) while those who acted out of envy and anger instead of faithfulness and humility are destroyed in their sins (e.g., Korah and his followers, 45:18-19). The author follows the prophetic and priestly offices, clearly building up a history pointing toward the rightful priesthood of Simon (50:1), a right based on a history of faithful, obedient people. Faith exists only as faithfulness, in works done in submission to God’s revealed will.

Sirach 51:30, the final verse of the book, concludes: ἐργάζεσθε τὸ ἔργον ὑμῶν πρὸς κайροῦ καὶ δώσει τὸν μισθὸν ὑμῶν ἐν καιρῷ αὐτοῦ (cf. also 16:12, 14; 35:24). Faithfulness, ultimately, is the call to the wise and will be rewarded by God. A person is called to study the teachings, seek to grow in wisdom and obedience to the Law in humility before God, and trust him to reward as he will. Skehan and DiLella conclude that, in Sirach, “to be faithful one must keep the Law and so do God’s will. Faith, in the biblical sense of the word implies not only an act of the intellect, which accepts God’s word as true and normative, but also the activity of the will that puts belief into action.”¹³⁶

¹³⁴ This expression seems a precursor to Jas. 2:1, προσωποληψία.

¹³⁵ This is in contrast to God’s impartiality, seen in 35:15 (LXX 35:12) which warns the hearers from relying on dishonest sacrifices to save them since “the Lord is the judge (κύριος κριτής ἐστιν), and with him there is no partiality.”

¹³⁶ Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 272.

3. Judgment and Mercy

The author of Sirach bounds God's judgment and mercy in this world, evident in a person's life and manner of death. Skehan and DiLella argue that "Even though Ben Sira did not believe in the afterlife, he could rightly affirm that the person who fears the Lord will be blessed even on the day of death because his earthly life had been blessed by the Lord ([1:11-12] and others will consider him to have been blessed."¹³⁷ The obedient receive God's blessing and mercy any time up to death, while those who are disobedient fall under God's judgment.

Sirach 2:11 reaffirms Exodus 34:6-7, revealing God's faithfulness to his people. God is οἰκτίρων καὶ ἐλεήμων, and he ἀφήσιν ἀμαρτίας καὶ σώζει ἐν καιρῷ θλίψεως.¹³⁸ This reminder of God's character as both compassionate and merciful appears eleven times in the OT as a fundamental summary of God's interactions with humanity.¹³⁹ Sinlessness is not expected: forgiveness is a foremost example of God's nature.¹⁴⁰ This expression of God's covenantal mercy, however, is immediately followed by a threefold "Woe" passage (vv. 12-13) that warns those who doubt God will not receive mercy or forgiveness.¹⁴¹ The author urges his readers to remain faithful in 2:18, for unlike human rulers, the mercy of the Lord is immeasurable and intrinsic to his identity.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 144.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 151, note that the "Syr has 'salvation' (or 'redemption')" instead of mercy in vv. 7 and 11, showing a later equation of these two concepts. See also 17:29, "How great is the mercy of the Lord, and his forgiveness for those who return to him," where God's mercy is defined in terms of his forgiveness of those who repent, his response to their repentance rather than to their accumulation of sin. Interestingly, the term for "mercy" here is ἐλεημοσύνη, consistently used elsewhere for almsgiving (see above). This paints a picture of the individual as entirely dependant upon the divine alms as it were.

¹³⁹ Cf. Jonah 4:2. Only in Ps. 112 does this combination of terms occur in relation to a righteous human rather than God.

¹⁴⁰ Sir. 8:5 reminds, "Do not reproach one who is turning away from sin; remember that we all deserve punishment." The second half of the couplet is remarkable because it urges empathy precisely *because* the person repenting and the person watching are in the same position before God: that of equal guilt (or "equally valuable" in the Greek, ἐπιτίμοις).

¹⁴¹ Cf. Jas. 1:6-8.

Sirach 5:1-8 juxtaposes God’s patience with his wrath, urging the reader to repent and turn to God while he is patient. Addressing the sin of presuming on God’s forgiveness, Sirach 5:6 warns in an echo of 2:11:

καὶ μὴ εἶπης Ὁ οἰκτιρμὸς αὐτοῦ πολὺς τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν μου
ἐξιλάσεται· ἔλεος γὰρ καὶ ὀργὴ παρ’ αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ ἀμαρτωλοὺς
καταπαύσει ὁ θυμὸς αὐτοῦ.
*Do not say, “His mercy is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins,” for both mercy and
wrath are with him, and his anger will rest on sinners.*

The author does not dispute God’s great compassion, but when a person presumes upon God’s mercy they become objects of wrath. The language of pride and of “adding sin to sin” (v. 5) in this passage clarifies that, by their casual attitude to sin, these people habitually choose to sin and therefore earn judgment instead of mercy.

Again in chapter 16 the author ponders God’s judgment on the wicked, contrasting the might of God’s mercy with the strength of his wrath. Verses 11b and 12 are particularly fruitful for understanding this contrast:

ἔλεος (רַחֲמִים)¹⁴² γὰρ καὶ ὀργὴ παρ’ αὐτῷ δυνάστης ἐξιλασμῶν καὶ
ἐκχέων ὀργήν. κατὰ τὸ πολὺ ἔλεος (רַחֲמִים) αὐτοῦ οὕτως καὶ πολὺς ὁ
ἔλεγχος αὐτοῦ ἄνδρα κατὰ τὰ ἔργα (לְכַפְּאוֹ)¹⁴³ αὐτοῦ κρινεῖ.
*For mercy and wrath are with the Lord; he is mighty to forgive—but he also pours out wrath.
Great as is his mercy, so also is his chastisement; he judges a person according to his or her
deeds.*¹⁴⁴

God is again described as “mighty to forgive,” a reminder that sinlessness is not expected but balanced by warnings of his wrath. More significantly, “mercy” and “wrath” seem to be the only two outcomes of his judging. If judgment is “according to deeds,” mercy or punishment *both* result from the individual’s actions, a theme 16:13 spells out even more clearly. This verse is perhaps the clearest statement of the principle that mercy is the positive outcome of justice and judgment the negative. God maintains a just judgment

¹⁴² The Hebrew term for mercy here appears in key statements in the MT for God’s mercy, such as Deut. 13:17 or 2 Sam. 24:14.

¹⁴³ לְכַפְּאוֹ appears only in the MT in Prov. 8:22 to describe the creation of Wisdom, “the first of his *acts* of long ago.”

¹⁴⁴ God’s right to decide a person’s fate is affirmed in 18:2, which declares, κύριος μόνος δικαιωθήσεται. This resonates in James 4:12 wherein God is the sole lawgiver and judge.

according to deeds, but repentance counts as a deed of righteousness that allows one to be judged among the righteous rather than the wicked. This situates the call to repentance in 17:25-32 with its congruent celebration of God’s mercy.

The psalm in Sirach 18 praises God and his power as contrasted to the fragility of humans. Verse 11 indicates God’s common grace to all people as expressed in his patience with humans. The author observes that while mortals can only have compassion for a person they can see, “the mercy of the Lord is on all flesh” (ἔλεος δὲ κυρίου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα, v. 13b). He therefore instructs and encourages his audience toward repentance and obedience. Verse 14, however, gives an important qualification to the preceding general statement:

τοὺς ἐκδεχομένους παιδείαν ἐλεᾷ καὶ τοὺς κατασπεύδοντας ἐπὶ τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ.

He has compassion on those who accept his discipline and who are eager for his precepts.

While Skehan and DiLella report that “the Lord is *especially* ‘merciful to those who accept his guidance,’”¹⁴⁵ such a distinction does not seem textually necessary. Snaith, in contrast, observes, “God’s apparently free-ranging forgiveness and *compassion* is quickly limited to those who seek true wisdom. This brings the passage into conformity with earlier parts of the book and forms a fitting close to the section.”¹⁴⁶ God’s mercy, specified in verse 13b as *for all* flesh, is appropriated by those who follow his commands and endure his discipline.

Sirach 27:30-28:7, expounding the *lex talionis*, demonstrates the proportionality of divine forgiveness:

ὁ ἐκδικῶν παρὰ κυρίου εὐρήσει ἐκδίκησιν καὶ τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτοῦ διατηρῶν διατηρήσει. ἄφες ἀδίκημα τῷ πλησίον σου καὶ τότε δεηθέντος σου αἱ ἀμαρτίαι σου λυθήσονται.

*The vengeful will face the Lord’s vengeance, for he keeps a strict account of their sins. Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.*¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 286, emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁶ John G. Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 93, emphasis his.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Matt. 6:13-14; Jas. 2:12-13. Sir. 28:1 makes the same statement as Jas. 2:13a but uses the language of vengeance rather than mercilessness.

The author here depicts gaining God’s forgiveness as entirely reliant upon the individual’s choice to forgive rather than take vengeance.¹⁴⁸ The person who takes vengeance into their own hands usurps God’s role. Sirach 28:4-5 continue the explicit warnings: “If one has no mercy (οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεος) toward another like himself, can he then seek pardon for his own sins? If a mere mortal harbors wrath, who will make an atoning sacrifice for his sins?”¹⁴⁹ He concludes that justice for the unforgiving person is that their own sins will not be forgiven by God. Failure to forgive leaves one outside the process for appropriating divine forgiveness within the covenant (διαθήκην, v. 7): sins cannot be atoned and justice is merciless. Obtaining God’s mercy in judgment is understood within and demanded by Israel’s covenant. These commands may be a logical outworking of the *lex talionis* within the Torah, but they may also be practical application of the law of neighbor love in Leviticus 19:18.¹⁵⁰

Continuing this principle, among God’s “unforgivable” is the person who ruthlessly takes from the needy (cf. 34:23-27). God hears the prayers of the oppressed and works to bring them the justice they deserve. Sirach 35:22 promises that God will crush “the loins of the unmerciful (ἀνελεημόνων),¹⁵¹ but this is paired with encouragement to wait in 35:25-26:

ἕως κρίνη τὴν κρίσιν τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ εὐφρανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ἔλεει αὐτοῦ. ὥραϊον ἔλεος ἐν καιρῷ θλίψεως αὐτοῦ ὡς νεφέλαι ὑετοῦ ἐν καιρῷ ἀβροχίας (LXX 35:23-24)
. . . until he judges the case of his people and makes them rejoice in his mercy. His mercy is as welcome in time of distress as clouds of rain in time of drought.

¹⁴⁸ Although there are remarkably similar statements in the *Test. XII Patriarchs* (Gad and Zebulon), it is unclear whether these are later Christian interpolations into the text (see Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 363-64). Davis, *Lex Talionis*, 57 does note this passage, but he does no more than compare it to Leviticus 19:18.

¹⁴⁹ This continues the resemblance with Jas. 2:13a, wherein judgment is said to be ἀνέλεος to the one who fails to show mercy (τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος). One cannot attain mercy or, in Sirach, atone for one’s own sins, without showing mercy to others.

¹⁵⁰ “Commandment” (ἐντολή) in 28:6-7 may well refer back to Leviticus 19:18, ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου. “Remembering” one’s true position before God plays a significant role in Sirach, using it to urge for humility in our interactions at all times.

¹⁵¹ The terms ἀνελεημόνως and ἀνελεήμων provide the closest antecedents to James’ term ἀνέλεος, and intriguingly they only appear in wisdom texts in the LXX: Prov. 5:9; 11:17; 12:10; 17:11; 27:4; Job 6:21; 18:13; 30:21; Wisd. 12:5; Sir. 13:12; 35:22; 37:11. Every use except Job 30:21 refers to human mercilessness, and there the referent is not clear.

Language of justice (κρίνη τὴν κρίσιν) pairs with language of mercy (ἔλεος ἐν καιρῷ θλίψεως), but the context clarifies that mercy is for the oppressed people (i.e., the righteous in Israel) who wait helplessly for God to act (cf. Jas. 5:7-8). The unmerciful and unrighteous receive his vengeance (ἐκδίκησιν, LXX v. 20) for their mistreatment of the widow, the orphan, the poor. These verses from Sirach reiterate the principle that showing mercy is necessary to receiving God's mercy, but it is also in context of a communal prayer. As a group the Gentiles have oppressed righteous Israel, thereby bringing themselves into God's judgment; but "his people" will find their redemption when God comes to judge their enemies. This serves as a reminder that often sin and righteousness work themselves out in community and mercy or judgment can be earned by entire communities—even if every individual may not fall into the particular habits of their group.

These samples draw a picture of God as fully just and fully merciful. The language of judgment can relate to human actions as judges but more often to divine evaluation of human deeds, particularly evil. The author teaches that judgment of the wicked will be seen within this world, whether in the manner of death or their children's rebellious or impoverished lives (LXX 11:28). Righteousness does not entail perfection but an active pursuit of God's law and repentance from sinfulness. Mercy is often a human action, especially that of almsgiving, but when it comes from God it is given to those who act mercifully and leads to rejoicing on the part of those who receive it (e.g., 16:11-12; 35:25). Mercy is a hoped for and anticipated work of the Lord, not to be presumed upon but an assured promise to the righteous in accordance with their deeds. The divine mercy is not clearly defined, but is closely equated with forgiveness of sin. It is an aspect of God's character that reveals itself in conjunction with judgment as the positive result of divine justice. God is patient with creation, but through continued disobedience, the sinner incurs

God's judgment.¹⁵² In the end, both mercy and judgment are earned by the person's life and choices in response to God's Torah.

C. WISDOM OF SOLOMON

The Wisdom of Solomon is a crucial transition text in which the awareness of an afterlife fully emerges within wisdom literature. Most likely originating in Alexandria in the first century B.C.E., this book "exhorts the Jewish people to remain faithful to its religious heritage"¹⁵³ and staunchly uses logic and Greek rhetoric to defend the reasonable nature of the Jewish faith in a Hellenistic environment. Murphy calls it "an interesting example of a biblical writer who took seriously the culture of his day, while elaborating his own vision of faith."¹⁵⁴ The author changes the question of God's justice because justice ultimately occurs in the afterlife. Whereas Proverbs and Sirach announced that wisdom brings life, Wisdom proclaims a new understanding of life—one that does not need to be visible to affirm. Murphy explains, however, "immortality is not rooted in the human makeup, but in one's relationship with God,"¹⁵⁵ the outcome of a life lived wisely.

This idea of immortality seems to be a blending of ideas that have been the domain of the burgeoning apocalyptic genre. Collins explains:

The worldview of these early apocalypses may be contrasted with that of the biblical wisdom books in three crucial respects: (1) the increased importance of the supernatural world and supernatural agents in human affairs . . . ; (2) the expectation of eschatological judgment and reward or punishment beyond death; and (3) the perception that something is fundamentally wrong with this world.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Cf. Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 87, who concludes concerning the intertestamental literature, that "given the central importance of judgment conceptions to these writings, the motif might be better termed 'divine *judgment* according to deeds,' even where the verb is one of *repayment*."

¹⁵³ Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005), 14. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 165, broadens the time frame to "the first century B.C.E. or C.E."

¹⁵⁴ Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 85.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 86. He continues, "It appears as if immortality is so positive a concept (life with God before and beyond death) that the wicked are considered not to live on in any real sense." Thus it is only the righteous who can be said to have immortal souls. Also, "no reference is made to the resurrection of the body. The author was interested not in the mode but in the meaning of immortality—to be with God permanently" (87).

¹⁵⁶ Collins, "Wisdom, Apocalypticism," 171.

Intriguingly, Collins does not discuss the Wisdom of Solomon in his essay even as he gives other examples wherein these two seemingly incompatible genres have cross-pollinated.¹⁵⁷ His summary of the differences between the genres of “wisdom” and “apocalyptic,” however, reveal the distinctives of Wisdom in contrast to Sirach and Proverbs and its pivotal role in wisdom’s literary history: while (1) is less crucial—the author freely mocks idols and holds humanity to blame for most of its ills, both (2) and (3) are definite features, particularly (2). Wisdom enters a new territory where a person’s response to wisdom, their actions and righteousness, have implications far beyond a lifetime.

1. The Word and The Law

In Wisdom, λόγος (15 occurrences) reveals the philosophical overtones of “reason” whilst retaining its most common meaning of “words/speech” or—as seen in Proverbs—a set of instructions. Νόμος appears only ten times, a mere third of the references in Sirach. At least three times νόμος refers to a false, human law in direct contradiction to God’s way (2:11, 12; 14:16). People create their own laws, but the text makes it clear that in so doing they sin, are foolish, and are headed for destruction (2:24). Likewise, for someone who leads and thereby claims a share of wisdom, a failure to lead according to the laws of God brings condemnation (6:4). In Wisdom, the law is something divinely given and not of human origin.¹⁵⁸

The influence of Greek philosophy on λόγος makes its most obvious appearance in 2:2 where it is best understood as “reason, rationality”: “reason (ὁ λόγος) is a spark

¹⁵⁷ However, see John J. Collins, “The Mysteries of God: Creation and Eschatology in 4QInstruction and the Wisdom of Solomon,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. F. García Martínez (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 287, where he comments: “The novelty of the worldview of the Wisdom of Solomon is commonly attributed to the influence of two factors: Hellenistic, Platonic philosophy, and Jewish apocalyptic traditions.”

¹⁵⁸ Bennema, “Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 71, calls Wisdom the “best representative” of what he calls “Spirit-centred wisdom.” He states, “The exact association, if any, between Wisdom and Torah is difficult to determine. . . . Wisdom is more the archetypal Torah, of which the Mosaic Law is but an image, i.e. the teachings of the Torah are *tokens* of divine Wisdom. . . . Wisdom’s laws are identical with Wisdom’s teaching/instruction (6:17-18), the content of which includes not only the divine commandments but also God’s will and purpose in the widest sense of the word.”

kindled by the beating of our hearts.”¹⁵⁹ This expression, however, is part of the *faulty* reasoning of the wicked, revealing their failure to understand the much more significant nature of humans as created by God and eternal creatures. In a more traditional understanding of λόγος, in 6:9 the words are the vessel by which wisdom is communicated to the rulers, the content being the unspecified totality of wisdom rather than a particular set of rules.

Lady Wisdom herself, however, has changed the referent and outcome of obedience to her law. In 6:18, for the first time obedience brings not simply life but immortality. The “law of life” from Sirach has gained an entirely new implication. In terms of the law’s content, however, Winston notes that “the author, unlike Ben Sira, nowhere explicitly identifies Wisdom with Torah,” concluding that Wisdom 6:18 “probably refers to the statues of natural law.”¹⁶⁰ Schnabel concurs, “the author of SapSal seems to avoid references to the Jewish (!) law.”¹⁶¹ Whereas Sirach has wisdom find her home in the temple of Jerusalem, the Wisdom of Solomon nowhere claims that but links wisdom closely with the divine and with those who seek her. Wisdom requires the obedience of a rational mind.

Twice, however, νόμος clearly refers to the Law of Moses. In Wisdom 16, the Israelites are said to have received punishments as a warning, εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ἐντολῆς νόμου σου (16:6b). Their discipline was for the sake of returning them to the commands so recently received at Sinai. Another allusion to this law-giving occurs, counter-intuitively, later in the text but referring to Israel’s prior escape from Egypt. In 18:4c, the authors

¹⁵⁹ Statements like this open the possibility of the Stoic interpretation of the λόγος in Jas. 1:21.

¹⁶⁰ David Winston, “Wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon,” in *In Search of Wisdom*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman (Louisville: WJK, 1993), 157. He continues, “Very likely [the author] believed with Philo that the teachings of the Torah were tokens of divine Wisdom, and that they were in harmony with the law of the universe and as such implant all the virtues in the human psyche, but when he focuses his attention on Wisdom, it is philosophy, science, and the arts that are uppermost in his mind. . . . She is clearly the archetypal Torah, of which the Mosaic law is but an image.” Collins, “The Mysteries of God,” 291, merely notes, “Incorruptability is assured by keeping the laws of wisdom,” without further defining wisdom’s law.

¹⁶¹ Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 131. He gives “possible references to the Jewish law [in] 2,12; 6,4; 9,9; 18,4.”

proclaims the Israelites were to receive τὸ ἄφθαρτον νόμου φῶς τῷ αἰῶνι,¹⁶² called again in 18:9 the “divine law” (τὸν τῆς θεϊότητος νόμον). The obedience of the Israelites during the Exodus and after preserved them as God’s people, enabling the light of the law to be given to the world.¹⁶³

Wisdom also shows the creative and healing aspects of God’s word. In Wisdom 9:1, the author begins a prayer to God by recognizing his work of creation: ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου.¹⁶⁴ Here again we see a link between ποιέω and λόγος (cf. Prov. 5:2), but here God acts by the λόγος, which itself is the agent in the creation *ex nihilo*. As well as being the creation agent, the author reveals that God’s λόγος also heals. In 16:12, he affirms, ὁ σὸς κύριε λόγος ὁ πάντας ἰώμενος. When God acts, the λόγος is his agent, a creative and redemptive force.

2. Faith and Works

Wisdom offers a nuanced perspective on faith, since its purpose is to defend Jewish monotheism and practices. It validates faith in YHWH as a reasonable choice while also utilizing traditional wisdom principles to present the rationality of the lifestyle (works) of the true Jews. Arguing for the faith and practice of the Jewish people, Wisdom presents potentially the most theological picture of God from any of the traditional wisdom texts, and also defends its view of right and wrong behavior as a necessary consequence of accepting the truth about God.

In this text, the terms πίστις and πιστός at first appear less relevant, appearing only one time each (3:14 and 3:9, respectively). Πίστις appears in the surprise praise of

¹⁶² Note the similarity of language here with Jas. 1:17: the language of giving (δίδοσθαι here vs. δόσις and δῶρημα in Jas.) as well as the mention of light (φῶς vs. “father τῶν φώτων”). Here the *law* is both what is given and what brings light, whereas James leaves the “gift” undefined but in the next verse mentions rebirth “by the λόγος of truth,” providing an interesting parallel constellations of ideas.

¹⁶³ This contra Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 132, who concludes that “the law is conceived as a universal entity. The significance of the particularistic Jewish laws is played down. The ethical perspective of the law is emphasized.”

¹⁶⁴ This as part of a threefold doctrinal affirmation: God is the God of the author’s ancestors (therefore faithful), merciful, and the creator.

the eunuch of 3:14, one of the few texts to declare a eunuch “blessed” (μακαρία, from 3:13) because of his faithfulness (πίστεως). It is immediately followed by the promise that “the fruit of good labors is renowned” (3:15).¹⁶⁵ Fruit is the reward, the logical outgrowth of a person’s works, contrasted with the destruction of the wicked foretold in both 3:10-13 and 3:16-19. The adjective πιστός in 3:9b, meanwhile, appears in context of judgment with the promise that “the faithful will abide with him in love,” the culmination of the pledge to the righteous given in 3:1. Throughout 3:9, the faithful are also described as “those who trust” (πεποιθότες), the “holy ones” (English only in parallel with 4:15), and the “elect” (ἐκλεκτοίς). “Those who act in a faithful manner” is the definition of the “elect.”

The corresponding category of “those who trust” in 3:9 indicate that verbs of “faith” and “belief” in Wisdom lean toward practical trust: a mental assent with logically following behavior. Together πείθω and πιστεύω occur nine times, with πείθω slightly more prevalent (5 uses). The Lord corrects those who sin *so that* they might put their trust in him (πιστεύω, 12:2), assumedly no longer to sin. Conversely, one shows trust by putting one’s weight on a raft *so that* one doesn’t sink (πιστεύω, 14:5). In the former, an action on God’s part leads to the obvious conclusion that people ought to put their trust in God, in the latter, it is the person’s action that shows their trust that the wood will float and save them. In both cases, the trust or faith proves salvific. Wisdom 16:26 contrasts food with the word of the Lord, proclaiming: τὸ ῥῆμά σου τοὺς σοὶ πιστεύοντας διατηρεῖ.¹⁶⁶ This biblical principle testifies to the proper relationship of God’s people to his word. The πιστεύοντας, the ones who truly trust in and believe God, will be

¹⁶⁵ Compare Jas. 3:18.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4.

sustained by his word because it teaches them how to live and brings them into the path of life.¹⁶⁷

In contrast, idolatry is the ultimate failure to trust God, who has revealed himself to all people and is the only Being worthy of worship. Chapters 13-15 repeatedly ridicule those who worship idols they created in their quest for God. Apparently, God could be found through investigation of the natural world but these people fail to persist. Instead of finding God, they create gods out of “the cast off pieces of his work” (13:12) or a “fragile piece of wood” (14:2). The author calls “the idea of making idols . . . the beginning of fornication” and “the corruption of life” (14:12). In contrast, to know God is “complete righteousness” (15:3).¹⁶⁸ In the wilderness, God’s people were saved partly because of their faithfulness to God and renunciation of idolatry (19:6). While those who acted wickedly among them were punished, the Israelites on the whole were faithful to the true God in contrast to the idolaters of other nations.

Other than avoiding idolatry, Wisdom is less specific about the works essential to a faithful person. It makes the standard censure of careless speech early on, warning in 1:11 that the result of sinful talk is destruction, a standard warning for the dangerous effects of careless and slanderous speech.¹⁶⁹ The author illustrates this warning much later in the complaints of the Israelites in the wilderness that led to their destruction by their own desires (19:11-12). The admonition for careful speech in 1:11 is followed in 1:12 by the caution not to “bring on destruction by the works (ἔργοις) of your hands.” As wrongful speech brings punishment, so also one’s works can condemn a person. Indeed, 1:9bc already linked words and deeds, for the λόγων comes to the Lord and convicts them for

¹⁶⁷ Οἱ υἱοὶ σου οὓς ἠγάπησας parallel τοὺς σοὶ πιστεύοντας, indicating an interplay between God’s initiatory love and his people’s call to faithfulness.

¹⁶⁸ Wisd 1:2b particularly foreshadows James’ warning against being “doubleminded” by doubting God, commenting “he is found by those who do not put him to the test, and manifests himself to those who do not distrust him.” If being anything other than single-minded indicates idolatry, then the doubleminded in Jas. stand condemned not merely for a lack of faith but for idolatry as well.

¹⁶⁹ This verse foreshadows Jas 3:1-12 and the havoc that can “result” from imprudent speech, while a lying tongue certainly would be described as being set on fire by *gehenna*, destroying the soul (Jas. 3:6).

their ἀνομημάτων. Their very words substantiate their guilt, a warning that recurs in 1:16 where the author warns, “the ungodly by their words (λόγοις) and deeds (χερσίν) summoned death.” Both speech and action count for—or against—a person in judgment (cf. 2:10-24).

The righteous show both the proper care for strangers and endure testing. In chapter 19, the Egyptians are condemned for a lack of hospitality in parallel with Sodom’s experience with Lot and the angels. Although almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη) is not mentioned once in Wisdom, the Egyptians are condemned for their failed charity. Meanwhile, those who endure testing gain God’s approval, as in 3:5: “Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself.”¹⁷⁰ While Wisdom makes clear that people choose their own evil deeds (1:16; or at the devil’s prompting, 2:24), it equally recognizes that people’s choices to persist in righteousness despite testing brings them life (5:15). Therefore Wisdom urges each reader to acknowledge the God who has revealed himself in history and nature and worship only him in faithfulness.

3. Judgment and Mercy

This is the first text in which a theology of the afterlife has developed, thus themes of mercy or punishment at a final judgment are possible to trace.¹⁷¹ Throughout Wisdom, God is described as merciful,¹⁷² initially to all people but in the judgment after death solely to those categorized as “the righteous.” At that point, the wicked bear the brunt of God’s unyielding wrath.¹⁷³ Thus again justice shows the two sides of mercy and judgment.

¹⁷⁰ Wisd 3:5 sets up Jas. 1:12 with its discussion of enduring πειρασμόν in order to win; likewise it parallels Jas. 1:2-4, for both texts understand trials (πειρασμός) and testing (πειράζω) as God’s work within his people, meant for their good.

¹⁷¹ Collins, “The Mysteries of God,” 293: “The hope of the righteous in Wisdom is not resurrection, but immortality. The objection is often raised that immortality in Wisdom does not derive from the inherent nature of the soul, as it does in Plato, but is a gift of God, and cogent on righteousness.”

¹⁷² Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 166, comments, “Sirach’s emphasis on divine mercy is carried forward with vigor,” but notes a parallel theme of election throughout the text.

¹⁷³ Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment*, 46, observes, “The author of this book is not the first to have presented historical eschatology and eschatology of the hereafter side by side without creating a genuine system of

Wisdom emphasizes the human responsibility, insisting “on our active participation in the divine plan and the relative freedom that characterizes our ethical role.”¹⁷⁴

Chapter one begins with how unrighteous speech and life serve to bring about one’s judgment. The audience is warned in 1:12, “Do not invite death by the error of your life,¹⁷⁵ or bring on destruction by the works of your hands.” Speech and deeds equally warrant judgment. The author notes that “justice” (ἡ δίκη), when on the wicked, will “punish” them for their sins of speech. Judgment is death without immortality. These people are described as having “invited” (1:12) and “summoned death” (1:16) through their unrighteous deeds.¹⁷⁶ In chapter 6, the rulers are warned of judgment if they fail to rule wisely (e.g., 6:2c-5). Not only will they be subject to God’s terrifying judgment, but also their public position places them in greater danger of failure and thus greater condemnation (continued in 6:6, where ἐλάχιστος can attain ἐλέους but the δυνατοὶ δὲ δυνατῶς ἐτασθήσονται; again 6:8).¹⁷⁷ While these verses do not state that leaders *cannot* receive mercy, they clearly imply that their judgment will be harder. We may also see hints of a preferential option for the poor, since the lowly more easily find God’s mercy while the leaders more readily earn judgment.

Chapter 3 balances the truth of the security of the righteous with the reality of trials on earth, explaining life’s difficulties as the way God tests his people. By enduring testing, the righteous confirm themselves to be among the faithful who “abide with him in love” (3:9). The key to chapter 3, however, is its attempt to explain the early death of the

ideas to connect the two. The same side-by-side presentation is found in the letter of Enoch (1 Enoch 91-104), a writing that demonstrates so many similarities and parallels to the book of Wisdom that it would be easy to suppose that the author of Wisdom knew the letter of Enoch, perhaps already in its Greek form.” He notes a historical change in how “judgment” was perceived applicable to this time period: “Only near the end of the first century C.E. do indications of a judgment on sinners *and* righteous appear” (155).

¹⁷⁴ Winston, “Wisdom in Wisdom,” 163.

¹⁷⁵ The description ἐν πλάνῃ ζωῆς and its link with death foreshadows James’ description of the person in 5:19 who πλανηθῆ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας, a wandering which would lead that one to death as well.

¹⁷⁶ Winston, “Wisdom in Wisdom,” 161, finds the blame for “the coming of Death [sits] squarely on the shoulders of humanity, who have circumvented God’s original intent to exclude that sinister figure from his blissful world.”

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Jas. 3:1 and the description there of a sterner judgment (μεῖζον κρίμα) for leaders.

faithful. Overturning the expectation that the reward of the righteous is long life, Wisdom deals with those who have died young. Seeing their early deaths as God's gift to spare them further testing, the author is able to expand this as an answer for others who were righteous and yet died young.¹⁷⁸ Wisdom 5:15-16 then shows the reward of the righteous in several ways, the first being eternal life (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσιν, v. 15a) as a reward (μισθός, v. 15b). It also states that they will receive from the Lord a crown (βασίλειον, v. 16).¹⁷⁹ In Wisdom, continued life and the glorious crown are specifically described as a *reward* from the Lord, the just outcome for their righteous life (cf. the μισθὸν κόπων, 10:17).¹⁸⁰ Ultimately, 6:10 emphasizes: οἱ γὰρ φυλάξαντες ὁσίως τὰ ὅσια ὀσιωθήσονται. Those who observe holiness *will be made* holy by God, or rather, God judges as holy those who have acted in a holy manner.

Wisdom 3:9c and 4:15 create an inclusio, emphasizing the opposite fortunes of the various characters depicted between them in the text. The two citations read:

ὅτι χάρις καὶ ἔλεος τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς αὐτοῦ (3:9c)
. . . because grace and mercy are upon [. . . his elect]
 ὅτι χάρις καὶ ἔλεος ἐν τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπισκοπὴ ἐν τοῖς ὀσίοις αὐτοῦ (4:15)
*. . . that God's grace and mercy are with his elect, and that he watches over his holy ones.*¹⁸¹

Contextually, since in 3:9 these righteous have already been tested and died, the implication is soteriological and eschatological. Likewise, in 4:15 Enoch has “been taken,” so the implication is again soteriological. The author uses **χάρις** throughout the rest of the book to indicate a gift (8:21; 14:26), while **ἔλεος** is both a character trait of God (9:1) and a trait of God's rule (6:6; 11:9; 12:22; 15:1). Combining the terms, these verses serve to

¹⁷⁸ See Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 170.

¹⁷⁹ James' description of the **στέφανος τῆς ζωῆς** in 1:12 almost seems a combination of all three descriptions.

¹⁸⁰ Collins, “The Mysteries of God,” 294, cautions, “Immortality was not strictly a reward for righteousness, however. It was the original design of the creator for all humanity” (294).

¹⁸¹ The NRSV follows some MSS in 3:9 to add greater parallelism: “because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect” where the LXX has what is copied above. Likewise, NRSV 4:15 incorporates LXX 4:14b thus making the English verse longer.

summarize the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly, a mark upon the righteous that sets them in stark opposition with the punishment the wicked “deserve” (3:10).

From chapter 10 onward, the author emphasizes the role of Wisdom in guiding and guarding the “righteous” because of their righteousness, while the “wicked” fail to please God. Wisdom 11:9-10 clarifies that the Israelites were ἐν ἐλέει παιδευόμενοι, in contrast to the “ungodly” who were μετ’ ὀργῆς κρινόμενοι. While the Israelites were punished for disobedience, this discipline in itself was *mercy*, a warning received only by this “holy people and blameless race,” not by the “ungodly.”¹⁸² The author continues with an excursus on the divine mercy, proclaiming God as “merciful (ἐλεεῖς) to all, for you can do all things, and you overlook people’s sins, so that they may repent” (11:23).¹⁸³ He sees the purpose of God’s discipline as salvation, however futile, as with the Canaanites in 12:10.¹⁸⁴ This verse has the only biblical precedent for the term ἔμφυτος,¹⁸⁵ presenting the reader with a group who *cannot* repent because their wickedness is inherent to their very being.

In final contrasts of God’s mercy and judgment, idolators and the Egyptians are highlighted as deserving God’s just judgment (δίκη ἐπεξέρχεται, 14:31) for their sins, even while God’s people rest confidently in his mercy (15:1-3). Failure to know God makes one an idolator and sinner; knowing God leads to immortality. Wisdom is apportioned to the righteous, God acts graciously toward those who seek him and turn to him in repentance, and it is the “righteous,” “holy” people of God whom he acts to

¹⁸² The people appear to have remained the holy people despite their need for discipline: perfection, or at least righteousness, entails a correct response to discipline.

¹⁸³ In 12:26 the reader is warned that those who ignore “mild rebukes will experience the deserved judgment of God.” Winston, “Wisdom in Wisdom,” 161, speculates that “the author of the Wisdom of Solomon may have anticipated the interpretation known to us from later times from R. Simeon b. Lakish’s comment on Exod 10:1 that ‘when God warns a man once, twice, and even a third time, and he still does not repent, then does God close his heart against repentance so that he shall exact vengeance from him for his sins’ (*Exod. Rab.* 13.3).”

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 161, notes “The Canaanites are a special case, claims Amir, since the author is clearly referring to their condition of being accursed from the very first as specified in Gen 9:25.” Thus the author can claim both that God loves all of his creation (11:24) and also recognize that the Canaanites will never repent because their wickedness is too inborn.

¹⁸⁵ An interpretive crux for Jas. 1:21.

defend and even chastises in order to preserve them unto eternity. By contrast, the wicked—as the only other group pictured—justly receive God’s judgment of death and fail to attain immortality.¹⁸⁶

D. 4QINSTRUCTION¹⁸⁷

This text serves as the example from the diversity of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Harrington argues, “the Qumran wisdom writings were part of larger post-exilic Jewish movements toward collecting and codifying Israel’s wisdom during the so-called Second Temple period.”¹⁸⁸ A well attested wisdom text,¹⁸⁹ 4QInstruction has only survived in what Goff calls “tattered remnants,”¹⁹⁰ a reality which makes discerning the theology of the whole difficult. Describing the work, Harrington comments:

This Qumran sapiential work is a wisdom instruction expressed in small units and put together without much apparent concern for logical or thematic progression. In form and content it is similar to Sirach, parts of Proverbs (especially 22:17-24:22), late Egyptian wisdom writings, Jesus’ instructions in the Synoptic Gospels, and the letter of James. . . . the work presupposes a secular or non-‘monastic’ setting. The one being instructed engages in business, has dealings with all kinds of people, and may marry a wife and have children.¹⁹¹

The possibility that this text was intended for a broader audience opens the chance that this wisdom text held wider appeal beyond the sectarian community that preserved it. This

¹⁸⁶ Collins, “The Mysteries of God,” 292, observes, “Wisdom does not refer to any punishment of the wicked after death; it appears that they simply cease to exist.”

¹⁸⁷ = 1Q26; 4Q415-418, 423. See Donald W. Parry and Emmanuel Tov, ed., *Calendrical and Sapiential Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) for the texts and translations.

¹⁸⁸ Harrington, *Wisdom Texts*, 7. He sees Proverbs and Sirach as providing clear contribution to this text in vocabulary, structure, and some themes, and also finds 1 Enoch essential particularly for understanding the theodicy and esoteric character of 4QInstruction (pp. 9-11). Of the Wisdom of Solomon, he states “That work reflects the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Alexandria in Egypt in the first century. . . . There is nothing like this at Qumran” (13). In contrast, Collins, “The Mysteries of God,” 291, sees commonalities between this text and Wisdom: “There are some clear points of analogy between the $\text{הַיְהוָה הַיָּדוּשׁ}$ in the text from Qumran and the mysteries of God in the Wisdom of Solomon. In both texts, understanding the mystery is the key to right behavior. This is so primarily because it discloses the ultimate outcome of righteous or wicked behavior—the reward of piety and the prize of blameless souls, in the idiom of Wisdom, or ‘who is to inherit glory and iniquity’ in the phrase of 4Q Instruction.”

¹⁸⁹ Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1, affirms “at least six copies of 4QInstruction were found at Qumran.” See also *Ibid.*, “The Mystery of Creation in 4QInstruction,” *DSD* 10 (2003), 163-86.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹¹ Harrington, *Wisdom Texts*, 40-41. Torleif Elgvin, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Early Second Century BCE – The Evidence of 4QInstruction,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years After Their Discovery*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Emanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 247, observes, “The combination of belonging to a community while at the same time living in an open society and dealing with outsiders, has parallels in the *Epistle of Enoch*.”

text, oriented toward life in the world, presents us with a complex audience in the Judean area of the first century BCE,¹⁹² thereby potentially giving us a close textual cousin to James in worldview, theology, and language.¹⁹³

1. *The Word and The Law*

4QInstruction does not reference **תורה**, instead placing a strong emphasis on the **רז נהיה**, the exact identity of which remains a mystery.¹⁹⁴ Much like the Torah elsewhere, this **רז** is to be studied, meditated upon and obeyed,¹⁹⁵ while the content apparently covers eschatological topics such as creation and judgment.¹⁹⁶ This emphasis on a mystery that has been revealed creates an interesting tension with traditional wisdom instruction, causing Harrington to defend 4QInstruction as “a wisdom instruction with apocalyptic features . . . 4QInstruction presents wisdom in an apocalyptic framework.”¹⁹⁷ Throughout the whole, the **רז נהיה** provides the hidden revelation of God to those who choose to dedicate themselves to its study.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 1, presents the various conclusions of Cross, Strugnel, Collins, and Elgvin for dating.

¹⁹³ Blenkinsopp, “Interpretation and Sectarianism,” 25 comments, “Both the Qumran community and early Christianity, on which alone we are reasonably well informed, appear to have thought of themselves, if not as the ‘true Israel’ in an absolutely exclusive sense, then at least as the nucleus of the Israel of the last days which God was preparing even then to inaugurate.”

¹⁹⁴ Daniel J. Harrington, “The *rāz nibeyeh* in a Qumran Wisdom Text (1Q26, 4Q415-418, 423),” *RevQ* 17 (1996), 550, states, “The expression *rāz nibyeh* occurs about thirty times (including reconstructions) in the sapiential work represented by 1Q26 and 4Q415-418, 423. It is so frequent and so regular in the work that when we find either word alone and need to fill in a lacuna, we can add the missing word with some confidence.” He later adds, “We may be able to get some idea of the content of the *rāz nibyeh* by attending to some of its parallel expressions. . . . It appears that the *rāz nibyeh* is associated with the knowledge of righteousness and iniquity,” while some of the parallels “suggest an eschatological dimension” (552).

¹⁹⁵ E.g., 4Q416 2 iii 9 (par 4Q418 9 8); 4Q417 1 i 18 (par 4Q418 43 16).

¹⁹⁶ E.g., 4Q417 1 i 8 (par 4Q418 43 6); 4Q418 77 2-4.

¹⁹⁷ Daniel J. Harrington, “Wisdom and Apocalyptic in 4QInstruction and 4 Ezra,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. F. García Martínez (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 335. This, in defence from Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 51, who argues “The epistemology of 4QInstruction is closer to that of apocalypticism than biblical wisdom. In this text wisdom is acquired through the contemplation of revealed mysteries rather than from knowledge the addressee can acquire on his own.” Elgvin, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism,” 226, suggests “that the composition represents a conflation of two literary layers: (1) an older layer of admonitions advocating traditional sapiential viewpoints, and (2) a younger, more apocalyptic layer consisting of longer discourses,” dating “the second layer to the mid-second century BCE.” This separation of layers, however, does not seem necessary.

¹⁹⁸ Bennema, “Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 78, sees Qumran as a slightly independent wisdom tradition: “in the Qumran community charismatic exegesis—the Spirit-inspired interpretation of the true meaning of

4Q417 1 i 8-9 gives us an example of the creational aspect of the **רז נהיה**, using the language of creation in relation to themes of wisdom and truth¹⁹⁹:

... כִּי אֵל הַדְּעוֹת סוֹד אֱמֶת וּבְרַז נִהְיָה
פֶּרֶשׂ אֶת אֹשֶׁה וּמַעֲשֵׂה הָ [לכל חכמה ולכל ע]רמה יצרה וממשלת מעשיה

... For the God of knowledge is the *foundation* of truth And *by/on* the mystery that is to come
 He has *laid out* its (= truth's) *foundation*, And its deeds [He has *prepared with all wis*]dom
 And with all [*unning has He fashioned it*, And the *domain* of its *deeds* (*creatures*)

Here, the more traditional creation language associated with Wisdom in wisdom instruction texts has given way to less clear terms. For the author(s) of 4QInstruction, it is now this “mystery that is to be/come”²⁰⁰ that is the essential teacher for how to live, bringing together creation and judgment. Harrington notes that “if fragment 1 of 4Q416 is indeed the beginning of the great sapiential instruction, then it must have provided the theological perspective in which the sage’s advice on various issues was to be interpreted.”²⁰¹ Wisdom and Torah have been replaced by revealed mystery,²⁰² which claims superiority to that which was earlier revealed. The author(s) link the creation order of the world with the legal, judgment order, all contained within one mystery which, like the Torah in Sirach, the wise individual will study.²⁰³

2. Faith and Works

As any wisdom instruction, *how* one lives is essential. Goff argues that the community is united by a common poverty rather than by “theological disputes or by

the Torah—is the hermeneutical key to reveal this saving wisdom. . . . Nevertheless, salvation within the Qumran community is, as in the Torah-centred wisdom tradition, also based on human effort: one needs to study and observe the Torah (1QS 5:7-10), and to observe the disciplines of the community (1:QS 5-7).”

¹⁹⁹ This parallels James’ language in 1:18 of birth *by* the word of truth. Whereas James seems to conflate **λόγος** and **νόμος**, however, his creational language has ties to legal language and fits within context of wisdom instruction.

²⁰⁰ Following Harrington, “The *nāz nihēyeh*,” 551.

²⁰¹ Harrington, *Wisdom Texts*, 41.

²⁰² Contra Lange (as cited in Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 70, 72), who sees the mystery as compatible with the Torah in contemporary understanding. Although it may be a similar ordering principle for the world, the **רז נהיה** in these texts is *the* creation tool and *the* standard by which the world will be judged, not one that parallels a previously given legal code and revelation.

²⁰³ This sort of link helps to support James’ connection of the creative, “birthing” Word with the Law that governs behavior. Likewise this text’s consistent emphasis upon gazing and meditating upon the **רז נהיה** parallels James’ **παρακύψας** and **παραμείνας** upon the perfect law.

oppression from foreign rulers.”²⁰⁴ Harrington concurs: “The poverty spoken about . . . does not seem to be a spiritual ideal. . . . Rather, it reflects the realities of life in the world for those who (wisely) pursue higher goals and serves as a symbol for the limitations inherent in the human condition.”²⁰⁵ The author’s concern, then, is a religious life in the context of poverty. The audience’s trials range from struggling with a proper handling of finances to a proper understanding of humility. The text deals with spouses, debt, oaths, and parents, prescribing a faithful way of life while consistently pointing toward the נהייה רן as the guide. “Faith” as a more abstract concept does not appear to focus in the text, but instead the faithful will study the רן נהייה and obey it in their daily life situations.

Following a series of instructions including care for one’s oaths (8), obeying the commands (8-9), avoiding enviousness (11), serving one’s master faithfully (12-16), urging one’s service “in spirit” but not selling oneself as a slave (16-18), 4Q416 2 ii ends with a section recognizing the audience’s poverty and teaching them how to live within it (18c-21a):

	אל תשבִיעַ לחֵם . . .	
	ואִין כֶּסֶת אֵל תִּשֶׂה יַיִן וְאִין אֶכֶל אֵל תִּדְרוֹשׁ תִּעֲנוּג וְאִתָּה	<i>vacat</i>
	חֶסֶר לַחֵם אֵל תִּתְכַבֵּד בְּמַחְסוֹרְכָה וְאִתָּה רֹאֵשׁ פֶּן	<i>vacat</i>
	תְּבֹזֵ חַיִּיכָה	<i>vacat</i>
	. . . Do not sate thyself with food	
<i>vacat</i>	when <i>there is</i> no clothing, And do not drink wine when there is no food.	
	Do not seek after delicacies when thou	
<i>vacat</i>	lackest (even) bread. Do not esteem thyself highly for thy poverty when	
	thou art (anyhow?) a pauper, Lest	
<i>vacat</i>	thou <i>bring into</i> contempt thy (own <i>way</i>) of life.	

While the text to this point has been very concerned that its audience members not indebted themselves to others, this passage provides very practical methods of living within one’s means, varied as those means may be. In many ways, this section functions as a warning against a pretension that leads to debt. Intriguingly, however, it *also* functions as a rare

²⁰⁴ Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 229.

²⁰⁵ Harrington, *Wisdom Texts*, 46.

warning against pride *in being poor*. While wisdom literature often condemns the rich for wrongful means of becoming wealthy, here the warning is to humility *in* poverty because in itself it is not a state of virtue. Honor, instead, always goes to God who “glorifies” the poor and “lifts up” their heads from poverty (4Q416 2 iii 10c-11).²⁰⁶ Goff argues that in 4QInstruction:

poverty is used in different ways. It often refers to the material poverty of the addressee. The declaration that he has been lifted out of poverty is a metaphor for his elect status. The addressee is poor but his elect status is portrayed as a form of wealth. The depiction of the addressee’s elect status as a type of wealth explains why 4QInstruction exhibits none of the hatred for the rich that is characteristic of the *Epistle of Enoch*. . . . The ‘you are poor’ refrain is also employed to discourage boasting.²⁰⁷

Because of their election, the poor are neither subservient to or in competition with the wealthy. Boasting, however, either in poverty or election is forbidden.

Meanwhile, in context of immersing oneself in the study of the רז נהיה, 4Q417 1

i 6b-8a reveals the result of examination:

... ואז תדש אמת ועול חכמה
 [ואול]ת[ת חן] מְעִשָׁה [ה] בְּכֹל דְּרָכֵיהֶם עִם פְּקוּדָתָם לְכֹל קִצֵּי עוֹלָם וּפְקוּדָתָ
 עַד וְאִז תִּדְעַ בֵּין [טָרָב לְ]רַע [כִּי] מְעִשָׂיהֶם [. . .]

And then thou shalt know truth and iniquity, wisdom
 [and foolish]ness *thou shalt [recognize], every ac[t] in all their ways, Together with their
 punishment(s) in all ages everlasting, And the punishment
 of eternity. Then thou shalt discern between the [good] and [evil according to
 their] deeds.*

The direct result of meditating upon the רז נהיה is the individual’s ability to see the difference between good and evil actions and to distinguish between good and evil *people* based on their *deeds* (and by default understand their eternal punishment).

The theme of knowing right and wrong continues. First the audience is encouraged to understand “how he should walk [p]erfec[t in all] his [ac]tions” (4Q417 1 i

²⁰⁶ This follows with the warning: “do not say, ‘I am needy, And I will n[ot] study (?) knowledge. Bring thy shoulder under all instruction” (4Q416 2 iii 12c-13a). Unlike Sirach, which views study as the wealthier person’s prerogative, 4QInstruction sees the study of the רז נהיה as each person’s responsibility.

²⁰⁷ Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 151. He later concludes, “The addressee is not angry at the wealthy because he is promised eschatological rewards that are more valuable than anything possessed by the rich” (229), suggestive of Jas. 1:9-11 and the overturning there.

12a), “for every one who is contaminated] with {evildoing} shall not be treated as guiltless” (4Q417 1 i 23b-24a). Sins are like a moral stain that contaminates the person.²⁰⁸ Acting in defiance of the רַז נְהִיָּה leads to accountability, for they will be neither “unpunished” nor considered “clean,” and as such will be accountable not only to God but also to the community as outside the accepted bounds for behavior.

Regarding speech-ethics, 4Q417 2 i (par. 4Q416 2 i) 1-4a deals with the proper ways for rebuking or responding to various people, but ends with the injunction: do not overlook thy own sins.²⁰⁹ In the midst of commands regarding reproof or forgiving others,²¹⁰ this caution stands out. All speech is to be done from the perspective of humility that does not ignore one’s own shortcomings (reiterated in 4Q417 2 i 14 in context of judging the poor). The author encourages humility so strongly because contextually he is moving to the awareness of God’s sovereign judgment and the need for humility before Him.²¹¹ Goff notes that “the humility that 4QInstruction recommends is associated with poverty. This is . . . emphasized by the word עֲנִי itself, which can refer to both poverty and humility.”²¹² Despite the addressee’s sinful nature, acting according to the ethics of humility and poverty can help to spare one from judgment.

3. Judgment and Mercy

“4QInstruction teaches that everyone will be judged. This is used as an incentive for the addressee to be ethical.”²¹³ Facing judgment, the addressee can hope for a positive outcome by studying and living according to the רַז נְהִיָּה. “Mercy” is given to all of

²⁰⁸ Cf. Jas. 1:21 and its language of moral filth.

²⁰⁹ וְאֵל תִּעְבֹּר עַל פְּשָׁעֶיכָהּ . . .

²¹⁰ Catherine M. Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 175, views this section as teaching how one should relate to nobles, but Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 151 fn. 99, does not find her arguments convincing.

²¹¹ Harrington, *Wisdom Texts*, 55. This is the only place he highlights a wisdom text focusing on judgment, one which “may reflect the integration of prophetic/eschatological material into the wisdom tradition.”

²¹² Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 163.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 204.

humanity, to sustain life, while “judgment” relates to the condemnation of the wicked while the righteous are able to “stand” before God.

Beginning this picture, 4Q416 1 10 (par. 4Q418 1), states:

מְשֻׁמִּים יִשְׁפּוֹט עַל עֲבוֹדַת רְשָׁעָה וְכָל בְּנֵי אֲמִתּוֹ יִרְצֶוּ לָּ...]

From Heaven He shall pronounce judgment upon the *work* of wickedness, But all His faithful Children will be accepted with favour by [Him...

While the following verses continue this train of thought, warning against the “dread” those under God’s judgment will feel and promising a future age of perfection after iniquity is judged and destroyed, this line is simplest, spelling out the dichotomy between the judgment the wicked have earned by their works and the acceptance (mercy?) granted the faithful. The chosen faithful here are most likely those within the community who obey the laws of the community,²¹⁴ following the ordered nature of creation (4Q416 1 2-8).²¹⁵ Regardless, when God enacts justice, judgment and salvation are the opposing results (see again 4Q418 126.ii.6-8).

In contrast with this future judgment, mercy appears in 4Q416 2 ii 1 (par 4Q417 2 ii+23), which presents God’s natural mercy to all people. Picking up the “for He” from the previous column, column two continues:

כִּי הוּא // פֶּתַח רַחֲמָיו לְמַלְאָא כִּי לְמַחֲסוּרֵי אוֹתוֹ וּלְהַתְרָף לְכָל חַי וְאִיִּן]

For He // has unloosed [His] mer[cies toward every man So as to fill] up all the def[iciencies of His secrets, And to give food] to all that lives, And there is no[one who will die of hunger.

²¹⁴ John Kampen, “‘Righteousness’ in Matthew and the Legal Texts from Qumran,” in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies Cambridge 1995*, ed. Moshe Bernstein, Florentino García Martínez and John Kampen (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 479, argues regarding the terms צַדִּיק and צַדִּיקָה in the Qumran literature that “the difference may not be simply a matter of a ‘stricter standard,’ but rather the significance of belonging to a particular ‘chosen’ group, which has exclusive claim to the ‘way of righteousness.’ This is a very different usage than the emerging definition in Tannaitic literature, which relates the word group more directly to the usage of צַדִּיקָה as almsgiving and צַדִּיק to mean ‘mercy.’ In Qumran literature we rather see that they are directly related to the group’s sectarian identity.”

²¹⁵ Walter Grundmann, “The Teacher of Righteousness of Qumran and the Question of Justification by Faith in the Theology of the Apostle Paul,” in *Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament Exegesis*, ed. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor (London: Chapman, 1968), 98, posits, “the brotherhood of Qumran received from the Teacher of Righteousness a rule in which a very strict interpretation of the Torah is given, and a conscientious attitude towards the Torah is encouraged and put into practice. . . . Salvation is won by faithful adherence to his person and teaching, by the suffering which the Teacher’s followers endure, probably because of this fidelity, and by accomplishment of the Torah.”

The author defines the “mercies” of the Lord in terms of God feeding everything that lives, enabling life to continue. This “mercy” bears no relation to the contrast of judgment and salvation but instead functions as a general term for God sustaining the world in an orderly fashion so that wisdom can function. This example illustrates the complete dependence of all creation on God’s mercy and implies humanity’s responsibility toward God in response.

4Q416 3 3-5 appear to deal with the promised time when wickedness is ultimately judged and wiped out, consoling the readers in the midst of trials of God’s loving nature.

[...עד תוס רשעה כי חרון בכל ק]ץ
 [לא תִּזְכָּר צַרָה כִּי גְדֹלִים רַחֲמֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאִין קִיץ]
 ... Until wickedness *comes to an end*, For there will be wrath in every *pe[riod]*]
 [affliction will *not perish*, For great are the mercies of God, And there is no end
 [to His *lovingkindnesses*]

The author praises God that there will be a time when wickedness will end and that, seemingly *despite* “affliction” in the current age, God’s people do not perish because they are the recipients of his mercy. The judgment, however, is “effective throughout history,”²¹⁶ thereby explaining why there is “wrath in every period.” This text also pairs the recognition of God coming in wrath and judgment with the promise that he is compassionate and merciful. The threat of judgment thus doubles as encouragement to the righteous.

As seen above, 4Q417 2 i 14-16 (par 4Q416 2 i) reminds the reader not to “*overlook thy own [si]ns,*” but to seek justice. What follows in lines 15-16 is the crucial motivating factor for obedience:

... יִרְאֶה אֱלֹהִים וְשָׁב אַפּוֹ וְעָבַר עַל חַטָּאוֹתֶיךָ [כִּי] אֵל לִפְנֵי [אַפּוֹ]
 [לֹא יַעֲמֹד כּוֹל וּמִי יִצְדַק בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבְלִי סְלִיחָה] אֵיכָה [יִקּוּם לִפְנֵי כּוֹל]
 ... And then God will *be seen*, and His anger *will abate*, and He will overlook thy
 sins. [Fo]r *before* [His *anger*]
 none will stand, And who will be declared righteous when *He gives* judgment? And
 without forgiveness [h]ow [can any poor man stand before Him?]

²¹⁶ Goff, *Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 190, while recognizing that 4Q416 4 1 “discusses judgment as coming in one ‘period of wrath.’”

The author here acknowledges that without God's forgiveness, every human is helpless before his judgment. Therefore while some lines appear to demand complete righteousness, those are tempered by ones like this that acknowledge every person's need for forgiveness. Obedience in just judging, particularly as relates to the poor, however, is crucial for how one stands before God in that time of judgment. Merciful judgment as a human apparently aids in abating God's anger. This passage also warns for humility before God in his judgment as every person exists in a state of condemnation and one can only "stand" before him because he forgives.

While some of the other fragments are enticing, with words or phrases such as "righteous deeds" and "judgment" appearing, without context one cannot say to what those phrases apply, thus making them less helpful. But on the whole 4QInstruction reveals typical wisdom patterns wherein obedience to God's law is rewarded by his approbation while disobedience brings condemnation and destruction. While occasional references to election are made, which could lead to understanding that the authors viewed themselves as an elect community and *therefore* warranting God's mercy, the basic pattern remains categorical for the "righteous" and "wicked."²¹⁷

E. OTHER WISDOM: EPISTLE OF ENOCH, PSEUDO-PHOCYLIDES, 4 MACCABEES

These three texts are grouped together largely for reasons of space. While each has something to offer to the discussion, no one in particular needs a full-length discussion.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ 4QInstruction offered the most sustained theology to be examined. Other texts, such as the Book of Mysteries and the Treatise on the Two Spirits, do not significantly move this discussion forward, revealing the same dichotomy between the righteous and the wicked where the latter are the recipients of God's judgment (*cf.* 1Q27 1.i.6; 4Q299 59.2-4; 1QS IV.12-14). Grundmann, "Teacher of Righteousness," 96, notes, "In the Hymns of Thanksgiving man's justice and God's mercy are directly linked" (*cf.* 1QH 13:16-17). Regarding the Scrolls more generally, Yinger, *Paul, Judaism*, 138, concludes, "Divine judgment according to deeds did not amount to a future (and currently unknowable) determination as to whether one had measured up. It was rather the inevitable sentence upon those who had distained God and his ways as revealed in the sect. . . . Thus for believers there would, in one sense, be no eschatological judgment (= punishment) according to deeds, at least as long as they remained faithfully within the sect and its way of life. . . . Salvation, while *already* assured to the sectary on the basis of grace and the covenant, had *not yet* arrived in its eschatological fulfillment, and thus would only be experienced in that Eschaton *if* one remained in that grace and covenantal relationship."

²¹⁸ James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 78, explains, "the documents in the

The Epistle of Enoch is comprised of *1 Enoch* 91-107, or alternatively 92-105, with chapter 91 functioning as a narrative bridge and 106-107 as an appendix regarding Noah's birth.²¹⁹ The suggested date for this text ranges from 200BCE to 50CE.²²⁰ The Epistle provides us with what is perhaps the quintessential example of apocalyptic wisdom wherein right living is grounded in illustrations of future rewards or punishment.²²¹ Pseudo-Phocylides, most closely estimated as between 30 B.C. and 40 C.E.,²²² provides much more traditional-style wisdom. Evans notes the contrast between stated and likely authorship: "The author of this poem claims to be Phocylides, an Ionic poet who lived in Miletus in the sixth century B.C.E. The real author was likely a Jew who wished to show that Jewish ethics had been taught long ago by a respected gentile ethicist."²²³ In contrast yet again, 4 Maccabees, most likely from the first century C.E.,²²⁴ "is a philosophical treatise that attempts to show in terms of Greek philosophy that the Jewish faith is the true religion. The book teaches that martyrdom is a substitutionary atonement that expiates the sins of the nations (1:11; 6:27-29. . . ; 17:21; 18:14)."²²⁵ The text uses the martyrdoms of Eleazar as well as the family of seven sons to teach the value of reason and self-control, as well as the need for righteous

Pseudepigrapha are not primarily important because they are cited by the New Testament authors; they are significant because they reveal the *Zeitgeist* of Early Judaism and the matrix of earliest Christianity."

²¹⁹ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch*, 10-12, support the latter grouping. For our purposes here, chapters 92-93 will not be included in the discussion, as 92 is an introduction and 93 is the Apocalypse of Weeks. Chapter 94, where the two ways instruction begins, shall mark our functional start to the Epistle.

²²⁰ Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 29. James Davila, "The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha as Background to the New Testament," *ExpT* 117 (2006), 56, has concluded that the Epistle of Enoch "can be shown to be Jewish on external grounds" and thus "fair game as Jewish background to the New Testament."

²²¹ Kampen, "'Righteousness' in Matthew," 478, observes, "Of the various sections which make up 1 Enoch, the final Epistle has the strongest sectarian orientation. Here 'the wise' and 'the righteous' are both appellations used to describe those of the author's own persuasion, continuing the identification throughout the section already proposed concerning the Apocalypse of Weeks. . . . There is, however, strong evidence to indicate the manner in which 'the righteous' and 'righteousness' are again used to indicate a sectarian way of life and its adherents."

²²² Pieter Van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 568. This text is the source for the translations of Pseudo-Phocylides.

²²³ Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 56.

²²⁴ Anderson, "4 Maccabees," 534. This text is the source for the translations of 4 Maccabees.

²²⁵ Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 55.

obedience to the Law despite persecution.²²⁶ These three texts provide examples of the various applications of wisdom to the thought world of the first century C.E., and so can help to broaden our perceptions of the various paths wisdom literature took in defining the righteous life.

1. The Word and The Law

The eleven uses of λόγος in the Epistle of Enoch²²⁷ reveal a theological undertone to the term. While most refer to speech of some sort, there is a clear distinction between the “words of the righteous” which may be equated to more general wisdom writing, or more particularly to the words of Enoch or the plot-filled speech of the wicked. Three uses of λόγος (97:6; 99:10; 100:9) relate to speech/works and so will be considered in the “faith and works” section. The Epistle does not use νόμος once (nor does *1 Enoch*), and the one use of ἐντολή in 99:10 again belongs under the “works” section. Instead, we will see that the author(s) view the teaching in *1 Enoch* to be the content for knowing God’s will.²²⁸

The section from 98:9-99:2 contains eight “woes,” each directed against those who fail in various ways: the fools, the stiff-necked, those “who love deeds of iniquity” (v. 12), but the final verses deal with false words. In 98:14-15, there are two separate woes:

οὐαὶ ὑμῖν βουλόμενοι ἀκυρῶσαι τοὺς λόγους τῶν δικαίων· οὐ μὴ
γένηται ὑμῖν ἐλπίς σωτηρίας. οὐαὶ ὑμῖν οἱ γράφοντες λόγους ψευδεῖς
καὶ λόγους πλανήσεως· αὐτοὶ γράφουσιν καὶ πολλοὺς
ἀποπλανήσουσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν αὐτῶν·
*Woe to you who annul the words of the righteous; you will have no hope of salvation. Woe to
those who write lying words and words of error; they write and lead many astray with their lies
<when they hear them.>*

²²⁶ Davila, “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,” 56, determines this text to be “Jewish beyond reasonable doubt (mainly on internal criteria),” but warns, “One should perhaps be somewhat more cautious about using these for New Testament background, since they may be considerably later than the New Testament writings. But they certainly give us valuable firsthand information about Judaism in the Hellenistic period or the first few centuries CE.”

²²⁷ Translations for *1 Enoch* are taken from Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch*.

²²⁸ Bennema, “Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 75, calls this text a prime example of apocalyptic wisdom. Here “Wisdom leads to right ethical conduct, righteousness and (eschatological) salvation/eternal life (5:8-9; 37:4; 48:1); to accept the words of wisdom is to follow Yahweh’s way, which is the way of righteousness toward (eschatological) salvation (99:10). Moreover, those who have gained wisdom will become a source of wisdom themselves (82:2-3; 104:12-105:1).”

The first woe stands against those who actively twist the words of revelation. By changing the “words,” they bring condemnation upon themselves. Presumably these “words of the righteous” are either specifically the teaching in *1 Enoch* or the approved body of wisdom literature (τῶν δικαίων being plural, it most likely does not refer solely to Enoch).

Likewise in verse 15 are those who are actively involved in leading people astray with their words—doubly described as lying words and straying words. Argall notes, “The addresses in the oracles are characterized as rival sages and teachers who do not accept Enochic wisdom (98:9, 14; 99:2) and who lead others astray (98:15).”²²⁹ These contrary wisdom teachers, among whom Argall counts Sirach, face destruction for their dual crimes of misrepresenting the *content* of the words of Enoch and teaching a wrong *content* of their own.²³⁰

The “woe” in 99:2 links λόγοι and the διαθήκη, where the latter further defines the former: “Woe to you who alter the true words (τοὺς λόγους τοὺς ἀληθινούς) and pervert the everlasting covenant (τὴν αἰώνιον διαθήκην) and consider themselves to be without sin.” Again condemning other wisdom teachers outside the Enochic school, the “words” here are the true teaching of Israel’s covenant. By “altering” the words in their own presentation, these teachers pervert the covenant itself. Argall notes, “The rival interpreters of Torah have hopes for good things because they consider themselves observant Jews (99:2c). . . . What the opponents least expect will happen to them.”²³¹

We see these links between false teaching and condemnation again in 104:9 in the concluding statements of the epistle: “Do not err (πλανᾶσθε) in your hearts or lie (ψεύδεσθε), or alter the words of truth (τοὺς λόγους τῆς ἀληθείας),²³² or falsify the words of the Holy One (τῶν λόγων τοῦ ἁγίου), or give praise to your errors. For it is

²²⁹ Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 181.

²³⁰ Cf. the warning in Jas. 3:1 of the accountability teachers must be ready to face for misleading others.

²³¹ Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 206, adding, “this author regards them as false teachers and states that the Day of the Lord will dash their hopes of salvation.”

²³² Cf. Jas. 1:18, and the birth λόγῳ ἀληθείας.

not to righteousness (οὐ . . . εἰς δικαίωμα) that all your lies and all your error lead, but to great sin (πλάνη).” Here the author first encourages his hearers to proper obedience. He quickly changes direction, however, warning them against either twisting the words of Enoch (v. 11) themselves or following those who do so. Again, more than mere speech, the “words” are the full content of the teaching of Enoch in opposition, potentially, to the teaching of Sirach.²³³

Ultimately, the Epistle of Enoch calls for a commitment to its teaching as the only method of salvation (100:6): “And the wise among men will see the truth, and the sons of the earth will contemplate these words of this epistle (ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους τούτους τῆς ἐπιστολῆς), and they will recognize that their wealth cannot save them when iniquity collapses.” The only thing able to save a person is obedience to the words of this wisdom school. The “words of this epistle,” warning of judgment for those outside the community and encouraging endurance in the righteous, stand in opposition to other teachings and demand wholehearted commitment.²³⁴

As with the Epistle of Enoch, Pseudo-Phocylides mentions neither νόμος nor ἐντολή. There are, however, four uses of λόγος in Pseudo-Phocylides, two referring to wise versus foolish or hasty speech (20; 124), and one in the caution that speech (λόγος) is the main weapon that humans have (128).²³⁵ This latter section is concerned with the intersection of speech and wisdom, for the author states that God has given all the animals various weapons as a “natural” (ἔμφυτος) means of defense, but given “reason” (λόγος) to humans for their protection. In contrast to humanity’s harsh speech, the author

²³³ Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 96-97. See also the textual variant of 106:13, generally considered outside of the epistle, wherein the author warns, “in the generation of Jared, my father, they transgressed the word of the Lord/the covenant of heaven (παρέβησαν τὸν λόγον κυρίου ἀπὸ τῆς διαθήκης τοῦ οὐρανοῦ).” Again we see a potential link between the “word of the Lord” and his “covenant” with Israel.

²³⁴ The final reference to λόγος, depending on whether one includes the final chapters of *1 Enoch* in the Epistle, refers specifically to the “words of Enoch” in 107:3. The content, while allusive of other, secret revelations of Enoch, refers in this context to Enoch’s words to Lamech regarding his son, Noah.

²³⁵ This line has the second use of ἔμφυτος we have seen, again bearing the meaning innate from creation, cf. Jas 1:21. This text is concerned with the intersection of speech and wisdom, however, and in its relationship to the λόγος fits better with James 3 and the message of controlling one’s tongue.

observes in 129: “But the speech of God breathed wisdom is better (τῆς δὲ θεοπνεύστου σοφίης λόγος ἔστιν ἄριστος).” This strengthens the link between wisdom and λόγος. Instead of speech as a weapon, one’s words can be controlled and guided by God’s wisdom, thus the tongue is controlled either by one’s base nature (i.e., equivalent to the weapons of other animals) or divinely led and instructed.

Λόγος appears fifteen times in 4 Maccabees, generally referring to “reason.” This text purports to be a defense of reason and presents the λόγος as something that holds one steady in obedience to the Law regardless of circumstances. As the book draws to a close, in 16:24 the author gives a summary of the speech (τούτων τῶν λόγων) the mother gave to her seven sons in which she “encouraged and persuaded each of her sons to die rather than violate God’s commandment (ἢ παραβῆναι τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ).” Her words are challenges, demanding obedience and reminding them of their commitment to the Law. Although this is a general reference to speech, it is the only use of λόγος in 4 Maccabees that does not refer to reason. Also, it links λόγος, commands, and obedience. Convinced by her words, her sons hold fast to the commandments and endure torture and death.

Fourth Maccabees uses νόμος 38 times but with the very consistent referent of the Law of Moses in its entirety.²³⁶ For example, the author mentions the command against certain types of food (1:34) but also the command against coveting (2:5-6, 8-9), love of parents (2:10), and even how to deal justly with a conquered enemy (2:14). This helps establish that when the author refers to the “law,” he means the Deuteronomistic

²³⁶ Blenkinsopp, “Interpretation and Sectarianism,” 20, referring to texts from this time period, particularly Chronicles, notes: “It has been a commonplace of Old Testament theologies and histories of the religion of Israel since Wellhausen to view increasing emphasis on Law as a symptom of decline in the Second Temple period. . . . it is pertinent to note the emphasis in our sources, and especially in the Chronicler, on *making covenants with the purpose of renewing fidelity to the laws*” (emphasis mine). He argues that this leads to increasing sectarianism.

law in its entirety.²³⁷ He also links the study of the law with wisdom, which he defines as “knowledge of divine and human matters” (1:16). He continues in 1:17: “This (αὕτη), in turn, is education in the law (τοῦ νόμου), by which we learn divine matters reverently and human affairs to our advantage.” The αὕτη refers back to the σοφία of 1:15 and 16: the law teaches wisdom and reveals the proper responses to the divine and human categories. Fourth Maccabees 2:21 reveals that “when God fashioned humans, he planted in them (περιεφύτευσεν) emotions and inclinations.”²³⁸ Although emotions are natural, the mind was created by God to rule and direct us: “to [the mind] he gave the law” (καὶ τούτῳ νόμον ἔδωκεν). This reveals a confidence in humanity’s innate rationality by which each guides and controls his or her emotions and actions.

The subsequent references to νόμος come in dialogue between Antiochus and Eleazar or the seven brothers. Eleazar calls the law the “divine law” (θείῳ νόμῳ, 5:16; cf. 6:21; 9:15; 11:27) and refuses to bend concerning the keeping of the law (τοῦ φυλάξαι τὸν νόμον, 5:29). His steadfastness in the law, even to death by torture, earns him the epithet, “Man in sympathy with the law and philosopher of the divine life” (ὡς σύμφωνε νόμου καὶ φιλόσοφε θείου βίου, 7:7). In a book in praise of reason, to be called “a philosopher of the divine life” is a noble title. The seven brothers continue in their faithfulness in “ready obedience to the law and to Moses our counselor” (τῇ τοῦ νόμου εὐπειθείᾳ καὶ συμβούλῳ Μωυσεῖ χρησαίμεθα, 9:2). Again, this affirms the identification of the Mosaic law in 4 Maccabees, but it also reminds us that, while Moses is the mediator of the law, the law itself is divine and therefore demands and deserves obedience.

²³⁷ Bennema, “Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 70, argues, “In 4 Maccabees wisdom is associated with Torah; the Torah is the locus of wisdom, and through the study and observance of the Torah one acquires wisdom (1:15-17).”

²³⁸ In both the περιεφύτευσεν of 4 Macc. 2:21 and the ἔμφυτος in Ps-Phocylides 128, the propensity to sin or be guided by reason are from birth, an innate part of a person’s make up.

2. Faith and Works

In the Epistle of Enoch, “faith” appears as confidence in God’s justice, trust that he will vindicate the righteous and punish the wicked. One interesting example of this occurs in the Ethiopic translation of 97:1. Nickelsburg and VanderKam translate it: “<Take courage>, O righteous; for the sinners will become an object of contempt, and they will be destroyed on the day of iniquity.” They note in a footnote, however, that the Ethiopic text varies regarding “take courage”: “Eth *have faith*, a normal translation of *take courage* in Eth NT. Cf. below 102:4; 104:2.”²³⁹ Faith, confidence in God’s character, is a basis for courage, and wise courage derives assurance from God’s faithfulness. The discourse in 102:4-103:4 supports this picture, for the righteous—even those who have died—are told to “fear not” and “take courage” because of God’s faithfulness and the reality that even death is not the end for the righteous (cf. 103:4). No where in the epistle (or the entirety of *1 Enoch*) do the terms ΠΙΣΤΙΣ or ΠΙΣΤΟΣ appear, while the verb ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ appears once in 104:13 in the conclusion of the epistle, assuring that Enoch’s words will be believed by the righteous and be of encouragement to them. Here “belief” is in the content and trustworthiness of Enoch’s visions.

In contrast to the assurance of faith, the Epistle of Enoch warns of the listing of each person’s deeds at the time of judgment—deeds usually are reason for judgment.²⁴⁰ In this context, ἔργον overlaps with λόγος. For instance, in 97:6, λόγοι refers to a sum account of one’s *deeds* read at the time of judgment:

... καὶ ἀναγνωσθήσονται πάντες οἱ λόγοι τῶν ἀνομιῶν ὑμῶν ἐν ὀπίον τοῦ μεγάλου ἁγίου κατὰ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν· εἴτ’ ἀναφελεῖ τὰ πάντα ἔργα τὰ μετασχόντα ἐν τῇ ἀνομίᾳ.

²³⁹ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch*, 147, fn. h. See also Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments. Vol 2: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 299, who translates this as “Believe, you righteous, that the sinners will be come an object of shame and will be destroyed on the day of iniquity.”

²⁴⁰ Gabriele Boccaccini, “Qumran and the Enoch Groups,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Qumran*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Richland Hills, Tex.: Bibal Press, 2000), 83, argues that the dualism in the Epistle “is transferred onto the sociological level. The chosen (the righteous and the wise) and the wicked (the sinners and the foolish) are identified respectively with the poor (and the powerless) and the rich (and powerful).”

And all the words of your lawless deeds will be read out before the Great Holy One, and your face will be <put to shame>; then he will remove all the deeds that partook (Eth: were founded in) in lawlessness.

Here the “words” present the summary of the *deeds* of each individual for which they will face judgment and shame, but the words are not the words of the individual. Instead the reader is given the image of a volume in which each person’s actions—right and wrong—are recorded, and the wicked will have the uselessness of their own deeds revealed before they are stricken from the book, leaving them with no defense (cf. Rev. 20:12; see again *1 En.* 104:7). The use of *λόγος* here contrasts with the use in 100:9, in which *both* words and deeds are a cause for judgment: “Woe to you, all you sinners, because of the words of your mouth (ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν) and the deeds of your hands (ἐπὶ τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν χειρῶν), for you have strayed from the holy deeds; in the heat of a blazing fire you will burn.”²⁴¹ Here speech and deeds are paired, equal causes for judgment.²⁴²

Along with the cautionary link with “words,” proper deeds can also be understood as obedience to the commandments (99:10):

καὶ τότε μακάριοι πάντες οἱ ἀκούσαντες φρονίμων λόγους καὶ
μαθήσονται αὐτούς, ποιῆσαι τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ ὑψίστου, καὶ
πορεύσονται ἐν ὁδοῖς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐ μὴ πλανήσουσιν μετὰ
τῶν πλανώντων καὶ σωθήσονται

And then the blessed ones hearing the words of the wise and learning them, doing the commands of the Most High, and proceeding in the ways of his righteousness, and not wandering with the deceivers, also will be saved.

This text again links the verb *ποιέω* with the commandments, leading to the conclusion that this *doing* is a part of why these ones are saved. They have not merely been hearers (οἱ ἀκούσαντες) of the words of the wise, but they have learned them, done them and not strayed (οὐ μὴ πλανήσουσιν) from them.

²⁴¹ Cf. Jas. 2:12 with its combination of “speak and act” in anticipation of judgment.

²⁴² This can be witnessed again in 98:9-99:2. In 98:14-15 and 99:2, the text warns of judgment for false teaching, while 99:1 warns against committing “erring acts (ποιούντες πλανήματα)” and “false deeds (τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ψευδέσιν),” for that one “will have no salvation for good (οὐκ ἔστιν ὑμῖν σωτηρία εἰς ἀγαθόν).” Cf. Jas. 5:19, where the one who is in danger is described as one who *πλανηθῆ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας*.

Pseudo-Phocylides, meanwhile, offers much on how a person ought to behave, in line with wisdom teachings, but little reflection on the nature of faith. Πίστις occurs twice, both times urging that the reader be faithful or trustworthy, as in line 13 encouraging the hearer, “in everything keep faith (πίστιν δ’ ἐν πᾶσι φυλάσσειν).” Line 218 discusses friendship, urging: “Love your friends until death, for faithfulness is a good thing (στέργε φίλους ἄχρις θανάτου· πίστις γὰρ ἀμείνων).”²⁴³ Faithfulness in friendship reveals a person’s character as trustworthy. The adjective πιστός does not occur in Pseudo-Phocylides, but the verb πιστεύω appears twice, both times in warnings to be wary to trust. Line 79 warns against trusting too quickly until the whole situation is clear, while 95 warns against trusting crowds since they are notoriously wayward creatures (described as πολύτροπος). Whereas πίστις refers to being trustworthy in character, the verb is the abstract, “placing one’s trust” in something, whether a mental assent or a physical act of placing one’s life or livelihood into another’s hands. In such cases, one is warned to be wise—and cautious.

Pseudo-Phocylides gives us the least theological understanding of “works” while returning to a more Proverbs-like wisdom summary. Overarching through the text is the core principle of moderation, especially as seen in verse 69 where in eating, drinking and talking are all to be done moderately. Otherwise, the list of wise living follows the general standards. Speech remains a concern, with the entire section of 122-31 dedicated to it. The pseudographer compares the power of the tongue to the “weapons” allotted every creature (125), a weapon that can be used for damage but is also intended as “protection” (128), meant to be the tool of wisdom to guide and direct “lands and cities and ships” (131). It should not, however, be used in a boastful manner (122-23). Likewise one’s temper needs to be guarded (57, 63-64), since carelessness can lead to murder (58).

²⁴³ This line appears as an interpolation in only one MS. See James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 582.

Instead of becoming boastful, each person should remember the quickness with which life can be overturned and remain humble (116-21; cf. Jas 4:13-17). Wealth should not lead to pride (42-47, 62) but should lead one to generosity (22-29; 83) in humility. Line 109 puts wealth into perspective, reminding, “When you are rich, do not be sparing; remember that you are mortal.” Not only can one’s wealth be overturned during life, the threat of mortality comes with the reminder that wealth is useless to the dead (110). One ought to practice justice (9-12, 21, 77; 137), avoid idolatry (147-49), work hard and avoid laziness (153-74), and remain sexually pure (175-206, 212-16).

Pseudo-Phocylides concludes with the reasons for all the commands given in mystery language remarkably similar to the $\overline{\text{ר}}\overline{\text{י}}\overline{\text{ר}}\overline{\text{ל}}\overline{\text{ל}}$ of 4QInstruction (229-30):

τὰυτὰ δικαιοσύνης μυστήρια, τοῖα βιεύντες
ζωὴν ἐκτελέοιτ' ἀγαθὴν μέχρι γήραος οὐδοῦ.
*These are the mysteries of righteousness; living thus
May you live out (your) life well to the threshold of old age.*

Line 228 observes that purity of the soul is more important than that of the body, reminding that the ultimate concern of this book is instruction for righteousness. Wisdom texts promise life to those who observe their instructions, and though they often define life differently,²⁴⁴ the important crux is τοῖα βιεύντες: one must “live thus.”

Fourth Maccabees presents the sovereignty of reason for controlling one’s actions and the rationality of the Jewish religion for determining those deeds. The text focuses on the example of endurance in Eleazar and in the seven brothers as they face torture and death. Reason is master over passions (παθῶν) that “are opposed to justice and courage and temperance . . . that one may not give way to them (τῶν τῆς δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ σωφροσύνης ἐναντίων . . . ὥστε αὐτοῖς μὴ εἶξαι; 1:6).” As with

²⁴⁴ For example, Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 97, notes about Sirach and *1 Enoch*, “The formulas and vocabulary relating the function of wisdom are remarkably similar, yet the two conceptions of life imparted by wisdom are radically different. The revealed wisdom of Enoch promises eschatological life, salvation at the final judgment (*1 En* 5:9). This life transcends death (81:4; 82:3). Ben Sira *never* speaks of life in this sense. For him, wisdom promises an improved quality of life, a happy and secure life, in the present time (*Sir* 4:12-13; 15:4-6; 24:22).”

Pseudo-Phocylides, 4 Maccabees promotes moderation in all things, governance by reason and endurance in commitment. Endurance makes reason evident and validates one's faith.

The noun πίστις only appears three times, and all three are in relation to the mother of the seven sons killed by Antiochus. In 15:24, the text notes that despite witnessing the torture of her sons, “that noble mother disregarded it all because of her faith in God (τὴν πρὸς θεὸν πίστιν),” even encouraging her sons to die with the same dignity as Eleazar (16:12-23). Her faith in God led her to view life as a gift from God not to be unduly held onto. Far from intellectual assent to tenets, her faith propels her to encourage her sons to die faithfully and then throw herself on the fire. For this the author praises her in 17:2, for she “exhibited the nobility of faith (τῆς πίστεως).” Reason controlled her maternal feelings, convincing her of the rightness of the faith and dictating imitation of Israel's heroes rather than give up the faith when faced with imminent death.²⁴⁵

The verb πιστεύω offers insight into the choice between trusting in God or in a ruler. Three of the five uses of the verb refer to trusting God and two to humans or institutions. Of the latter, 4:7 refers to entrusting one's money to the Temple, a supposedly trustworthy institution that had become untrustworthy due to interference by an unbelieving king. This king urges the seven brothers not to follow Eleazar's example in faithfulness but instead to trust in him (7:8):

πιστεύσατε οὖν καὶ ἀρχὰς ἐπὶ τῶν ἑμῶν πραγμάτων ἡγεμονικὰς
λήμψεσθε ἀρνησάμενοι τὸν πάτριον ὑμῶν τῆς πολιτείας θεσμόν
*Trust me, then, and you will have positions of authority in my government if you will renounce
the ancestral tradition of your national life.*²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Πιστός appears only in 7:15 relating that the “faithful seal of death (πιστὴ θανάτου σφραγίς)” had perfected Eleazar because he endured in faithfulness to Israel's God despite torture.

²⁴⁶ This translation is from the NRSV as it better translates πιστεύσατε, instead of from Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:553, whence the others derive.

In this final use of πιστεύω, the king asks the brothers to place their futures into his hands. Such a decision, however, required the denunciation of their people and religion, a complete transference of their belief system from Yahweh to Antiochus.²⁴⁷

In 4 Maccabees 7:19 and 21, the rightness and rationality of Eleazar's faith is praised. The text argues that only those who place piety as their first priority are able to conquer their passions:

πιστεύοντες ὅτι θεῶ οὐκ ἀποθνήσκουσιν ὥσπερ οὐδὲ οἱ πατριάρχαι
ἡμῶν Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ ἀλλὰ ζῶσιν τῷ θεῷ . . . ἐπεὶ τις
πρὸς ὅλον τὸν τῆς φιλοσοφίας κανόνα φιλοσοφῶν καὶ πεπιστευκῶς
θεῷ.

. . . *believing that to God they do not die, as our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died not, but live to God. . . For what philosopher is there, who lives by the whole rule of philosophy and believes in God [who couldn't conquer their passions].*

This is the essential lesson of 4 Maccabees: true piety leads to the ability to live in moderation, to controlling the excesses of emotion and selfishness that could lead one to betray God, to confidence in God that one will not be forgotten even in death, and to assurance that death itself is not the ultimate evil. Reason based in piety defines faith and is revealed in endurance.

3. Judgment and Mercy

Each of these three texts deal differently with the idea of future judgment, in keeping with their different focuses. Pseudo-Phocylides is not concerned with the dialectic of God's judgment and mercy, focusing instead on ethics with the sense that God will repay according to one's deeds and thus people ought to extend mercy to one another. Pseudo-Phocylides is slightly complicated because often the declarations of judgment or reward are tied closely to the deeds of a person, making it hard to distinguish between works and rewards.

A few examples, however, are simple. Line 11 is a classic *lex talionis*: "If you judge evilly, subsequently God will judge you (ἦν σὺ κακῶς δικάσης, σὲ θεὸς μετέπειτα

²⁴⁷ In some ways this echoes Pseudo-Phocylides' concern that its readers be chary of giving their trust.

δικάσει).”²⁴⁸ The κακῶς δικάσης here might well be another way of describing not only partiality in judgment (toward the rich) but also merciless judgment (toward the poor), actions to which God responds with strict judgment. Lines 51-52 show the limitations of human judgment, warning, “Whoever wrongs willfully is a bad man; but if he does so under compulsion, I shall not pass sentence (ἢ δ’ ὑπ’ ἀνάγκης, οὐκ ἐρέω τὸ τέλος), for it is each man’s intention that is examined.” The author sees “the end” as determined by internal motivations, thus he places judgment outside of what any human can make on another. The only one who can examine a person’s intentions is God, thus he is the only one who can declare a person “a bad man.”

Expressing a sentiment like Proverbs 17:9, Pseudo-Phocylides 141-42 urges:

πλαζόμενοι δὲ βροτὸν καὶ ἀλίτροπον οὐ ποτ’ ἐλέγξεις.
βέλτερον ἀντ’ ἐχθροῦ τεύχειν φίλον εὐμενέοντα
*Never expose a wandering man and a sinner.
It is better to make a gracious friend instead of an enemy.*

The second half of the proverb clarifies that the “exposure” is a negative act such as gossip or defamation. By exposing a sinner, a person gains an enemy by humiliating them in the public sphere. In contrast, therefore, the choice not to expose the wanderer is a gracious act that brings reconciliation. By forgiveness one gains a “gracious friend” who is grateful for the consideration of the person who saw their sins and yet did not shame them but allowed an opportunity for repentance and change.

4 Maccabees presents a clear discussion of divine justice and mercy, exploring the fates of the righteous and the wicked. In it, Antiochus attempts to convince various righteous characters to sin against God in the face of torture. Along the lines of Pseudo-Phocylides 51-52, in 8:14 Antiochus attempts to persuade seven brothers, “whatever justice (δίκην) you revere will be merciful to you when you transgress under compulsion.” According to Antiochus, a just God would understand giving way to sin under compulsion and fear of death, therefore the Jewish sons who were before him ought not hold out any

²⁴⁸ Cf. Matt. 6:15; 7:1-2; Jas. 2:13a; 4:11-12.

longer because God would understand the tortures they faced and forgive them.

Antiochus argues that mercy would be given to a person who sins under compulsion, in contrast to a strict justice that takes no account of circumstances. The text continues with what might have been the musings of the brothers had they been cowardly and not controlled by reason. In this scene, they concede his point: “The divine justice (θεία δίκη) will pardon us for being afraid of the king under duress. . . . Not even the Law itself would willingly condemn us to death for being afraid of the instruments of torture” (8:22, 25). The text, however, reveals the king’s logic as faulty reasoning: instead of giving way to their fear, the brothers hold firm to the Law regardless of the pain facing them because endurance in obedience is the way to please God (cf. 9:2, 8). Mercy, as the brothers understood it, was individually won through endurance and obedience but extends to the community of Israel.

The seventh brother’s indictment against the king contrasts God’s justice toward the king and his mercy toward the Israelites, equating the two. Because of the king’s failure to recognize with gratitude the gift of kingship he has been given, the brother warns the king of his doom while praying for the preservation of his people (12:12, 17-18).

ταμιεύσεταιί σε ἡ δίκη πυκνοτέρῳ καὶ αἰωνίῳ πυρὶ καὶ βασάνοις αἱ εἰς
ὅλον τὸν αἰῶνα οὐκ ἀνήσουσίν σε . . . ἐπικαλοῦμαι δὲ τὸν πατρῶον θεὸν
ὅπως ἴλεως γένηται τῷ ἔθνει ἡμῶν, σὲ δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν βίῳ καὶ
θανόντα τιμωρήσεται.

Because of this, justice has laid up for you intense and eternal fire and tortures, and these throughout all time will never let you go . . . and I call on the God of our ancestors to be merciful to our nation; but on you he will take vengeance both in this present life and when you are dead.

God’s mercy towards his people would presumably be shown in releasing Israel from oppression, but Antiochus’ judgment is individual and warranted by the evils that he has enacted. God’s mercy is not envisaged as solely for those who die, but for the entirety of Israel. The seven brothers, by their righteous self-sacrifice, hope to propitiate God for the sins Israel has committed (cf. 9:23-24). Mercy, for the Israelites, consists in their freedom

from oppression. For those who die, mercy is attaining immortality (cf. 18:23).²⁴⁹ But the king's continuance in murder leaves him outside of the possibility of mercy, facing only God's justice (cf. 18:22).

The Epistle of Enoch continues the same patterns of warning people to live righteous lives so that they might deserve mercy.²⁵⁰ From the beginning of the Epistle following the blessing of Methuselah, the tone is set by the Instruction on the Two Ways (94:1-5) which begins, "the paths of righteousness are worthy of acceptance, but the paths of iniquity will quickly be destroyed and vanish."²⁵¹ The author does not discuss mercy *per se* (ἔλεος does not appear in the Epistle), but instead argues for God's "acceptance" of the righteous in contrast to the judgment and destruction of those who walk in wickedness. "The reader should note here a developing dichotomy between judgment according to deeds (for sinners, including sinners within Israel) and the rewarding of the righteous by mercy."²⁵² In this section, the "paths of iniquity" are also called "paths of violence and death" (v. 2), and "paths of evil . . . the paths of death" that bring destruction (v. 3). In contrast, the "paths of righteousness" are also called the "paths of peace" by which "you may live and prosper" (v. 4). This section's structure and message are much like that of Psalm 1, in which the two ways of life and death are laid out for the wise.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ 4 Maccabees 17:17-18 provides the interesting explanation that the brothers received eternal life in God's presence *on account of* their endurance, implying that they would not be in that blessed state had they succumbed to the torture and disobeyed the commandments of God as Antiochus urged.

²⁵⁰ Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment*, 63, observes: "Enoch's letter (92-105) is a word of consolation for the righteous and a preaching of judgment for sinners, very much in the spirit of the superscription of the Book of Watchers in 1:1."

²⁵¹ VanLandingham, *Judgment & Justification*, 91, warns, "One of the primary issues for this author and his community arises from the problem created when the wicked experience the blessings of the covenant, whereas the righteous do not. The Last Judgment will resolve this contradiction between historical reality and the Deuteronomic formula."

²⁵² Yinger, *Paul, Judaism*, 70. He adds, "as in the OT, it is not individual transgressions *per se* which cause these apostate Israelites to experience God's damnation. Rather, the deeds manifest that they are 'wicked in [their] hearts' (104:9) and 'do not fear the Most High' (101:9), while those who are accounted righteous fear God and 'walk in the path of his righteousness' (99:10; 101:1)" (71-72).

²⁵³ Boccaccini, "Qumran and Enoch," 75 observes, "The identification of evil with impurity makes separation the new password for salvation." He later continues, "The proto-*Epistle* adds that, at the beginning of the final times (the present of the author), God will choose a group from among the chosen. This group will receive special 'wisdom' and will keep themselves separated from the rest of the people while acting on their behalf and thus preparing the way for the redemption of Israel and of the entire creation."

The discourse in 99:11-100:6 deepens the picture of what the author views as “judgment.” First, 99:11-16 warns that “in Sheol you will be slain” (v. 11, a phrase missing in the Gk.), for they continue to sin “until the day of the great judgment (ἡμέρας τῆς κρίσεως τῆς [μεγάλης], v. 16). In 100:1-4, while the text is quite corrupt, Nicklesburg and VanderKam have pieced together a description of the judgment, a “day” described with massive threats of murder and death, ultimately reaching a climax in which “angels will descend, going down into the hidden places on that day, and those who aided iniquity will be gathered into one place. And the Most High will be aroused on that day (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως) to execute great judgment (κρίσιν μεγάλην) on all” (v. 4). What began as a this-worldly prophetic condemnation becomes an eschatological event with angels descending and everyone facing judgment, emphasized by the repetition of κρίσις. The text clarifies, however, that the “all” who face judgment does not include the righteous, for 100:5-6 describe them as being guarded and protected “until evil and sin come to an end,” an event most likely occurring in the judgment just described. Judgment comes upon the wicked, but the righteous, those who realize that “their wealth cannot save them” and who study the “words of this epistle,” find protection by the angels.

Finally, *1 Enoch* 102:4-104:8 reveals God’s justice and how his judgment *after death* puts to right the imbalances that occur in this life. The dead sinners are threatened with impending judgment, even if their entire time on earth looked pleasant and at their deaths they were declared blessed (103:5-6, in a sharp contrast with Sir. 11:26-28). In 103:7-8, the author discloses that, whereas the righteous were perceived to have gone to Sheol but did not, the wicked face a devastating fate:

ὅτι εἰς ᾧδου κατὰξουσιν τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν, καὶ ἐκεῖ ἔσονται ἐν ἀνάγκῃ
 μεγάλη καὶ ἐν σκότει καὶ ἐν παγίδι καὶ ἐν φλογὶ καιομένη, καὶ εἰς κρίσιν
 μεγάλην εἰσελεύσονται αἱ ψυχὰι ὑμῶν ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γενεαῖς τοῦ
 αἰῶνος. οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, οὐκ ἔστιν ὑμῖν χαίρειν

(77). For him, this is the beginning of how “the Enochians (or part of them) became the Essenes” (78). While the proto-*Epistle* helped initiate this move, the proper *Epistle* (only 96:6-104:6) “has specific anti-Qumranic elements,” revealing the separation of ways between the Enochic group and the Essenes (82).

. . . that down to Sheol they will lead your souls; and there they will be in great distress and in darkness and in a snare and in a flaming fire. Into great darkness your souls will enter, and the great judgment will be for all generations of eternity. Woe to you, you will have no peace.

Whereas the Wisdom of Solomon foreshadowed life for the righteous while the wicked fail to attain immortality, *1 Enoch* places both the rewards of righteousness and the punishment of the wicked on an eternal scale. The author pronounces a “woe” upon the wicked that they will lack peace, failing to attain to the Sabbath rest that was promised to the faithful. In contrast to light and peace, the wicked are promised darkness and torment. This judgment looms because of the way the wicked treated the righteous poor, the humble who were defenseless (103:9-104:6). The righteous, meanwhile, are promised that, despite having been tormented by their masters in life, their pleas for help have reached the ears of God (cf. Jas. 5:1-6). As the passage progresses, we find that although the righteous also will see the “great day of judgment,” they need not fear it, for they “will not be found with the sinners” (104:5).²⁵⁴ “Judgment,” therefore, functions in two ways in this section: as the legal righting of the social inequity and oppression within this world (i.e., “justice”) as well as the eternal punishment of the wicked who enacted the oppression of the righteous poor (i.e., “judgment”).

Ultimately, in the Epistle of Enoch “mercy” is not an active theme: “salvation” stands opposed to “judgment,” the former safeguarding the righteous at the time when God enacts his judgment upon the wicked. “Judgment,” meanwhile, stands for the time when God will make all things right, bringing justice to the oppressed through the

²⁵⁴ Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment*, 145, observes, “The oldest conception of eschatological judgment in Judaism expects *judgment as the imposition of punishment on Israel’s enemies at the end of time*. This conception rests on the prophets’ proclamation of the day of YHWH, which was a determining influence for the origin and development of Jewish eschatology as a whole. . . . The judgment of that day consists of a violent action with which God and God’s faithful utterly destroy the gentile nations.” He continues, “The concept of an historical, punitive judgment is also found, however, in texts that are not based on the contrast between *Israel* and the *Gentiles*, but between *righteous* and *sinners*. In this case the division runs through Israel itself, with the punishment falling primarily on the sinners in Israel. Examples are found as early as Malachi and Isaiah 65-66” (146).

punishment of the wicked.²⁵⁵ Both categories of people—those destined for salvation and those for judgment—are clear-cut and based upon the life each person has lived, and while repentance may be accounted for, there is a clear sense that one’s deeds will be the basis for one’s destination.²⁵⁶

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this survey, one of the most obvious developments is the growth of apocalyptic influence on wisdom and the growing notion that God’s justice can and will be worked out after death. So Yinger can argue, “Not merely one element among others, *judgment is the central issue in Jewish eschatology of this period and forms the main theme of many of its literary products.*”²⁵⁷ More important is the basic framework for justice: the pattern revealed by the wisdom literature is that judgment (punishment) is the negative outworking of justice, while mercy (or salvation, life) is the positive.²⁵⁸ That is, when justice is enacted—either in this life or afterward—the wicked receive judgment and the righteous receive mercy.

“Faith,” as a theoretical concept, proves rare. The closest the term comes to an abstract theological category is when the various authors urge faith in God’s faithfulness to enact justice despite the seeming inequities in the world. The root tends towards either faithfulness or a description of the faithful, namely, the righteous. When describing the

²⁵⁵ VanLandingham, *Judgment & Justification*, 90, observes regarding 98:6-8, “Since the coming judgment is executed on behalf of the righteous, the word for ‘judgment’ throughout *1 Enoch* connotes a negative aspect and is descriptive primarily of what will occur to the wicked.” He continues, “The final judgment is characterized by God’s mercy because God executes judgment against the wicked on behalf of the righteous—the oppressed” (92).

²⁵⁶ Boccaccini, “Qumran and Enoch,” 82, argues: “The author of the *Epistle of Enoch* does not deny that evil has a superhuman origin, but holds human beings responsible for the sinful actions they commit. . . . The Enochic doctrine of evil does not contradict the principle of human responsibility. Evil is a contamination that prepares a fertile ground for sin (we might now use the term ‘temptation’), but it is the individuals themselves who have ‘invented sin’ and, therefore, are responsible for their own deeds.” Cf. Jas. 1:13-16.

²⁵⁷ Yinger, *Paul, Judaism*, 88. He later adds, “In no instance have we found the note of fearful uncertainty so often associated with judgment according to deeds in caricatures of legalistic Judaism. . . . Rather than being necessary to *determine* one’s status as righteous or wicked before God, this judgment functions primarily to *reveal* this status publically and to initiate the execution of the appropriate sentences.”

²⁵⁸ VanLandingham, *Judgment & Justification*, 77, observes in Jubilees a larger pattern: “Mercy refers to God’s beneficence or saving activity and, as a term, remains neutral in regard to whether God’s action is deserved,” but concludes “that the author believed that . . . everybody is saved (primarily from God’s judgment) because of his or her own righteousness.”

deeds of the righteous, “works” includes everything from controlling one’s tongue to a particular emphasis on caring for the poor and enacting justice on behalf of the defenseless. Only very rarely are specific “works of the law” mentioned; generally sacrifice is the only one to appear and only in passing. Perfect sinlessness is never expected, however, and repentance regularly appears as a good deed of the righteous.²⁵⁹ Finally, throughout the texts both the “word” and the “law” are entities to be studied and obeyed, whether simply as the content of the teachings in each particular text or more particularly as the words and commands of God. The Law is seen as a holistic entity revealing the will of God, but more often than not it is the ethical, not ritual, aspects of the law to which the texts allude.

Crenshaw concludes, “The goal of all wisdom was the formation of character.”²⁶⁰ These categories integrate to reveal a consistent pattern across the wisdom texts: the righteous are those who faithfully obey the law of God, particularly in regards to caring for the poor and guarding their tongues, and the righteous are the only ones who will receive God’s mercy when he enacts his justice.

²⁵⁹ Yinger, *Paul, Judaism*, 62, observes “One’s works of obedience are not viewed as *merits*, each to be recompensed in atomistic fashion, but instead are the observable manifestations of the covenant loyalty of the unseen heart. . . . The requisite obedience (righteousness) was never viewed as *flawless perfection*, but might be better described by such terms as *consistency*, *integrity*, and *authenticity* of action.” Likewise he concludes, “one’s *works* are not viewed mechanically or atomistically, but are a unitary whole revealing one’s inner character of faith. Faith and works are not in competition with one another. Rather they represent two sides of the single coin of human response in the light of God’s gracious covenantal arrangement.”

²⁶⁰ Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 3.

CHAPTER 2: THE SAYINGS OF JESUS ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

James is closely related to the Jesus tradition. Kittel declares, “Es gibt keine Schrift des NT außer den Evangelien, die so mit Anklängen an Herrnworte gespickt ist wie er.”²⁶¹ While Hartin argues for a close relationship between the Jacobean community and that of Matthew,²⁶² Bauckham is less convinced that such a specific relationship can be drawn, ultimately concluding, “it is not possible to pin down his knowledge of the tradition of Jesus’ sayings to particular Gospels or Gospel sources known to us.”²⁶³ He argues that James functions as a sage who reformulates the Jesus sayings, much as Sirach did with Proverbs.²⁶⁴ Because of this debate, the first question shall be to briefly examine the underlying methodological assumptions in this chapter.

A. METHODOLOGY

As was noted above, James and the Synoptics appear to share some sort of relationship. Davids observes some of the complexities of this relationship: “While the numbers of parallels show that Matthew is closer to James than is Luke, in tone (for example, in his woes on the rich) and in language James is far closer to Luke,” to which he concludes that “James is therefore using a pre-gospel form of what we might loosely term the Q tradition in a redaction (his own or someone else’s) which differs from both of the two canonical gospels.”²⁶⁵ While Hartin argues for a close relationship with James and

²⁶¹ Gerhard Kittel, “Der geschichtliche Ort des Jakobusbriefes,” *ZNW* 41 (1942), 84.

²⁶² See, e.g., Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings*, particularly pp. 187-98, who argues for a common Q tradition (or M) between James and Matthew, from which both texts drew. Richard Bauckham, “Review of P.J. Hartin’s *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*,” *JTS* 44 (1993), 301, however, warns that “Hartin’s close association of James with the Matthaean community is problematic in ways he seems not to have noticed,” and warns that “One has the impression that the conclusions desired are dictating the assessment of the evidence” (300).

²⁶³ Bauckham, *James*, 31.

²⁶⁴ See Bauckham, *James*, 74ff. He explains, “The role [of sage] therefore involves passing on the accumulated wisdom of the tradition, but also penetrating its meaning, drawing out its insights, developing it in new ways,” communicating “*as his own wisdom in his own formulation* the wisdom he has gained from his intensive study of the tradition” (76, 79). He later states, James has “special canonical connections with the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and with the Synoptic teaching of Jesus” (111).

²⁶⁵ Davids, “James and Jesus,” 68. He adds, “Thus James witnesses to a third community for which the ethical teaching of Jesus was important.”

Q^{Matt 266}, one which Kloppenborg supports and strengthens,²⁶⁷ others remain less certain that such a direct line can be drawn. A consensus in James scholarship, however, is growing around the idea of emulation, or a creative setting of the Jesus tradition by the author of James. This was first and most comprehensively explored by Bauckham but developed by others attempting to work out the textual relation.²⁶⁸ Davids concurs: “Everyone would recognize the authority behind an allusion, whether or not their version of the tradition had the exact verbal form. Thus we can say that James knew the Jesus tradition and assumed that his readers were also familiar with it (otherwise the allusive references would fall on unknowing ears).”²⁶⁹ Subsequent to Bauckham’s book, the idea of allusion and imitation has dominated Jacobean studies.

Bauckham, however, also issued some warnings regarding casual use of allusion to assess dependence between texts. Looking at the use of the Gospels in later Christian texts, he cautions:

In most of the literature with which we are concerned, direct citations of Gospel traditions are the exception, allusions the rule. This creates a problem which is apparent in a great deal of work in this area: that of knowing how to distinguish a real allusion to the Gospel traditions from a coincidental resemblance. . . . Agreement in an unusual idea, with minimum verbal resemblance, may be more impressive than agreement in a commonplace idea expressed in rather common and obvious words and phrases.²⁷⁰

For Bauckham, simply having common phrases was not enough; there had to be some degree of uniqueness between the two texts before claiming a dependence. So, for example, Davids posits a comparison between James 1:21 and Luke 8:12, since “in James 1:21 a paragraph on pure speech (*i.e.*, speaking without anger) is summed up with a call to receive the implanted word which is able to save one’s soul. The interesting fact is that

²⁶⁶ Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings*, particularly chapters 5-6.

²⁶⁷ Kloppenborg, “Reception,” 93-141; *Ibid.*, “Emulation,” 121-50.

²⁶⁸ Bauckham, *James*, particularly chapter 2.

²⁶⁹ Davids, “James and Jesus,” 69.

²⁷⁰ Richard Bauckham, “The Study of the Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects,” in *Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 383.

only in Luke 8:12 is the word (λόγος) said or implied to have been able to save.”²⁷¹

Deppe, however, supports a somehow closer relationship between Matthew and James, observing that they share a theological framework.

Heading the list of themes where James and Matthew stand in the same theological camp is the concept of the law. Of all the NT writers the closest perspective to that of Matthew is without a doubt the Epistle of James. . . . Both James and Matthew, therefore, recognize a new law summarized by Jesus without setting aside the old moral law of the OT. The gospel and the law are thus linked together for both authors. The gospel of the kingdom (Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14) does not relax even the least of the commandments (5:19) for Matthew; instead, the word is completed by doing the commands of the Master (7:21). In James too the mentioning of the gospel as ‘the implanted word which is able to save your souls’ (1:21) is followed immediately by a command to ‘be doers of the word’, an expression which could just as easily mean ‘be doers of the law’.²⁷²

Deppe thus, without intending to, offers tacit support to Hartin’s observation of the nearness of James and Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew, however, was most likely drawn together after the epistle of James, even if one assumes that James is pseudepigraphical and composed after the death of James, the leader of the Jerusalem Church. Thus one cannot state, as with Ben Sira, that the final form would have been read by the author of the epistle. Bauckham offers one escape from this conundrum, for “we have to recognize that a writer need not always allude to the same source, and that in a period when written and oral sources were both well known they might influence each other in his memory.”²⁷³ McCartney deals with this dilemma by placing James and Matthew into similar positions in the early Church: “Certainly, one would expect some correspondence of James with Jesus’s teaching [in Matthew], simply because [Matthew and James] come from the same milieu of early

²⁷¹ Davids, “James and Jesus,” 71.

²⁷² Deppe, *Sayings of Jesus*, 161. He lists several similarities: “Both understand the teaching of the church as a new Christianized law (Mt. 5:17-20; Jas. 2:8-11; 4:11-12). Both speak about the law as the way to perfection. In both the law of love is, on the one hand, set alongside the other commandments which together constitute the law and, on the other hand, is given special recognition as the most important of the commandments, one which fulfils the whole law.”

²⁷³ Bauckham, “The Study of the Gospel Traditions,” 385. Davids, “James and Jesus,” 74, adds, “James is frequently at root an enlargement upon and application of the Jesus tradition in the light of community situations.”

Christianity, which had evolved from within Judaism (Penner 1996: 254).²⁷⁴ This is, quite possibly, the nearest explanation for how the Gospel of Matthew functions in this thesis. James scholars have consistently noted the similarities between the Synoptics and James, ties strengthened between Matthew and James in tone and theology. If most scholars concur that James is, as Bauckham describes it, “a creative re-expression of significant aspects of the wisdom of Jesus,”²⁷⁵ it seemed reasonable to compare it with a completed, potentially related final form of one Gospel, one sharing a similar contextual space. Matthew scholar Dale Allison posits that, “The Christianity behind James was probably a near relative of the Christianity reflected in Matthew, for the two writings share much.”²⁷⁶

Thus it is not so much the exact sayings of the historical Jesus, but the contextualized life and teaching as presented by the Matthean Jesus, one first-century setting of the sayings of Jesus within the context of a related community, that is being examined here.²⁷⁷ On the whole, this chapter will seek to examine one coherent, theological setting of the life and teachings of Jesus.²⁷⁸ First it will study the three sets of

²⁷⁴ McCartney, *James*, 51-52. He adds, “The extent of correspondence, and the unique character and similar phrasing of the prohibition of oaths, make it more likely that James knew Matthew (or vice versa), or that both James and Matthew had access to variants of a particular text (such as a pre-Synoptic form of Q, as Hartin 1991: 141-72 proposes), or that both James and Matthew were disciples of a particular tradition, namely the teaching of Jesus. . . . Bauckham (1999: 97-107) notes that not only are particular texts similar, but also the overall tenor of James’s wisdom is similar to Jesus’s teaching in its (1) radical reinterpretation of Torah, (2) rejection of social stratification, (3) appeal to eschatological motivation, (4) emphasis on God’s mercy over judgment, and (5) concern for the reconstituted people of God. The author of this letter has absorbed not just several of Jesus’s sayings, but indeed the very ethos of Jesus’s ethical vision.”

²⁷⁵ Bauckham, *James*, 111. “James’ wisdom is a creative development of the Jewish wisdom tradition decisively inspired and shaped by the wisdom of Jesus.”

²⁷⁶ Allison, “Fiction of James,” 565.

²⁷⁷ Childs, *New Testament as Canon*, 438, observes, “even when compared to Matthew’s interpretation of Jesus’ teachings, the letter of James functions canonically in a unique way because of its post-Pauline context. The Gospel of Matthew offers a construal of Jesus’ teachings as the true interpreter of the Old Testament law. Canonically Matthew functions as a witness to Jesus’ earthly life leading up to his death and resurrection. However, James extends Matthew’s understanding into the post-Pauline period. His letter is not just a check against a misunderstanding of Paul, but a positive witness for hearing the synoptic sayings in a post-Pauline Christianity. The letter bears witness that, correctly interpreted, the Old Testament continues to function as a norm for Christian living even after the resurrection.”

²⁷⁸ Johnson, *James*, 55-56, notes, “James shows the greatest affinity to the tradition of Jesus’ *sayings* rather than to that of Jesus’ stories. Some of these, indeed, may be attributed to the accident of sharing a moral universe that emphasizes the connection between verbal profession and action (Matt 7:21-23; Luke 6:46 = James 2:14-26), as well as the importance not only of *hearing* but also of *doing* (Matt 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49 = James 1:22-25), and uses agricultural imagery to exemplify the connection between identity and consistent behavior (Matt 7:16; Luke 6:44 = James 3:10-13).” From this and other analogies he shows, he draws the

paired themes (law/word; faith/works; judgment/mercy) throughout the book to see how they are developed by the Gospel writer. Second we will look at several key teachings of Jesus in Matthew that are often highlighted in studies on James: the Sermon on the Mount,²⁷⁹ the parable of the unmerciful servant (ch. 18), and the judgment of the sheep and the goats (ch. 25).

B. MATTHEW'S USE OF THE THEMES

In the wisdom literature, all of the chosen ideas overlap at different points: speech can be a cause for judgment, obedience is needed in accordance to the Law's commands, the righteous act in mercy, and so on. This same overlap occurs in Matthew, so with the attempt to place passages under their appropriate headings, we recognize that the subjects are not as divided as they may appear here.

1. *The Word and The Law*

a. *General survey*

Both νόμος and λόγος are crucial to Matthew's understanding of Jesus' identity and role. Matthew uses λόγος 33 times to refer to general speech or "words" (e.g., 5:37), to Jesus' ability to heal with a word (echoes of the Wisdom of Solomon), to the OT law, but most often to his teaching about the Kingdom of God.²⁸⁰ In all but one case (Matt. 22:36), Jesus is the only one to use either νόμος (8 times) or ἐντολή (6 times). By this, Matthew depicts Jesus as the one with the right and authority to interpret the law, and

following conclusion: "1) James makes use of sayings traditions that are otherwise identified as being from Jesus; 2) although some of his wording resembles Matthew in particular, it is more likely that he makes use of the traditions at a stage of development prior to the synoptic redaction, that is, at a stage roughly that of the gospel sayings source conventionally designated Q; 3) the use of the sayings tradition is James' distinctive way of mediating the 'Jesus experience.'"

²⁷⁹ Davids, "James and Jesus," 67, argues, "It is significant that the allusions are not scattered all over the gospels, but they focus on one large block, namely, the ethical material contained in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain. On the one hand, this concentration should be expected, for the paraenetic material collected in the Sermon is most suited to the topics discussed in James. The fact that this material appears in block form not only in Matthew and Luke (which may be dependant on each other or may be independent redactions of a previous collection) but also in James gives *prima facie* evidence that there existed an early paraenetic collection of the sayings of Jesus (oral or written) and that James knew a version of that block of tradition."

²⁸⁰ In two parables, Jesus uses λόγος to refer to "accounts" between a master and a servant (18:23 and 25:19), each time in analogy to how God will judge his people.

λόγος serves to reveal the content of Jesus' interpretation. Neither term appears before chapter five, as if with the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount Matthew introduces Jesus as the teacher, interpreter, and fulfillment of the law.

b. The New Moses and the New Yoke: Matthew 1-4 and 11:19, 28-30

Some have suggested that Matthew's introduction sets Jesus up as a new Moses, a new lawgiver. Barth notes that the "thesis that Jesus, as a second Moses, founds a new law, the Messianic Torah, is based to a large extent on the opinion that the old synagogue expected a new Torah from the Messiah."²⁸¹ The nativity story sets Jesus as the promised Davidic king, the fulfillment of multiple prophecies (1:22-23; 2:5-6, 17-18, 23). In addition, the opening chapters, with their stress on fulfillment, also present the reader with the idea that the coming of Jesus initiates a new phase in the history of Israel. Even more, the flight to and return from Egypt, the single boy child saved from slaughter, and period in the wilderness echo the story of Moses and of Israel in Exodus. As Macaskill observes, "at the heart of the Exodus account is the idea of a revelation being made to Israel through that figure [of Moses]."²⁸² And indeed, as the story moves toward the Sermon, the setting on the mountain-top recalls that of Moses receiving the law on Sinai, preparing "the reader for the idea that some fresh revelation will be made by God as it was in the original Exodus."²⁸³ Jesus' coming, according to Matthew, categorically fulfills what was promised regarding a Davidic king and also the prophetic promises of a greater revelation by God.

As the Messiah and the new Moses, Jesus stands in contrast to the other teachers of his time. While Matthew 11:19 and 28-30 do not refer either to λόγος or νόμος, the conceptual link between wisdom, law, and the yoke initially created by Sirach 6:30 and 51:26 helps to expand the image of Jesus as the new lawgiver. As Witherington argues,

²⁸¹ Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held (London: SCM Press, 1963), 154.

²⁸² Grant Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom and Inaugurated Eschatology in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 124-25.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 126. For his exploration of this theme in Matthew, see pp. 123-27; for a full defense, see Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

however, “the differences are at least as important as the similarities, for at Matt. 11:29 it is Jesus, not Torah, that is identified or associated with the personification of Wisdom.”²⁸⁴ In Matthew 11:19, Jesus claims a justification for his *own* actions of eating and drinking with the statement, “wisdom is proved right by her actions.” This leads to his call to respond in 11:28-30, where the yoke imagery comes to the fore. Jesus reiterates the call to Wisdom’s yoke in Sirach 51:26, “Put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls receive instruction; it is to be found close by,” but “makes it clear that it is Jesus as Wisdom offering *his* yoke, not any previous yoke that is in view.”²⁸⁵ Davies and Allison explain:

No other Jewish teacher ever told another: Take up my yoke. This, however, is exactly what Jesus does. He is, therefore, playing not only the part of Wisdom . . . but also the part of Torah; or, rather, he is Wisdom, he is Torah. . . . For Judaism “Torah” is . . . the full revelation of God and of his will for man. So the identification of Jesus with Torah makes Jesus the full revelation of God and of his will for man.²⁸⁶

Ben Sira offered an understanding of Torah as Wisdom’s yoke; Jesus—while not replacing the Torah (cf. Matt. 5:17-20)—offers a yoke that gives rest and teaches the recipient the way of his own character.²⁸⁷ Gentleness and humility are placed in opposition to weariness and heavy burdens. As Deutsch notes, the yoke “designates the whole teaching of Jesus and connotes obligation or responsibility.”²⁸⁸ Although Jesus demands a higher obedience even than the Scribes and Pharisees, his teaching is paradoxically not a wearying and burdensome yoke, but one that brings rest. Suggs describes Matthew as confronting the reader with “law opposed to law. The yoke of Jesus is not some other yoke than the yoke

²⁸⁴ Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, 145.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 360.

²⁸⁶ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 289-90.

²⁸⁷ Intriguingly, these ideas play a major role in James in terms of the desired character traits of the audience. Cf. *πραύτης* in Jas 1:21; 3:13 and the call for the “deeds done in the humility of wisdom”—an intriguing link between this passage in Matthew and the ‘wisdom’ passage in James 3:13-18. Also, *ταπεινός* is crucial for James’ understanding of who God honors. See especially 1:9; 4:6.

²⁸⁸ Celia Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke: Wisdom, Torah and Discipleship in Matthew 11:25-30* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 42.

of Torah. Rather, the yoke of the true Torah, of Wisdom, is set over against that of the Pharisaic Torah.”²⁸⁹

By presenting Jesus as a sort of new Moses (the new lawgiver) and as the true Wisdom of God (the revelation of God and his will for humanity, the one who can rightly interpret the law), Matthew compels the reader to take seriously Jesus’ words and actions as presenting to us the fulfillment of God’s revelation to his creation. But also, as Hauerwas reminds us, “Jesus, the new Moses, will like Moses be burdened by his people’s unfaithfulness.”²⁹⁰ Just as the original Torah required obedience in order to attain the covenant rest, so Jesus’ yoke must be accepted and lived for it to bring the promised rest.²⁹¹

c. Commandments for Life: Matthew 19:16-22 and 22:34-40

In two somewhat parallel stories, Jesus interprets the commandments for his audience. In Matthew 19:16-22, “one” came to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good deed must I do (τί ἀγαθὸν ποιήσω) to have eternal life?” Jesus responds: “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” The man then questions “Which?” Jesus replies with a composite sketch including the love command from Leviticus 19:18. The man presses further, claiming to have obeyed those, so Jesus reveals that perfection comes through the complete dissolution of the man’s possessions in favor of the poor that the man might “come and follow.”²⁹² Jeremiah warns against forcing too literal a translation:

The evidence of contemporary literature does not allow the ‘all’ to be pressed too far. According to the Mishnah (M. Arak. viii.4) a man may devote only part of his means to the Temple, and to go further than this was not valid. This passage

²⁸⁹ M. Jack Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew’s Gospel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 107. He concludes that “Matthew daringly identified Jesus with Wisdom. For the evangelist, Jesus was not Wisdom’s child but Wisdom incarnate. . . . In relation to the law, Jesus transcended familiar categories: as he was the incarnation of Wisdom, so was he the embodiment of Torah” (130).

²⁹⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 40.

²⁹¹ See particularly the arguments regarding rest in Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom*, 150-52.

²⁹² Alan P. Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works? The Role of Works in Salvation in the Synoptic Gospels* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2006), 198-99, observes that, as with the fulfillment of the Law in 5:17-20, “the issue *now* is not really one’s relationship to the Law but one’s relationship to Jesus.” Therefore, while “it was the Mosaic Law that Jesus was referring to when speaking with the Rich Young Ruler . . . the key is that Jesus takes the ruler *beyond* the Law—and thus *surpasses* it—to *Himself*.”

demonstrates that men were obliged to set a limit to their generosity. It had already been recognized as a precept in the first century AD that it was not permissible to spend more than a fifth of one's means on acts of charity (j. Peah i.I, 15b.23) . . . The phrase 'to sell all that he had' . . . cannot always be taken literally, and the evidence shows how far the demands for charity on a man's means were taken in practice.²⁹³

The man's desolation at Jesus' word, however, indicate that Jeremias' cautions may well not reflect this situation.

The man leaves, devastated by this λόγος of Jesus. France first recalls that every follower of Jesus is called to this higher righteousness (5:20, 48), then observes, "By this more searching demand Jesus shows the man how inadequate his supposed righteousness (v. 20) really was; it did not touch him at the point of his real interest. To obey 'perfectly' the command of Leviticus 19:18 will involve him in a practical renunciation for which he is not prepared."²⁹⁴ Now clearly this was a specific command to a specific audience, but it is worth nothing that the man takes Jesus' λόγος as a requirement equivalent to the other commandments and could not see his way to obedience.²⁹⁵ Stanley observes, "Perfection is a synonym for eternal life and a requirement for entry into the kingdom."²⁹⁶ Jesus' λόγος provides the hearers with a new understanding of perfection by obeying the intent of the law as pointing to him.

²⁹³ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1962), 127. He continues, "On the other hand, it was performed to the letter by such a man as R. Johanan: for the sake of studying the Torah he sold all his material possessions without even retaining enough for the needs of his old age. We must, therefore, consider the possibility that 'to sell all' is not to be taken literally, but is rather a powerful expression for the demands of charity" (128).

²⁹⁴ R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 286.

²⁹⁵ This use of λόγος may help to justify James' correlation of the λόγος as a law. Likewise Jesus' teaching on the rich and their difficulty of attaining salvation (19:23-26) may also reside in the background of James' varied warnings to those who rest securely in their riches. Günther Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held (London: SCM Press, 1963), 29, highlights the important point, "Fulfillment of the commandments and perfection can no more be realised anywhere except in 'following' Jesus. This is seen most clearly in the percope of the rich young man. . . . In following Jesus the perfection demanded by the law is thus fulfilled."

²⁹⁶ Stanley, *Jesus and Salvation by Works*, 201. Earlier he states regarding the young man's question, "Eternal life is thus a road to be traveled . . . a pilgrimage beginning with an *entrance* and ending with *perfection*" (142-43).

In the context of Jesus' strivings with the Jewish leaders, in Matthew 22:34-40 a legal expert of the Pharisees tests Jesus by asking him to name the greatest commandment. More specific than the rich man, this lawyer precisely words his query for *one* commandment out of the law (ποία ἐντολὴ μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ).²⁹⁷ Jesus first gives one—undivided love of God—which he calls ἡ μεγάλη καὶ πρώτη ἐντολή, but then he elevates Leviticus 19:18 to being ὁμοία αὐτῇ, and concludes that these *two* commands tie together the entirety of the law and prophets. Rather than entering a lengthy legal discussion with those who sought to trap him, Jesus provides a sweeping interpretation of the entire Torah. Luomanen notes, “It is generally accepted that for Matthew the love commandments constituted a critical principle which could be used to set aside individual OT commandments,”²⁹⁸ which appears at times true, particularly in the Sabbath controversies. Hagner agrees, arguing that Jesus does not repudiate the OT law but rather distills its essence and creates a “hermeneutic for the understanding of all the other commandments.”²⁹⁹

More significantly, Davies notes that “first-century Jews commonly summarized the twin aspects of the law as human piety toward God and love of one another. . . . Jesus’ answer is just the kind of answer with which no Jew would have found fault,”³⁰⁰ and

²⁹⁷ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. III (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 240, make the following translation observation: “We take *μεγάλη* to be superlative and *ποία* to mean ‘what’: the lawyer wishes to know what is the greatest commandment. But there is no definite article before *μεγάλη*, and *ποῖος* often means ‘what sort of’. So one could take the question to mean: what sort of commandment is great in the Torah, that is, what is the quality shared by the most important commandments? One can readily imagine that Jesus was asked such a question, which reminds one of the rabbinic debates over the ‘heavy’ and ‘light’ commandments. But it is wiser to suppose that question corresponds to answer, and the answer offers ‘the greatest and first commandment.’”

²⁹⁸ Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew’s View of Salvation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 84.

²⁹⁹ Donald A. Hagner, “Holiness and Ecclesiology: The Church in Matthew,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 178. He views this passage as essential for understanding Jesus and the law: “in his sovereign authority Jesus is able to cut through to the very essence of the law. He defines the weightier matters of the law as ‘justice, mercy and faithfulness’ (23:23), sounding very much like an Old Testament prophet. The essence of the law, however, is found in the striking twofold love commandment. It is here that the ethical teaching of the law finds its root. . . . [Matt 22:40] is the heart of the law for Jesus.”

³⁰⁰ Margaret Davies, *Matthew* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 155-56.

thereby Jesus silences questions about his theology, his Jewishness, and his teaching. In contrast, Hauerwas observes: “Jesus’ response has unfortunately been used to characterize the difference between Christians and Jews. Christians are alleged to represent a religion of love in contrast to Jews, who represent a religion of law.”³⁰¹ Jesus’ answer does the opposite. By answering in such a way that no one can find fault while also positing that neighbor love is “like” love of God, Jesus reveals that to love God one must also love one’s neighbor and vice versa.

Luz observes that in Matthew’s Jewish Christian tradition, loving God would mean “knowing the one God and obeying him in the world. For them the love of God and the love of neighbor are closely related from the very beginning.”³⁰² Although the lawyer most likely expected to receive one or the other as an answer, by tying the two inextricably together, Jesus “reveals that the Torah’s foundation and end is, in our idiom, ‘moral monotheism’, or ‘theistic humanism’. Religion and ethics are one.”³⁰³ Jesus masterfully claims the authority from the other leaders in this pericope and concludes that only when the two commands are united have the Law and the Prophets been fulfilled.

d. Conclusions

Matthew presents Jesus to the reader as the supreme interpreter of the law, a new Moses come with the promised revelation from God. Jesus’ λόγος has the power to heal, as we will see next, but also reveals the commands of God to those willing to hear. Those who submit to his yoke find themselves called to perfection in obedience to the νόμος and simultaneously finding rest in humility. As Barth concludes, “The constant exhortation to the doing of God’s will and the threat of judgment according to works has

³⁰¹ Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 194. He warns, “Jesus’ combination of the two commandments, however, challenges the assumption that we know ourselves well enough to be capable of altruism. Rather, to learn to love our neighbor as ourselves requires that we learn to be befriended by God so that we will have selves sufficient for love” (193).

³⁰² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 83.

³⁰³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew III*, 245. They continue, “There is no self-contained piety: we must be ‘prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one’s love upon other human individuals’ (Orwell).”

not led in Matthew to the Christian relying on his own achievement; the disciples recognise themselves as empty before God, as the μικροί, who live by the seeking love of the shepherd.”³⁰⁴

2. Faith and Works

a. General survey

Faith appears understated in Matthew. None of the vocabulary (πιστεύω, πίστις, πιστός) appears before chapter 8, six of the 24 appearances occur in chapters 8-9 in the series of healing stories, and the next two as well come in context of healing stories. It is not until 18:6 that we see an instance of the terms *not* in relation to a healing story. From there “belief/fait h” shifts to mean the acceptance of a message—whether correct or not. The five uses of πιστός are all in chapters 24-25, amidst a series of parables regarding faithfulness and who pleases God. Meanwhile, ἔργον and its related verb also do not occur before chapter 5, but appear 10 times total, most often connoting deeds—good or bad—done for religious purposes or, more specifically, to please God. The verb, ποιέω, however, offers an additional insight into Matthew’s view of actions: namely, actions reveal the person. In eight verses Jesus pairs ποιέω with καρπός,³⁰⁵ repeatedly warning through fruit imagery that those who do not bear good fruit will be cut off and thrown into the fire, concluding in 12:33 that “a tree is known by its fruit.” Those of faith are apparent by their recognition of Jesus and their proper responses to God and Jesus.

b. Faith in Jesus’ Authority to Heal: Matthew 8-9

Matthew 8-9 is a series of stories relating to Jesus’ power as a healer. This succession illustrates the power of Jesus’ word to change the physical reality (8:8, 16), but even more, it reveals the necessity of the individual’s faith. Each person healed—or someone near them—demonstrates complete trust in Jesus’ ability to heal, and *acts* to get

³⁰⁴ Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding,” 125.

³⁰⁵ Matt. 3:8, 10; 7:17, 18, 19; 12:33; 13:26; 21:43.

within Jesus' vicinity. Their faith leads them out of their homes and towns to Jesus' presence in order to plead for his help.

For instance, in the dramatic interaction with the Roman centurion, he refuses to allow Jesus to enter his house, instead recognizing Jesus' ability to heal from anywhere by his word (8:8). The centurion's faith is a wholistic entity that first accepted Jesus' ability to heal enough to bring him *to* Jesus to ask for healing, but more comprehensively did not need signs or physical proximity. He understood power and its implications, and therefore was confident that if Jesus had the power to heal then nothing more was needed. France defines the faith here as "absolute practical reliance on Jesus' power," the kind of faith that characterizes these chapters.³⁰⁶ The centurion understood that Jesus' very words had healing, restorative power. In this statement he recognizes Jesus' deity because he acknowledges Jesus' power over the very state of existence: if Jesus speaks a word of healing—present or not—that healing is accomplished in the physical world.

Despite Jesus' willingness to follow him, the centurion believes that Jesus could heal without coming near the servant. In 8:10 (par. Lk 7:9), Matthew notes Jesus' response to this sort of faith. Nolland observes, "Matthew rarely attributes emotion to Jesus, and elsewhere it is always others who are amazed at Jesus. So the impression made here on Jesus stands out all the more."³⁰⁷ Such complete faith startles Jesus, especially in someone not of Jewish origin. Morris comments, "Matthew records Jesus' astonishment, a very human trait. Faith like this was not to be expected of a Gentile."³⁰⁸ The people to whom he had been sent, the ones who knew the whole history of God's work redeeming his people, did not exhibit such faith in his ability to heal as the centurion. As Jesus notes in

³⁰⁶ France, *Matthew*, 155.

³⁰⁷ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 358.

³⁰⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 194-95. He continues: "Faith is one of the great Christian concepts, but it is found only 8 times in Matthew. It points to trust in Jesus and, in a context like this, in his ability and readiness to give help in unexpected ways. . . . it is not without interest that in the whole story nothing is said about whether the sufferer had faith or not; it is the faith of the centurion that is brought out."

8:11, this soldier exemplifies the “many from east and west” included in the Kingdom through a faith that surpasses that of the supposed people of God. Nolland continues:

As a statement made from the perspective of his whole ministry, it has something of a proleptic role (cf. discussion at 2:3). Jesus is not saying that he has failed to find faith in Israel, but he is saying that he has not found faith on the level of the centurion’s (this will apply as much to the disciples as to others). The following verses will go on to indicate, in effect, that the correlative of finding that the best of faith in Israel is not outstanding is that in some faith will be found to be entirely lacking. Israel is here viewed from a salvation-historical perspective: it is among God’s historical people that faith should most naturally be found. The kind of faith in view is one that recognizes and responds to what God has now begun to do in Jesus. As in Luke, ‘Faith . . . is attributed to those who act decisively on the basis of the conviction that God’s help is to be found with Jesus and gratefully receive God’s action through him’ (Nolland, Luke, 1:235).³⁰⁹

Ultimately, Jesus responds to this faith with the pronouncement, ὥς ἐπίστευσας γενηθήτω σοι. This pronouncement includes the first use of πιστεύω in Matthew and raises a theoretical question about the centurion’s faith: If he had doubted at this point, would his servant have been healed? That, however, is not the point of the story. Rather, Matthew teaches that the centurion did not doubt Jesus’s ability to heal, even at a distance, and because of his steady faith, the servant was healed.

Matthew 8:16 then makes clear Jesus’ power over the spiritual world. Jesus is said to cast out demons by his word as well as healing everyone who came to him. Jesus’ word has authority over those who have been possessed by demons, showing that his power extends far beyond the people coming or brought to him. Further, with his word he heals not only the possessed, but any with physical or spiritual ailments. In this single line, Matthew shows the power of Jesus’ words over both the physical and spiritual realms to bring healing and restore wholeness.

The next miracle which explicitly mentions faith is that of the paralyzed man with the four friends who bring him to Jesus in 9:1-7 (par Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 5:17-26). It is notable that when Jesus sees the faith of the *friends* that he responds, announcing that the paralytic’s sins “are forgiven.” Jesus’ response instantly brings out cries of “Blasphemy,”

³⁰⁹ Nolland, *Matthew*, 358.

but he is undeterred. In this pericope, he broadens the picture of his purpose, his mission. While many may have seen him as merely a healer, he impresses upon his audience that his mission is wholistic: to redeem the sick of Israel from their spiritual sickness, not merely from their physical illnesses. As Davies and Allison wryly comment, “Paralysis aptly dramatizes the stultifying effects of sin.”³¹⁰ Matthew presents his twofold healing in response to the faith of the friends who brought the paralytic man to him: the persistent faith of these children of Israel allows Jesus the opportunity to reveal the deeper purpose of his mission to heal. Significantly, the persistence of the friends in spite of many obstacles bears witness to the reality of their faith. It is just such a faith, a faith that tears the roof off a buildings, to which Jesus responds.

The fourth miracle story to emphasize faith is that of the woman with the bleeding in 9:20-22, a story embedded in the narrative of Jairus’ daughter in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 9:18-26; Mk. 5:21-43; Lk. 8:40-56). As Jesus passed on his way to Jairus’ house to heal his daughter, a woman battles the crowds to touch his cloak, believing that even a secondary contact like that could heal her. The Markan account specifies that Jesus feels the healing and turns, saying, “Be courageous, daughter: your faith has saved you (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε).” Matthew announces that she was “saved” (ἔσωθη) from that hour. This verse makes the first connection of πίστις with σώζω.³¹¹ Blomberg argues that “Jesus originally spoke these words . . . to refer to *both* physical and spiritual wholeness.”³¹² Likewise, Stanley claims, “even here it is likely that physical healing also involves spiritual deliverance since Peter states in the book of Acts that Jesus healed

³¹⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 76.

³¹¹ Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 38. Luomanen notes this is one of the pericopes “where Matthew’s diction is based on Mark’s story.”

³¹² Craig L. Blomberg, “‘Your Faith Has Made You Whole’: The Evangelical Liberation Theology of Jesus,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. Joel Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 76. He notes that Matthew’s redaction abbreviates the Markan version “so as better to highlight the woman’s faith” (78). Andries G. van Aarde, “ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, the Davidic Messiah, As Political Saviour in Matthew’s History,” in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 19, views this story as “‘paradigmatic’ of the exclusivity of the ‘old’ Israel and the inclusivity of the Matthean community as the ‘new’ Israel,” particularly since this exemplifies the restoration of socially lower female (20).

(ἰώμενος) all who had been oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38). . . . We should therefore not be so quick to separate the physical from the spiritual.”³¹³ Regardless, it is the woman’s faith itself that is said to heal her: Jesus takes no active part in this story. Physical healing appears as a piece of salvation, an indication of the presence of the kingdom of God with all its wholeness. In contrast with chapter 8, here it is not Jesus’ word that heals, but his presence.

And finally, in one last pericope, the story of the two blind beggars in Matthew 9:27-29, again reveals the conjunction of healing and faith. These blind men followed Jesus, calling on him for mercy (9:27, ἐλέησον), persisting in following even when Jesus did not respond to them. Instead of giving up, desperate for his touch they follow and persist in their request. Jesus first asks if they πιστεύετε and then declares the healing would be κατὰ τὴν πίστιν. Morris warns, “Jesus accompanies his healing touch with some words that underline the importance of faith. We should understand *according to your faith* in the sense ‘since you have faith’ rather than thinking of strict proportionality (the meaning is not ‘the more faith, the better the result’; cf. 8:13).”³¹⁴ “Faith” clearly has an element of mental assent, of content that is intellectually verifiable and accepted. As such, however, such a faith still encompasses how the blind men acted, for it leads them to follow and call out.³¹⁵ Believing that Jesus could heal them would have benefited them nothing had they not followed and physically placed themselves completely at the mercy of Jesus. Their faith made them bold to call out and follow, and the truth of their faith was

³¹³ Stanley, *Jesus and Salvation by Works*, 135.

³¹⁴ Morris, *Matthew*, 234. He continues, “JB renders, ‘your faith deserves it,’ but this makes of faith a merit instead of a trust in Jesus through which God’s good gift is received. . . . It is better to understand the words in the sense of the REB, ‘as you have believed, so let it be.’”

³¹⁵ This parallels the OT usage of יָדַעַתְּ, as described by Weiser (TDNT 6:186): “This contains subjective (theoretical) recognition and acknowledgment, but it also contains the practical subjection of the total person, in knowledge, will and conduct, to the claims of the relevant command. . . . The concept of יָדַעַתְּ embraces a twofold relation: recognition and acknowledgment of claim and reality, and the relation of the validity of this claim for him who says Amen to all its practical consequences.”

revealed in their restored vision. They called for mercy and received physical healing, indicating their understanding of mercy as related to restoration.

These stories reveal much about the kind of faith Jesus sought: wholehearted, fully-committed belief in him that was willing to rest everything on the truth of Jesus' claims. No mere intellectual assent that Jesus was a fascinating teacher with many useful sayings suffices: it is to faith that gambles everything and risks looking foolish that Jesus responds. Novakovic warns, "although Jesus' healings cannot authenticate his messianic vocation, they can facilitate human recognition of the messianic character of the time in which they take place and through this contribute to the revelation of Jesus' messianic identity."³¹⁶ Jesus' healing ministry reveals the power of Jesus' word to bring in the wholeness of the Kingdom of God, and those who respond to him recognize his authority and react appropriately, both in belief and deed.

c. The Seed, The Word, The Fruit: Matthew 13

In Matthew 13:2-9, Jesus teaches the people the parable of the seed sown on differing grounds. In his explanation to his disciples in 13:18-23, the λόγος equates to the seed and bears the fruit, but requires a response. Jesus' message about the kingdom of heaven is one of the prime themes of Matthew, beginning with the preaching of John in 3:2. John and Jesus both warn their audiences to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand/near." Jesus' incarnation brought God's rule into a new relation to his people, calling them to repent and change their way of living.

In Matthew 13:19, however, Jesus calls his message τὸν λόγον τῆς βασιλείας.³¹⁷ This word of the kingdom is to be comprehended, but the sign of understanding is that it then bears fruit. Luz observes, "Jesus' parables are not simply meant to be theoretical. Their significance points again and again to everyday life: they asked to be lived, not to be

³¹⁶ Lidija Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 190.

³¹⁷ Given the link to be discussed between λόγος and νόμος in James, this parable should be kept in mind in the interpretation of the νόμον βασιλικόν in James 2:8.

grasped by the intellect.”³¹⁸ We must note that it is not the quantity of the fruit that distinguishes the ones who understand from the ones who fail, but the fact that *they bear fruit*. Other seeds showed initial signs of growth, but because they fail before they reach the fruit bearing stage, they are considered to have failed entirely. So it is not the initial response that is crucial, according to this story, but the endurance in responding. Also, wealth is specifically listed as one of the main oppositions to the word, something that should be kept in mind when reading James. Hauerwas concludes, “It is hard to be a disciple and be rich. Surely, we may think, it cannot be that simple, but Jesus certainly seems to think it is that simple. The lure of wealth and the cares of the world produced by wealth quite simply darken and choke our imaginations.”³¹⁹ Jesus presents a failure to understand and a fear of persecution or ostracism as two reasons people fall away from the faith early on. Wealth, however, is more insidious, as it chokes out those who have endured through the first two and could, by implication, even be said to have a root. Money, or a desire for it, stunts these people and keeps them from bearing fruit. Given the importance of good fruit for Matthew, this seems a deadly failure.

Davies and Allison note, “even if the synoptic interpretation does not derive from Jesus himself, it rightly catches his intention. The point is that people should hear and do the word Jesus speaks (cf. Mt 7.24-7).”³²⁰ The word that Jesus has taught is repentance and obedience to God’s kingdom as brought near by his own incarnation.³²¹ It is noteworthy that, while interpreters generally agree that the sower represents God in some fashion and the seed corresponds to the word of God, the latter is sown far more broadly than is responded to and in some cases the recipients respond not at all (the seed on the path).

³¹⁸ Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 91.

³¹⁹ Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 128.

³²⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew II*, 375-76.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 403, note that this parable has to do the failure of the Jews to respond to Jesus and his message. “Although the word of the kingdom is preached to all, all do not respond in the same way. . . . Opportunity does not guarantee response, proclamation does not abolish sin. This is the main message of 13.1-23, which in effect offers something similar to the free will defense for the problem of evil.”

Only in Luke's version of the parable does the verb φύω appear (8:6, 8), referring to the seed that "grew" on the rocky soil and the good soil.³²² Given the importance of ἔμφυτος in James and the rarity of this verb, it may not be a far stretch to see this parable in the background of James' understanding of what it means to receive the word.

This parable teaches the *necessity* of human response to the divine action. Grace is offered freely in the widespread sowing, but only those who respond avail themselves of it. Those who believe and respond correctly, however, will bear fruit (καρποφορεῖ) in abundance, assumedly the fruit worthy of repentance (Matt. 3:8).

d. Conclusions

At this point, it seems reasonable to conclude that Matthew closely links faith and faithfulness. There is intellectual assent, an acknowledgment of Jesus' claims and teaching; that assent then drives the individual to a dramatic response. Those who hear the message of the kingdom and believe it, repent and live according to Jesus' teaching. Bornkamm creates a distinction in Matthew between οἱ μαθηταί as the "disciples here and now," whereas "it is not 'the disciples' but 'the righteous' who will shine like the sun" and stand at the right hand of the judge.³²³ The parables in chapters 24 and 25 teach that the *faithful* servants—so defined because they are constantly acting in readiness of his coming and in accordance with his λόγος—will "enter into the joy of the master" (25:21, 23). What a person believes leads to corresponding action; without the fruit, the faith is deemed useless.

³²² φύω makes only one other appearance in the NT, in Hebrews 12:15. Davids, "James and Jesus," 71, observes that "the parable of the sower may also be reflected [in James] in the idea of receiving the word (Luke 8:13) and in the strange use of ἔμφυτος which is probably influenced by the use of φύω in the parable. The parable, of course, supports James' call to put away evil (in this case anger) by acting on (receiving) Jesus' instruction. . . . The point James makes is that simply knowing the gospel (assuming this is the same word also mentioned in 1:18, 21) is not enough. One must act on it or obey it."

³²³ Bornkamm, "End-Expectation," 43.

3. *Judgment and Mercy*

a. *General survey*

As with the other main terms surveyed here, neither of the next terms appears before chapter 5. **Ἐλεος** and its cognates occur 15 times, seven referring to “mercy” in some theological aspect, three to almsgiving, and five to requests for healing. Of these, the first group is the most illuminating. **Κρίνω** and its related nouns, meanwhile, appear 22 times. The most common use appears to be admonitions of and allusions to the Day of Judgment (cf. Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36, 41, 42; 19:28), or warnings that judgment and its accompanying punishment is being earned (cf. Matt. 5:21, 22; 23:23). Judgment is most often warned on account of the people’s failure to recognize Jesus. In the quotation from Isaiah in 12:18-21, however, “justice” (**κρίσις**), is desired, the object of the hope that the servant fulfills. As we will see again when we examine the Sermon on the Mount and the judgment of the sheep and goats, justice is tied closely with acts of mercy.

b. *Mercy, not Sacrifice: Matthew 9:13 and 12:7*

Jesus’ use of the Hebrew prophets reveals the importance of human mercy in human-divine relations. Twice in Matthew Jesus quotes the prophetic statement “I desire mercy (**ἰσχυρῶς ἔλεος**), not sacrifice” (Hos. 6:6). Matthew thus summarizes God’s relationship with his people, in which mercy to the helpless holds an essential place. Luz argues based on these quotations that “for Matthew in particular the prophets were also important witnesses for the love commandment.”³²⁴ Hagner says, “Hosea, speaking for Yahweh, put the emphasis upon mercy . . . even to the extent of denying the absolute importance of sacrifice. *Mercy is a better way of obedience.*”³²⁵ Mercy here refers at least in part to the practice of almsgiving. Jeremiah observes, “Almsgiving played an important part in Jewish piety: ‘The more charity, the more peace’ (M. Ab. ii.7) was Hillel’s teaching.

³²⁴ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 213.

³²⁵ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 239, emphasis mine.

Compassion for one's fellow men was regarded as a special characteristic of a descendent of Abraham (b. Betz. 32b).³²⁶

Sacrifice signals one form of obedience, clearly, but in 9:13 Jesus calls those who overestimate it as the “righteous” whom he is not seeking. However, by echoing the words of Hosea, Jesus places a premium upon mercy as the way of showing obedience to God (cf. Matt. 25 below). Hays argues that these quotations reveal that:

The ‘hermeneutic of mercy’ supplants or relativizes the Law’s specific commandments (cf. Exod. 34:21). In these passages we see the outworking of Matthew’s earlier claim in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus fulfills rather than negates the Law. When that formula is applied to test cases, such as eating with sinners and harvesting grain on the Sabbath, we see that the Law is understood to bear witness to what Matthew elsewhere calls ‘the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith’ (23:23). Jesus’ teaching provides a dramatic new hermeneutical filter that necessitates a rereading of everything in the Law in light of the dominant imperative of mercy. . . . Those who take upon themselves Jesus’ yoke are in effect taking up the yoke of the Torah as interpreted by Jesus, but his yoke—in light of his hermeneutic of mercy—is not burdensome.³²⁷

As Hays notes, this is not a replacement of the law, but an understanding that the double love commandment accords with the Hebrew prophets. Stanley notes, “Clearly there is a close relationships between love/mercy/treatment of others, and salvation in the NT, to the degree that where love is absent so too is salvation.”³²⁸ Sacrifice on its own is incomplete and inadequate, like love for God without love for neighbor.

c. Judgment based on one's speech: Matthew 12:36-37

The importance of what one speaks cannot be overstated because speech and thinking, words and heart, thought and the action that embodies it are linked together. Speech is the clearest external indicator of a person's heart, as Hays describes: “Speech and action are the outward manifestations of what is in the heart. . . . Action flows from character, but character is not so much a matter of innate disposition as of training in the

³²⁶ Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 126-27.

³²⁷ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 100.

³²⁸ Stanley, *Jesus and Salvation by Works*, 332.

ways of righteousness.”³²⁹ Speech reveals one’s training, one’s developed character; therefore the act of speech counts as a work by which one is judged. “Words, like deeds, are indicators of a person’s relationship to Jesus and relationship to the kingdom.”³³⁰ Matthew 12:36-37 also links words and the outcome of the day of judgment: one’s words bring one justification (i.e. mercy) or condemnation, a fate possibly determined by careless speech.

The orientation of this judgment is future. Gathercole affirms, “In 12:37 the reference to justification is clearly in the context of an eschatological acquittal; it stands in contrast with condemnation, and both future tenses certainly refer to the eschatological future of the day of judgment.”³³¹ In Matthew’s gospel, the future judgment motivates proper behavior now. This passage emphasizes that each person faces judgment based on how he has lived, and Matthew’s use of *δικαιωθήση* and *καταδικασθήση* forces us to take this warning seriously.

d. The Weightier Things of the Law: Matthew 23:23

The final uses of *πίστις* and *νόμος* in the Gospel both occur in 23:23, in Jesus’ showdown with the Scribes and Pharisees.³³² In the fourth of seven “woes,” Jesus warns the scribes and Pharisees that they are doomed because they tithed herbs and spices, but forgot “the weightier things of the law, justice (*τὴν κρίσιν*) and mercy (*τὸ ἔλεος*) and faith (*τὴν πίστιν*).” Tithing is right, but is not of first importance. Jesus condemns the leaders for missing their priorities: tithing had replaced a manner of living in reflection of

³²⁹ Hays, *Moral Vision*, 99. He continues, “In this respect, Matthew’s moral vision has much in common with Israel’s wisdom tradition, though Matthew is more concerned with community formation than with the cultivation of wisdom and virtue in the individual.”

³³⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 351.

³³¹ Simon J. Gathercole, “The Doctrine of Justification in Paul and Beyond: Some Proposals,” in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 232-33. He adds, “the description of justification that we saw in the Matthean saying is, mutatis mutandis, very close to what we saw in the Epistle of James. James, as is well known, makes the point very explicitly that justification is not by faith alone but by works (James 2:24). As the context makes clear, James understands justification to be linked to *future* salvation, much as in Matthew’s gospel.”

³³² Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 183-84, also points to this saying as helping us understand how “the cultic instruction preserved in Matthew’s sermon . . . assumes participation in the Jewish cult, but subordinates it to social concerns.”

God's character. Luz sees this verse as meaning "simply what Matthew had named as the highest commandment: love (22:34-40; cf. 5:21-26, 43-48; 7:12)."³³³ This verse pulls "faith" into the realm of "faithfulness," something enacted and visible, rather than a belief system.

Luz explains further:

The important commandments are formulated into a group of three in biblical, especially prophetic, language. Justice (κρίσις) corresponds to the biblical מִשְׁפָּט. . . . "Mercy" (ἔλεος), a word that he has used twice from Hos 6:6 (9:13; 12:7), means, for example, "works of charity" such as those named in the great portrayal of the last judgment (Matt 25:35-39, 42-44). As early as 5:7 Matthew had pronounced the merciful blessed, and in 12:1-8 he had contrasted mercy with the Sabbath observance of the Pharisees that neglects human needs. Finally, "faithfulness/faith" (πίστις) here cannot mean faith in Jesus, nor can it mean the faith of prayer or the active faith that performs works of love, for faith is never for Matthew the essence of the requirements of the law. Instead, we are to understand πίστις in the tradition of biblical language, but also as it is understandable for Greeks, as "faithfulness." . . . Jesus represents the Bible's prophetic heritage more than its priestly-cultic heritage.³³⁴

Nolland supplements this description, "If Mic. 6:8 is the model (it has a list of three items and starts with 'justice' and 'mercy' as does Matthew), then 'faith' would be analogous to Micah's 'walk humbly with your God,'" but then cautions: "Matthew makes clear that a prophet-like focus on justice and mercy is not antithetical to even the minutiae of cultic practice: 'and not abandoned the others'.³³⁵ Jesus did not abolish the ritual in favor of the moral law: the two hold together in a proper balance.

In a prophetic style denunciation, Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees for their failure to understand the so-called "weightier" things of the law: the triumvirate of justice, mercy, and faith. Mott notes two points: "(1) Jesus carries on the prophetic attack on the piety which leaves out social justice. (2) He clearly indicates the place of the Old Testament teachings about justice: they reflect the highest level of Old Testament ethics

³³³ Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 124.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Nolland, *Matthew*, 937-38. He explains the list thus: "Though Matthew's list is not identical to any OT list, it has a family likeness to various attempts to give a set of principles that would sum up the whole will of God. κρίσις as 'justice' has appeared in Matthew only in 12:18 and 20, in the quotation from Is. 42:1-4, but that must be its sense here. ἔλεος ('mercy') is identified as a matter of central concern in the uses of Ho. 6:6 in Mt. 9:13; 12:7. And in both these texts the Pharisees are identified with a lack of 'mercy'. To create a uniform set πίστις here should mean 'faithfulness' rather than 'faith' (as it mostly does in the LXX). But since Matthew otherwise uniformly uses πίστις to mean 'faith', this possibility must be considered also for Mt. 23:23."

and are essential to his new order.”³³⁶ This verse proves crucial to understanding Jesus. He affirms the central importance *in the Law* of acting justly, mercifully, and faithfully. They are not lesser commands equal to tithing one’s spices; rather, the commands to care for the poor and disenfranchised are vital to life in the covenant. These leaders are condemned for failing to practice these principles despite holding to the particulars of the law. They failed to understand the law and thereby God.

e. Conclusions

This section is perhaps the hardest to summarize neatly, because all three of the “in-depth” sections to come speak to judgment and mercy. But we can draw two initial conclusions. First, Jesus emphasizes merciful actions towards others, highlighting love of neighbor as essential to covenant faithfulness. Secondly, Jesus warns his audience of a future judgment, wherein one is judged on the habits and character one builds during this lifetime. In this judgment, one’s sacrifices and tithing count less than the more “wisdom” priorities of a controlled tongue and a merciful character.

C. CLOSER READINGS

While the previous discussions contribute to the intersections and developments of the themes central to James, three passages in particular may lie in the background of James’ thought, and as such deserve further treatment. These are the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:21-35), and the judgment of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

³³⁶ As quoted in Guillermo W. Mendez, “Justification and Social Justice,” in *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1992), 104.

1. *Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7*³³⁷

The Sermon on the Mount forms a most significant block of teaching for James. Morgan argues that every major teaching in James parallels instruction from the Sermon;³³⁸ thus we will readily see all the key themes in this section.

a. *The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:5-12*

The Beatitudes introduce the character of God's people. Jesus reveals a correspondence, presumably from God, for the people who behave according to kingdom manners. Hauerwas views the macarisms in a community setting:

That Jesus declares such people "blessed" indicates that the transformed world has begun with the proclamation that "the kingdom of heaven has come near." Each of the Beatitudes names a gift, but it is not presumed that everyone who is a follower of Jesus will possess each beatitude. Rather, the gifts named in the Beatitudes suggest that the diversity of these gifts will be present in the community of those who have heard Jesus's call to discipleship.³³⁹

This view does not, however, seem to encompass Jesus' teaching elsewhere that *everyone* be merciful and his warnings that all of those who follow him will endure persecution for following him.³⁴⁰ These macarisms seem less a "gift list" than a call to character. Hauerwas correctly observes, however, that these traits flourish because of the nearness of the kingdom. Likewise, the nearness of the kingdom encourages those striving to live out these descriptions.

³³⁷ Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. L. L. Welborn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 42, relegates the text of the Sermon to a "secondary literary creation, a critical compilation of sayings of Jesus that have been recognized as decisive for instruction in proper theological thought and practice," therefore needing some distinction between "three kinds of 'texts':" the actual words of Jesus, the text as we have it, and the text as it is applied. Despite his distinctions and his warning that the author here chooses "to differentiate the path chosen by the author of the SM from the directions pursued by other early Christian groups" (43)—thus presenting a combative view of early Christianity—if the sermon is a compilation of ethical teaching, that makes it eminently suitable as a compendium of Jesus' wisdom sayings.

³³⁸ Christopher W. Morgan, *A Theology of James: Wisdom for Consistent Churches* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, forthcoming 2010). See also Virgil V. Porter, Jr., "The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of James, Part 1," *BibSac* 162 (2005), 344-60; *Ibid.*, "The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of James, Part 2," *BibSac* 162 (2005), 470-82.

³³⁹ Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 63.

³⁴⁰ Hagner, "Holiness and Ecclesiology," 175, agrees: "The beatitude of 5:10, 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,' has in view the ethical righteousness of those who follow Jesus. . . . The parallelism between 5:10 and 5:11 is striking, where ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης ('on account of righteousness') parallels ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ ('on account of me'). Righteousness is associated with relationship to Jesus."

For this study, perhaps the most significant macarism is Matthew 5:7, μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.³⁴¹ With this one simple macarism, Jesus mandates that God’s people must practice mercy in order to receive mercy from God. Simply put, Jesus creates a positive *lex talionis*, a *quid pro quo* relationship of divine mercy toward the merciful. The principle here “is also paralleled in Mt 6.12-15; 7.1-5; 18.21-35; Mk 11.25; and *t. B. Qam.* 9.30: ‘As long as you are merciful, the Merciful One is merciful to you.’”³⁴²

Davies and Allison add:

perhaps throughout Matthew (including 5.7) ‘mercy’ and its cognates imply that merciful action is the concrete expression of loyalty to God, and that what God demands is not so much activity directed Godward (‘I desire ... not sacrifice’) but loving-kindness benefiting other people (‘I desire mercy’).

They then argue that the passive ἐλεηθήσονται does refer to “the hope of receiving mercy at the last judgement.”³⁴³ Hagner warns: “Implicit in this beatitude is the judgment upon the wicked oppressors, i.e., the ones who have *not* shown mercy: to them mercy will not be shown (cf. Jas 2:13).”³⁴⁴ This statement falls in line with the wisdom tradition: those who practice mercy to others will, in the future, receive mercy from God.

b. Fulfilling the Law and the “Antitheses”: Matthew 5:17-48

In Matthew 5:17-48, Jesus establishes his relationship to the law as he begins the main body of his teaching. He warns in 5:17, Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλύσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας· οὐκ ἦλθον καταλύσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι. Jesus’ relation to the law in Matthew is notoriously complex. Regarding this passage, David Wenham asks,

³⁴¹ The macarism provides the positive equivalent to James’ proverb in 2:12a: mercy is the promised reward of the merciful. While Deppe, *Sayings of Jesus*, 99, remains unconvinced that this verse lies in the background of James’ saying, he does concede that both this saying of Jesus and that of James appear drawn “from a common tradition of Jewish wisdom,” thus fitting it within the trajectory seen thus far. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 93, notes two parallels from Proverbs, “Prov 14:21b reads ἐλεῶν δὲ πτωχοὺς μακαριστός, ‘blessed is the one who has mercy on the poor’ (cf. Prov 17:5c, a phrase only in the LXX text: ὁ δὲ ἐπισπλαγχνιζόμενος ἐλεηθήσεται, ‘the one who has compassion will be shown mercy).” This second parallel seems particularly relevant, although its absence from the Hebrew may explain why it is not often cited.

³⁴² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 454.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 455.

³⁴⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 94.

“Why bother to say that Jesus has not come to destroy the law and the prophets and that he expects a higher righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees? Surely because some people argued that Jesus by his teaching or his way of life was undermining the law and the prophets and lowering the moral standards.”³⁴⁵ Contrarily, Luz argues that here, “Matthew has appropriated a Jewish Christian tradition that demand the keeping of *all* individual commandments of the Torah and excludes material criticism of Torah commandments.”³⁴⁶ Luz, however, holds a minority position.³⁴⁷

Until this point of the Sermon, Jesus’ statements are remarkably inoffensive as regards the law, unless, as Deines suggests: “In the Beatitudes, people are promised participation in the kingdom of God without the Law and the prophets. The keeping of the Law is not mentioned at all. . . . how dare Jesus promise something like that to people without connecting the promise to the keeping of the Law as an expression of God’s will

³⁴⁵ David Wenham, “The Rock on Which to Build: Some Mainly Pauline Observations about the Sermon on the Mount,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 200. “We know that people did accuse Jesus exactly in those terms for his liberal attitudes to the Sabbath and for mixing with sinners. . . . It is in response to that sort of accusation that Jesus in 5:17-20 replies very forcefully that he is not destroying the law and the prophets or lowering standards. No, he is ‘fulfilling’ them, bringing in the full righteousness to which they are pointing and going even higher than the scribes and Pharisees.” See also Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law*, 119. He adds that in the antitheses, “Matthew has broken through the tension between the law and the life of the Spirit. Christ is not set over against the law, but identified with it. . . . what is involved here is not merely a principle of interpretation but the issue of authority” (119-20).

³⁴⁶ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 221. “He not only appropriated it; he also intensively edited it and placed it at a prominent place in his Sermon on the Mount. That fits in well with the basic intention of the Matthean v. 17 that speaks primarily of the fulfillment of the law through Jesus’ obedience and life. The conclusion seems unavoidable that the ‘fulfilling of the law’ in v. 17 must first of all be interpreted on the basis of vv. 18-19. What is then meant is the faithfulness to every individual commandment of the Torah.” While he concedes that “The love commandment is at the heart of the Torah, [and] the ceremonial laws are secondary,” he concludes, “they are all parts of the law that Jesus fulfills in its entirety. Verses 17-19 are a ‘Jewish Christian program’ of great conciseness.” See also Ulrich Luz, “The Fulfillment of the Law in Matthew (Matt. 5:17-20),” in *Studies in Matthew*, ed. Ulrich Luz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), particularly 185-220 and his essay there entitled “The Fulfillment of the Law in Matthew (Matt. 5:17-20).”

³⁴⁷ Cf. Roland Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew — An Ongoing Debate,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 64. Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 492, argue, “there were those who recognized the relative freedom of the Gentiles and yet at the same time believed that those born as Jews should remain within the law and Jewish traditions (so James, and Cephas, and John according to Gal 2; also probably Paul. . .). Matthew, we should like to think, belonged to this third group. For him, the law was still to be observed by Jewish Christians (5.17-20; 23.3), but such was not necessary for the Gentiles.”

and Israel's covenant?"³⁴⁸ Contra Luz, the question about Jesus setting aside the law is valid, given the crowd's astonishment at his authoritative teaching in Matthew 7:28-29.

The general consensus is that Jesus does modify the Law in his teaching, signified in his use of πληρώω.³⁴⁹ Davies and Allison note that in Matthew πληρώω generally refers to Jesus as the fulfillment of an OT prophecy, but that "he who fulfills the law and the prophets displaces them in so far as he must become the centre of attention: the thing signified (Jesus) is naturally more important than the sign (the law and the prophets) pointing to it. . . . [But also] if the law is fulfilled, it cannot on that account be set aside. Fulfillment can only confirm the Torah's truth, not cast doubt upon it."³⁵⁰ Meier, however, understands Matthew to be asking a nuanced question, not "what is the relation of this man Jesus to the center of our religion, the Mosaic Law," but "what is the relation of the Mosaic Law to the center of our religion, the Lord Jesus," thereby inverting the question within the text's Christian context.³⁵¹ This change of focus acknowledges the shock of Jesus' original hearers, but also anticipates the forthcoming teaching. In 5:17-20, Jesus

³⁴⁸ Deines, "Not the Law," 73. "While the goal of the Law and the prophetic hope, namely 'righteousness,' is mentioned twice (5:6, 10), the traditional and expected way to this goal, namely the keeping of the Law, is not referred to. . . . This immediately raises the question (and not only for a Pharisee or scribe)" of Jesus' relation to the Law.

³⁴⁹ Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 242, argues that the first significant fulfillment of the law occurred "in his teaching and practice, though those, of course, ultimately culminated in the Cross." He adds that Jesus shows no indication of dividing between ritual and moral law, but rather "in the teaching and ministry of Jesus the whole Law found its fulfillment and no part of it remains unchanged" (243).

³⁵⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 486-87. They observe: "It is at once clear from 5.21-48 that Jesus proffers new demands . . . so πληρώω must at least be consistent with a transcending of the Mosaic law. At the same time, the verb almost certainly has prophetic content, for (i) Matthew uses πληρώω most frequently to express the fulfillment of an OT prophecy by Jesus (the formula quotations); (ii) 'and the prophets' has been added to 'the law' in 5.17, which proves that the evangelist is thinking of prophecy; (iii) in 11.13 a verse from Q is edited with the result that the Torah prophecies ('the prophets and the law prophesied until John'), and this implies that the Torah could be fulfilled just as the prophets could. . . . So when Jesus declares, 'I came . . . to fulfill', he means that his new teaching brings to realization that which the Torah anticipated or prophesied. . . . while Jesus' new demands may surpass the demands of the OT, the two are not contradictory. . . . Rather do the words of the Torah remain the words of God (cf. 15.4), their imperatival force undiminished (cf. 5.18; 23.23)."

³⁵¹ John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel* (NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 63. He continues, "Matthew answers that question in 5:17-20 in terms of eschatological fulfillment of Law and prophecy, with the fulfillment of Law understood in analogy to the fulfillment of prophecy." See his expanded discussion in pp. 224-28. Matthew 11:13 confirms the ability of the Law to "prophesy," stating, πάντες γὰρ οἱ προφήται καὶ ὁ νόμος ἕως Ἰωάννου ἐπροφήτευσαν. The Law is not a static entity given once by God to dictate behavior, but rather it actively points toward a goal. As such, not only can the Prophets be fulfilled, but so also can the Law.

clarifies the validity and continuing importance of the Law but establishes his role as its intended fulfillment, giving him the *right*—as its intended fulfillment—to determine the Law.³⁵²

In Matthew 5:19-20, Jesus affirms this “greater” righteousness in keeping the law for any who wish to attain the kingdom.³⁵³ With this, Matthew concludes the section in which he affirms the Law and calls for perfect obedience in order to receive eternal life. Davies and Allison muse that “5.20 may not so much anticipate unique teaching as enjoin readers to do, to act, to be. The better righteousness is the righteousness of action—based, of course, on the words of Jesus,” this in contrast to those who do not live out what they teach.³⁵⁴ Jesus warns those who teach anything but the full law that they will be “least in the kingdom.”³⁵⁵ This may be contrasted to Matthew 18:6 (par. Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:2), where false teachers are warned of the dangers of their unfaithfulness in far more damning language. Stanton suggests that “the warning in 5.19 . . . may refer to the sayings of Jesus, rather than (as in the more usual interpretation) the law.”³⁵⁶ Such a division would set up the “antitheses” as indeed Jesus’ new law in Matthew.

³⁵² Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 43, defines Matthew’s use of πληροῦν here as “insisting that Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah was and is ‘orthodox’ in the Jewish sense: his teaching, like that of any other orthodox teacher, was not in itself Torah but merely its interpretation, the sole purpose of which was to fulfill the will of God.”

³⁵³ Dunn, *Unity*, 246, observes, “*Matthew’s attitude to the law* comes to clearest expression in 5.17-19. These were probably three independent logia which Matthew himself has joined together. . . . Matthew clearly understands them in terms of continuing *loyalty* to the law, that is, for him, *the law as interpreted by Jesus*. Whatever Jesus himself may have meant by any talk of fulfilling the law, he is not to be understood as superseding it, or leaving it behind. On the contrary, ‘fulfilment’ is defined by the antithesis with ‘destroy’. . . . Here clearly the law as ‘realized’ by Jesus retains *an unconditional validity for those who belong to the kingdom of heaven*; and here too is a firm rebuke to other members of the kingdom (other Christians—Matt 8.11) who were more liberal in their attitude to the law. Matthew’s high regard for the law is also expressed in two words distinctive in his vocabulary,” namely *anomia* and *dikaïosune*.”

³⁵⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 498-99, continuing: “the contrast in 5.20 between two types of righteousness [may have] as much or more to do with doing than with teaching. The previous verse, 5.19, is about doing, and when Jesus elsewhere speaks of the scribes and Pharisees, he typically refers to their ‘hypocrisy’ (e.g. 15.7; 22.18; 23.13-15, 28). The slur presupposes that they really do know better. So in Matthew the main problem with the Jewish leaders is not that they do not know the difference between right and wrong, it is instead simply that, knowing what they should do, they do something else.” This comment corresponds with James’ concern that his audience not merely be “hearers of the word” but “doers.”

³⁵⁵ Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 91, argues that Matthew 5:19 does not teach relative positions in heaven but rather the importance of the Law.

³⁵⁶ Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 300.

Hagner warns that this obedience “is not to be understood quantitatively (contra Luz)—that is, that the righteousness Jesus speaks of does not come through a greater preoccupation with the minutiae of the law that outdoes even the Pharisees.”³⁵⁷ Instead, he argues, “Jesus expects . . . a new and higher kind of righteousness that rests upon the presence of the eschatological kingdom he brings and that finds its definition and content in his definitive and authoritative exposition of the law.”³⁵⁸ In light of Jesus’ creation/kingdom righteousness, Betz’s theory that this section of the Sermon as well as the warning against false prophets in 7:15-20 is directed against Paul and the law-free Gentile mission seems very doubtful.³⁵⁹

In this context, however, the difficulty lies in extrapolating whether Jesus meant to say that the “kingdom of heaven” is a *reward earned* by those righteous enough, or whether there might be a sort of “covenantal nomism” in effect, whereby Jesus—as the new Moses—addresses his new legal code to those already “in” (the disciples) and warns them that to remain “in” they must maintain the righteousness that he teaches.³⁶⁰ Luomanen observes, “The mere fact that the obedience is made a precondition for the entrance into the final salvation does not yet break the pattern of traditional covenantal nomism, nor

³⁵⁷ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 109.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 109. He warns that “the larger context of the verse (e.g., the grace of the beatitudes) forbids us to conclude that entrance into the kingdom depends, in a cause-effect relationship, upon personal moral attainments. This verse is addressed, it must be remembered, to those who are the recipients of the kingdom.”

³⁵⁹ Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 20-21. He argues that 5:19 is a direct attack on Paul, while 7:15-20 is “aimed at those Christian prophets who do not do the works of the Law. . . . The community of the SM is, without doubt, a Jewish-Christian minority in distress. Without lie the hostile forces of non-Jewish paganism. Gentile Christianity of a Pauline stamp, with its freedom from the law, has a bewitching harm; they are ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing.’” In contrast, Graham N. Stanton, “The Origin and Purpose of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 183, comments, “it is unlikely that 5:17 is directly polemical,” pulling in evidence from Matt 10:34 where similar language, but no obvious opposition community, is in play.

³⁶⁰ Hays, *Moral Vision*, 422, understands Matthew to be defending the fledgling Christian movement from claims of antinomianism: “The remarkable claim in Matthew 5:17-20 that Jesus has come not to abolish the Law and the prophets but to fulfill them must be read in the context of the late-first-century struggle for ownership of Israel’s heritage. No doubt the early Jewish Christians were being accused by their Jewish contemporaries of being ‘soft’ on Law observance. Matthew responds by formulating, in the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, a programmatic denial of the charge. . . . Not only is the charge false that Jesus sponsors antinomianism, but in fact he demands a standard of legal obedience more stringent than that of the scribes and Pharisees, . . . a more radical interpretation of the Law that fulfills the Law by dealing with the orientation of the heart. The scribes and Pharisees dabble with superficial concerns, suggests Matthew, but Jesus exposes the deep intention of the Law.”

does it prove that Matthew would be a pure legalist.”³⁶¹ Van Aarde observes, “The command for surpassing righteousness implies that like Jesus, the disciples have to radically obey the will of the Father in heaven, which is accomplished through *doing* it.”³⁶² Matthew 5:17-20 requires of Jesus’ followers a deep obedience to the Law—the definition of which will be nuanced throughout the text—if they are to receive the Kingdom.³⁶³ Jesus demands not simply law but law’s fulfillment: a new ethic based in his very own life.

As the one who fulfills the law, Jesus reveals the righteousness of the kingdom in the Sermon. Deines summarizes the general scholarly feeling that the subsequent teaching has been given an incorrect name, saying, “the designation ‘antitheses’ is not helpful at all. Jesus does not set his teaching *against* the Torah, but explains through examples how the eschatological righteousness based on his fulfillment of the Law and the prophets (5:17-20) looks. The ‘antitheses’ are therefore to be seen as the guiding norms for the kingdom of God.”³⁶⁴ According to Deines, the antitheses are not in conflict with the Torah, but rather teach the path—and cost—of righteousness.³⁶⁵ In contrast, Meier argues that “in three cases . . . Jesus revokes the letter of the Law and replaces it with his own diametrically opposed command. . . . As regards the Law and authority over it, Jesus stands where God stands.”³⁶⁶ Wenham argues that Matthew’s Jesus intensifies the OT call to perfection:

In God’s kingdom the standard is, of course: “You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5:48). So was Jesus undermining the Old

³⁶¹ Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 92.

³⁶² van Aarde, “ΙΗΣΟΥΣ,” 15.

³⁶³ Twice in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus threatens judgment to those who fail to obey God’s law, even within their thoughts (5:21-22, 27-29). Both times, he not only intensifies the commands but also threatens damnation as the result of failure. This sort of teaching indicates that the final judgment rests on more than strictly faith in Jesus, unless, of course, one takes the position of Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 516, who view this last line of extreme punishment as a Matthean redaction. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 121, comments, “discipleship of the kingdom is a serious matter that requires true, i.e., unreserved, absolute, commitment.”

³⁶⁴ Deines, “Not the Law,” 64. He does then add the slightly contradictory statement: “They do not abrogate the Torah of Moses, but they make it in a way superfluous. Whenever Jesus’ followers live according to what is demanded of them, the regulations of the Torah are no longer needed.”

³⁶⁵ Contra Porter, “Sermon on the Mount in James,” 353, who sees Jesus’ “antitheses” behind James’ “law of freedom,” stating the cliché, “Under the pharisaic interpretation of the Law the people were enslaved, but Jesus’ interpretation gave freedom to the people.”

³⁶⁶ Meier, *Vision of Matthew*, 64.

Testament law and moral standards? Exactly the opposite: he was bringing in the kingdom of God, in which the standard is perfection. Seen in this context, the Sermon on the Mount is not depressingly difficult legalism. Rather, it is a description of kingdom-of-heaven living, as well as a call to the disciples to live out their discipleship and their sonship of the heavenly Father. . . . The starting point is in the first four beatitudes—the acknowledgment of spiritual need and the seeking of God’s righteousness. . . . This righteousness represents the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.³⁶⁷

Jesus does not abrogate the Law, because the standard of perfection and holiness to which God has consistently called his people (cf. Ex. 19:6; Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 8, 26; etc.) has not changed.³⁶⁸ While Luomanen concludes that “the starting point for Matthew is to show that Jesus does not question the OT law” even as “the openly Jewish program in verses 5:17-20 has turned into the teaching of Jesus’ commandments (28:16-20),”³⁶⁹ Matthew instead presents a Christocentric view of the OT Law. The arrival, death and resurrection of Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God, and so Jesus explains the righteousness of the kingdom. As the one to whom the Law and Prophets pointed, Jesus has the right to define the law of the kingdom of God that he inaugurates. Macaskill argues, in “the so-called antitheses . . . the ethical standards derive from the original design of creation. Moreover, it seems arguable that the standards are, more specifically, based upon the idea that man and woman are made in/as God’s likenesses.”³⁷⁰ The Christ law, the law of the kingdom, springs from the creation principle of humanity in the *imago dei*, a reality that shapes every interaction.

This is perhaps best captured in Matthew 5:44 and 48: ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν· ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς. . . . ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν. Taking the traditional *lex talionis* and turning it on its head, Jesus demands love instead of

³⁶⁷ Wenham, “The Rock,” 201.

³⁶⁸ Throughout Matthew 5-7, Jesus makes a clear connection to the Jewish legal code, referring specifically to two of the Decalogue (5:21, 27) as well as to many of the “lesser” laws such as those concerning divorce (5:31, cf. Deut. 24:1), oath-taking 5:33; cf. Deut. 6:13), love of neighbor (5:43; cf. Lev. 19:18), and fasting (6:16; cf. Is. 58:33; Joel 2:12; Zech. 8:9, in which texts fasting appears as a regular part of life and religion).

³⁶⁹ Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 88, 87.

³⁷⁰ Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom*, 186.

proportionality.³⁷¹ Instead of leaving room for like-responses, Jesus instigates a revolution in which reactions are to be anything *but* proportional: generosity with those who would take, non-response to those who would fight, love for enemies, prayer for tormentors: this is a love that extends beyond anything “natural,” as the examples in vv. 46-47 demonstrate.

These commands, however, are rooted in the character of God (vv. 45, 48) and the final verse thus calls for “perfection” or “wholeness”—growth in the *imitatio dei*. Jesus simply repeats God’s command in Leviticus 11:44-45 (19:2; 20:7, 26; etc.), encapsulating the Hebrew notions of holiness with the growing concept of τέλειος, perfection. Martens explains, “The praxis of God’s people is never detached from the basic premise of God’s holiness, which entails morality and ethics (Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48).”³⁷² Jesus’ standard for his follower’s relational conduct is the Father, who does not function by the apparently petty *lex talionis*. Davis ties together this whole pericope:

Jesus’ ethic surpasses both the ethics of the Jewish populace and leadership and goes beyond the teaching of what was contained and required in the OT Law. . . . Jesus’ instruction represents a new perspective, different from that of the OT *lex talionis* texts or NT-era Judaism. Thus, Jesus’ teaching represents a new and higher standard of righteousness and is directly tied to the introduction of the promised eschatological kingdom.³⁷³

Ultimately, as van Aarde says, “Matthean ethics centres on Jesus’ words ‘be τέλειοι as your heavenly Father is τέλειος’ (Matt 5:48). Integrity makes *inner life* correspond with *outer behaviour*; a wholeness which is rooted in one’s *whole* being.”³⁷⁴ Perfection—a key term for James—springs from the implementation of this fulfillment ethic. Jesus fulfills and

³⁷¹ Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 244, warns against giving too high a priority to the love-commandment, noting that here “the OT love-commandment is not only surpassed by the new instruction Jesus gives, but is only one among several other antitheses some of which would be extremely difficult to subsume under the heading of ‘love’.”

³⁷² Elmer A. Martens, “The People of God,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 242. Stanton, “Origin and Purpose,” 188, calls 5:48 a “‘key’ verse” regarding ethical conduct.

³⁷³ Davis, *Lex Talionis*, 167. He adds, “While a measure of attention-getting language may exist, that Jesus intended these types of examples to be lived in a concrete fashion is borne out not only by the straightforwardness of the teaching, and its direct applicability in its historical context, but also the example of nonresistance that Jesus repeatedly exhibited when he was physically offended by the ‘evil person’ during his ministry.”

³⁷⁴ van Aarde, “ΙΗΣΟΥΣ,” 20. He also points to Matt. 22:37-38.

then teaches his followers to complete the kingdom ethic of love: *imitatio dei* for the *imago dei*.

In this respect, Matthew 7:12 also fits within this discussion, for here Jesus declares that to treat others as one wishes to be treated ἔστιν ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται. In many ways, this is again an inverse *lex talionis*. Instead of a negative, proportional warning, he gives a positive statement, an encouragement to act *as one would wish to have done* to one. Jesus views the law as the guide by which people regulate their interactions with others. As McKnight concludes, “For Jesus, morality is no longer *just Torah but now it is Torah as defined by love.*”³⁷⁵ This aphorism concludes a section regarding personal interactions, and here Jesus summarizes the guiding principle of the Law and the Prophets regarding relationships. This standard governs people’s tendency to judge the “other” and condemn, but also comes in response to God’s principle of giving good gifts to those who ask. Again, Jesus’ fulfillment of the law does not create a new law by which one can safely consider oneself “in,” but creates an ethic of transformation by which the righteous are shaped to the values of the kingdom, the *imitatio dei*.

c. Laws of Proportionality: Matthew 6:12-15, 7:1-2

Twice within the Sermon, Jesus teaches about proportionality. The first comes within the “Lord’s Prayer” and its subsequent explanation regarding forgiveness, while the second initiates a section on judging and interpersonal interactions in chapter 7. Both these teachings serve to encourage and also to warn the hearer that, to an extent at least, God deals with his people in accordance with the character they choose to display.

First, in the middle of the Prayer, Jesus teaches: ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν, continuing with the explanation that as we forgive (ἐὰν γὰρ), we will be forgiven by God in heaven—or not

³⁷⁵ McKnight, “Parting in the Ways,” 96.

(vv. 14-15). Hagner argues that “it is a given that God’s forgiveness is always prior,”³⁷⁶ an argument that cannot be supported by this particular text but that derives its support from the parable in Matthew 18. Here, Jesus gives no indication of God’s initial call or forgiveness. He simply points to the future judgment and warns that we are forgiven only insofar as we ourselves forgive others. France warns against too great an emphasis on the time-sequence, viewing this as primarily a warning against “the insincerity of a prayer for forgiveness from an unforgiving disciple.”³⁷⁷

It is significant that Jesus chooses only the one line of the prayer to explain, with its simplicity of reciprocity of forgiveness or judgment. Within Jesus’ prayer itself is the recognition that when one asks for forgiveness, it will be given to that one ὡς καὶ, in proportion—or at least in like manner—to his or her own willingness to release others from their debts. Here Hauerwas reminds us, “The forgiveness of debts signals that nothing is quite so political as the prayer that Jesus teaches us. . . . [challenging] our normal economic and political assumption.”³⁷⁸ Matthew then switches vocabulary from ὀφείλημα within the prayer to παράπτωμα in the explanation.³⁷⁹ It may well be a vocabulary shift simply for literary purposes; the latter term broadens the application for those who might wish to narrowly apply Jesus’ statement to financial transactions. Therefore, while the economic and political would be an appropriate outcome, Davies and Allison remind us pragmatically of the communal nature of this prayer: “The right of the eschatological

³⁷⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 152, observes, “It is clear from these verses that a direct connection exists between God’s forgiveness and our forgiveness. . . . These verses are a forceful way of making the significant point that it is unthinkable—impossible—that we can enjoy God’s forgiveness without in turn extending our forgiveness toward others.”

³⁷⁷ France, *Matthew*, 136. He adds, “The point is not so much that forgiving is a prior condition of being forgiven, but that forgiveness cannot be a one-way process. Like all God’s gifts, it brings responsibility; it must be passed on. . . . There can be no question, of course, of our forgiving being in proportion to what we are forgiven, as 18:23-35 makes clear” (137).

³⁷⁸ Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 79.

³⁷⁹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederic William Danker, Third ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 743, defines ὀφείλημα as “that which is owed in a financial sense, *debt, one’s due*” with the subsequent meaning of “obligation in a moral sense, *debt*,” placing Matthew’s use here in the latter category. BDAG defines παράπτωμα as “a violation of moral standards, *offense, wrongdoing, sin*” (770).

community to utter the Lord's Prayer depends, as does the efficacy of the prayer, upon communal reconciliation. Hence the Lord's Prayer must be prayed by a church whose members have forgiven one another.³⁸⁰ Thus the warning goes beyond mere individual judgment to judgment of the entire community. While forgiveness and mercy are not identical, they overlap strongly in these verses; divine forgiveness of offences in a potentially eschatological context matches human forgiveness of others within this world.³⁸¹ The communal outworking of forgiveness is essential to this return to the ethics of creation, the fulfillment of the higher righteousness and the love of others already commanded. Thus it appears that the ultimate appropriation of God's promise for mercy in judgment depends on individuals having enacted mercy and forgiveness to one another in life (echoing 5:7).

Following in a similar vein to 6:12-15, in Matthew 7:1-2 Jesus teaches an equivalence between divine and human judgment.³⁸² Jesus warns that our responses one to another, in forgiveness or condemnation, will be the measure we will receive at the final judgment.³⁸³ Matthew uses remarkable grammatical ingenuity in his warnings: ὧ κρίματι κρίνετε κριθήσεσθε and ὧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε μετρηθήσεσθαι, making the future judgment correspond with one's current actions. Hagner notes that the phrase, "lest you be judged" "does not imply that one can avoid judgment by God at the eschatological judgment (this

³⁸⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 617. Given James' emphasis on the community and that issues like justice and mercy are most relevant in corporate relations (cf. Jas 2:1-6), their point regarding the communal nature of forgiveness may well be appropriate in James as well.

³⁸¹ Marianne Sawicki, "Person or Practice? Judging in James and in Paul," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 401, observes that inculcating kingdom values is how the Father goes about being "our Father": "The Father forgives the debts of those who have forgiven their debtors. For both Jesus and James, we might go a set further and say that this reciprocity is constitutive of the meaning of divine Fatherhood itself. The Father *fathers* or begets by imposing the law of the kingdom."

³⁸² Matthew 6:12-15 and 7:1-2 together appear to function as a midrash of Sirach 28:1-2, quoted above. The parallel in Lk. 6:37 combines these two segments from Matthew: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged (μὴ κρίνετε, καὶ οὐ μὴ κριθήτε). Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned (καταδικάζετε, καὶ οὐ μὴ καταδικασθῆτε). Forgive, and you will be forgiven (ἀπολύετε, καὶ ἀπολυθήσεσθε)."

³⁸³ John S. Kloppenborg, "Agrarian Discourse and the Sayings of Jesus" (paper presented at Biblical Studies Seminar, University of St Andrews, February 20, 2008), 24, notes that the Matthean rendition of the measure-for-measure saying has been moved into the realm "of law and retribution" such that it has been "assimilated to the *lex talionis*." He agreed that James follows Matthew's apocalyptic leanings.

judgment is presupposed in the following words) but merely that the way in which one judges others will be the way one is judged by God at the eschatological judgment.³⁸⁴

While Matthew's use of κρίνω here sounds threatening, presumably if a person chooses to view his neighbor in mercy, then there is no threat.³⁸⁵ Stanley comments, "Quite simply, at judgment time people will be treated in the same way they have treated others."³⁸⁶ It is far better, then, *not* to judge one's neighbor but deal with them in mercy and forgiveness.

d. First Warnings of Judgment: Matthew 7:15-28

In this passage, Jesus uses a farming metaphor to explain the role of people's lifestyles for determining whether they are true or false teachers/prophets, but the metaphor swiftly moves to include judgment with the addition of εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. The cost of bearing bad "fruit" by not having a lifestyle in keeping with Jesus' teaching is judgment, being cut off and cast out. Jesus continues with the warning that calling Jesus "Lord"—and even doing miraculous deeds in his name—is not sufficient for entry into the kingdom. Here again Betz sees evidence of an anti-Pauline redactor at work, observing, "Who are the ones who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' in the scene before the judgment seat of Jesus in Matt. 7:21-23, but are nevertheless cast out? They are the lawless Gentile Christians, with their *kyrios*-Christology, who have prophesied in the name of Jesus, have cast out demons and done many mighty works, but who have not done the will of the Father who is in heaven."³⁸⁷ This, however, is a forced fit for the passage, and Stanton observes, "Pauline Christians might have been expected to appeal to πίστις or even

³⁸⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 169.

³⁸⁵ France, *Matthew*, 142, notes that "the least that such [a 'fault-finding, condemnatory'] attitude can expect is to *be judged* with equal harshness by other men. But the passive, as often in Matthew, probably conceals God himself as the agent. Just as he will forgive those who forgive (6:14-15), he will condemn those who condemn."

³⁸⁶ Stanley, *Jesus and Salvation by Works*, 331. He adds, "While these passages evidently teach that God's final treatment of man is dependant upon man's final treatment of his fellow man we should not forget that Jesus in fact taught that at judgment time a measure for measure type principle would be implemented. Whatever problems we have with this theologically it is clear that this is what the text teaches" (332).

³⁸⁷ Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 20.

(conceivably to $\gamma\nu\hat{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ as the basis of their libertinism.”³⁸⁸ Instead of imagining a fight between Jewish and Gentile Christians, this passage is best understood in its context with other “fruit” passages in which responding to Jesus’ kingdom ethic of repentance and obedience is essential.

Likewise, though this passage is closely related to the one following which defines the expected obedience, here we must note what is *not* needed for entry to the kingdom: showy signs of power, even if done in Jesus’ name. These things are all said to have been done $\tau\hat{\omega}\ \sigma\hat{\omega}\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\acute{\omicron}\mu\alpha\tau\iota$, but apparently were not deeds done in obedience to God’s will. Jesus explicitly states that only those who $\acute{\omicron}\ \pi\omicron\iota\hat{\omega}\nu\ \tau\grave{\omicron}\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\hat{\upsilon}\ \pi\alpha\tau\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ (as taught in the Sermon) will enter the kingdom. Stanton says, “for the evangelist the words of Jesus are that important,”³⁸⁹ as becomes apparent in verses 24-28.

France notes one other startling revelation of this passage, at the point that Jesus states $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\acute{\nu}\ \mu\omicron\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\iota\eta\eta\ \tau\grave{\eta}\ \acute{\eta}\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha$. “Notice that in vv. 21-23 Jesus presents *himself* as the judge at ‘that day’, when his hearers would have expected *God* to be mentioned. The claim is all the more striking for being assumed, not argued. Moreover, the criterion of judgment is their relationship with *him*.”³⁹⁰ Those judged call Jesus “Lord,” and seem to think that he should recognize them, but judgment happens not based on whether they can work miracles by his name. Instead, Jesus speaks with full authority, warning that the future judgment is based on their obedience to the Father’s will as he has taught it.

Jesus concludes his sermon with the analogy of (dis)obedience to building on a sandy or solid foundation. The story compares the wise person who builds on rock to

³⁸⁸ Stanton, “Origin and Purpose,” 184. Lack of closed parenthesis in original.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 190, noting, “For Matthew, the Q reference to ‘carrying out the words of Jesus’ can be paraphrased by ‘doing the will of my Father.’”

³⁹⁰ France, *Matthew*, 149.

those who obey Jesus' words, and the foolish person to the one who builds on sand.³⁹¹

Much like the story of the seeds, the obedient person endures storms and hard times while the one who hears (ὁ ἀκούων) but does not put Jesus' teaching into action (μὴ ποιῶν αὐτοῦς) falls flat when trials come. Here we see the correct link between hearing and doing: namely, hearing leads to doing. The failure to *do* what one has *heard* marks one as a fool headed for destruction.³⁹² Davies and Allison remind us, "The rock is not hearing and doing but the teaching of Jesus as delineated in the great sermon; and to build on that rock, that is, to do the will of the Father in heaven, shows a person to be prudent."³⁹³ They note that the storm in v. 25 is not just "the calamities and afflictions of everyday life," but rather, "in the OT the storm often represents God's judgment . . . and in later Jewish literature the difficulties and trials of the latter days are, despite Gen 9.11, sometimes pictured as terrible tempests."³⁹⁴ It does not seem necessary that this story refer *solely* to the eschatological judgment, but following the judgment story in vv. 15-23, the eschaton very likely is this parable's main context.

Hauerwas observes, "If we know ourselves and others by our fruits, we must have learned what constitutes good fruit. Jesus's sermon provides the outline for the discernment of those who are true."³⁹⁵ Here Jesus again refers to his *teaching* as a λόγος three times in a row, recalling the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount with all of its various imperatives, blessings, and illustrations. The λόγοι of Jesus are the firm rock upon

³⁹¹ Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 20-21, again creatively concludes, "can it be a coincidence that the wise disciple, whose life is represented in the parable of Matt. 7:24-27, builds his house 'upon the rock.' . . . Can this 'rock' be anything other than an allusion to Peter and his church, against which Paul may be polemicizing, in concealed form, in 1 Cor. 3.11?" Here the difficulty is that this parable serves to summarize Jesus *teaching* and the need for each person to apply it, not an ecclesiological statement regarding Peter as the base of the church in contrast to Paul.

³⁹² Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 720, highlight that "It is perhaps noteworthy that, in 7:24-27, Matthew says nothing at all about studying the words of Jesus. For the evangelist, presumably, it is not studying that is greater but doing. Compare *m. 'Abot* 1.17, which no doubt addresses the tendency in rabbinic Judaism to exalt study at the expense of other action."

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 721.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 90.

which wise live, guiding their behavior in all aspects of life: relationships, speech, anger, prayer, fasting, tithing, even law obedience.³⁹⁶

While quite obviously the death and resurrection of Jesus are central to the Christian faith, Jesus declares that acceptance through the doing of his words is how a person survives the storm of judgment. In contrast, Davies and Allison note the fate of those who do not obey: “Their end is destruction (7.13) and separation from Jesus (7.23). This is the unsoothing end on which the sermon ends.”³⁹⁷ Much like the covenant end of Deuteronomy, obedience or disobedience to Jesus’ λόγος work their respective results.³⁹⁸ Stanton adds, “In the SM and in the gospel as a whole, grace and demand are linked inextricably. For Matthew, the Jesus of the SM is the Son of God through whom God is acting for mankind: it is his demanding teaching which is to be central in the life of the community and in its discipling of the nations.”³⁹⁹

Jesus, by his λόγος, gives a new ethic to the people of the Kingdom by which they will be recognized, a law that cannot be fulfilled by any legalistic obedience but that requires a transformation of the heart and disposition. So comprehensive was this new “law-giving,” people understandably “wondered” at this Sermon that redefines law and obedience itself. Hauerwas rightly notes, “Jesus teaches as one who has the authority to determine what is authoritative.”⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ Stanley, *Jesus and Salvation by Works*, 186-87, concludes, “Central to Matthew’s SM is the kind of righteousness required to enter the kingdom as stated in 5:20, itself analogous to doing the Father’s will in 7:21. Based on a couple of references taken from Hosea 6:6 it is evident that righteousness and the Father’s will are tantamount to showing love and mercy. While righteousness cannot simply be defined as love or mercy these are certainly qualities that separated the insufficient righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees with the exceeding righteousness necessary to enter the kingdom. They are at the core.”

³⁹⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 723.

³⁹⁸ This sort of linguistic distinction of Jesus’ λόγος as the rule of the Kingdom very well sets up James’ use of the λόγος as the kingdom νόμος.

³⁹⁹ Stanton, “Origin and Purpose,” 190.

⁴⁰⁰ Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 92. Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 245, thus concludes, “The whole question of Law, therefore, must be placed in a wider context, for the central point in these encounters . . . was not the issue of law but the authority of Jesus himself.”

2. *The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant: Matthew 18:21-35*

The parable of the unmerciful servant provides us with crucial information for understanding the intersection of judgment and mercy.⁴⁰¹ Introduced by Peter's query about how often he must forgive a fellow disciple, Hagner notes that this parable helps to establish the priority of God's gracious forgiveness to his people as well as their subsequent responsibility to act in kind.⁴⁰² Regardless of the fact that initial forgiveness comes by an act of God, it is clear that *final* forgiveness depends on the individual's willingness to forgive. The parable depicts the king's pardon of a poor servant's great debt, one he never could have repaid. When that servant was freed, however, he refused to extend clemency to a fellow servant with a far lesser debt. Hearing of this action, the king's response is definite and furious, reminding the first servant that the king had forgiven him (πάσαν τὴν ὀφειλὴν ἐκείνην ἀφήκᾳ σοι), and so he ought to have shown the same mercy (οὐκ ἔδει καὶ σὲ ἐλεῆσαι τὸν σύνδουλόν σου, ὡς καὶ γὰρ σὲ ἠλέησα). The servant is responsible to show mercy because he has already having been forgiven his debt (see especially v. 33). When he failed to appropriate the mercy given him by extending it to his fellow servant, however, his own forgiveness was revoked.⁴⁰³

In this passage, Jesus makes a linguistic jump from the master "forgiving" the one servant (ἀφήκᾳ σοι) to the responsibility of that servant to "show mercy" to his fellow servant (ἐλεῆσαι τὸν σύνδουλόν σου) on the basis of having received mercy (σὲ ἠλέησα). Luomanen finds this pattern crucial to understanding salvation in Matthew, for:

⁴⁰¹ Interestingly, this passage is not highlighted by Deppe as a saying of Jesus taken over by James. Given its frequency of citation by commentators of James regarding 2:12-13, however, this is considered one of the most important passages for understanding James' theology of judgment.

⁴⁰² Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 152, in his section on 6:14-15.

⁴⁰³ Bauckham, "James and Jesus," 129, regarding the relevance of this passage to James 2:13, notes "That God's mercy will be shown in showing mercy to those who themselves have shown mercy to others (2:13), a principle already found in Jewish wisdom tradition (Sir. 28:1-4; Prov. 17:5 LXX), is especially characteristic of Jesus' teaching (Matt. 5:7; 6:12, 14-15; 18:23-35; Mark 11:25). Put otherwise, from the abundant mercy of God flows the abundant mercy shown by his people (3:17), especially to the needy (1:27; 2:15-16), and from the generous giving of God comes the generous giving of God's people to those in need (2:15-16)." As this parable shows, mercy is initiated by the divine figure, but it is *in response to* and *because of* this that mercy is demanded from all who would claim to be among God's people.

it is clear that the indicative forms the basis of Matthew's understanding of salvation. The starting point is God's election, which calls for human response. Although the indicative does not hold a prominent position in Mt quantitatively, its role in Matthew's pattern of salvation is crucial. It can be seen in Matthew's understanding of salvation history, where God's election forms the starting point, as well as in the fact that those who enter the group of Jesus' followers experience salvation as a present reality which they are to maintain through obedience.⁴⁰⁴

Jesus here fleshes out his positive *lex talionis*: the implication is that the people in his audience *had* received God's mercy and were *therefore* responsible for showing mercy to each other (this positive *lex* ties this parable to the teaching of 6:12-13 and 7:1-2).⁴⁰⁵

Ultimately, to receive forgiveness and mercy at the final judgment requires the obedient response of forgiveness one to another now, a response to the far greater forgiveness each person has already received. The parable presents three stages: (a) initial *mercy* (forgiveness of the debt) was given at the whim of the king for an unimaginable debt; (b) mercilessness was then enacted by the forgiven servant in face of a much smaller debt; and (c) finally *justice* is enacted as a response to (b). Jesus warns that this parable applies to each person, saying, οὕτως καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος ποιήσει ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ἀφῆτε. In slight disagreement with Shank, who argues, "Jesus here teaches that the forgiveness of God . . . remains conditional, according to the individual's subsequent response to the gracious forgiveness which he has received,"⁴⁰⁶ the initial mercy was not itself conditional. Forgiveness *was* freely given, but justice called for merciless judgment after mercy failed to bear fruit. As van Aarde states, "To receive forgiveness and to refuse

⁴⁰⁴ Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 285.

⁴⁰⁵ Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment*, 279, warns, "this parable does not say the same thing as Sir. 28:2. . . . It is true that the Matthean application in v. 35 appears to understand the parable in this sense; but in the parable itself the servant is not judged simply because he refused mercy; it is because he refused it after he himself had received it in lavish measure." He continues, "the idea that God's attitude toward human beings corresponds to the attitude of human beings toward their fellow men and women plays an important part. But we should not explain the parable on the basis of the logion; instead, the logion should be interpreted on the basis of the parable. The parable expresses the unspoken premise of the logion: Because we ourselves have received God's grace, we can and should give up judging; we should forgive and be generous. Otherwise, we have received grace in vain" (280-81).

⁴⁰⁶ Robert Shank, *Life in the Son: A Study in the Doctrine of Perseverance* (Springfield, Miss.: Westcott, 1961), 7.

to forgive others means excluding oneself from the reign of God.”⁴⁰⁷ For those who fail to bear the fruit of mercy already experienced, judgment is absolute.

3. The Judgment of the Sheep and Goats: Matthew 25:31-46

Finally, in the last section of Jesus’ eschatological discourse, Jesus brings together the issue of works and judgment in what Hagner calls “an apocalyptic revelation discourse.”⁴⁰⁸ Here, in the dividing of the sheep and goats, we see the works that create the lines of distinction. “Sheep” traditionally referred to the people of Israel,⁴⁰⁹ so it seems reasonable that the division here occurs between the true Israel—the true people of God—and those who are only masquerading among them. As in the prior literature, the distinction is black and white with a bipartite division of “sheep” and “goats,” a symbolic way of saying “righteous” and “wicked” (see v. 37). The division between the two groups is based on their deeds: the righteous are welcomed into their “inheritance (κληρονομήσατε),” because they fed the hungry, clothed the poor, gave hospitality to the stranger, and visited the sick and imprisoned, while the wicked are condemned for their failure to act in this manner. Nolland observes, “Vv. 35-36 explain the basis of identification. . . . The items on the list are all concrete acts in response to specific and pressing needs. The list is clearly intended to be exemplary and not at all exhaustive. Comparable lists from the OT and Jewish tradition share many of the elements found in vv. 35-36, but without the same scope or degree of consistency of form.”⁴¹⁰ He continues, “In Mt. 25:31-46 this list of acts of compassion appears no fewer than four times, with a significant abbreviation on only the fourth occasion. The account is concerned to drive

⁴⁰⁷ van Aarde, “ΙΗΣΟΥΣ,” 15-16, argues for a political and economic interpretation of this parable.

⁴⁰⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 740, notes that although the immediately preceding context might lead one to think of this as a parable, “this narrative is based not on a fictitious story but on the description of a very real, though future, event.”

⁴⁰⁹ See even as early as 2 Sam 24:17/1 Chr 21:17; 1 Kings 22:17/2 Chr 18:16; Psa 74:1; 78:52; 79:13; 100:3; Jer 23:1; 50:6; Ezek 34:6, 11-12, 15, 17, 20-22, 31; Mic 2:12; Zech. 10:2; Matt 9:36; 10:6; 15:24.

⁴¹⁰ Nolland, *Matthew*, 1028.

home the profound significance of the kinds of behavior listed.”⁴¹¹ The behavior listed concerns active work on behalf of those who have neither advocates nor resources.

The righteous are declared “blessed” because they saw the needs of the helpless and acted on their behalf, identifying with them in all their different forms of need: hunger, thirst, stranger, ill, or imprisoned, all of which Jesus claims as having been done to himself. The “sheep” are perplexed at when they did these things to the king, not realizing that service to the “least ones” equals service to Jesus. Stanley concludes, since “Jesus identifies with others . . . how one treats another person is a direct reflection of one’s attitude toward Jesus.”⁴¹² The unconscious nature of their response, however, is crucial to understanding the nature of God’s law in Matthew: there is no conscious “staying in” through a new legal code. Instead, the very nature of their obedience to God’s way reveals the absolute transformation of their character to the *imitatio dei*. They have simply “done what God would have us to do and so doing have ministered to Christ himself.”⁴¹³

On the basis of their response to the helpless and needy, the decision is made, and the “goats” “go away for eternal punishment (εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον), the righteous to eternal life (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον).” The reward of “life” is promised to those who unselfconsciously practice acts of mercy, while judgment falls on those do not live according to the principles of Leviticus 19:18 and Hosea 6:6. This passage depicts the final judgment as depending on one’s deeds, particularly of mercy. Beare, holding a traditional view of salvation strictly by grace, is troubled by this parable and concludes, “There is no trace of saving *faith*—the righteous have done their good deeds without any thought that they were serving Christ (or God). There is no mercy shown to the accursed, while the

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 1031. Regarding the object of the charity, Nolland, *Matthew*, 1032, argues that “There will be an important difference in v. 45, which will make it clear that while the focus here is on disciples who have helped other disciples in need, the Son of Man actually identifies (but not as with a brother or sister) with the needy in their need” and “the omission is also important in another respect: it implies that ‘the king’ values service to the needy as service to himself irrespective of whether those served are disciples or not. It may not be service to his brother or sister, but it does count as service to himself” (1034).

⁴¹² Stanley, *Jesus and Salvation by Works*, 336. He notes also that “righteousness is being viewed as a *pattern of life*” in the Synoptics.

⁴¹³ Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 211.

blessed have no need of mercy. There is justice for all, but is justice without mercy Christian?”⁴¹⁴ And indeed, in Neufeld’s summary: “The king’s verdict depends only on whether or not the nations have acted compassionately toward the least, the hungry, the thirsty, strangers, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. This summarizes the standard of righteousness that Jesus taught throughout Matthew.”⁴¹⁵ The problem Beare has with this passage originates from his preconception that eternal life is strictly a gift of God upon which works can have no bearing, while Jesus’ teaching repeatedly has emphasized that God’s final judgment is based on a person’s life, whether one has lived by the ethics of the Kingdom. By failing to understand mercy as a covenantal requirement, Beare concludes that “the blessed have no need of mercy,” while in truth the blessed are the ones who *do* receive God’s mercy as the rightful conclusion of justice. Mendez observes that “the Bible points out the impossibility of expressing God’s love without the consideration of concrete activity on behalf of fellow human beings. . . . God is love and God is justice, and we cannot say that both categories are abstract unhistorical entities whose value lies precisely in their transcendent nature.”⁴¹⁶

These acts are holistic and often uncomfortable, but there is also an echo of the covenantal revelation of Deuteronomy 10:12-22, wherein YHWH commands his people to care for the poor and welcome the alien, remembering their own history with humility. In a culture that desperately wanted the Romans and the foreigners out of their land, one of the items that Jesus praises is welcoming (συνάγω) the stranger (ξένος), bringing foreigners into fellowship so that they are no longer outsiders. Each act demands sacrifice

⁴¹⁴ Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Commentary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 496-97. He begins: “It is to be noted that in this whole passage there is no trace of a doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, or of the grace of God. The righteous are invited to enter into the Kingdom because they have shown themselves worthy by their kind deeds, not because their sins are forgiven.” Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 746-47, however, argues “although sometimes understood as confirming a salvation by works, this passage need not be understood as incompatible with the gospel of the kingdom as a divine gift. . . . Matthew does stress the importance of righteousness as good deeds, but as a part of a larger context in which God acts graciously for the salvation of his people.”

⁴¹⁵ Edmund K. Neufeld, “The Gospel in the Gospels: Answering the Question ‘What Must I Do To Be Saved?’ From the Synoptics,” *JETS* 51 (2008), 277.

⁴¹⁶ Mendez, “Justification,” 186. His points to the examples of “Ja. 2:14ff.; 1 Jn. 3:10ff.”

and discomfort on the part of the practitioner, going far beyond the minimum of tithing set by the law and moving into actions in accordance to God's nature.⁴¹⁷ Nolland reminds that this teaching alone ought not to upset the rest of the Gospel's teaching that "God's fresh initiative is located in Jesus," but concludes, "Recognizing what God is doing and aligning oneself with it are of fundamental significance for Matthew."⁴¹⁸ Much as with the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, merely calling Jesus "Lord" without putting into practice his transformational ethic is useless at the judgment. Religion cannot consist in carefully regulated laws but rather is the active outworking of God's Kingdom on earth, an ethic James will further define.

Richard Hays concludes that one of the key themes of Matthew's theology is the importance Jesus placed upon how his followers live. "God's ultimate judgment of all will be based upon *concrete works of love and mercy*, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. Confessional orthodoxy counts for nothing unless it is accompanied by obedience to the will of God. The kingdom of God is characterized by compassionate outreach to the weak and needy."⁴¹⁹ Hays reads Matthew through the "hermeneutical filter" of the double love

⁴¹⁷ While this development became apparent after the time period we are concerned with here, Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 278, observes that "Later rabbinic theory distinguished between these good deeds, which they called 'acts of charity' (מַעֲשֵׂי חֶסֶד), and alms (צְדָקָה). 'Acts of charity' included deeds that not only required money but also involved the whole person. Together they belong to the 'good works' (מַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים) that, unlike the commandments, could not be defined more precisely by the Torah. Works of charity were very important for the Jews, especially after the destruction of the temple. According to Jewish texts, performing or failing to perform acts of charity can be decisive at the judgment." Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 186, notes, "In rabbinic tradition, there are also traces of the belief that the treatment of the needy is compared to one's actions toward God." For Deuteronomy 10:12-22 as background for ethical instruction concerning care of the poor and the alien, see also Mariam J. Kamell, "The Economics of Humility: The Rich and the Humble in James," in *Economic Dimensions of Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker and Kelly Leibengood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 159-64.

⁴¹⁸ Nolland, *Matthew*, 1036-37. He warns "At every level of the tradition the account in Mt. 25:31-46 is denatured if its criterion of judgment is allowed to displace others that feature prominently in the Gospel material. To be sure, Matthew places a fresh level of emphasis on the need to conform action to profession and to a significant degree conceives following Jesus ethically (see, e.g., 16:24-27), as long as 'ethically' is understood to relate to action and is seen to embrace love of God as well as love of neighbour (22:34-40) and as long as action is understood to be rooted in the nature of the inner person (12:34-35)." While Matthew readily "assigns functions of deity to Jesus" and views him as the focus of God's work in the world now and in the future, in this passage he also rhetorically emphasizes the importance of these works in the judgment day.

⁴¹⁹ Hays, *Moral Vision*, 109.

command⁴²⁰—love of God and of neighbor—which leads him to this conclusion. He understands Jesus’ teaching to require fulfillment of the law *in order to pass* the final judgment,⁴²¹ but the law to be enacted by God’s people is the deeper righteousness promulgated by Jesus most clearly in the Sermon, but also throughout his life and teaching. Mendez notes that “Justice is closely linked to eschatology in several ways. The pervasive presence of God’s justice in the *eschaton* is the reality behind all present mirror-like human justice.”⁴²² This is a crucial summary of Matthew’s theology, for the Gospel consistently warns readers that their actions, especially those of love and mercy, are mandatory for them to attain God’s mercy in final outworking of justice.⁴²³ To take these warnings at less than face value is to miss one of Matthew’s key points.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

From this survey, a few conclusions ought to be highlighted. First, throughout the text, a consistent emphasis is placed on deeds of mercy and forgiveness, particularly in the three pericopes studied in greater depth. A legalistic quota of obedience is consistently rejected (cf. Peter’s question in Matt. 18:21-22); rather the text drives the reader toward developing a merciful disposition. Matthew focuses on the character of a disciple, revealing the shape of kingdom character as revealed through the λόγῳι, the νόμος of Jesus. The call and empowerment for this character of *imitatio dei* begins with God’s mercy, revealed both in Israel’s past but come to fruition in Jesus’ presence. Luomanen thus concludes:

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁴²¹ C. Stettler, “Paul, the Law and Judgment by Works,” *EvQ* 76 (2004), 195-96, sees this also in Paul, arguing that “For Paul, the last judgment is a judgment by works (Rom. 2:9-10). This is true also for believers (2 Cor. 5:10). . . . Paul repeatedly warns those who remain in sin that by doing so they will lose their salvation (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:1-12). . . . Judgment by works means for them that their *obedience* is measured, not their disobedience.”

⁴²² Mendez, “Justification,” 194.

⁴²³ Bornkamm, “End-Expectation,” 23-24, observes, all “are judged by the ‘one’ standard, namely that of the love they have shown towards, or withheld from, the humblest. That decides who belong to the righteous, who enter into eternal life, and who have to go into eternal punishment. . . . the final destiny is determined by the doing of God’s will.”

Matthew's view of salvation can be fully understood only in a Jewish-Christian context where God's past deeds in the history of his people were still known well enough. . . . In Matthew's view, only through Jesus is it possible to restore the relationship between God and his people which Israel had broken. In Matthew's pattern of salvation, the main function of Jesus is to make possible a life in obedience to God.⁴²⁴

The audience has repeatedly witnessed God's character through his deeds—both in mercy and judgment—but God's mercy comes to its fulfillment in Jesus. Because of the greatness of God's mercy in the Christ-event, those who claim faith in Christ now must follow the way of unquantifiable obedience and mercy as they seek the coming of the Kingdom.

⁴²⁴ Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 285.

CHAPTER 3: THE THEOLOGY IS PRESENTED IN JAMES 1-2

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

There are several questions raised as we approach James. Does he follow the growing wisdom trajectory of judgment and mercy as the two sides of mercy? How do Jesus' descriptions of judgment and the righteous affect James' writing? Even more basically, does James show influence from Jesus' teaching in these areas or is his writing strictly in line with the earlier wisdom texts? Finally, how do these discussions help us to understand James' theology of salvation?

These questions all reach the bulk of their answers in chapters one and two of James. Therefore this chapter walks closely through those two chapters, attempting to classify the elusive identity of the word/law to which obedience is commanded, the nature of "faith" and its "works," and his nuanced relationship between judgment and mercy. Because his arguments overlap, repeat and build on each other, for the sake of clarity we will follow the order of the text, drawing out the themes as they appear. In the next chapter we will survey the end of the epistle more synthetically to determine how the categories studied here sustain through the text and ultimately develop the soteriology of the epistle.

A. JAMES 1

1. The Nature of God and the Wisdom of Trials: James 1:1-8

This introductory section presents the reader with both an encapsulated glance into both the author's theology of God as well as an introduction to the Christian life. The two themes interplay throughout these verses, so for this section we follow the text's structure as it illumines these particular themes.

The greeting sets the tone for the epistle’s theology. Beginning by describing himself as a δούλος,⁴²⁵ a slave θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, James reveals a high Christology. While some argue this mention of Jesus could be a later addition,⁴²⁶ McCartney avers, “No matter how this verse is read, James is setting forth a very high Christology, identifying Jesus not just as Christ (Messiah) but also as Lord, mentioned in the same breath with God.”⁴²⁷ Bauckham adds that James’ wisdom may have had “special authority because it is the wisdom of a sage whose own teacher was Jesus,” a reality presupposed in the introduction of 1:1.⁴²⁸ James’ prescript serves to pave the way for a Christological reading in the text, even while serving as a call to proper humility, since the author of the text claims only lowly status for himself.

Turning then to the human concern of the passage, verses 2-4 introduce us to the goal of the epistle: the “completion” and the maturity of the audience.⁴²⁹ He begins with the correct response to trials—πάσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε⁴³⁰—recognition of God’s purpose to use all circumstances to draw his people into maturity.⁴³¹ Intriguingly, it is not the *trials* that are said to have an ἔργον τέλειον; rather, ὑπομονή is the key in shaping godly maturity. The end result of endurance *is* maturity in faith. Like Jesus’ command in

⁴²⁵ Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 171, observes that “in the LXX, δούλος was regularly used to render the Hebrew term עֲבָד which often referred to those who obey God, and specifically of figures such as Moses, Joshua, David and the prophets.”

⁴²⁶ See Allison, “Fiction of James,” 529-70, particularly pp. 541-43, for its summary of this argument.

⁴²⁷ Dan McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 78. This, in contrast to Dunn, *Unity*, 251, who argues that “*The letter of James is the most Jewish, the most undistinctively Christian document in the NT. . . . The Jewish and undistinctively Christian character of the letter is such that some have been able to argue, not implausibly, that James was originally a Jewish document taken over with little alteration by an early church. However, there are a number of features which seem to require a Christian author. . . . The faith he gives expression to is one which seeks to live according to the teachings of Jesus within a wholly Jewish framework of belief and practice — Christian at significant points but more characteristically Jewish in sum.*”

⁴²⁸ Bauckham, “Wisdom of James,” 85.

⁴²⁹ Michael Thompson, in conversation at Tyndale Fellowship, 4 July 2009, argued James 1:4 was the thesis of the epistle for this reason.

⁴³⁰ “*Consider it pure joy.*” See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 176-77, 182-83, for his discussion on the various technical interpretations of this line.

⁴³¹ See also Sir. 2:1-6, particularly 2:4 which warns them to “be patient” or endure (μακροθύμησον) in times of trial and humiliation (ταπεινώσεως).

Matthew 5:48, ἔσεσθε . . . τέλειοι, the goal here is that the hearers ἦτε τέλειοι.⁴³² James, as did earlier wisdom authors, recognizes that endurance—consistency in right actions despite difficulty—is crucial for becoming τέλειος.⁴³³

James 1:5 then gives us a crucial insight into the author’s understanding of God. He calls God τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ, placing the descriptive participle into the very title of God and making it absolutely clear that this generosity is a primary and repeated trait of God.⁴³⁴ Rather than qualifying an elite group as the recipients of this generosity, James specifies that God gives to *everyone* (πᾶσιν) generously. The term ἀπλῶς, here translated as “generously”⁴³⁵ could also mean “single-mindedly,”⁴³⁶ an idea which makes sense in contrast with the “double-minded” person about to appear in 1:7, a person presented as the antithesis of all that God is and wants.⁴³⁷ In this regard God’s character might be called “simple”: he gives generously and without reservation, doubt, or hesitation.⁴³⁸

Depending on how one translates this term, then, it can support the image of God’s purity of will as well as his liberality. James then adds that God gives “without reproach.” Along with expanding on the picture of God’s sheer munificence, this phrase unlocks the idea that God does not expect his people to have wisdom except as a gift from him. Batten observes that “such a description fits well with the image of a frank friend and benefactor,” in contrast with the practice of patronage.⁴³⁹ God does not condemn the

⁴³² Deppe, *Sayings of Jesus*, 65-67, does not find a purposeful quotation of Jesus in this verse, noting instead “that moral completeness was the goal of many, if not all, of the early church leaders” (65).

⁴³³ We will look more closely at the τελ- word group later, but it is worth noting Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 104: “perfection for James is to display total and unvarying commitment to God and to do good works and develop the character prescribed by the ‘law of liberty’ and the wisdom from above.”

⁴³⁴ The present tense nature of the participle allows the possibility of repeated or continual giving as God’s nature.

⁴³⁵ As Johnson, *James*, 178.

⁴³⁶ As Moo, *James*, 59.

⁴³⁷ ἀπλῶς could also mean “sincerely, without hesitation.” Cf. Davids, *James*, 72-73.

⁴³⁸ As Ralph P. Martin, *James* (Waco: Word, 1988), 18. Matthew 6:22-23 might support this contrast with its division of the eye as ἀπλοῦς or πονηρός. This is the only use of the ἀπλος root in Matthew and supports the growing idea in James that God’s people are also called to be ἀπλῶς.

⁴³⁹ Alicia Batten, “God in the Letter of James: Patron or Benefactor?,” *NTS* 50 (2004), 265. In contrast, she describes patronage as “by definition an exchange between unequal parties, and maintained by a system whereby the clients were kept obedient to, and were often exploited by, their providers” (264). The description of God in 1:5 stands in stark contrast to an exploitative system.

petitioner for their lack of wisdom but gives the very thing needed to become mature and complete (1:4).

The warning to the doubter that follows in 1:6-8 makes clear how important this aspect of God's character is. To hesitate shows either doubt in his character as generous or vacillation regarding the value of wisdom, and neither pleases God.⁴⁴⁰ The *διακρινόμενος* stands in direct opposition to God's nature as *ἀπλῶς*, failing to recognize the simplicity of generosity in God's nature. While God seeks to give to his people everything that they need to please him, those who doubt, like those who are friends with the world (4:4), reveal their uncertainty regarding whether they want to please God, and thus cut themselves off from the help he willingly gives.

For James, the adjective *ἀκατάστατος* (also 3:8; related noun *ἀκαταστασία* in 3:16) is unequivocally bad. Here the adjective qualifies the *ἄνῆρ δίψυχος*, the double-souled person, while in 3:8 it characterizes the active tension of the evil embodied in the tongue. This instability of path (*ὁδός*) reminds the reader of other “two ways” teaching visible in Psalm 1 and prevalent in both secular and Jewish teaching.⁴⁴¹ Instead of choosing one path and remaining faithfully on it, this *ἄνῆρ δίψυχος* wavers between them in all his different choices, revealing his lack of commitment to the right path. The term *δίψυχος*, of course, is difficult to pin down precisely, as it appears first here and there is speculation whether James himself coined the term.⁴⁴² Its intent, however, is clear. James does not say that the doubter literally has two souls—one of faith, the other of doubt. Rather, the doubter is torn internally by their own indecision, led by the wisdom of the world and

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. Martin, *James*, 18, who notes “God’s nature . . . is not to be questioned, and his giving is marked by a spirit of spontaneity and graciousness. The theme of James is that of the ‘prodigality of God’ (Vouga).”

⁴⁴¹ Pictured in Proverbs as the choice between two women, see also Didache 1:1: “There are two paths (*ὁδοὶ δύο εἰσὶ*), one of life and one of death, and the difference between these two paths is great” (in Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. 1 [Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003], 417).

⁴⁴² See Stanley E. Porter, “Is *dipsuchos* [James 1:8; 4:8] a ‘Christian’ Word?,” *Biblica* 71 (1990) 469-98, who argues that it is essentially a “Christian” word because it appears in Christian literature alone through the first two centuries C.E. The concept, however, is not new, as Sirach 1:28b warns its readers not to approach God “with a divided mind” (*καρδίᾳ δισσηῖ*), in a similar context of prayer and proper fear of the Lord. Sirach 1:28-30 shares a variety of warnings with James: in addition to the divided mind, it also warns against hypocrisy (*ὑποκριθῆς*) and a self-deceived heart (*ἡ καρδίᾳ σου πλήρης δόλου*).

unable to trust God's generous nature. Again, this person stands against the ἀπλῶς nature of God, a contradiction to the goal of being τέλειος and ὀλόκληρος.⁴⁴³ By his doubt, he chooses to stand outside of relationship with God.

The introduction, therefore, presents the reader with a clear glimpse into James' theology and purpose. God's nature as good and generous is set in apposition to the human reality of difficult trials. The doubleness of human nature, meanwhile, stands in opposition to the unity and single-minded nature of God's intent. Ultimately, this passage reminds the reader that, while called to endure, this endurance is made possible by the gift of God's wisdom.

2. James 1:9-11: Humility versus Humiliation

This section introduces James' contrast of the terms ὁ ταπεινός and ὁ πλούσιος. Picking up on prophetic imagery from Isaiah 40 or Psalm 103, James compares the fates of those who rely on their wealth as similar to that of grass that disappears in a moment's dry wind. The debate on this passage circles around the issue of whether the πλούσιος are also ἀδελφός, and subsequently whether the warning of coming humiliation is simply a warning or something more damning.⁴⁴⁴ Theologically, these verses correspond well with the multitude of passages throughout wisdom literature encouraging the oppressed person that God will bring about justice on their oppressors, whether early statements like Proverbs 18:12, which also contrasts the ὑψοῦται with the ταπεινοῦται, or Sirach 11 and the pragmatic reminder of Pseudo-Phocylides 109, but also the more apocalyptic wisdom of 4Q418 126.ii.6-8 or *Enoch* 99:1. In all we see the consistent pattern that those who boast now will not boast in the time of God's judgment.

⁴⁴³ Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 143, observes that the contrast in the text is “between τέλειος and δίψυχος,” so that “purity is a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition in order to achieve perfection.”

⁴⁴⁴ Some, like Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth*, or Tamez, *Scandalous Message*, see this as a warning of eschatological damnation. Others, like William Baker, “James,” in *James-Jude: Unlocking the Scripture for You*, ed. William Baker and Paul Carrier (Cincinnati: Standard, 1990), 22, argues that as irony, this warning to rejoice is too extreme if taken for damnation.

This passage, however, gives the first indication of James' belief that every person is either one of ὁ ταπεινός or will be forcibly humiliated (ταπεινώσις), a contrast that will be further developed through the book.⁴⁴⁵ While ὁ ταπεινός does contain the idea of physical poverty, it also conveys the Hebraic idea of the “righteous poor,”⁴⁴⁶ and thus is a more theological term than πτωχός and appropriate for the contrast presented in this passage. This idea may also pick up on the more nuanced beatitude in Matthew 5:2, the πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, who are promised ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. This promise, of course, pairs with James' reiteration in 2:5, as we will see shortly. Ultimately this passage introduces what will be important particularly in chapters 4 and 5 regarding a person's salvation: the necessity of a humble heart before God without dependence upon worldly goods or status.

3. James 1:12-21: The Two-Ways of Obedience and Desire

This section is not normally grouped together, but doing so reveals a thread not unlike two-ways teachings. One result is a greater awareness of the passage's contrast of living by desires and living by obedience to the word. Another is a much fuller explanation of God's role toward his people. Finally, combining these verses brings a third benefit of discussing the first two uses of λόγος together. As with 1:1-8, human and divine actions trade priority in the text.

First, the beatitude of 1:12 shows God's merciful response to those who have endured πειρασμόν, here hinging between the “trials” of vv. 2-5 and the “temptations” of 13-15. The important action is ὑπομένει, for the blessing devolves upon those who endure their trials, engaging the process called for in vv. 2-4 leading toward maturity and godly character. Verse 12 promises that the one who endures λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς. Neusner views the πειρασμόν as temporal judgment: “What about this

⁴⁴⁵ See Kamell, “Economics of Humility,” 157-75.

⁴⁴⁶ Davids, *Epistle of James*, 43.

matter of ‘standing the test,’ which I identify with ‘standing in judgment’? The context does not suggest that the author of the Letter has in mind a transaction beyond the grave. For ‘standing the test . . . receiving the crown . . .’ is followed by an account of self-exculpation for sin. . . . That turning suggests we deal with judgment in this life, at death, not after resurrection.”⁴⁴⁷ Most commentators, however, view this in terms of the eschatological gift of eternal *life* as the reward for enduring through the trials in life.⁴⁴⁸ This sets a soteriology as resting on two things from the human side: *endurance* and *loving God*.

In the progression of temptation in 1:13-15, we see the opposite of endurance. Instead of holding fast, these people fall prey to the lure of their own desires, and, having given in, begin a life cycle that leads to death. One may question whether the θάνατος that sin births is physical death such as disease brought on by sin, or spiritual death and actual damnation.⁴⁴⁹ The context of allegorized sin and desire and the contrast with the crown of life leads toward the latter conclusion.⁴⁵⁰ Thus we have another aspect of ὑπομένει: the conscious decision not to give into desires, enduring through both hardships and temptations.

James immediately warns, however, that his audience not be deceived: while they should not imagine that their desires are harmless, equally salvation is not merely through their own endurance. Verses 16-18 introduce a new but key point of James’ theology: the role of election in God’s mercy. Having clearly specified God’s generous nature in 1:5-8 and given a corresponding warning to those who doubt God’s unstinting generosity, the warning against deception in 1:16 stands out, followed with yet another expression of

⁴⁴⁷ Neusner, “Sin, Repentance, Atonement,” 431.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Martin, *James*, 33; Mayor, *St. James*, 46, who comments that ζῶης is a genitive of definition: “the crown which consists in life eternal”; or Davids, *James*, 80, who states, “the actual reward is salvation itself, for (eternal) life is certainly the content of the crown (so Laws, Mussner, Mitton, Schrage).” Cf. Prov. 10:6 for a similar phrasing, “blessings are upon the head of the righteous.”

⁴⁴⁹ Konradt, *Christliche Existenz*, 58, cautions that “daß θάνατος auch hier nicht erst die eschatologische Verdammnis der Sünder meint,” even while it may be a secondary implication of the person’s choices.

⁴⁵⁰ See John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (2.629-1055) for a literary depiction of this incestuous relationship, which, however, allegorizes it away from the human responsibility James intends.

God's munificence. As with the warning against doubt in 1:6, verse 16 implies a soteriological significance of self-deception. Failure to understand God's nature as it is revealed in verses 17 and 18 by believing evil of him (as in vv. 13-15) can lead to a complete failure to receive his gifts, of which salvation is paramount.

James 1:17-18 may be the most triumphant statement in James of God's role in redeeming his people.⁴⁵¹ The author uses a redundant statement to emphasize God's generosity, in contrast to the desire, sin, and death that bog down the previous verses. James does not want his audience confused. God is the source of manifold good underscored by his reiteration of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$: $\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha$ $\delta\acute{o}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}$ $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ $\delta\acute{\omega}\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$. James manages both to highlight the completeness of God's giving with the double use of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ and to highlight the gift nature by the synonyms $\delta\acute{o}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ and $\delta\acute{\omega}\rho\eta\mu\alpha$. This is not the same as the outcome of endurance in 1:12 (the "crown of life") but the sum total of every good aspect of life that cannot be earned, such as wisdom (1:5) and redemption (1:18). The readers are assured that he will not change in regards to this because "in him there is no variation or shadow of turning."⁴⁵² Unlike the planets that turn and shade and change, God is constant.⁴⁵³ As Garland describes it, "God's goodness . . . is not as periodic as the full moon or the morning sunrise. It does not fade into the west."⁴⁵⁴ With the bold statement of 1:17 James affirms God's unchanging nature as the generous giver of all good as well as the singleness and purity of God's nature as revealed by his desire to give his people what they need.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵¹ I have discussed this in greater depth elsewhere, see Mariam J. Kamell, "The Witness of James and the Implications of Grace" (paper presented at Tyndale Fellowship, Cambridge, 4 July 2009).

⁴⁵² See Donald J. Versepnt, "James 1:17 and the Jewish Morning Prayers," *NovT* 39 (1997), 177-91, for a very plausible background for this description of God as the "Father of lights" within Jewish prayers said each morning to thank God for his faithfulness in bringing the new day and his mercy evidenced thereby.

⁴⁵³ Martin, *James*, 39, notes that this description stands in contrast to the shifting planets, for "while they are always in motion he never changes whether in himself . . . or in his dealings with his people (so 1:5)."

⁴⁵⁴ David E. Garland, "Severe Trials, Good Gifts, and Pure Religion: James 1," *RevExp* 83 (1986), 392.

⁴⁵⁵ This unchangingness of God's nature provides one more contrast to the $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma$ of the doubleminded in 1:8.

James uses that confidence to make very clear that God did the choosing for this new creation, election being the clearest example of God's good gifts.⁴⁵⁶ James 1:18 states most boldly James' theology of God's initiatory work in electing and redeeming his people.⁴⁵⁷ As with Abraham and the people of Israel, the process of becoming part of the people of God is initiated and brought into being by God himself. This verse does not state only that God was willing, as if he merely acquiesced to such an event, but that God *willed* the new creation into being. James brings the causal participle βουληθείς to the beginning of the sentence for this emphasis,⁴⁵⁸ as if to say that God's willingness is the *only* reason James' addressees had for their communion with God.⁴⁵⁹ Subsequently, the idea that he "gave birth" to these people indicates a new nature: they are no longer trapped by their fallen natures but have been re-created by the word and brought into the new covenant.⁴⁶⁰ This birth stands in direct contrast to the "birth" of death in 1:15. His audience, James says, are instead the "firstfruits" of God's work, brought into creation by the active word of God. Between the language of God as the father of lights and the

⁴⁵⁶ The initial participle may be more simply translated as "being willing," but it makes sense also as a causal participle since the rebirth would not have occurred without his active will of it. Contra Dibelius' affirmation of James' a-theological nature, Johnson, *James*, 204, remarks: "James' declaration in 1:17 is rightly perceived as one of the noblest *theologoumena* in the NT. Patristic writers recognized its extraordinarily rich and foundational quality . . . [and it was] a favored text through the entire Eastern tradition."

⁴⁵⁷ While the vast majority of scholars view this as a reference to redemption and new birth, L. E. Elliott-Binns, "James i.18: Creation or Redemption?," *NTS* 3 (1956), 148-61, views this as a reference "to the original creation of which man was the crown and the promise; [James] knows nothing of any 'new' creation or rebirth" (156). Others, such as Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, and Sophie Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (London: A. & C. Black, 1980) agree, often pairing the creation interpretation with a background in Stoic philosophy of innate reason.

⁴⁵⁸ Timo Laato, "Justification according to James: A Comparison with Paul," *TJ* 18 (1997), 48, observes, "The participle βουληθείς expresses (with the same sense as with Philo) the free and sovereign will of the creator. It underscores the independence of salvation from human powers." Konradt, *Christliche Existenz*, 58, notes: "In 1,18 selbst wird dies durch das vorangestellte, absolut gebrauchte Partizip βουληθείς unterstrichen." Likewise Johnson, *James*, 197, observes, "its [the verb *boulomai*] position at the beginning of the sentence with no transition . . . demands that it be given considerable weight."

⁴⁵⁹ Compare with God's recounting of his choice of Israel as well in Deuteronomy 10:14-15: despite being the Lord of the universe, he "set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you."

⁴⁶⁰ James' use of "a kind/sort of" (τινα) may well speak to the "already/not yet" nature of this new birth. The believers have been reborn, but they still apparently are struggling with obedience, something that Jeremiah 31:31-34 does not anticipate.

statement of God's will, Konradt finds that "Für Jakobus' soteriologische Konzeption ist damit ein weiterer wichtiger Baustein gewonnen."⁴⁶¹

This understanding undergirds all of James' concern for how his audience acts, for he wants them to behave in a manner in accordance with their birth. The language of firstfruits brings overtones of the Hebrew Bible sacrifice, the tithe due to God, as well as Pauline language in which Christ is the firstfruit of the resurrection and the new order. James now intimates that his audience is the firstfruit, the sacrificial reserve, the firstborn child owed to God (cf. Ex. 22:29), and as one dedicated to and birthed by God, love and obedience ought follow. As in the Hebrew Scriptures, election and service cannot be separated.⁴⁶² Thus it appears that James has a somewhat circular path towards attaining mercy in the end: new birth then demands endurance and love which lead to eternal life, each step depending on the prior. Because God loved his people and chose to give them birth as a people, they ought to love him and endure the trials of life, and in enduring they witness to their love for God and "earn" mercy at the judgment and win their salvation as their crown.

Returning to the theme of obedience and endurance, verse 19 provides quintessential wisdom advice for these firstfruits concerning the proper control of their tongues and tempers.⁴⁶³ First is the simple contrast of "quick to listen, slow to speak" traditional to any wisdom instructor. When he reaches ὀργή, however, James adds further information: in contrast to the perfect work of endurance (1:4), human anger does *not*

⁴⁶¹ Konradt, *Christliche Existenz*, 59.

⁴⁶² Cf. Matt. 18:21-35. Alexander Rofé, *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 13, describes the original election of Israel thus: "The ideal relationship that should exist between YHWH and Israel is a relationship of love. YHWH loved the Patriarchs (4.37; 10.15) or Israel (7.8) and for that reason elected the nation. The nation, for its part, must respond to him with complete love (7.5 10.12; 11.1, 13, 22), which means absolute loyalty to YHWH and acceptance of his service with all one's heart." Ray Carlton Jones, "Deuteronomy 10:12-22," *Int* 46 (1992), 281, simplifies the discussion: "Election and service belong together in the Bible: The consequence of the Lord God's sovereign election of Israel is that Israel must serve the Lord."

⁴⁶³ R. W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997), 35-37, uses this verse as his guide to the structure of the epistle. For him these three commands are pivotal for understanding James' message and the Christian life.

produce a τέλειος result.⁴⁶⁴ In giving free reign to one’s fury, one “works” (ἐργάζεται) something that stands in direct opposition to God’s ways. Whether one succumbs to temptation more readily when angry (1:13-15) or anger stems from or leads to judgmental attitudes (4:1-3, 11-12), those who claim kinship with God through their “birth” ought not give free reign to their anger. Thus 1:19 gives us three insights into how the people of God should act—all within the realm of social dynamics, reminding the reader of the importance of the community in the process of working out God’s righteousness.

Finally, we can turn to the first two uses of λόγος in James, both of which bear a note of ambiguity. The λόγῳ ἀληθείας in 1:18 is the means by which God gives birth to his people. This word of (re)creation echoes the earlier literature about the creative and healing power of the λόγος,⁴⁶⁵ of the creative word of God in creation (e.g. Gen. 1; Sir. 12:15). Beyond simply physical healing, this goes to a (re-)birth into existence as a first-fruit in God’s restoration of creation. Adults are reborn by the word, bringing in echoes of Nicodemus and his conversation with Jesus (Jn. 3:1-21). At this first occurrence of the λόγος, scholars generally propose three options for its meaning: the Gospel message of rebirth,⁴⁶⁶ a reference to original creation of humanity and their creation potential,⁴⁶⁷ and a baptismal-catechetical instruction.⁴⁶⁸ At this point, however, no conclusions should be drawn as the evidence of the whole text is not yet in play.

The salvific λόγος of 1:18 is quickly followed by the ἔμφυτος λόγος of 1:21. Because of its central position in setting up the “doers of the word” section and the

⁴⁶⁴ Contrast τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν, ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἔχεται (1:3-4).

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. Sir. 42:15; Wisd. 9:1; 16:12; also Matt. 8-9 and its depiction of Jesus’ healing/salvific word discussed above.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. John Reumann, “The Christology of James,” in *“Who Do You Say that I Am?” Essays on Christology*, ed. Mark A. Powell, and David R. Bauer (Louisville: WJK, 1999), 130; Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Commands of God,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 95.

⁴⁶⁷ Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 192, 96.

⁴⁶⁸ Franz Mußner, *Der Jakobusbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 241-43; Laato, “Justification according to James,” 49.

transition to νόμος therein, this second use deserves close examination.⁴⁶⁹ There are four main interpretations for λόγος in James 1:21. First, based largely on the qualifier that the λόγος is “able to save your souls,” is the Gospel interpretation.⁴⁷⁰ Second, because of the adjective ἔμφυτος, there is the Stoic interpretation of an innate reason or understanding that is restored and thereby able to function in its original created state, allowing people to choose wisdom.⁴⁷¹ Thirdly is a wisdom tradition that sees this λόγος as a continuation of the good gifts from God, of which wisdom is the foremost.⁴⁷² And lastly is the understanding of this as referring to Jeremiah’s prophecy of an internalized Torah within the hearts of the people of God now come to fulfillment.

Bauckham and Moo lead a less common final position, positing Jeremiah 31:31-34 as the interpretive background for James’ thought. Moo views the Jeremiah prophecy of a new, internalized covenant as behind this text but sees it as an allusion:

When we consider James’s frequent allusions to Leviticus 19 and his situation early in the life of the Jewish-Christian church, elimination of reference to the OT law seems to be impossible. More helpful is the recognition that James’

⁴⁶⁹ Konradt, *Christliche Existenz*, 81, observes of 1:21: “Der Vers ist eine notorische crux.” Several authors do avoid the question entirely. Brosend, *James and Jude*, 53, acknowledges a “creative tension” in receiving something implanted, calling this the “most intriguing use of ‘word’” but pressing no farther. R. W. Dale, *The Epistle of James and Other Discourses*, 5th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), 42, describes the word as a “seed” which has life and therefore roots itself within those who accept it, but fails to define what it is. Finally, R. J. Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1922), 30, 28, engages in flawlessly circular logic when he equates the “word” in 1:21 with the “word of truth” in 1:18, which he had there equated with the upcoming “implanted word.”

⁴⁷⁰ With some variations on precise interpretation, see Johnson, *James*, 202; James B. Adamson, *James: The Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 78; Davids, *James*, 95; Davids, “James and Jesus,” 71; Martin, *James*, 49; M. Dibelius, *James*, trans. Michael A. Williams (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 113. Regarding a blend of interpretation between Torah and Gospel, see Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 138, 190; Ropes, *Epistle of St. James*, 173; A. Schlatter, *Der Brief Des Jakobus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1956), 146.

⁴⁷¹ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 83; W. B. Carpenter, *The Wisdom of James the Just* (London: Isbister, 1903), 145. Gathercole, “Doctrine of Justification,” 226, provides a convincing alternative to this that still takes account of God’s creative speech: “We should more properly consider that God’s ‘speech-acts’ are what determine reality; they do not merely create an alternative, Platonic reality.” He continues, “God’s act of justification is not one of *recognition* but is, rather, closer to *creation*. It is God’s *determination* of our new identity than a recognition of it” (229). While he would most likely not support the Stoic interpretation of an inherent rationality being restored in this verse, the idea that God’s *word* has creative force warrants further consideration in 1:18 and 21. In “birth by the word,” new creation language is readily evidenced.

⁴⁷² St. John Parry, *A Discussion of the General Epistle of St James* (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1903), 22; F. J. A. Hort, *The Epistle of St James* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909), 38; Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings*, 111; Patrick J. Hartin, *James* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 79-80; Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora*, 90; Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 73; Menahem Kister, “Wisdom Literature and its Relation to Other Genres: From Ben Sira to *Mysteries*,” in *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins, Gregory E. Sterling, and Ruth A. Clements (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 30, based on parallels in Ben Sira 1:20 and 2 *Baruch* 51:3.

description of the law as “planted in” the believer *almost certainly alludes* to the famous “new covenant” prophecy of Jer. 31:31-34. According to this prophecy, God would enter into a “new covenant” with his people and would, as part of that new covenant arrangement, write his law on the hearts of his people (v. 33). The law that God had first communicated to his people in written form will now be internalized, undergoing transformation and perhaps modification in the process.⁴⁷³

Moo later adds that “James’s language reminds his readers that they have experienced the fulfillment of that wonderful promise. . . . God plants [the *logos*] within his people, making it a permanent, inseparable part of the believer” that will lead to their ultimate salvation.⁴⁷⁴

Bauckham argues that the case for Jeremiah is even stronger. He ties the “implanted word” of 1:21 to the “law of freedom” of 1:25 and 2:12, arguing that they “refer to role of the law in the new covenant of Jeremiah 31(LXX 38):31-34, but this is less a case of allusion than of an exegesis presupposed by James.”⁴⁷⁵ According to Bauckham, James’ readers would have followed his interpretation that the Christ event changed the old paradigm, therefore those in Christ define what it means to be “firstfruit.” These explanations that deal with the word and law in relationship with Jeremiah’s prophecy allow for a smooth transition within the text when James switches from *λόγος* to *νόμος* in 1:23-25.⁴⁷⁶ Likewise, this explanation fits with the Jewish wisdom pattern that the word, like the law, was something to be studied, internalized, and obeyed. The word should shape one’s character.

The adjective *ἐμφυτος* in 1:21 is the primary reason that many seek a Stoic philosophical background to James’ theology but can also support the New Covenant interpretation, making it worth a brief survey.⁴⁷⁷ The standard meaning for *ἐμφυτος* is

⁴⁷³ Moo, *James*, 32, emphasis mine.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 87-88. He notes that “James here portrays salvation as future from the standpoint of the believer,” a customary view in the NT, “where the verb ‘save’ and the noun ‘salvation’ often refer to the believer’s ultimate deliverance from sin and death.”

⁴⁷⁵ Bauckham, *James*, 141.

⁴⁷⁶ See Mariam J. Kamell, “Incarnating Jeremiah’s Promised New Covenant in the ‘Law’ of James: A Short Study,” *EQ* (forthcoming), for a greater discussion of the wisdom and prophetic backgrounds supporting this interpretation.

⁴⁷⁷ Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 192, argues: “While James does contain allusion to several scriptural prophecies, Jer 31:31-35 and other passages cited by Fabris in this connection are not among them. More

“inborn, natural.”⁴⁷⁸ Liddell and Scott notes only one occurrence where ἔμφυτος means “implanted” and that is in James 1:21. They also list this text as the only place where the object of ἔμφυτος is λόγος. While later Christian authors may pick up on this expression, it is not a common one within the Greco-Roman world.

The precise term ἔμφυτος is not common in the biblical literature, but the LXX consistently uses the related compound verb καταφυτεύω for the promise of restoration in the land as God’s promised people, beginning as early as Exodus 15:17. Particularly important are the prophetic uses, especially Jeremiah 31:27-28:

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will plant (σπερῶ; cf. Matt. 13), the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of men and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant (καταφυτεύειν),” declares the LORD.

This passage, combining several of the terms for planting, reveals that throughout the Hebrew Bible the metaphor of planting is for God’s work of restoration and that this will be worked out in community. Those who have endured in faithfulness *will be* planted in God’s time and location, thus ending the diaspora. Without overstating the case, the shared φυ- root helps to strengthen the tie of James to the Jeremiah passage as well as to the prophetic tradition more broadly of God’s promise to restore his faithful (cf. Amos 9:14-15; Ezek. 17:22-23).

Dauids notes that the verb φύω appears in the parable of Luke 8:5-15.⁴⁷⁹ There, φύω refers to the seeds that grow up, not to the *planting* of the seeds. Other scholars join Dauids in seeing the parable of the sower more generally (also Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:2-9) as a possible background to James’ thought here, where the “word preached,” when

importantly, though the term ἔμφυτος alone is not a decisive indication that the *logos* of James is ‘innate,’ the more specific concept of an ἔμφυτος λόγος or νόμος consistently denotes something given to all people at God’s *initial* creation of humanity elsewhere in the ancient literature, including the Christian literature.”

⁴⁷⁸ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Revised 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 551. The related verb, φύω, has to do with growth, translated variously as “bring forth, produce, put forth; grow, wax, spring up” (p. 1966).

⁴⁷⁹ Dauids, “James and Jesus,” 71.

it properly takes root, brings about fruit and salvation.⁴⁸⁰ This may support a type of Gospel understanding for the λόγος in James since it may be an echo of Jesus' teaching about the "planting" of the word of God. This story background may also help to clarify the relationship of ἔμφυτος to δέξασθε, where the word may be scattered widely but for it to truly take root it must be properly received. The linguistic parallels are not strong enough to establish it as a clear background to James' thought, however, as Deppe notes.⁴⁸¹

Between these two options, it seems reasonable to conclude with Martin that "The idiom [of the implanted word] is . . . OT-Jewish,"⁴⁸² one which Jesus absorbed. The prophetic texts support the legal nature of the "implanted word": as repeatedly the law was the center of focus for internalization. The text of Jeremiah promises that at the time of the new covenant the law would be written on people's hearts, and Jesus picks up on this promise and appropriates it for his own work at the cross. James picks up on this theme of new covenant as the way God begins the work of his new creation (1:18), implanting the law within those who follow Christ, thus able to save their souls (1:21) and empowering them to live according to God's will.⁴⁸³

The strength of Jeremiah 31:27-34 as a background for James is that it presents a new relationship between God and his people. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, God repeatedly indicts his people of failing within their covenantal relationship, but here he

⁴⁸⁰ Davids, *James*, 95; Mayor, *St. James*, 64; Knowling, *Epistle of St. James*, 30; Adamson, *James: The Man and His Message*, 38.

⁴⁸¹ Deppe, *Sayings of Jesus*, 246. He states, "Davids' thesis . . . is not supportable. First of all the genre is different. . . . Secondly, the use of ἔμφυτος is not strange but is paralleled in Barn. 9:9. . . . Finally, this word can better refer to the church's preaching and teaching than the planting (φύω) of the seed in Lk. 8." In response, however, it might be noted that in both Jesus' parable and the early church's "teaching and preaching," the key to both was the acceptance of and obedience to the word that made it effective.

⁴⁸² Martin, *James*, 49.

⁴⁸³ Konradt, *Christliche Existenz*, 85, observes, "1,21b macht darüber hinaus deutlich, daß das Heilschandeln Gottes sich nicht auf den einmaligen anfänglichen Akt der Versetzung der Christen aus dem Tod ins Leben beschränkt. Indem er den Christen daa wirkmächtige Wort gewissermaßen als 'Lebenskeim' eingestiftet hat, ist er vielmehr auch bei der Erhaltung der Christen im Heil auf dem Plan. Christlicher Lebenswandel wird vom 'eingeborenen' Wort bzw. von dessen imperativischer Seite nicht nur geboten, sondern auch ermöglicht."

promises to make their relationship innate to them. This text is repeatedly quoted throughout the NT in context of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Jesus is cited as quoting it in both Matthew 26:28 and Luke 22:20 as he offers the cup to his disciples, and then Paul alludes to Jesus' quote in 1 Corinthians 11:25 (less directly in 2 Corinthians 3:6). Likewise, Hebrews 8:8-12 and 10:16-17, both of which cite Jeremiah 31 verbatim, demonstrate that in the NT era the authors viewed the time of the new covenant as having arrived through the work of Jesus at the time of his death and resurrection.⁴⁸⁴ While Martin argues that the "implanted word" "recalls also the baptismal response,"⁴⁸⁵ I would argue that the NT witness to the New Covenant language does not refer to baptism, but to the Eucharist.⁴⁸⁶ Jesus clearly saw his act of death and the act of drinking his blood as signifying the arrival of the New Covenant, one that brings about the forgiveness of sins.

If this can be argued as background for James, it explains both James 1:18 and 1:21. In 1:18, God gives birth to his people *λόγω ἀληθείας*, where the "word" is the active agent in this birth metaphor. If in James the *λόγος* is the law of the New Covenant now made internal, the word of truth might reasonably be understood as this new covenant. The birth language then would be God's action in writing the covenant on his people's hearts so that they are birthed into a new relationship with God as his children, as ones who know him covenantally through Jesus' work, the "first fruits" of the day when all will "know God." Likewise, in 1:21, if the internalization of the new covenant through Jesus' death and resurrection is in mind, then the "word planted within you" refers to Jeremiah's promise that God would "put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts," namely the law of God as mediated through Christ's life and blood. This understanding also provides the smoothest transition into the *νόμος* as James uses it in

⁴⁸⁴ Texts like Acts 10:43, 1 Cor. 3:3, 1 John 2:27 make the same point but less explicitly.

⁴⁸⁵ Martin, *James*, 49.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Matt. 26:28: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν).

1:25 and following, as there is not the difficulty of a sudden change of referent. As the implanted new covenant, the λόγος is a law which God's people will finally know and obey.

How then does one receive something that is “implanted” (1:21)? On the whole there is a general agreement that gives a practical parallel to the “removing” (ἀποθέμενοι) in the first half of the verse. Painter notes the “call to ‘receive’ is at the same time a call to reject contrary ways of life.”⁴⁸⁷ Ropes argues that the verb refers “not to the mere initial acceptance of the gospel, preached and heard, but (cf. ἔμφυτον) to attention to the knowledge of God's will.”⁴⁸⁸ Carpenter comments that the “word is to be received, and turned as it were into a part of our own nature.”⁴⁸⁹ Cargal agrees, adding that this does not necessarily mean “obey,” but rather an internalization of this word so that it becomes a part of their nature.⁴⁹⁰ More than strict obedience to a word, this receiving of the λόγος transforms one's very nature, again paralleling the promised reality in Jeremiah 31. Wall notes that this word “must be ‘received’ (i.e., followed) for redemption to have its full result. Salvation is a collaborative enterprise between a gracious God and an obedient humanity, where mutual obligations must be met in order for promised blessings to be dispensed.”⁴⁹¹ Such an interpretation fits well within the context of James in which God, by his grace, gave new birth to his people and yet requires obedient action that shows that one is among this new people.

In 1:12-21, then, we are introduced to the option of living by one's desires, a theme played out first in vv. 13-15 with its dangerous ending and reiterated with the command to ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεΐαν κακίας in 1:21. In contrast, the theme of endurance in 1:12 parallels the proper reception of the word in 1:21,

⁴⁸⁷ John Painter, “The Power of Words: Rhetoric in James and Paul,” in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 249.

⁴⁸⁸ Ropes, *Epistle of St. James*, 172.

⁴⁸⁹ Carpenter, *Wisdom of James*, 144.

⁴⁹⁰ Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora*, 89.

⁴⁹¹ Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 72.

a reception done ἐν πραύτητι because the word itself is given only as a gift from God (1:18). This word, described variously as ἀληθείας, ἔμφυτος, and δυνάμενον σώσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν, has redemptive power as both the means by which birth into the new creation occurs but also requiring reception on the part of the individual. God, meanwhile, is further developed as the generous giver (cf. 1:5) who willingly gives his word to his people *that they might be* a new creation, distinct in life and thought, not driven by desires and their evil inclination but given to humility, endurance and obedience, even as they are τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

4. James 1:22-27: Obedient Hearing of the Word/Law

This passage contains the shift from λόγος to νόμος that is central to James' theology of obedience and salvation, and concludes with what is most likely the thesis statement of the letter. The λόγος may be the means of our initial rebirth, but verses 22-25 make clear that it is also "the perfect law of liberty." As Richardson notes, "What James referred to as the 'Word' in vv. 18,21,22,23 he calls the 'law' here. As the 'Word' brings new life according to v. 18, so 'the law' here is what sets us free."⁴⁹² Johnson agrees with an inclusive reading of the "word/law," for "too great a distinction should not be made between Gospel, Torah, and the word of creation, since for James they all represent gifts of God."⁴⁹³

James focuses on each person's obedience to the word. Now that the λόγος has been "received" in its implanting, the next step is obedience. The λόγος is to be studied closely in order that it can be obeyed. Here James' language closely overlaps with earlier wisdom language about the requirements of hearing and fulfilling the words of the

⁴⁹² Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 97. In reference to the two modifiers of law in 1:25, he adds, "The combination of law and freedom points to the free obedience of the Christian life and echoes Paul's theology of freedom in Christ. . . . The law is 'perfect' in that it participates in the goodness of God and is essential to his gifts bestowed in wisdom to believers. . . . The absence of a reference in James to any law other than that contained within the Ten Commandments or that which sums them up in acts of love and mercy supports" his understanding of "the law as testimony to the active Word" (97-98).

⁴⁹³ Johnson, *James*, 214.

teacher.⁴⁹⁴ One can also hear an echo of Jesus' parable in Matthew 13 where it is the seed that *bears fruit* of obedience that is saved. The "words" of the wise were always to be studied *and obeyed*. To hear and not obey reveals one as a fool (Matt. 7:24-27). The ἀκροαταὶ λόγου are like those who build on the sand in Matthew's picture, hence the importance of being ποιηταὶ λόγου.⁴⁹⁵

In James also, the word is meant for study *and* obedience to avoid self-deception. This self-deception (παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοῦς), like the deception warned against already (1:16), has vital implications. While the ἀκροαταὶ λόγου is condemned, the ποιηταὶ λόγου receives a rare macarism (see 1:12): ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται. The blessing apparently does not only reside in a future "salvation," but also in the present. This passage emphasises being a ποιητής: urging the audience to be both ποιηταὶ λόγου (1:22, 23) and individually ποιητῆς ἔργου (1:25, the second use of ἔργον). While the usual problematic dilemma in James is "faith and works," ἔργον seemingly can be another expression for the word/law already explored, and 1:22-25 presents that the readers should be doers of the *word*, the *law*, and of *works*: the received implanting leads to *doing*. This warning sets up the forthcoming discussion on faith and works: each person who claims to be a "hearer" ought to be a "doer" as well.⁴⁹⁶

Martin highlights the importance of the link between λόγος and νόμος in James 1. He takes νόμος here as both the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:33 (introduced by the "implanted word" of James 1:21) and the love command of Leviticus 19:18 (to be highlighted in James 2:8).⁴⁹⁷ He argues that "the perfect law' is none other than the 'word implanted' in the hearts of responsive believers. It is the 'law' of love to one's neighbor as

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Prov. 4; 28:9, 18; Sir. 0:10; 2:16; 15:1; 19:20; etc. See Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 46-56.

⁴⁹⁵ Johnson, *James*, 206, notes a textual variant in 1:22 which substitutes "doers of the law" (ποιηταὶ νόμου) for ποιηταὶ λόγου, "undoubtedly to be attributed to the influence of 4:11." He notes the relation that then bears to Rom. 2:13.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. the promise of En. 99:10.

⁴⁹⁷ Martin, *James*, lxxi. He agrees with Mußner regarding the baptismal reference in 1:18. He states in his introduction: "More probably the 'perfect law' and the 'royal law' relate to love for one's neighbor in Lev. 19:18."

well as the law written on the human heart. Both ideas stem from the eschatological fulfillment of the new covenant prophecy of Jer 31:31-34.⁴⁹⁸ He argues the “law” in James is that which Jesus taught, which neither equals nor abandons the Torah but “includes, expands, and deepens the demands of the ‘old’ law.”⁴⁹⁹ This new covenant law was taught by Jesus as the new lawgiver, but is now implanted within the followers of Jesus.

James’ expression νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας (1:25; 2:12) does not have an exact parallel in the Jewish texts, but his modifiers warrant a closer look. James only employs ἐλευθερία twice, both times in relation to νόμος. It is a rare term, however, appearing only nine times in the Septuagint and Pseudepigrapha⁵⁰⁰ and nine other times in the NT.⁵⁰¹ By using this term James intentionally emphasizes the freedom component of the law.⁵⁰² The question stands, however, whether James intends a “law which brings freedom” to those who obey it, or a “law whose very nature is freedom.” This question cannot be fully answered until the second use of this phrase in 2:12.

The adjective τέλειος also provides illumination.⁵⁰³ James himself is not entirely consistent with his use, but generally when the noun τέλειος refers to humans it entails maturity and completion, whereas when it refers to divine things, it implies true perfection as a reflection of the divine character. If this reading is correct, it seems reasonable that this use of τέλειος refers to the law as “perfect” *because* it was given by God (as one of his

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 51. In terms of the freedom aspect of this law, he goes on to state that the fulfillment of the Jeremiah prophecy “is evidently what James means by τῆς ἐλευθερίας. . . . Freedom is not *from* the works of the law . . . , but rather it connotes a release from self-interest and a new capacity to practice God’s will in the interests of one’s needy neighbor” (51).

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁵⁰⁰ It appears once in Leviticus 19:20 as related to an “unfreed” slave woman. The rest of the appearances are in 1 Esdras, 1 and 3 Maccabees, Sirach, and the Sibylline Oracles.

⁵⁰¹ Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 10:29; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 2:4; 5:1, 13 x 2; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:19. The three uses in Gal. 5 all relate to freedom from the Law in Paul’s allegory of Hagar and Sarah. The adjective ἐλεύθεριος has a further 23 occurrences, 14 in Rom., 1 Cor. and Gal. alone, one in Matt. and two in John, but none in James.

⁵⁰² Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 92, notes, “While the Torah’s perfection is known from Jewish literature . . . the Torah’s ‘liberty’ is not, and we can only speculate about its possible sources.” He then finds a kind of “Jubilee theology” occurring where in “‘liberty’ in this rhetorical setting is a catchword that gathers to itself the images of neighborly love for poor and oppressed believers found in the levitical laws of holiness, and especially within the Jubilee ordinance” (95).

⁵⁰³ These two uses with the law plus 1:4 x 2, 17, 25; 3:2. Other related terms appear once each: τελέω (2:8); τελειόω (2:22); and τέλος (5:11).

“perfect gifts”, 1:17) and perfectly represents his will for his followers.⁵⁰⁴ Kistemaker argues that the law is perfect in an absolute sense. It is changeless, a “law of God through Jesus Christ [that] sets man free from the bondage of sin and selfishness.”⁵⁰⁵ The law’s ability to set people free from the bondage of sin then qualifies it as “of freedom,” borrowing a fairly Pauline frame but also echoing Jesus in John 8:36. Again, a final discussion of this must wait until 2:12.

Finally, verses 26-27, which potentially form the thesis statement of the letter—particularly the positive expression of 1:27—give crucial insight into James’ theology, for they define what does and does not please God.⁵⁰⁶ While the three ideas have not necessarily all been in such proximity as in James’ formulation, in earlier texts they are unsurprising: control of the tongue, care for the poor and marginalized, and moral purity. James’ language is more intriguing, though. While a term like *θηροσκεία* does not necessarily have negative connotations, James’ idiom between the two verses sets up a strong distinction. The modifiers *δοκεῖ* and *ἄπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ* in 1:26 instantly give the impression of a religion of externals and regulations followed, such as might be used today when asking if someone is “religious.” The arrogance and self-delusion of this person can be witnessed in uncontrolled speech, a single symptom which exposes his religion as worthless and vain. This echoes Jesus’ exegetical trouncing of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:8-11 (par. Mk. 7), quoting Isaiah 29:13.⁵⁰⁷ There the use of *μάτην* parallels James’ description of this religion as *μάταιος*, and in these contexts we see a development of the thought that concern with the details of the law without a

⁵⁰⁴ Contra Mayor, *St. James*, 68, who concludes that “The law of liberty is called *τέλειος* . . . because it carries out, completes, realizes, the object and meaning of the Mosaic law which it replaces (Matt. v. 17).” This fails to account for the evidence he gives of the Mosaic law itself being consistently called “perfect” and a law that brings “liberty.”

⁵⁰⁵ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 62.

⁵⁰⁶ See Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 83, for a defense of 1:27 as the thesis statement, while Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 97, argues “it is better to speak of 1.26—27 as James’s attempt to distill the thrust of his argument into a short, memorable saying. In this way he is not summarizing the entire content of 1.2-27 (or the rest of the letter), but encapsulating the basic wisdom of his letter in a few short lines.”

⁵⁰⁷ See also Prov. 10:19; 17:27; Sir. 4:29; Wisd. 1:11; En. 100:9; 104:11; Ps. Pho. 125.

corresponding internal transformation—revealed by uncontrolled speech—leaves one with religion only describable as μάταιος.

Meaningful θρησκεία is possible, as revealed in 1:27. This verse captures James' two other core concerns: that people would proactively care for the disenfranchised⁵⁰⁸ and equally remain ἄσπιλος from the taint of the world. This moral purity is not an isolationist policy, an idea that has been floated several times wherein one avoids all contact with “others” in case “they” taint one.⁵⁰⁹ James is far from isolationist, for that clearly does not fit the context of helping the poor and oppressed. Instead, the command is to *visit* the distressed, *helping them* in their difficulty, whether by bringing food or by working to change the larger social structures that leave them “in distress.”⁵¹⁰ This is worship that pleases God, the active mercy that mirrors God's heart of generosity just seen in 1:17-18. Having a proper perspective regarding the poor and disenfranchised is one sign of moral purity. Where one stained by the κόσμος accepts the values and priorities of the world, being “unstained” (ἄσπιλος) is to be shaped by God's values of generosity and care for the helpless.⁵¹¹ The κόσμος is the entire worldview that stands in opposition to God, one to which people all-too-readily ascribe.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ See, e.g., Friesen, “Injustice or God's Will,” 244, who sees James as presenting on the whole “a relatively simple explanation for economic inequality. Jacob [*sic*] blamed the local elites for economic injustice but also criticizes the general population for complicity.” Later, however, Friesen finds James faulting the larger Roman “status system” (245) while condemning his congregation's participation in a system driven by wealth.

⁵⁰⁹ See Roberts, “Definition of ‘Pure Religion,’” 215-16, and more recently Trudinger, “Epistle of James,” 61-63. The response of Johanson, “Definition of ‘Pure Religion,’” 118-19, however, suffices for both attempts to make this claim. See also Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 187-88, who notes in contrast to Roberts and Trudinger that “the composition is not calling for sectarian separation from the surrounding culture, but rather . . . is a complex document demonstrating a degree of cultural accommodation while at the same time calling forth specific socio-cultural boundaries between the reader and the world.”

⁵¹⁰ Martin, *James*, 55, calls this a “summons to do what lies in [the readers'] power: to come to the aid of the defenseless members of society and reach out actively on their behalf (1:27). Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 101, warns that “even conventional social wisdom instructs that a group is as viable as its weakest member (cf. Matt. 18:6-14; Acts 6:1-10). For this reason, the biblical Torah is especially concerned that the least and last members of the community are not abused but cared for (Exod. 22:22; Deut. 24:17-21; cf. Ps. 146:9; Isa. 1:17; et al.), since God is their champion (Deut. 10:18),” and that by acting thus, one “anticipates the inevitable reversal.”

⁵¹¹ Wachob, *Voice of Jesus*, 83, observes, “The use of the prepositional phrase παρά τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ (‘before God, the Father’) and ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου (‘from the world’) clearly suggest an opposition between God and the world.”

⁵¹² See Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 117.

There is some question, however, of whether ἄσπιλος also indicates ritual purity and a command to obey the entire Law as relates to its ritual, not simply moral, commands—again raising the question of what the ποιηταί are to be doing. While Dibelius argues that “‘unstained’ must be completely restricted here to its ethical sense,”⁵¹³ Painter is less convinced that a distinction between ritual and moral law is possible:

The language of 1:27 includes vocabulary directly related to ritual purity alongside language concerning social and moral responsibilities. It is unjustifiable to assume, without any indication from James, that the language of ritual purity should be understood metaphorically of moral purity. Rather, 1:27 expresses both moral and ritual obligations arising from the law.⁵¹⁴

In contrast, Elliott argues that James deals with fractious and divisive community by “[invoking] traditional distinctions of purity and pollution to press for a restoration of holiness and wholeness in the Christian community and a reinforcement of its distinctive ethos.”⁵¹⁵ James, in line with other wisdom writers, does not emphasize ritual *qua* ritual, but ritual only insofar as it highlights other concerns. Here the context is of James 1:26 and its relation to Isaiah and Jesus’ condemnation over the worthlessness of those who “worship” without inward transformation, shown through uncontrolled speech.⁵¹⁶ While James the Just historically may have practiced full ritual obedience, the epistle instead fits within the wisdom world such as Proverbs where, for example, the adjective καθάρως appears five times generally relating to moral purity and a clean heart.⁵¹⁷ James calls his readers to a morality that will, by necessity, look very different from the world around.

⁵¹³ Dibelius, *James*, 122. This because the epistle does not deal with the Gentile debate, a circumstance which for him “also raises a serious objection to the authenticity of the document.”

⁵¹⁴ Painter, “The Power of Words,” 251. He begins, “This easy separation of the moral and ritual elements in the law is nowhere suggested by the letter of James and is not supported by evidence from the first century. Indeed there was no characteristic linguistic distinction to describe ritual and moral elements of the law. The assertion of the necessity to keep the whole law does not suggest exemption from certain aspects of it.”

⁵¹⁵ Elliott, “Epistle of James in Rhetorical,” 71.

⁵¹⁶ See also Jesus’ censure toward the Scribes and Pharisees in Matt. 23 for this very problem.

⁵¹⁷ The adjective ἄσπιλος does not appear in the LXX and only four times in the NT: here, 1 Tim. 6:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2 Pet. 3:14. Two of the other times it refers to keeping oneself “unblemished” for the Lord’s coming, much as the Law required in sacrifice, and the third refers to Christ himself as a spotless lamb for sacrifice. In each of these cases the moral outweighs the ritual application of the term.

B. JAMES 2

In contrast to the introductory nature of chapter 1, James 2 has sustained sections of argumentation. It continues all the issues raised in chapter one in greater depth: proper relationships in the community, judgment according to one's obedience to God's kingdom law, and God's divine mercy. While the entire chapter is crucial for this thesis, the argument here focuses particularly on 2:12-13 as the summary of James' view of final salvation.

1. *The Faith of Christ in Community: James 2:1-7*

This section begins with the elusive πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation.⁵¹⁸ What does it mean “to hold” the faith of, or in, Christ in favoritism? This is the only example in James where τὴν πίστιν could be objective, wherein faith is *in* Christ in a belief sense. James could also refer here to the model of Jesus' faith (subjective), whereby one ought not debase Christ's own faithfulness by acting so contrarily even within the community. While both are possible, the former makes more sense as a warning introductory this entire chapter against attempts to claim faith in Christ while failing to live according to his teaching.⁵¹⁹ The text has made clear, God/Jesus' faithfulness to all people is unquestioned.⁵²⁰

The example that follows condemns appearance-based judgments. James reveals the greeter's pretensions as he interacts with two newcomers, highlighting the communal nature of such sins.⁵²¹ Whether or not the wealthy person is a believer is irrelevant for this

⁵¹⁸ Resuming the high Christology from 1:1, 2:1 adds the descriptor, Jesus Christ τῆς δόξης. See Jack Freeborn, “Lord of Glory: A Study of James 2 and 1 Corinthians 2,” *ExpT* 111 (2000), 185-89, for the Christological implications of this expanded title. He observes that in James we see “the glory of God himself,” even though “James did not articulate this pattern fully” (186). The pattern that emerges is of “the poor man's champion, the impartial judge who cares for the ‘widow and orphan’, the brilliant teacher and healer is now to be understood as the epitome of God's wisdom” (187).

⁵¹⁹ Childs, *New Testament as Canon*, 436, observes, “In 2.1 the writer uses the objective genitive to speak of a faith in Jesus Christ against which faithful human behaviour is measured. Partiality is an attribute which is incompatible with the glory of Christ.”

⁵²⁰ Blomberg, *James*, 106.

⁵²¹ Throughout James phrases such as ἐν ἑαυτοῖς (2:4) or ἀλλήλων (4:9; 5:9, 16) reveal the collective failure, emphasizing that the community should be different from their surrounding culture.

particular illustration.⁵²² The problem is the response of the people inside as they defer to the wealthy person *simply because of* the display of their wealth and debase the poor person *simply because of* their apparent poverty. It is this simplicity that earns them the title “judges with evil opinions.” The term for their discrimination, διακρίνω, is the same for the doubter in 1:6, revealing seriously flawed patterns of thought. Their internal and interpersonal dialogue reveals a fundamentally faulty value system as they accept the self-importance of the wealthy person as accurate, forgetting that the Glory of God chose to identify instead with the impoverished of the world. Their actions reveal a failure to be ἄσπιλας . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου (1:27).

James drives home the point with the reminder that God has chosen the impoverished as his own.⁵²³ Bauckham observes, “This paradox brilliantly encapsulates the Jewish tradition of regarding the pious poor as the paradigms of faith.”⁵²⁴ Here the πτωχός are the materially destitute, a physical—not spiritual—state. Problematically, 2:2-5 are often taken to make a very simple economic equation for salvation: the poor are saved and the rich cannot be.⁵²⁵ The πτωχός, however, are further nuanced as chosen to

⁵²² George M. Stulac, “Who Are ‘The Rich’ in James?,” *Presbyterion* 16 (1990), 91-92, notes, “There were ‘some wealthy individuals’ coming into the church as new converts, these are the ones James would have in mind in 2:2 and 4:13. But James avoids calling them ‘the rich’ and reserves the term *plousios* as a uniformly offensive term.” Whether the ones in 2:2 are actually “new converts” coming into the church is questionable, but his assessment of the term πλούσιος is legitimate.

⁵²³ Johnson, *James*, 233, argues that 2:5 is an implicit statement of God’s role as judge.

⁵²⁴ Bauckham, “Wisdom of James,” 85. He adds, “The first hearers/readers of James might have been reminded of Jesus’ beatitude, but it does not seem to me at all necessary to the rhetorical force of the saying in its context that they should do so.” In contrast, Deppe, *Sayings of Jesus*, 90-91, argues that this saying is at least dependant upon a saying of Jesus, partly because of the presence of “kingdom,” which “is not Jamesian vocabulary.” He concludes “this verse is a combination of the church’s experience with a promise of Jesus” (91).

⁵²⁵ E.g. Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth*, 62-63, who states, “This verse poses a problem especially in Christian communities where there are many wealthy members. Is there a doctrine of election being taught here—a doctrine which excludes all rich from final salvation or even the experience of faith? Some have attempted to solve the problem by noting that the election of the poor is not ‘due to any merit of their poverty, but in fact, poverty and election coincide.’ The rich are then placated with an assurance that ‘this does not deny that an occasional rich man may have become a Christian.’ [See Ropes, 193-94] Such an addendum does not seem to be in the mind of the writer. For him the rich are outside the sphere of salvation and faith. . . . the vulgar idea that one’s wealth is a sign of divine favor, is rejected by Jesus and James.”

be πλουσίους ἐν πίστει, the only correct sort of πλουσίος in the epistle and an honor granted to “those loving” God.⁵²⁶

The wording at the end of 2:5 exactly parallels that at the end of 1:12. In 1:12, the subject is the one who endures, while in 2:5 the poor are the subject and called “rich in faith,” but together the promises stand thus:

τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν
κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν

In the one the promise is of the kingdom, in the other a crown, but the intent—and outcome—is clearly the same: a “crown of life” parallels being “heirs of the kingdom.”⁵²⁷ Crucially, in both verses the promises are τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν. Endurance or poverty are meaningless without a proper focus: persistence in faithful love of God. By repeating ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν, the text defines the recipients of the gifts as more than simply those who grit their teeth or are impoverished.

James’ language of election in 2:5 (ἐξελέξατο) echoes 1:18 and the willingness of God to give his people new birth, emphasizing again God’s freedom of choice both of the audience as a whole (1:18) and of the destitute in particular (2:5), thereby placing them on equal footing. Bauckham notes that this is one place in the epistle where the arrival of God’s kingdom is not solely reserved for the future: “That God has chosen the poor means that their status in his eyes and in those of faith (2:5) is already changed. Honouring the poor is the radical transvaluation of values already incumbent on the Christian community (2:1-9).”⁵²⁸ Again, this election is two sided: the poor are not promised wealth but wealth *in faith*, and their status as heirs depends on their status as those who love

⁵²⁶ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 103, provides a helpful balance: “It would seem that for James the poor are to be seen as the natural members of the community (cf. i. 9). Yet he stops short of an unqualified idealization of poverty as the distinguishing mark of membership.”

⁵²⁷ These echo Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom. The link with Matthew 5:3 is particularly profound: Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, although 5:10 also finishes with the promise ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν for the ones persecuted for the sake of righteousness. One might possibly draw parallels of Jas. 1:12 = Matt. 5:10 and Jas. 2:5 = Matt. 5:3, as James re-sets these sayings of Jesus.

⁵²⁸ Bauckham, *James*, 104.

God.⁵²⁹ With these qualifications in place to prevent misapplication, James' point remains: those who dishonor the poor dishonor Christ and show themselves ignorant of God's purposes.

2. Life in the Law of Liberty: James 2:8-13

This section seemingly presents the highest view of the Mosaic Law, with its reference to two of the commands of the Decalogue, its absolutist view of the unity of the Law, and its arguable divide between the Mosaic Law and the new "law of freedom." It contains five of the ten uses of νόμος in the epistle and contains the most extended discussion on the nature of the law. For James there is one law, the unified representation of the will of the "one Lawgiver" (4:12). Several linguistic issues arise, namely the use of the adjective βασιλικός in 2:8 and the second use of νόμος ἐλευθερίας in relation to judgment in 2:12. Finally, James 2:12-13 form the center of James' soteriology through the contrast of judgment and mercy.

a. The νόμος βασιλικός: James 2:8

There are a number of interpretations for this expression. Johnson argues that much of the Epistle refers back to the Holiness Code and specifically the commands of Leviticus 19, which would place the emphasis of law in this letter on the moral codes.⁵³⁰ Specifically he argues that the νόμος in James refers to Leviticus 19:18 and the law of love there as the summary of the entire Torah, a synopsis Jesus reiterates. Johnson states "James can speak of the law positively as 'law of liberty' and 'perfect law' and 'royal law'—

⁵²⁹ See Kamell, "Economics," 157-75, for the distinction between πτωχός and ταπεινός in James' theology, which concludes the contrast for final salvation is between the "rich" and the "humble."

⁵³⁰ See his article, "The Use of Leviticus 19 in the Letter of James," in Luke Timothy Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 123-35. The legal-ethical code of Leviticus 19 plays an important part of James' exposition of the requirements of the law, with analogous commands against partiality, for love of neighbor, for concern for the poor (including paying wages promptly), justice in judgment, and wrong uses of the tongue. As Johnson contends, understanding Leviticus 19 as a possible background to James helps clarify conceptual links even where there are not explicit verbal links. Leviticus 19, part of the Holiness Code of the Torah, clarifies how the people of Israel were to live in the land. Because James calls Leviticus 19:18b the "royal law," he emphasizes the law of love as essential.

meaning thereby, the law of love in Lev. 19:18.”⁵³¹ James’ νόμον βασιλικόν may reflect a standard view concerning Leviticus 19:18 or a reference to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 22:37-40. If Johnson’s analysis is correct and Leviticus 19:12-18 stands behind the message of James, then there may be justification to see the “law” in James as the moral requirements on the people of God.⁵³²

Others view James’ referent as the Mosaic Torah in total, with perhaps some preference for the moral aspects of it. For example, Wall argues that in texts like 1:22-25 and 2:14-26 more particularly, the vocabulary “underscores the requirements of a Torah-observant faith.”⁵³³ This obedience then leads to wisdom: “the Torah tradition actually defines the way of wisdom: wisdom ‘heard’ is the whole Torah observed.”⁵³⁴ For Wall, the νόμος in James is the Mosaic Law, to which James still holds his audience accountable.⁵³⁵ Viviano argues for a Torah interpretation as well, arguing that “Jaques représente ainsi une forme de Judéo-christianisme fidèle à la Torah . . . [et] ne mentionne pas les observances rituelles, non pas parce qu’il les rejette . . . mais pour des raisons de genre littéraire (il écrit non pas une halacha, mais une œuvre d’exhortation moral . . .).”⁵³⁶ He argues that the allusions in James to a variety of commands reveals James’ commitment to the whole law,

⁵³¹ Johnson, *James*, 61. He gives the helpful summary of previous opinions: “At the very least, the use of the figure of the mirror suggests that he saw it as containing an *exempla* of moral behavior . . . , as was seen by Oecumenius. Bede . . . takes the ‘law of liberty’ to mean the grace of the Gospel, and Theophylact identifies it with the ‘Law of Christ.’”

⁵³² See also Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 110; Wiard Popkes, “The Law of Liberty (James 1:25; 2:12),” in *Festschrift Günter Wagner*, ed. Faculty of Baptist Theological Seminary (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 134; Richardson, *James*, 46. One difficulty is that the unusual use of νόμος to refer to a single law. Hort, *Epistle of St James*, 54, however, argues: “There is no difficulty in thus applying so wide a term νόμος to a single precept, since the precept itself was so comprehensive,” and uses the law of love as the interpretive grid for the rest of the law (53).

⁵³³ Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 87.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵³⁵ Sawicki, “Person or Practice?,” 398, agrees: “To show partiality is to commit sin and break the law—not only the νόμος βασιλικός but the detailed Mosaic Law as well (2:9-11). Why? . . . To break any one law is to break them all, since each particular law is a facet of the νόμος βασιλικός.”

⁵³⁶ Viviano, “La Loi Parfaite,” 221.

but adds that “la base la plus sûre pour fonder notre thèse se trouve en 2,10,” a supposed polemical argument against Paul.⁵³⁷

Jackson-McCabe regards this section as referring to the Decalogue at the very least. He views 2:8-12 as essential to our understanding James’ view of νόμος “as the only passage in the entire work in which the author explicitly identifies commands included in this law.”⁵³⁸ He adds that “the only commands explicitly attributed to the ‘law of freedom’ are all from the Torah,” and thus it is “quite clear that the author assumes, at the very least, a close relationship between the scriptural law and the law of freedom—and thus between the Torah and the implanted *logos*.”⁵³⁹ This understanding of James’ law as the Mosaic Law makes sense of the adjective “perfect,” for that language was often found to refer to the law in the previous Jewish literature, but does not necessarily explain the epithet “of freedom.”

Others create a sharp divide between the Mosaic law and this new “royal law . . . of freedom.”⁵⁴⁰ Bede argues for a preference on ethics, but sounds more like Paul: “Just as *the law* of slavery is what *was given by Moses*, so the law of liberty is *the grace* of the Gospel which *came through Jesus Christ*.”⁵⁴¹ He emphasizes the practice of charity as the crucial piece to fulfilling this new law. Dibelius also argues for the ethical character of the law, but states confidently that the substance of the law can be identified. “The expression ‘perfect law of freedom . . . is completely explained, as far as its content is concerned, by the context. . . . [The] ‘law’ is to be understood here: as the norm of Christian piety.”⁵⁴² He agrees with those who separate this law in James from the Mosaic or Jewish law, and indicates a

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 222. He concludes that throughout history the traditions of Paul and James have stood in “une danse dialectique entre au moins deux sotériologies différentes” (226).

⁵³⁸ Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 155.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 163-64.

⁵⁴⁰ For example, see the following while recognizing they each have their own nuance: Hort, *Epistle of St James*, 41; Moo, *James*, 94, 117; Ropes, *Epistle of St. James*, 178; Franz Schneider, *Der Jakobusbrief* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1987), 51.

⁵⁴¹ Bede, *The Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, trans. David Hurst (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1985), 25-26. For him, “the grace of the Gospel [is] the perfect law of liberty” (20).

⁵⁴² Dibelius, *James*, 116.

preference for importing a Stoic background where Reason is the law (as seen in 4 Maccabees).⁵⁴³ Isaacs also agrees with the separation of a new moral law, positing this as “law of Christ . . . i.e., the will of God expressed in Jesus’ words and deeds, by which his followers should live.”⁵⁴⁴ She argues that James “ethicizes” the law, transforming it from one concerned with rituals and boundary markers into one that “refers to acts of compassion for the weak and vulnerable who are exploited by the world.”⁵⁴⁵

One last interpretation sees the “royal law” as best translated as the “law of the kingdom,” the entirety of what Jesus taught and inaugurated.⁵⁴⁶ This does not necessitate a strong break between the Mosaic Law and the “law of freedom,” but does see an interpretive divide occurring in Jesus who refines and reissues the law under the dual heading of “love God and love your neighbor.” Moo summarizes: the “‘royal law’ might be James’s way of referring to the sum total of demands that God, through Jesus, imposes on believers. . . . Understood in this sense, the ‘royal law’ extends beyond the Mosaic law as fulfilled and reinterpreted by Jesus to include the teaching of Jesus.”⁵⁴⁷ In this, James’ term βασιλικόν refers to the law of the kingdom of God as taught by Jesus, who is himself the “glory” of God. An expansion of Johnson’s emphasis on Leviticus 19, this seems the best understanding for the adjective.

b. Judgment ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου: James 2:9-11

Thematically, in 2:8-12 (in which five references to νόμος occur) and 4:11 (four references), the theme of judgment is explicitly related to the law, and judgment may well be implicit in 1:25 as well, for there the person who obeys is “blessed in his or her doing.” The law is the standard by which God judges his people, a standard both strict and freeing.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 116-20.

⁵⁴⁴ Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Geo.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 193.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 200

⁵⁴⁶ E.g., Hartin, *Spirituality of Perfection*, 78, although not his earlier work (see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings*, 93); Davids, *James*, 48-49, 100; Felder, “Wisdom, Law and Social Concern,” 167.

⁵⁴⁷ Moo, *James*, 112. See also Davids, *Epistle of James*, 114; Frankemölle, “Gesetz im Jakobusbrief,” 400-402.

James 2:9-11 also presents an argument for the unity of the Law. He argues for the importance of obedience to the entire law with the stated goal of proving favoritism not a “lesser” sin.⁵⁴⁸ To do so, he uses two of the more shocking commands of the Decalogue, murder and adultery.⁵⁴⁹ Using an argument from the greater to the lesser, verses 10-11 provide the example that supports the statement of verse 9 that showing favoritism is to “work sin” and brings one under the conviction of the whole law.

Showing partiality places a person in direct disobedience of the kingdom law of neighborly love, even as adultery and murder are clear examples of a failure to love the other. Such failure brings judgment on the one who fails, reiterated twice in this short paragraph: ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται and again, γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου. By failing in neighbor love, they not only fail to obey the law, but they actively “work” sin—entirely the wrong sort of works to be engaged in. There are only two uses of the verb ἐργάζομαι in James (1:20; 2:9), and both times it shows the wrong type of works that the audience is producing. Instead of being ποιητὴς λόγου/ἔργου (1:21, 25), by showing favoritism, they ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε and therefore fail according to the very law of which they supposed to be doers.⁵⁵⁰

Likewise, to be accounted as a παραβάτης throughout the wisdom literature consistently indicates one who deserves and falls under the wrath of God’s judgment, and here is no exception. Barton, Veerman, and Wilson explain, “James’ point is not that showing

⁵⁴⁸ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth*, 66-67, is adamant: “Those who discriminate against the poor ‘work sin’ (*hamartian ergazesthe*) and are convicted as ‘transgressors’ (*parabates*) of the law. Significantly, James links such partiality with such sins as murder and adultery (v. 11)—an indication of how heinous the crime of discrimination against the poor is to James. Furthermore, the use of the participle *elegchomenoi* (‘convicted’) in v. 9 indicates that the sin of partiality is against the whole law, not just a single commandment. It is in this context that James writes [v. 10]. . . . And it is also in this connection that v. 13 is presented. Those who discriminate against the poor are breakers of the law because they have failed to show mercy. To such there will be no mercy in the judgment. According to James, then, anyone who honors the rich at the expense of the poor discriminates against those whom God has elected; shows favor to those who oppress God’s chosen—as well as blaspheming God whose possession the poor are; and transgress the whole law of God and is, therefore, in the same category as the murderer and adulterer. That one can expect no mercy in the judgment.”

⁵⁴⁹ Again supported by Jesus, who intensified and internalized these two commands in Matthew 5:21-30.

⁵⁵⁰ See Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 124: “God requires the ‘work’ of the ‘royal law,’ since not to ‘produce’ this work is to break the law, to sin, and therefore to forfeit the hope of participating in the coming triumph of God (2:5, 1:12).”

favoritism is as ‘bad’ as murder, but that no matter what commandment someone breaks, that person is guilty of an offense against God. He or she has violated the will of God. We cannot excuse the sin of favoritism by pointing to the rest of the good we do.”⁵⁵¹ The law fairly judges each person according to the works they produce, whether they are doers of the law or mere hearers.

c. The Triumph of Mercy: James 2:12-13

These verses comprise two of the most important for James’ theology of final salvation. They are also, however, possibly the most allusive verses.⁵⁵² The two verses divide into three sections, with a key question for each: (1) the need for “speaking” and “acting” in relation to the judgment by the “law of freedom,” (2) what “judgment” might be in view, and (3) whose mercy is it that “triumphs” over judgment. The priority of the two verses as a whole appears to be on human mercy as essential for divine forgiveness. James’ conclusions in 2:12-13a make sense if God’s mercy in the final judgment depends upon human actions of mercy because of the prior statements in 1:18 and 21 regarding God’s initial mercy. Here, more than anywhere, we hear echoes of Jesus’ parable of the unmerciful servant and his reiteration of Hosea’s affirmation that God “desires mercy more than sacrifice.”

i. Judgment by the Law of Freedom: 2:12

The “speak” and “act” of James 2:12 summarize the entire totality of a person’s life lived out, internal and external. Every part of life is to be lived ὡς διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες κρίνεσθαι. Here is the second use of the expression νόμος ἐλευθερίας, potentially confusing as it comes directly after a passage emphasizing the unity of the law and citing Mosaic examples,⁵⁵³ and judgment rests upon whether one has

⁵⁵¹ Bruce B. Barton, David R. Veerman, and Neil Wilson, *James* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1992), 53.

⁵⁵² In contrast with the discussions regarding the λόγος/νόμος in chapter 1 where the focus was on the content of those terms, here the complication is the elliptical nature of the sayings, particularly in verse 13.

⁵⁵³ Carpenter, *Wisdom of James*, 173, has perhaps the most unique interpretation, for he ends by contradicting James. He states that “The realization of the need of harmony between ourselves and the whole order of

lived according to the law of liberty or not.⁵⁵⁴ Wall notes that “In the present passage, the meaning of ‘law of liberty’ construes its eschatological role and liberating result as a barometer of the community’s devotion to God: in this case, the ‘law of liberty’ is the community’s rule of faith which measures and approves (or disapproves) its fitness for the kingdom of God.”⁵⁵⁵ Brosend agrees: “‘Law,’ above all, is what members of the community are to ‘do,’” most particularly as regards the disadvantaged and the poor within society.⁵⁵⁶

The “law of freedom” places a high priority on the love of neighbor for its fulfillment. Mußner concludes, “Damit ist schon eindeutig gesagt, daß die Erfüllung des Liebesgebotes den entscheidenden Maßstab beim Gericht abgeben wird, wie es der Lehre Jesu entspricht (vgl. Mt 7,19; 25,31-46).”⁵⁵⁷ This opens the question of what the “judgment” in James 2:12 might be: does James refer to earthly punishment or to eternal damnation? The confusion is legitimate because much of the book focuses on actions within this world, and more importantly, James 2:1-6 uses κριταί to refer to human judges in a section dealing with human partiality. The section immediately prior on the law, however, indicates that the context has shifted to God as the Judge determining who has fulfilled the law.

This “judgment” of James 2:12 appears to be the final, eschatological judgment. Moo observes, “A new twist is added here. For the first time, James warns about eschatological judgment and suggests that conformity to the demands of the law will be

things, or rather between ourselves and the God of order, sets law in a different light; it then unfolds to us outlines of the ideal, because we see not the dry code but the spirit of which the commandments are but examples.” While James argues for the unity of the law on the basis of the unity of the lawgiver (Jas 4:11-12), in 2:8-12 he makes clear that the commandments are not mere “examples” but are commandments that must be obeyed. In addition, to call the Mosaic Law a “dry code” is to import post-Reformation ideas into James, who never expresses such an attitude toward the law.

⁵⁵⁴ One way to understand the freedom of this law is that it presents right and wrong and then gives the freedom of choice (cf. Rom. 5:13). James’ emphasis on actions is thus the exercise of freedom whereby one makes concrete one’s faith.

⁵⁵⁵ Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 127.

⁵⁵⁶ Brosend, *James and Jude*, 68-69.

⁵⁵⁷ Mußner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 126.

the criterion of that judgment.”⁵⁵⁸ The preposition *διὰ* is crucial for understanding the judgment that occurs here. Laws notes that “*dia* with the genitive normally serves to identify the agent or instrument of action, so that the law might be seen as the agent of judgment, as in Jn vii. 51 (cf. the law as ‘convicting’ in Jas ii. 9).”⁵⁵⁹ Popkes notes, “The law itself will be an active factor (*dia* is instrumental: ‘by, through’, not just ‘according to’) in the last judgment. Apparently the law of liberty is regarded as valid law, both by James and his readers.”⁵⁶⁰ Johnson supports the notion that the law will be the agent by which judgment will occur, arguing, “The *dia* here expresses the *means* used by God for judgment. God judges on the basis of the measure that has been revealed to humans.”⁵⁶¹ As will be seen with “mercy” in 2:13b, perhaps there is reason for seeing a subtle personification of the law here as the one standing up at the final judgment accusing or justifying the individual according to its own integrity.

This forms the standard by which James’ audience should live, guiding their lives and interactions with one another. Judgment looms near (as seen by the *μέλλοντες* in 2:12 and the warning *ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτῆς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν* in 5:9) and, James argues, will be based on how they have lived out this law, which has at its core the principle of love of God and neighbor. But more than a simple measurement, this *νόμος* is a dynamic part of the final judgment process, the integral prosecutor or defender in the law court of the one Judge, a scenario James views as imminent.⁵⁶²

James’ warning acts as a restatement of Jesus’ warnings that everyone faces judgment and that obedience is both expected and required of his followers. Judgment,

⁵⁵⁸ Moo, *James*, 116.

⁵⁵⁹ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 116. She opts, however, for the more confusing interpretation that *διὰ* “indicates the state or condition in which an action is performed; the *law of freedom*, cf. i. 25, is the framework or context within which they speak and act, and the future judgment will take account of that fact (so Ropes and Hort; the idea will be that of Rom. ii. 12).”

⁵⁶⁰ Popkes, “The Law of Liberty,” 135.

⁵⁶¹ Johnson, *James*, 233.

⁵⁶² Wiard Popkes, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 180, observes: “Auf jeden Fall unterstreicht *μέλλοντες*: »Ihr werdet so gerichtet werden – das ist gewiß.«”

James warns, will be based on how each person “speaks” and “acts,”⁵⁶³ on whether one has lived according to the “law of freedom.” Townsend warns:

It is important to remember that it is by our obedience or otherwise to the will of God that we shall be judged. No doubt there is a tension here, between on the one hand God’s gracious acceptance of us though we cannot deserve it, and on the other God’s judgement of us on the basis of what we do. If so, it is not a tension peculiar to James. It is present also in the teachings of Paul (contrast Rom. 5.6-11; 8.31-34 with Rom. 2.12-13; I Cor. 3.13-15; II Cor. 5.10).⁵⁶⁴

But regarding James 2:12, it seems reasonable to conclude that James teaches that the eschatological judgment will be done in accordance with each person’s actions as they relate to the law of freedom, especially whether they choose to love their (poorer) neighbors in a practical manner.⁵⁶⁵

ii. The *Lex Talionis* of Judgment Without Mercy: 2:13a

The *lex talionis* has a great deal of precedent in the literature surveyed. It dictates the principle of proportionality for punishment, generally a negative principle. As discussed above, the initial statements of the *lex talionis* are found in Israel’s legal code but are common throughout all the Jewish literature.

To understand James’ final aphorism, one must first seek to understand the nature of “judgment without mercy” (κρίσις ἀνέλεος). Moo answers that simply: “The reference to ‘judgment’ is clear enough from v. 12: the negative verdict of condemnation that God will pronounce over evildoers in the last days.”⁵⁶⁶ Martin is less certain of the

⁵⁶³ Resuming wisdom themes in which speech and deeds are intimately interconnected.

⁵⁶⁴ Michael J. Townsend, *The Epistle of James* (London: Epworth, 1994), 42-43, adding, “Eph. 2.8-10 comes as close as anything in the NT, not to resolving the tension, but to giving proper expression to both poles of it and showing how they belong together.” Kistemaker, *Epistle of James*, 85, concurs: “In these verses James develops the sequence of law, transgression, judgment, and mercy. No one is able to keep the law perfectly, for everyone transgresses that law and falls into sin. The inevitable consequence for the sinner is that he will have to appear before God’s judgment seat. And the one who stands guilty before the Judge pleads for mercy [. . . cf. Matt. 18:32-33]. God freely grants us mercy when we ask him, but he expects us to imitate him. When we refuse or neglect to extend mercy to our fellow man, God withholds it from us and instead gives us judgment without mercy.”

⁵⁶⁵ Popkes, *Jakobus*, 180, notes how carefully James has defined his “law of freedom”: “Konkretere Hinweise auf den Inhalt der *jak* Interpretation liefert der weitere Kontext: die Fürsorge für die Waisen und Witwen (1,27), die Achtung des Armen (2,2 ff.) und die Hilfe für Bedürftige (2,15 f.). Jak hat im übrigen klargestellt (V. 10 f.), das es keine illegitime Aushöhlung des »Gesetzes der Freiheit« geben darf.”

⁵⁶⁶ Moo, *James*, 118. He explained earlier, “The connection between the verses shows that James views mercy as included within the law by which we are to be judged. The OT, of course, repeatedly requires God’s people to be merciful to others. Especially worth quoting, because of the connection between mercy and

identification. “Κρίσις, taken in the sense of eternal damnation, gives too stern a threat (unless James is driving home the thought that lack of concern is evidence of unreal faith, thus providing grounds for eschatological punishment). It is doubtful that giving preference to the rich at the expense of the poor is meant to be equal to the sin of apostasy.”⁵⁶⁷ While Martin does not like this identification of the judgment, he is in the minority position. Most scholars agree that this does, in fact, warn of the final eschatological judgment.⁵⁶⁸ A background in Jesus’ teaching makes it hard to escape this conclusion.⁵⁶⁹ James restates here the principle of the judgment of Matthew 18 and 25 as well as of the earlier wisdom teachers: those who fail to enact mercy will also be denied it in due course.

Some disagree to what exactly the “mercy,” or the lack of it, relates. Laws, for example, separates 2:13a from its context and views it as proverbial:

It would be forced to see in the introduction of this new idea of mercy a reference back to the situation of James’s illustration in ii. 2 ff., with mercy as the implied antithesis of discrimination and therefore as the basis for the treatment the poor man should have received. The syntactical change from second person address to third person statement suggests that what is being given is a general principle rather than a specific guide.”⁵⁷⁰

concern for the poor and powerless, is Zech. 7:9-10. . . . But more relevant, as usually is the case in James, is the teaching of Jesus. Particularly apropos is the parable about the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:21-35). But James also, in effect, transforms Jesus’ beatitude—“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matt. 5:7)—into its opposite” (117).

⁵⁶⁷ Martin, *James*, 71. He can accept that this refers to eternal damnation only if James’ statement is taken in context of the subsequent discussion of faith and works: “For this moral theologian, works, even acts of charity (2:14-16), provide the evidence that Christian faith is genuine. . . . On the other hand, failure to live out the message in its social ramification implies (for James) a dead faith that is useless for salvation (2:14). The severity of this verse must not then be diminished. Those who fail to demonstrate a living and consistent faith are in danger of facing harsh judgment at the end, for they live as though ethical issues were of no consequence. Failure to show mercy to others cuts a person off from a true appreciation of the divine compassion (as emphasized in the dominical parable of the debtor servant and its application, Matt 18:21-35). . . . Those who discriminate against the poor are reckoned to be in danger of the same fate as the godless. Such stern warning is reminiscent of Matthew’s special sources (e.g., Matt 13:24-30, 41-42, 47-50; 25:31-46; Reicke, 30)” (71-72)

⁵⁶⁸ Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 128, calls it “God’s eschatological courtroom,” while Richardson, *James*, 126, adds “Failure to show mercy to those in need calls into question whether there has been any true act of repentance in face of God’s mercy. Instead of liberation, the full force of the law’s condemnation falls against those who break the law.”

⁵⁶⁹ Maynard Smith, *The Epistle of S. James* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1914), 128-29, sees the tie to Jesus’ teaching and warns, “We think at once of the Lord’s Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer. We remember His warning, ‘With what measure ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.’ We remember the Parable of the Two Debtors, and may learn from it not only the perils of the unforgiving temper, but also the operation of God’s righteous mercy.”

⁵⁷⁰ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 117.

While James uses an aphorism to summarize this section, Laws is nearly alone for not seeing a connection with at least 2:1-9 if not also 2:14-26.⁵⁷¹ This may be a more general principle that James recycles, but he uses it *because* of its relevance to this context. Johnson notes “that the *scholia* on this passage interprets it in terms of almsgiving, as do John Chrysostom, Oecumenius, and Theophlact,” partially because the connection had already been made “in Sirach, [where] the expression ‘show mercy’ (*poiein eleos*) becomes linked to the sharing of possessions with the poor (Sir 29:1; see also 18:13), thus creating a bridge to the concept of almsgiving.”⁵⁷² Whether almsgiving is the sole interpretation of James’ warning here or not, there are indications throughout the epistle that concern for the poor features highly in his understanding of what God desires from his people (cf. Jas. 1:27, 5:1-6), indeed such concern marks God’s people (cf. Jas. 2:14-17).⁵⁷³

For those not “doing mercy,” therefore, James warns of κρίσις ἀνέλεος.⁵⁷⁴ The pattern seen in Jesus’ teaching shows that eschatological judgment and damnation is the merciless outworking of justice declared solely on merciless people. When James warns of “judgment without mercy” for those who have failed to repent and live a life according to

⁵⁷¹ She can, unsurprisingly, find support from Dibelius, *James*, 149. Johnson, *James*, 236, in contrast, finds that the context illumines the passage: “v.13, which speaks of merciless judgment of the unmerciful and of mercy triumphing over judgment, points forward to the example of ‘mercilessness’ that James will recount immediately in 2:14-16. At the same time, it connects that ‘neglect of the poor’ to the merciless ‘shaming of the poor’ in 2:2-4.” Richardson, *James*, 126, adds, “What becomes apparent here is the interconnectedness between fairness toward the poor, neighbor love, and the principle of receiving and showing mercy.”

⁵⁷² Johnson, *James*, 234. The shared root with ἐλεημοσύνη, “almsgiving,” strengthens the association (cf. Matt. 6:2). It is also hard not to think of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, with its literal depiction of the damnation of the rich man, which *results from* his unmerciful treatment of Lazarus. This parallel may indicate that James, and Jesus, are not making a general statement about how all works will fare in the final judgment, but specifically how *acts of mercy toward the poor* are essential for a positive result.

⁵⁷³ Cf. Sir. 29:11-12.

⁵⁷⁴ Mußner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 126, observes about this verse: “Der Vers macht wegen seiner Begrifflichkeit – von ἔλεος war ja im vorausgehenden keine Rede –, seines Inhalts und seiner formalen Struktur den Eindruck einer ziemlich festgeprägten Sentenz. Jak übernimmt sie und stellt sie ad vocem κρίνεσθαι neben V 12, wodurch freilich nun der Ausdruck ἔλεος interpretiert wird im Sinn des Liebesgebotes: liebe den Nächsten, d.h., sei barmherzig gegen den Armen! So ergibt sich aber auch ein organischer Übergang zum folgenden Text, in dem es ja um das Erbarmen mit den notleidenden Brüdern und Schwestern geht, das den Menschen ‚zu retten‘ vermag, nämlich beim Gericht. . . . Eingeführt aber wird V 13 als Begründung (γάρ). Begründet wird die vorausgehende Gerichtsandrohung mit dem unausgesprochenen Zwischengedanken: man soll das Gericht fürchten; ‚denn‘ es wird unbarmherzig gegen den Unbarmherzigen sein (V 13a).”

the principle of neighbor love, it seems intuitive, logical, and yet also surprising.⁵⁷⁵ When in context of justice being enacted by the Judge, judgment is by default ἀνέλεος, the opposite side of justice from mercy. Judgment, as condemnation, excludes mercy.

James' statement in 2:13a, follows logically, then, for he promises an ἀνέλεος judgment to the ἀνέλεος, i.e., the ones not doing the law. And this in itself brings with it the justification of the righteous, the merciful, as they watch the wicked brought down in judgment.⁵⁷⁶ Yinger notes that, in the OT, "judgment according to deeds is not dreaded as inimical to but in fact welcomed as leading to the justification of the righteous."⁵⁷⁷

Judgment, in James 2:12-13a, comes in two forms: for the righteous, they are judged by the law of freedom by which they have lived and thus they have nothing to fear; for the merciless, they are judged by the law of love by which they have *not* lived and thus they have everything to fear.

iii. Mercy Triumphant: 2:13b

This last short aphorism raises the most complicated questions. First, to whose mercy and whose justice does James refer? Second, does this "boasting" by mercy negate justice? And finally, is mercy then a "work" by which people are saved? As Moo asks, "whose 'mercy' is it that triumphs over judgment? Some commentators think that James refers to the mercy of God himself. While setting forth a strict standard, conformity to his

⁵⁷⁵ Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 128, posits that "God's eschatological courtroom promises a fair trial to every person: the rule of faith is Torah, which clearly and perfectly stipulates God's will. Since love of one's neighbor is the rule of God's coming kingdom, it seems theo-logical [sic] that 'mercy' is given by God to those who 'show mercy' – that is, who love their (poor) neighbors – while divine 'judgment' (*kerisís*) is reserved for 'the one who has been merciless.'" Davids, *Epistle of James*, 118-19, meanwhile, warn, "Judgment without mercy would be strict justice, every sin getting its full punishment, a prospect which the Jews feared (cf. Urbach, 448-461, on the rabbinic development of the relationship of God's attributes of justice and mercy; . . .). The one who does not show mercy would be the person failing to care for any creature or other person (a duty derived from requirement of copying God's attribute), especially the failure to help the poor."

⁵⁷⁶ This sounds similar to judgment scenes described in the Epistle of Enoch, there intended as encouragement to remain faithful.

⁵⁷⁷ Yinger, *Paul, Judaism*, 37. This, in context of 1 Kings 8:32 (= 2 Chronicles 6:23), in which "the language of judgment [intersects] with that of justification" in a positive way. Popkes, *Jakobus*, 181, also sees an OT background for the conjunction of mercy and judgment, noting that "Die Wurzel für diese Zusammenstellung liegt im AT; danach stehen Gerechtigkeit, Barmherzigkeit, gerechtes Gericht, Wahrheit und Friede sehr wohl miteinander in Einklang; die Verletzung eines Elements beeinträchtigt auch die anderen."

holy law, as the basis of judgment, God is ultimately a God of mercy, who also provides in his grace a means of escaping that judgment.”⁵⁷⁸ Because of the context, however, Moo disagrees with this conclusion: “The ‘mercy’ that James has been referring to in this context is human mercy, not God’s (v. 12). We therefore think it more likely that he is making a point about the way in which the mercy we show toward others shows our desire to obey the law of the kingdom and, indirectly therefore, of a heart made right by the work of God’s grace.”⁵⁷⁹ His point is valid: contextually James has consistently referred to *human* actions throughout chapter two, at least up until verses 12 and 13. At that point, however, the imminent judgment appears, one that determines the fate of every individual, presumably executed by God at the eschaton. The context has broadened to open the possibility of divine mercy.

Others also notes this link between human responsibility and God’s response. According to Bede, James “says, by acting in this way, you see to it that by loving your neighbor you deserve to be loved by God; by showing mercy to your neighbor you become worthy of mercy in the divine judgment.”⁵⁸⁰ Whether the language of deserving and worth are the correct terms might be questioned, but thinking in terms of the *lex talionis* helps clarify the legal nature of Bede’s statement. Likewise, Hort agrees that the reader does not need to decide between the two subjects for mercy: “Is it then human or Divine ἔλεος, the plea of the mercy that has been shewn in life or the Divine mercy resisting the Divine condemnation? Probably neither without the other: the two mercies are coupled as in Mt. v. 7, in the Lord’s Prayer, and the Two Debtors.”⁵⁸¹ Popkes notes that:

Der Verzicht auf einen Gen. subiectivus bei ἔλεος (wessen Erbarmen?) könnte beabsichtigt sein; beides ist impliziert: Das menschliche Erbarmen findet Respons beim Erbarmen Gottes. V. 13b ist dann positiver Gegen-Satz zur

⁵⁷⁸ Moo, *James*, 118.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Bede, *Commentary*, 25.

⁵⁸¹ Hort, *Epistle of St James*, 57.

»Regel« V. 13a. Gottes Gericht fragt zu allererst nach praktiziertem Erbarmen. Nur dieses triumphiert über das Gericht; denn das Erbarmen entspricht Gottes eigenem Wesen und Willen.⁵⁸²

The reason, according to Jesus as interpreted by James, that God’s mercy triumphs in the judgment is specifically due to his response to human mercy, the triumph of God’s character within humanity itself.⁵⁸³ James’ emphasis is primarily on *human* mercy as contrasted with *divine* judgment in this saying: the human ἔλεος, in contrast with the human ἀνέλεος, succeeds in averting a negative judgment and invoke a response of ἔλεος from God. This does not make God unjust. Rather, because God *is* just, when his people live in accordance with his character, then *in his justice* God responds to his people with mercy, not judgment.

This leads into the second question, namely the use of “boasting” in this context. The only other time κατακαυχάομαι appears in James (3:14), it is an arrogant boast, done in pride and willful insubordination. That meaning does not appear dominant here. Here, it is the quality of mercy—not human pride—that “triumphs over” the negative “judgment.” Within the wisdom opposition of mercy and judgment, in justice mercy ought to triumph over judgment for those “doing mercy.” On the one hand, Dryness points out “This then is how mercy triumphs, not just in showing impartiality, but in a loving hospitality and welcome for those in need.”⁵⁸⁴ From the perspective of divine mercy,

⁵⁸² Popkes, *Jakobus*, 182.

⁵⁸³ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 117-18, puts forth both sides of the argument: “Judgment and mercy could be seen here as two attributes of God: God, the author of judgment in 13a, delights in a situation where his mercy may over-ride his judgment. Where a man has shown no mercy, God’s judgment of him is inexorable, but where there is evidence of merciful deeds, God’s attribute of mercy triumphs over the dictates of his justice, and the balance is tipped in man’s favour. . . . More probably, though, the focus is on man’s rather than God’s mercy. The merciless man may expect merciless judgment; a man, however, who has shown mercy may stand before judgment with confidence. . . . James would apparently have no difficulty with the notion that man may boast before God, his judge; or that man’s mercy may be made a meritorious work that boasts a claim on God’s approval (contrast Rom. iv. 2-4). His aphorism could be said, though, to be not only independent of but logically inconsistent with the argument of ii. 10: there the law must be kept in full or there is liability for the whole; here the consideration of mercy may apparently serve to waive judgment.” What she fails to consider in this conclusion is that, for James, acting mercifully *is* evidence of the fulfillment of the law of freedom, thus it is not simply a “get out of jail free” card but reveals a disposition of obedience to God’s will.

⁵⁸⁴ William Dyrness, “Mercy Triumphs over Justice: James 2:13 and the theology of faith and works,” *Themelias* 6 (1981), 14.

however, Neusner comments that “mercy completes the principle of justice,” and that without the two together, “God would execute justice but not mercy, and, from sages’ perspective, the world would fall out of balance.”⁵⁸⁵ These two perspectives give the opposing but balancing sides of the equation.⁵⁸⁶

Human mercy “triumphs” over the precise justice of the impartial court advocated in 2:1-4 because the practice of ἔλεος, ἰσχυρία, fulfills the covenant requirement and defines one as righteous. Divine mercy likewise triumphs in that, to those who have shown mercy, it rewards them for their mercy rather than punishing them for their sins, weighing the human mercy favorably at the time of the final judgment. To those who show mercy, at the judgment their mercy invokes the divine mercy and one or both together are depicted as “triumphing over” the strict judgment that would be expected.⁵⁸⁷ Even more, in a picture worthy of an apocalyptic text, Mercy⁵⁸⁸ “boasts” together with the righteous as justice is enacted. As the injustices of the world are put to right in God’s final justice, Mercy sees the vindication of the righteous, the merciful. This is not a mockery of justice, but instead the fulfillment of justice. Mercy can boast because she witnesses the judgment of the wicked and the protection of the merciful within herself.

⁵⁸⁵ Neusner, “Sin, Repentance, Atonement,” 416. Grundmann, “Teacher of Righteousness,” 96, notes that “In the Hymns of Thanksgiving man’s justice and God’s mercy are directly linked.”

⁵⁸⁶ D. Edmond Heibert, *The Epistle of James: Tests of a Living Faith* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 172, fails to understand the legal aspect of mercy as the opposite of judgment. “Mercy does not triumph at the expense of justice; the triumph of mercy is based on the atonement wrought at Calvary.” In this he is supported by Kistemaker, *Epistle of James*, 86: “Mercy is never earned but it is always granted when it is sought. If we were able to earn it, mercy would no longer be mercy. We must look to the One who grants it to us. . . . The Christian knows that in the judgment day, mercy triumphs over justice because of Christ’s meritorious work.” James nowhere denies the efficacy of Christ’s death and resurrection, much less God’s grace as emphasized in James 1, but here he emphasizes the covenantal requirements of mercy as part of God’s character as the Just.

⁵⁸⁷ Smith, *S. James*, 131, pictures a scene of judgment in which the King provides mercy “on account of facts which the law did not contemplate, and for which perhaps it was impossible to provide. *Mercy*, then, in S. James’s phrase, *triumphs over judgment*—a legal judgment; but it does not necessarily triumph over justice. The judgment may be in accordance with the law, while justice clamours for mercy.”

⁵⁸⁸ It is possible that, in Jas. 2:13b, “Mercy” becomes personified, an occurrence not surprising in this epistle for the tendency toward personification appeared as early in 1:4 with “perseverance” (ὑπομονή) which was to finish *its* perfect work and to various degrees throughout the rest of the epistle (Sin and Death in 1:14-15; the Word in 1:22; the Law which “judges” in 2:12; Wisdom in 3:13-17; etc).

Ultimately, then, human *actions* of mercy appear necessary to a favorable declaration in justice. As 2:14-26 will make quite clear, good intentions do not suffice and a faith that does not act hospitably and charitably fails to save. This continuation of the theme of mercy makes the contrasting statements of 2:13 even more critical. Mercy must, it appears, be enacted in order to be efficacious. And thus the answer to the third question regarding this proverbial statement appears to be “yes,” mercy is a “work” required for salvation. But that is a misleading way to understand James. It is better perhaps to call the mercy that triumphs an appropriation of the divine concern (2:5, 8), proof of the reality of the “birth” (1:18) and the “implanted word” (1:21), and an accurate understanding of “faith” (2:14). This question of what constitutes “good works” will be explored next, but the thrust of James 2:12-13 has been that the audience must “speak and act” in a manner that will bring them into the mercy of God at the final judgment, and therefore speech and actions are the essential criterion with which James is concerned here.

Since James writes to a community of fellow Christians, he might well agree with Sanders’ statement that “good deeds are the *condition* of remaining ‘in’, but they do not *earn* salvation.”⁵⁸⁹ According to James, however, one absolutely essential element for “remaining ‘in,’” i.e., experiencing a positive outcome at the final judgment, is acting in a merciful manner. But to speak of it simply as “deeds” fails to appropriate the transformative power of the “implanted word” from 1:21, τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν. If, as was argued earlier, the νόμος and λόγος are at the least closely tied, the one who has appropriately received and obeyed the word will have developed the very character of the νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας and need fear nothing. It is character, not mere “works,” that James seeks to transform.

⁵⁸⁹ Sanders, *Paul and Judaism*, 517.

3. *The Faith that Works: James 2:14-26*

This passage follows immediately on the crucial judgment passage and brings it to life. Although it is a fundamental passage for understanding James, historically too much weight has been given it in relation to verses 12-13, for it expands upon James' prior statements.⁵⁹⁰ Regarding the relationship of "faith" and "works," of course, this passage is central. Out of the epistle, these verses contain eleven of the 16 uses of πίστις and all three of the verb πιστεύω. Likewise it has twelve of the 15 uses of ἔργον and the single, loaded use of συνεργέω.⁵⁹¹ The questions of the proper types of works, of whether faith can exist alone, and how these relate to final salvation will all be explored. The immediate transition into the question of whether a faith without works "can save" implies that an eschatological perspective is still in place. Yet again, as with 2:12-13, eschatology impinges on the current behavior.

a. The Argument for a Faith with Works: James 2:14-19

The primary question of this section relates to work-less faith, of which James asks: μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σώσαι αὐτόν;⁵⁹² This rhetorical question sets up the passage,⁵⁹³ clarifying James' position that a faith lacking ἔργα (pl) is insufficient for salvation. Johnson warns modern readers:

Is it really plausible that James could find it necessary to remind Jewish Christians of the first generation on such a fundamental point as this? . . . The answer to the first question is straightforwardly, "Yes, messianic Jews in the first generation could need such reminders." The assumption that first-century Jews, either in Palestine or in the Diaspora, were all Pharisaic in their devotion to Torah is a distortion caused by reading earlier realities through the lense of a later normative Judaism. Judaism in the first century was widely diverse, and "Jewish Christianity" was also in all likelihood a diverse phenomenon.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹⁰ Contra, e.g., Dibelius, *James*, 149.

⁵⁹¹ However it has neither of the appearances of ἐργάζομαι (1:20; 2:9) nor the one use of κατεργάζομαι (1:3), all discussed above.

⁵⁹² The claim to faith (ἐὰν πίστιν λέγη τις ἔχειν) is reminiscent to the claim of being religious in 1:26 (εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκὸς εἶναι): both are misguided and shown to be false by the failure in how the person acts.

⁵⁹³ See, e.g., Duane F. Watson, "James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes of Argumentation," *NTS* 39 (1993), 94-121, for a greater discussion of James' rhetoric here.

⁵⁹⁴ Johnson, *James*, 249.

He warns against an oversimplification that assumes the only proponent of such views could have been Paul and opens the way for allowing this passage to speak to the culture more broadly. Returning to terminology briefly, **σώζω** is the only “salvation” term used in James and occurs five times, the first three reasonably unambiguously referring to salvation at the time of final judgment (1:21; 2:14; 4:12).⁵⁹⁵ This use in particular follows the warning of 2:13 and the dichotomy of the merciful/unmerciful judgment. While James is concerned by the thought of final salvation, his apprehension here, following after 2:12-13, could readily be re-worded as “could such workless faith warrant a merciful judgment?” As we will see later, because God is the Judge who “is able to save or destroy” at the time that he enacts his justice (4:12), James focuses on God’s justice and how one attains to a merciful verdict in the eschaton—and when he uses **σώζω** in an eschatological way, this is his referent.

James immediately provides examples to support his proposition. While common examples, James highlights two of the tasks that Jesus depicted in Matthew 25: feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. With these most basic of human needs James pictures an ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφή, putting this one *within* the community of believers and thus raising the stakes. If the person had been a stranger, perhaps some in the audience could have complained of the impossibility of caring for every needy person, but James preempts this protest. James gives what seems an almost ludacris scenario, in which the better-off believer, faced with desperate physical needs, “blesses” the poorer one, wishing them well with the nearly mocking words θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε.⁵⁹⁶ Laws suggests that this is “reverential periphrasis: the hope is not simply that somehow or other these wants will

⁵⁹⁵ The other two are in 5:15, 20. The irony that a thesis on soteriology has, thus far, minimized the importance of the **σώζω** word group is not lost. James, however, places far more interest in judgment and mercy language than that of “salvation.”

⁵⁹⁶ These verbs could be in the middle voice, which would make the mockery more in the forefront, saying, “Go, warm yourself and feed yourself,” cf. Heibert, *Epistle of James*, 180. The passive, however, is equally useless, since there is no indication of how the person would receive the aid to be warmed and fed, since the fellow believers fail to help. Martin, *James*, 85, while supporting the middle voice interpretation, emphasizes that “either voice points to the fact that some professed believers are failing to meet the needs of other church members.”

be supplied, but that *God* will supply them.⁵⁹⁷ This attitude fails, however, to take into account that it is through his people that God supplies for the needy (e.g., Lev 19:10; Deut 15:7, 11). To such a theologically correct and realistically useless sentiment, James reiterates, τί τὸ ὄφελος. A “faith” that expresses the right sentiments but fails to clothe the naked is of no use.⁵⁹⁸ He is willing to call it “faith” (2:14), but it fails to win salvation.⁵⁹⁹ For this reason, Johnson ties together several themes, arguing for “a moral framework” for this section, wherein James’ “opening illustration provides the perfect negative example. . . . Here indeed is a case of false religion as defined by James 1:26-27, combining self-indulgence, careless use of speech, and a refusal to visit orphans and widows. It is, therefore, not ‘unstained by the world’ and not ‘pure and undefiled before God.’”⁶⁰⁰

James 2:17, then, summarizes the argument, concluding the first round of argumentation (οὕτως) and pointing toward the next (νεκρά, inclusio with v. 26). While he is willing to concede the use of πίστις for this workless belief, he sees absolutely no point to it.⁶⁰¹ Faith, with nothing to support it, proves useless for helping in the judgment: failure to feed and clothe the needy person is a failure at “mercy” (2:13), and a faith that does not lead to these actions does not “profit” one in the judgment. Instead, James emphasizes the importance of works for faith, highlighted by the inclusio from 2:14 and 17: ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη and εἰ μὴ ἔχη ἔργα, and the double use of τί τὸ ὄφελος in 14 and 16. Having twice emphasized this “faith’s” lack of works, declared its uselessness for

⁵⁹⁷ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 121. She adds this “is probably intended as a caricature of what to his supposed man of faith would seem a wholly appropriate response. Confronted with a case of need, he commits it with prayer to God, who clothes the naked and feeds the hungry . . . and sends away his fellow-believers with expressions of confidence.”

⁵⁹⁸ Proctor, “Faith, Works,” 307, observes, “James argues throughout his letter that the Christian faith should express itself through charitable acts of hospitality. . . . For James, the Christian lifestyle should be one that aims at ameliorating social pain and marginality: to be holy is to be hospitable, to be pious is to be pragmatic.”

⁵⁹⁹ Contra the examples given in Matthew of faith acting at all costs.

⁶⁰⁰ Johnson, *James*, 247.

⁶⁰¹ See Lewis, “Investigation of James 2:14-26,” who argues for a possible (if wrong-headed) separation between “faith” and “works” terminology in James; also Lewis, “A New Perspective.”

salvation, and proclaimed its sheer lifelessness,⁶⁰² the central illustration of helping the poor crucially sets up that the most important works for James are acts of charity:

“Works” here are not the Pauline works of the law, such as circumcision, but rather the works of love, such as caring for those who are in need, not showing favoritism, being humble, or being slow to speak. In essence, works are the sum total of a changed life brought about by faith. . . . James emphasizes the absolute necessity of post-conversion works.⁶⁰³

In suit with the other wisdom authors, James shapes the character of his audience, not the ritual of their religion.⁶⁰⁴ Without evidence of kingdom ethics developing naturally from their faith, James questions the very existence of faith. As Heide explains:

Faith and works do not necessarily have to be diametrically opposed to one another. It seems to fit James’ understanding best to find faith as the purchasing agent of salvation, but not if it is only a statement of creed and not a way of life. Works are the natural expression of that faith. They are not a condition for faith and salvation, but rather an exemplification of it.⁶⁰⁵

James presents a picture wherein faith and works are inextricably intertwined, as a transformation into the character of God. He is unconcerned by works done apart from faith nor does he argue that ethics exist independent from faith.⁶⁰⁶ As Fung remarks, “in denying that a work-less faith can save, James does not thereby raise the question whether,

⁶⁰² McCartney, *James*, 157, notes the fittingness of the example: “the faith-deed of provision for a fellow believer’s hunger or nakedness is a particularly apt example, not only because it emphasizes the necessity of love of neighbor in the church, but also because the needy person receives no benefit from nice words, just as the professing Christian receives no benefit from inactive faith. And there is an echo here of Jesus’s words in matt. 25:31-46. . . . Its inaction is a mute but powerful testimony to its deadness, and shows itself to be a false faith by the way it responds to the needy brother.”

⁶⁰³ Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 132. Cf. also Davids, *James*, 119; Moo, *James*, 100-101. This interpretation is set up both by the thesis statement of 1:27 but also the contexts of 2:1-4 and 2:12-13.

⁶⁰⁴ Ropes, *Epistle of St. James*, 30-31, concedes, “Good works (there is no hint that among these he includes ritual or Pharisaic acts of piety, but, on the other hand, no clear indication that he consciously rejects them) are necessary to please God (I²², 2⁵ 2¹², 14²⁵ 3¹³). A living faith can be recognized by the good works of the believer (2¹⁸). It does not exist where there are no accompanying works.” Stein, “‘Saved by faith,’” 13, however, also points to the centrality of Christ for James: “When James refers to ‘works,’ he is clearly not referring to ‘works of the law.’ He is also not referring to deeds of mercy and love isolated from faith. The works that he refers to are always associated with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (2:1). Thus ‘by works’ in 2:21-22 should be understood” as Gal 5:6.

⁶⁰⁵ Gale Z. Heide, “The Soteriology of James 2:14,” *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1992), 92.

⁶⁰⁶ T. Lorenzen, “Faith without Works does not count before God! James 2¹⁴⁻²⁶,” *ExpTim* 89 (1978), 231, observes: “His question is not whether works apart from faith can save, but whether faith apart from works can. . . . Repeating the phrase ‘what does it profit’ from v.14 indicates that the perspective is soteriological (how can I stand before God?), not merely ethical (how must I act in the world?). Neglecting the demands of the situation, or artificially relativizing such demands has consequences for one’s salvation.”

let alone imply that, faith-less works can.”⁶⁰⁷ His argument focuses on the merciful character of a faith that saves, not whether works alone can save.

In 2:18, James uses an interlocutor to argue for the separable nature of faith and works. While verses 18-19 are fraught with punctuation difficulties,⁶⁰⁸ James’ point remains clear: the impossibility of demonstrating faith “without deeds” (χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων) when it is readily shown “by deeds” (ἐκ τῶν ἔργων). Faith and works, James argues, belong together, for faith is inexpressible without its fruit. At this point the only works discussed in the epistle should be highlighted: James is concerned that his audience do *works of mercy* combined with a character of moral purity and a controlled tongue.

Πιστεύω appears twice in James 2:19 to indicate a content based belief, an affirmation of a creedal point. While the statement καλῶς ποιεῖς is not entirely sarcastic, for indeed the belief that “God is one” cornerstones the Jewish religion,⁶⁰⁹ James remains unimpressed with mere orthodoxy.⁶¹⁰ As Davids notes, “such belief is indeed necessary, but not enough for salvation”⁶¹¹ for, as James notes that “even the demons believe!”⁶¹² In a parallel made evident by James’ subsequent use of Rahab, the people of Jericho “knew of

⁶⁰⁷ Ronald Y. K. Fung, “Justification’ in the Epistle of James,” in *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), 147.

⁶⁰⁸ The discussion regarding where the quotation begins and ends remains conflicted. The meaning is apparent: faith and works belong together, a faith without works is unprovable. See Heinz Neitzel, “Eine alte *crux interpretum* im Jakobusbrief 2, 18,” *ZNW* 73 (1982), 286-93; Scot McKnight, “James 2:18a: The Unidentifiable Interlocutor,” *WTJ* 52 (1990), 355-64; more recently, Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora*, 125-26; Edgar, *Has God Not*, 170-71. It pushes far beyond the evidence available, however, to argue as Vasiliki Limberis, “The Provenance of the Caliphite Church: James 2.17-26 and Galatians 3 Reconsidered,” in *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, ed. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg (London: T&T Clark, 1997), 414, that “James is counting on his readers’/listeners’ ability to make the easy identification of τῆς with Paul.”

⁶⁰⁹ See the parallel phrasing in the other letter purportedly composed by James in Acts 15:29: εὐ πράξετε.

⁶¹⁰ In this, James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977), 239, reveals James’ continuity with Judaism: “In short, it is evident that *the earliest community in no sense felt themselves to be a new religion, distinct from Judaism*. There was no sense of a boundary line drawn between themselves and their fellow Jews. They saw themselves simply as a fulfilled Judaism, the beginning of eschatological Israel. And the Jewish authorities evidently did not see them as anything very different from themselves: they held one or two eccentric beliefs (so did other Jewish sects), but otherwise they were wholly Jewish. Indeed we may put the point more strongly: since Judaism has always been concerned more with *orthopraxy* than with *orthodoxy* (right *practice* rather than right *belief*) the earliest Christians were not simply Jews, but in fact continued to be quite ‘orthodox’ Jews.”

⁶¹¹ Davids, *James*, 125.

⁶¹² Lorenzen, “Faith without Works,” 232, pushes too far, however, when he argues: “Thus faith without works is not only dead and futile, it is also demonic!” James does not say their faith itself *is* demonic, he merely notes the futility of sheer orthodoxy.

and feared the LORD” (Josh. 2:11), but their knowledge, no matter how theologically correct, did not save them.⁶¹³ Like the demons in James 2:19, the LXX reveals that the residents of Jericho recognized YHWH and trembled in fear, but Rahab showed her faith ἐκ τῶν ἔργων and was saved. Orthodox belief, while a good thing, is meaningless if it does not produce ethical actions. Such belief fails to grasp and implications of the identity of the one in whom faith is stated.

b. The Exemplars of This Faith: James 2:20-26

At this point, James transitions his argument yet again, this time marshalling examples from the Scriptures (cf. parallel example lists in Sir. 44-50; Wisd. 10; 1 Macc. 2:51-62; 4 Ezra 7:106-111; Heb. 11). He introduces this new section by calling his opponent a “fool” (κενέ), the traditional opposite of the wise person who lives by the fear of the Lord.⁶¹⁴ Echoing 2:14 and 17 again, James then introduces a wordplay on works, offering to prove that faith “without works” (χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων) does not work (ἀργή).⁶¹⁵ This term only appears eight times in the NT, every other time referring to a state of idleness that is condemnable.⁶¹⁶ A faith without works is an inoperative faith that does not bring about the intended result of faith: salvation.⁶¹⁷ Its very idleness condemns it.

⁶¹³ Mariam J. Kamell, “Reexamining Faith: A Study of Hebrews 10:19-12:14 and James 1-2,” in *Hebrews and Theology Conference Volume*, ed. Nathan MacDonald and Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 430.

⁶¹⁴ Dan McCartney, “The Wisdom of James the Just,” *SBJT* 4 (2000), 56, also identifies James’ pragmatic wisdom focus, a focus that means one who does not believe faith necessitates works cannot be called wise: “For James, wisdom is essentially an ethical quality. . . . In particular, the wisdom of James focuses on two ethical issues: speech ethics and humility.” Also, “James does not seem so much concerned with the intellectual search for wisdom as with moral action befitting true wisdom” (54).

⁶¹⁵ In this case a note of the textual variant is worthwhile, since the variant νεκρά is clearly a harmonization with 2:17 and 26. The use of ἀργός, however, exemplifies the sort of catchword play in which James so often engages.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. Matt. 12:36; 20:3, 6; 1 Tim. 5:13; Titus 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:8.

⁶¹⁷ Or, as in Matthew, healing and restoration. Fung, “‘Justification,’” 152, observes “The word translated ‘barren’ (also RV, NEB; Gk *argos*—literally ‘workless’, ‘not at work’ (Mt. 20:3. 6)—means in this context (*cf.* 14) ‘unproductive of the blessings of salvation’. The verse thus restates the point of the whole section in the form of an effective world-play: ‘faith’ that has no works does not work—it is dead (17) and does not save (14).”

James pairs Abraham with Rahab as his two examples. “Abraham and Rahab stand as far apart from each other on the social scale as is possible: the one a wealthy, respectable male and founder of the Israelite nation; the other a poor, disreputable, Gentile female.”⁶¹⁸ This span, perhaps, was intentional to reveal that this principle of faith accompanied by works applies to every person. Wachob concludes that James “concretizes πίστις in two ‘historical examples’ (παραδείγματα) that recall the ‘works of mercy’ of Abraham and Rahab.”⁶¹⁹ While James was most likely aware of Abraham’s acts of hospitality, those are not the incidents to which he alludes. It is fair to say that both characters were models of mercy, but we must also be careful not to ignore the illustration that James chooses to give. Both characters are ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, an expression fraught with theological danger for the Protestant interpreter. This passage has the only three uses of δικαιόω in the epistle, each time used to show how the person was justified only in relation to their works.

What is this justification, however, and when does it occur?⁶²⁰ Davids observes that “the community ancestors Abraham (also known in Jewish tradition for his great care for the poor) and Rahab (the archetypal proselyte) were proclaimed righteous after they had acted on their faith, not before.”⁶²¹ James’ statement in 2:24 clearly sets the timeline as deeds followed by justification, a series that can thus be witnessed. Lexically, δικαιόω is a

⁶¹⁸ Kamell, “Defining Faith,” 429. Placing Hebrews and James in parallel, the article continues: “In terms of style, Hebrews and James are among the most Jewish books of the New Testament and so Abraham’s appearance as a model of faith, while enlightening, is not necessarily surprising. On the other hand, for *these* two epistles both to include this *Gentile woman* as a paradigm of faith is noteworthy.” James furthers the moral distance between Abraham and Rahab by calling her a prostitute (ἡ πόρνη), a status not indicated in Josh 2.

⁶¹⁹ Wachob, *Voice of Jesus*, 84. While agreeing that mercy is an essential theme in James, I think Wachob overstates his case and reads into the evidence available, cf. pp. 109-111.

⁶²⁰ Stein, “‘Saved by faith,’” 13, answers simply “Paul refers to the initial, proleptic pronouncement of God’s judicial verdict upon faith. James is referring to the verdict in the final day when a person stands before God.”

⁶²¹ Peter H. Davids, “James’s Message: The Literary Record,” in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner (Louisville: WJK, 2001), 83. Martin, *James*, 91-92, argues for “a mainly demonstrative sense” for δικαιόω, noting that “this line of interpretation takes up the Jewish understanding of ‘justification’ because righteousness is there seen as the covenant fidelity or obedience expected of those who are to survive the judgment.” Proctor, “Faith, Works,” 331, concurs, saying that James “uses this verb to speak about the future eschatological judgment in which God will recognize the fact of an existing righteousness,” even as he claims that “James is not concerned with soteriological issues.”

key term in James 2:21, 24, and 25, for here is where the apparent contradiction with Paul becomes most concentrated. Martin warns, “If James’ use of δικαιοῦν . . . here were the same as that of Paul, then we would be forced to agree that James does indeed contradict Paul on the issue of the means of justification.”⁶²² Thus this term becomes a crux for the issue of James’ relation with Paul. While that is not the dominant concern of this thesis, nevertheless this term warrants a closer examination.

Δικαιοῦν appears thirty-nine times in the NT, three times in James, but fifteen in Romans and eight in Galatians, showing the strong preference Paul had for the term in those texts. The three uses in James, so close together, pose the difficulty either of contradicting Pauline usage by pronouncing justification by or through works or assuming a less common NT usage of “demonstrating *x* right.”⁶²³ Looking to our other NT text, the two uses in Matthew 11:19 (καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς) and 12:37 (ἐκ γὰρ τῶν λόγων σου δικαιωθήσῃ, καὶ ἐκ τῶν λόγων σου καταδικασθήσῃ) reveal a mixed use of the verb. In the former wisdom is *revealed to be right*, while in the latter refers to future judgment.⁶²⁴

Laws is among those who see a rift between James and Paul, arguing that “Paul could surely never have tolerated James’s explicit assertion that justification is *not by faith alone* nor his lack of attention to an initial saving act of God that makes faith and consequent good works possible.”⁶²⁵ It has already been argued in this thesis that James does assume an initial saving act of God and that this theology then undergirds his moral

⁶²² Martin, *James*, 91.

⁶²³ Laws, *James*, 130, notes that “the idea of justification is an important one in Old Testament and subsequent Jewish thought,” and that it began in a “forensic context” wherein “justification referred to the judge’s verdict on the individual before him, who is acquitted or pronounced ‘in the right’ on the basis of his proven innocence.”

⁶²⁴ The noun δικαιοσύνη, which is in James 1:20, 2:23, and 3:18, thus also relates to this discussion. It appears seven times in Matthew, four in the Sermon on the Mount alone, but thirty-four times in Romans and only four in Galatians. Moo, *James*, 134, observes that Matthew follows typical Jewish uses of these terms where “‘righteousness’ is mainly, if not exclusively, the conduct expected of the disciple (Matt. 5:20) and ‘justify’ refers to the verdict pronounced over a person’s life at the last judgment, a verdict based on what a person has done.”

⁶²⁵ Laws, *James*, 133.

instruction. Thus this particular description of the “basic lack of sympathy” between James and Paul may be an overstatement of the situation.⁶²⁶ Two scholars assume a declarative sense for the verb, whereby the deeds of Abraham demonstrate his righteousness and this state is then declared over him. Lorenzen argues that James presents the salvific use of Abraham’s sacrifice, wherein “Abraham’s willingness to offer up his son as a sacrifice to God (Gn 22¹⁻¹⁴) is seen in v. 21 as a good deed which God recognizes by granting him the status of salvation.”⁶²⁷ In this he is very like Dibelius, who urges that “God found [Abraham] faithful and (as a reward) ‘attributed righteousness’ to him.”⁶²⁸ Thus for Lorenzen and Dibelius, the the good deeds are seen and recognized and then rewarded, a more traditional but non-Pauline legal use.

Moo offers a more difficult challenge that “the overall thrust of this passage, established by the broader context, . . . the issue is what constitutes the ‘true religion’ that will survive the judgment of God (1:21-27, 2:12-13) and by the specific question raised in v. 14: with ‘that kind of faith’ save a person?”⁶²⁹ Because of the importance of context in this thesis, his objection is important. He misses, however, that, while the text is concerned with surviving the judgment, this passage argues that survival rests on faith that is demonstrable now. Mercy at the time of judgment is gained by having shown mercy. James nowhere else describes righteousness as being ascribed on top of a person’s deeds, but that a person attains *mercy* on account of one’s deeds. Though Moo argues that “James is asserting that Abraham was granted a positive verdict in the judgment by God on the

⁶²⁶ Ibid. She has already acknowledged that whereas Paul references works of the Law, James’ “understanding of *works* is most naturally seen in terms of the deeds of charity demanded in v. 15 f.” (129).

⁶²⁷ Lorenzen, “Faith without Works,” 232. So also Jeremias, “Paul and James,” 370, who observes that James 2:21 “uses, like Judaism, the verb *δικαιοῦσθαι* in the analytical sense. God recognizes the fact of the existing righteousness.” Proctor, “Faith, Works,” 325, adds, “since Abraham both believed in Yahweh’s promises and acted in a hospitable manner, God acquitted him on Mount Moriah and spared Isaac’s life.” For Proctor, it appears that God’s declaration of Abraham’s righteousness coincided with Abraham’s final test, functioning as an “acquittal” from the final sacrifice.

⁶²⁸ Dibelius, *James*, 162.

⁶²⁹ Moo, *James*, 135.

basis of his pious acts,⁶³⁰ the closer context of the co-temporal participle ἀνεύγκας and the subsequent discussion of faith “working together with works” and “being completed” indicate a continuing process, not necessarily a final salvific declaration—even while acknowledging the larger argument that demonstrable faith saves.

Martin finds no contradiction between James and Paul on this issue, “for in vv 21-24 Abraham’s works (which may recall the thought of testings, πειρασμοί, 1:2, 12; see Davids, 127) are the evidence that God declares Abraham as ‘righteous,’ i.e., faithful (1 Macc 2:52). This suggests that a mainly demonstrative sense lies behind δικαῖον.”⁶³¹ With Martin, more scholars now argue that δικαιοῖω here follows on the demonstrative language emphasized in 2:18 and following. For instance, Johnson notes that “The hardest term to translate here is *dikaioun*, primarily because of its frequent use by Paul in context opposing righteousness by faith and ‘works of the law.’⁶³² . . . The precise meaning in each case must be determined by context, not some general theological concept. Given the previous statement demanding the *demonstration* of faith, the translation here as ‘shown to be righteous’ seems appropriate.”⁶³³ Likewise, Fung argues, “We are bound to conclude

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Martin, *James*, 91. He continues, “Such an understanding stresses that works are the only means of demonstrating one’s righteous standing (Moo, 109). This use has lexical support (Gen 44:16; Luke 7:29-35 . . .). . . . The nub of his response to the objection in vv 18-19 is that no such tearing apart of faith and works is possible and that the only faith that justifies is faith-united-with-works as a single unity.” McCartney, *James*, 164, adds, “On this view, therefore, James’s justification by works (a manifestation of righteousness by obedience) is seen to be something completely different from the justification by works that Paul rejects (a verdict of God’s acquittal based on conformity to law). For James, ‘justify’ is a synonym not for ‘save’ (cf. 2:14) but for ‘show’ or ‘prove’ (2:18).” See his greater discussion on this term in pp. 162-71.

⁶³² He lists “Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 8:30, 33; Gal 2:16-17; 3:8, 11, 24.” He also notes “the complex use of the verb and its cognates in the OT (e.g., LXX Gen 38:26; Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1; Pss 50:6; 81:3; 142:2; Sir 1:22).”

⁶³³ Johnson, *James*, 242. He continues, “The phrase *ex ergon* (literally, ‘out of works’) has the sense of ‘on the basis of deeds,’ meaning that the deeds make his righteousness manifest. At first glance, the sentence appears flatly to contradict Paul’s argument concerning the righteousness of Abraham on the basis of faith rather than works (Gal 2:16; 5-6; 3:24; Rom 4:2), until we remember that in Paul’s case, the contrast is with ‘works of the law’ (including circumcision), whereas in James it is with a *pistis argē* (ineffectual faith).” He later summarizes, “James’ own understanding of genuine (‘perfect’) faith is revealed in the examples he cites from Torah. Both Abraham and Rahab had faith that was *demonstrated* by their actions. The example of Abraham is much more elaborated. James’ choice of the ‘testing of Abraham’ (in God’s call to sacrifice his son Isaac) is particularly appropriate, for that act of fidelity by Abraham serves precisely to make James’ point: the *Akedah* was not a replacement of faith by deeds but was itself a deed worked by faith. . . . It is in this light that the present translation renders the Greek as ‘shown to be righteous’ (2:21, 24), for the entire line of argument

therefore that *dikaiōō* in v. 21 is probably to be taken in a demonstrative rather than its more technical, declarative sense.”⁶³⁴ This declarative sense does not deny a further ruling at the judgment, but the focus of the text in these verses is on demonstrable faith (“show me”) that reveals friendship with God (not the world) and ultimately leads to a merciful judgment.

Removing the Pauline lens from δικαιοῶ, it seems best to render it here as simply “shown to be righteous,” faithfulness demonstrated. Davids argues for such a separation, concluding, “The point of James’s argument, then, has nothing to do with a forensic declaration of justification; the argument is simply that Abraham did have faith . . . but he also had deeds flowing from that faith”⁶³⁵ The reverse is also true: without the demonstration they would not have been considered ἐδικαιώθη. Glaze suggests, “James dealt with an experience of Abraham long after God had declared him righteous because of his faith. He was showing, therefore, not that Abraham gained a right relationship with God through works, but that his willingness to express his faith through obedience justified his claim to faith.”⁶³⁶ One cannot claim faith unless such a claim can be justified by how one lives when tested or when faced with other’s needs.

here has involved *demonstration*: ‘show me your faith apart from deeds, and by my deeds I will show you my faith’ (2:18)” (247-48).

⁶³⁴ Fung, “Justification,” 154.

⁶³⁵ Davids, *James*, 127, explains in depth: “But what does ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη mean? Here it is certainly correct to bracket Paul’s definitions and first of all search for answers in the Abrahamic tradition. The works are plural, which could indicate simply the class of actions leading to being declared δίκαιος, but which in the case of Abraham may well refer to his 10 testings, especially since testing (πειρασμός) is of such interest to James. In fact, the incident of the binding of Isaac (‘Aqedah) which James cites forms in Jewish tradition the capstone of a series of tests . . . and the fact that Isaac is bound and then released is seen as evidence not only of Abraham’s obedience to God, but also of the value of his previous acts of mercy, of charity. . . . These data mean that neither the works which James cites nor the justification which results are related to Paul. Rather, the works are deeds of mercy (which therefore fit with the opening verses of this section) and the ἐδικαιώθη refers not to a forensic act in which a sinner is declared acquitted (as in Paul), but to a declaration by God that a person is righteous, *saddiq* (which is the implication of the ‘Now I know’ formula of Gn. 22:12; cf. Is. 5:23. . .). Adamson is correct in seeing that a moral rather than a primarily judicial emphasis is intended. . . His faith was not just ‘saying,’ but ‘saying and doing.’”

⁶³⁶ R. E. Glaze, Jr, “The Relationship of Faith to Works in James 1:22-25 and 2:14-26,” *The Theological Educator* 34 (1986), 41.

With the *‘Aqedah*, James argues that Abraham’s “faith worked together with his works (ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις)” and that “by his works, his faith was made complete/perfected (ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη).” This sentence first gives us the word play between συνήργει and ἔργα, which in both phrases, “faith” is the subject and works add the substance. The two are shown in a cooperative process, together bringing a person to sanctification and salvation, and works are the means whereby faith moves to a state of perfection and completion so desired by James (cf. 1:4; 2:8; 3:2).⁶³⁷

Mußner argues for the priority of faith:

Jak sagt auch nicht—auch dies ist besonders zu beachten—: Die Werke wirken mit dem Glauben zusammen, sondern umgekehrt: Der Glaube wirkt mit den Werken zusammen, d. h., das Primäre ist auch für ihn der Glaube. Eine Alternative Glaube oder Werke ist für Jak undenkbar.⁶³⁸

Stein agrees:

This is not an equal parallelism. . . . James clearly sees faith as primary. Works do not produce faith. James never entertains the idea that works can exist independently of faith. Earlier in 1:22 James gives the command to be doers of the word (cf. ‘works’) and not hearers only (cf. ‘faith’). No thought is given to the possibility that one can be a ‘doer’ but not a ‘hearer.’⁶³⁹

Faith has the priority for James. Just as he does not argue for the salvific value of works without faith, neither does he argue that works worked with or were completed by faith (e.g., τὰ ἔργα, nom., with τὴν πίστιν, acc.). Moreover, as Lodge notes, this places the emphasis on “was perfected,” such that “instead of faith and works as two subjects acting upon one another, faith *acts* (συνήργει) and *receives* its wholeness or completion through works.”⁶⁴⁰ Likewise the expression ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη reminds the reader of the statement in 1:4, wherein endurance is to have its ἔργον τέλειον so that they might be τέλειοι. As McCartney summarizes, “works do not make faith flawless;

⁶³⁷ Fung, “‘Justification,’” 154, observes “In the second half of v. 22, the verb (*eteleiōthē*) is better rendered ‘perfected’ (NASB) or ‘made perfect’ (AV, RV) than ‘completed’ (RSV) or ‘made complete’: in 1:15 James has spoken of sin as ‘full grown’ (*apotelestheisa*) when transformed into act and habit and in 1:4 of perseverance being made perfect by exercise. Here he speaks of faith being made perfect by works.”

⁶³⁸ Mußner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 142.

⁶³⁹ Stein, “‘Saved by faith,’” 14.

⁶⁴⁰ John G. Lodge, “James and Paul at Cross-Purposes? James 2,22,” *Biblica* 6 (1981), 199.

they bring faith to its proper completion.”⁶⁴¹ Or, as Hort words it, “The works received the co-operation of a living power from the faith: the faith received perfecting and consummation from the works into which it grew.”⁶⁴² Works, notably works of mercy, bring faith into its completion, its maturity and wholeness that is the goal of wisdom.

Fung sees common ground between James and Paul in their use of Abraham:

‘James quotes Gn. 15:6 for the same purpose as Paul does – to show that it was faith that secured Abraham’s acceptance.’ In other words, *this* is the place, and the only place in the epistle, where Abraham’s justification *before God* is mentioned; on this matter ‘for James, no less than for Paul, the words of Gen. 15:6 . . . are decisive. It was by his faith that Abraham was justified’.⁶⁴³

In his actions, then, Abraham brought to fulfillment what Scripture had already declared of him: he believed God.⁶⁴⁴ ΠΙΣΤΥΕΩ refers to an intellectual belief brought to perfection through the synergy of faith brought to its maturity or perfection by works (1:22).⁶⁴⁵ Using the example of Abraham, who did not simply intellectually “believe” God but put his son on the altar, James concludes in 1:24 that we also can see (ὁρᾶτε)⁶⁴⁶ it is by works (ἐξ ἔργων) a person is judged righteous.⁶⁴⁷

His concluding statement, while directly opposed to Luther’s *sola fide*, is also the only time in the NT that such a phrase ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΜΟΝΟΝ appears.⁶⁴⁸ Stein observes, “It is ironic that the specific affirmation ‘justification by faith *alone*’ does not come from any

⁶⁴¹ McCartney, *James*, 169.

⁶⁴² Hort, *Epistle of St James*, 64.

⁶⁴³ Fung, “Justification,” 155.

⁶⁴⁴ This and 2:19 are the only two uses of ΠΙΣΤΥΕΩ.

⁶⁴⁵ Proctor, “Faith, Works,” 320-21, observes that “the imperfect *synērgēi* in v. 22 implies the coexistence of faith and works in Abraham over a long period and not just at the time of the *Akedah*.”

⁶⁴⁶ Echoing the “show me” of 2:18.

⁶⁴⁷ Lodge, “James and Paul,” 205, adds “The true antithesis comes in [1,]25 between a (pleonastic) doer who acts and a hearer *who forgets*,” a discussion which has set this one up. He reminds that Wis. 7:27 pronounces that Wisdom “passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God (φίλους θεοῦ),” as Abraham is here termed (210). Proctor, “Faith, Works,” 323, concurs: “Jewish interpreters understood Abraham’s love for God as the motivating factor behind his obedience, which in turn provided a strong basis for Yahweh’s friendship with him.”

⁶⁴⁸ Lorenzen, “Faith without Works,” 233, poses the highly anachronistic question at this point, “James is very critical of faith alone and insists that works are necessary for salvation. This raises many problems. Has James departed from the Pauline and Protestant emphasis that salvation comes by faith alone? If this is so, should this have consequences for the canonical status of James?” He “rescues” James, however, by recognizing “first of all that James was not a systematic theologian” and therefore should not be called to task for his failure to acknowledge Paul’s “superior” theology, ultimately calling readers to recognize the pragmatic balance James brings.

statement found in the letters of Paul but rather from James. And James is arguing that justification is not by faith alone!”⁶⁴⁹ Because of James’ polemical tone, Jeremias concludes “There can be no doubt that Ja 2²⁴ presupposes Paul, for the thesis ἐκ πίστεως μόνου which James contradicts is no where met in the whole literature of Judaism and of the earliest Christianity except only in Paul.”⁶⁵⁰ Fewer scholars, however, are drawing this conclusion. For example, McCartney argues that “although there are some similarities of phrasing and use of OT texts (particularly Gen. 15:6) that may sound as though James is ‘reacting’ to a perversion of Paul’s notions of justification by faith, those similarities may instead be attributed to the fact that both James and Paul operated in a Hellenistic Jewish environment that was experiencing growing pains resulting from an influx of people from a Gentile background.”⁶⁵¹ Johnson explains in detail:

The answer to the second question, ‘why does James use language so associated with Paul,’ is more difficult to answer . . . [in] limited space. But the basic point can be stated clearly enough. It is not that discussions of ‘faith and works’ are absent elsewhere in Jewish and Christian literature. . . . It is not that ‘faith and righteousness’ do not occur in combination, for they do, nowhere more impressively than in the Qumran writings. . . . The problem, rather, is that James and Paul bring these elements together in unusual concentration. It, therefore, *appears* that they are discussing the same topic. In fact, as I tried to show earlier, they are not. They use the same words but in different ways. The direction of James’ argument is different from the direction of Paul’s. But then why is the language so close? The best answer is probably to be found not in a hypothetical power struggle between early Christian leaders, or in a subtle literary polemic, but in the simple fact that both James and Paul were first generation members of a messianic movement that defined itself in terms of the ‘faith of Jesus.’ And because both Paul and James were Jewish and interacted primarily with Palestinian Judaism, they both instinctively turned to Torah for that explication and found—as did the Christian movement generally—the figure Abraham as open to midrashic exploitation. From within their separate concerns, they developed separate midrashic arguments that converge at the semantic level in intriguing (yet obvious) ways, yet diverge at the level of meaning in still more important ways.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁹ Stein, “‘Saved by faith’,” 14.

⁶⁵⁰ Jeremias, “Paul and James,” 368. He continues problematically, “The answer which Christian Judaism, in agreement with the whole of Judaism, considered as self-evident is: Righteousness is obtained by obedience to the will of God. Only he who fulfils the law will be proved by God. Righteousness is ἐξ ἔργων νόμου; how could it be obtained otherwise?” This is the sort of conclusion fought by Sanders, *Paul and Judaism*, see esp. 180, 517. In context of James it remains problematic, because James no where says that righteousness is ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, and in fact never uses that phrase—Jeremias imported a Pauline phrase into James as an answer to the Pauline difficulty of James’ conclusion that salvation is *not* ἐκ πίστεως μόνου!

⁶⁵¹ McCartney, *James*, 16.

⁶⁵² Johnson, *James*, 249-50.

Essentially Johnson and McCartney argue that a great deal of literature of the time would have automatically looked to Abraham in particular, if not also Rahab,⁶⁵³ in order to support their particular exegetical arguments. As Davids argues above, the “works” of Abraham to which James refers are “works are deeds of mercy,”⁶⁵⁴ works which, as James 2:12-13 has already promised, will bring about a merciful judgment: recognition for a living faith.

Jeremias does, however, come to a conclusion that is still largely agreed upon in relation to Paul and James on the necessary works:

The deeds of which James is speaking are the fulfilment of the ‘royal law’ (the law of our king) (2⁸), of the ‘perfect law of liberty’ (12⁵)—‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ . . . ”Εργα with James means Christian love. Romans 2³⁸ (justification by faith without the deeds of the law) is speaking of Christian faith and Jewish deeds. James 2²⁴ (justification by works and not by faith only) is speaking of Jewish faith and Christian deeds.⁶⁵⁵

Abraham is the prime example to all Israelites that faith entails *faithfulness*, not merely an intellectual acceptance of a proposition.

To the example of Abraham, James adds one final illustration: that of Rahab in 2:25.⁶⁵⁶ He links her to Abraham by the adverb ὁμοίως, indicating that this model does not necessarily add something new but serves to drive the same point home. As noted above at 2:19, Rahab, the resident of Jericho, proved her faith as distinct from the fear of the people of Jericho by her actions of rescuing the spies. James calls her a prostitute, but “even” (καί) she was justified—and quite physically saved—through her faithful actions

⁶⁵³ See A. T. Hanson, “Rahab the Harlot in Early Christian Tradition,” *JSNT* 1 (1978), 53-60; R. W. Wall, “The Intertextuality of Scripture: The Example of Rahab (James 2:25),” in *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Tae Hun Kim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 217-36.

⁶⁵⁴ Davids, *James*, 127.

⁶⁵⁵ Jeremias, “Paul and James,” 370.

⁶⁵⁶ While James does not mention her faith, Proctor, “Faith, Works,” 328, observes that, “since within the context of Jas. 2:14-26 James only attempts to prove the necessity of good works in addition to faith, his decision to leave out any explicit reference to Rahab’s ‘belief’ is understandable. The necessity of orthodox belief is the implicit assumption of this passage as a whole, and as a result James need not discuss Rahab’s faith explicitly.”

that demonstrated her believe in YHWH's sovereignty, actions that would have placed her very life in danger had they been discovered by the reigning government.⁶⁵⁷

Ultimately, James summarizes his position on faith once again in 2:26, returning to 2:17 and the uselessness of an idle faith. He concludes with the aphorism that the body and spirit unity is a necessary condition for life. He makes a direct comparison here, giving one last picture to his audience. Again Davids notes, "Works are not an 'added extra' any more than breath is an 'added extra' to a living body."⁶⁵⁸ While it is possible to have a body without a spirit, it is simply that: a body, inert and useless for life. Likewise one can have a faith without works but it is correspondingly dead and useless for its purpose. Much like the call to righteousness in Wisdom literature or the image from the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, the one who does not bear fruit faces judgment for this failure to show life. McCartney concludes: "that which distinguishes living faith from death faith is works of faith. By no means does any of this suggest that one could create genuine faith by works, any more than an effort at mouth-to-mouth resuscitation could revitalize a corpse."⁶⁵⁹ For James, works are not added (and therefore optional) to faith, they are integral to its very existence. Faith in James, in order to save, must be faithfulness.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Some very brief conclusions can be drawn from these two theologically-laden chapters. First, the word and the law together form the long-awaited transformative New Covenant, now internalized in those who accept it, shaping an obedient people, the ποιητὰ λόγου. The λόγος comes freely as a gift from God, initiating the relationship as his firstfruits. As such, obedience is not a matter of doing the right things alone, rather it

⁶⁵⁷ Hanson, "Rahab the Harlot," 54, notes the contrast between Heb. 11:31 and Jas. 2:25, for "one and the same episode is cited as an example of faith by one author and of works by another," something he also notes happens with Abraham between the two texts. From this he concludes, "It seems likely that the author of James was trying to correct Hebrews rather than Paul in the matter of the relation of faith to works. The two examples he cites, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and Rahab's treatment of the spies, are both mentioned in Hebrews, but neither occurs explicitly in Paul" (59).

⁶⁵⁸ Davids, *James*, 121.

⁶⁵⁹ McCartney, *James*, 172.

reveals a renovated character shaped to the will of God. For such a one, there is no need to fear the judgment, for they will by very nature act in the mercy of God. In contrast, the one who fails to act mercifully ought to fear the judgment, for their deeds reveal that they have not received (1:21) the λόγος and are not among the new creation. A living faith is gifted by the λόγος of God, and the one who receives it in humility reveals their reception through a character of mercy. This obedience of πίστις allows the salvific power of the λόγος to come to its fullness and completion (ἔτελειώθη), bringing the person through to a merciful judgment.

CHAPTER 4: BROADENING THE PICTURE IN JAMES 3-5

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Chapters one and two provide the most crucial passages for this thesis, bringing together all the related themes of the law, works, faith and justice, but a number of passages from the rest of the epistle broaden the picture garnered thus far. This section, therefore, will seek to highlight further developments in the text while remaining focused on James' key themes.

A. THE WORD AND JUDGMENT

Throughout the later three chapters of James, the text links speech and judgment. James 3:2 offers the only simple use of *λόγος* in the epistle, referring simply to speech and introducing a section focused on correct speech leading to purity of motive. While control of the tongue and its reflection on the internal state (Jas. 3:2-12) is a consistent concern in both wisdom literature and in James, for the sake of space we shall not explore that section further here. More germane to our discussion is James 3:1 with its warning to teachers. This verse bridges James 2 and its focus on saving faith with chapter three and its discussion of the power of the tongue.⁶⁶⁰ In introducing teachers here, James is not strictly concerned with the fact that they teach by speaking. Rather, given the text's holistic approach to life and faith, James makes a logical connection since teachers would be expected to lead not only with their words but also with their examples. Thus a disparity between the two would be even more reprehensible since they "know the good they ought

⁶⁶⁰ Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora*, 138-39, sees 3:1-4:12 as one discursive unit based on judging, arguing, "He then emphasizes the importance of having this proper attitude [in 4:10] by introducing the theme of judgment of individual believers through the inverted parallelism between teachers who 'will receive the stricter judgment' (3:1) and the 'one Lawgiver and Judge who is able to save and to destroy' (4:12). This second inverted parallelism underscores a fundamental difference in the perception of the function of teachers between James and his readers. In response to his reminder that there is 'one Lawgiver and Judge,' James immediately challenges his readers' aggrandized self-perception, asking 'so who are you who judges the neighbor?' (4:12). They perceive the role of teachers as being to 'judge' others, to exercise (punitive?) authority over errant members of the community ('neighbors'). James, on the other hand, views 'teachers' not as the dispensers of '(punitive) judgment' but as the recipients of 'stricter judgment.' . . . We can thus summarize the theme of the discursive unit of Jas 3:1-4:12 as 'humbling oneself' in the light of impending 'judgment.'"

to do” (Jas. 4:17)!⁶⁶¹ Knowling notes this, saying “Perhaps it may be fairly said that nowhere was the separation of faith and works likely to be more frequent or more offensive than in that arising from vain and empty speech on the part of men who, while claiming to be instructors of the foolish, ‘say and do not.’”⁶⁶²

The judgment here is left very ambiguous. It may refer to a harsher judgment by those under the teacher, people who expect them to hold a higher standard. James, however, consistently argues for God as the sole judge, and as such places an eschatological spin onto judgment.⁶⁶³ Townsend rightly notes a dependence on the teachings of Jesus in this expression, echoes which help to support the divine nature of this judgment: “The spiritual principle behind this may well be that from those to whom much has been entrusted, much will be required (Luke 12.48), though that saying is not directly in view here. Rather more in mind is Jesus’ insistence that we shall be either acquitted or condemned in the final judgement out of our own mouths (Matt. 12.37).”⁶⁶⁴

The teacher whose actions fail to match their words condemns him or herself. The passage which follows points to the double nature of the people who cannot control their tongue, bringing them into the category of the *δίψυχος* so condemned in the

⁶⁶¹ Smith, *S. James*, 168, disagrees: “It is with a man’s words that he is here concerned, and he is going on to speak at length as to the perils of speech. He is not for the moment concerned with the man’s other conduct.” Johnson, *James*, 255, notes the difficulty with the English word “judgment” here: “the precise meaning of *krima* here is difficult. Does it mean (so Laws, 144) that they are to be judged by a higher standard (compare Epictetus, *Discourses* II, 15, 8; Rom 5:16), or does it mean (so Ropes, 226; Dibelius, 182) that they will be punished more severely (see Rom 2:2; 3:8; 1 Cor 11:34; 2 Pet 2:3)? The English ‘judgment’ allows both construals . . . for the idea that teachers receive a harsher sentence, see the condemnation of the Scribes by Jesus in Mar 12:38-40.”

⁶⁶² Knowling, *The Epistle of St. James*, 68. So also Ropes, *Epistle of St. James*, 227, who says, “μείζον κρίμα, ‘greater condemnation’; cf. Mk. 12⁴⁰ (Lk. 20⁴⁷) οὗτοι λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα, Rom. 13². The teacher’s condemnation (or, as we should say, his responsibility) is greater than that of others because having, or professing to have, clear and full knowledge of duty, he is the more bound to obey it, cf. Lk. 12⁴⁷ f.”

⁶⁶³ Smith, *S. James*, 168, notes both these options, but opts for the latter: “Throughout his Epistle S. James views all things in the light of Doomsday, and the supreme Judge is the only Judge he fears. In consequence it were better to translate τὸ μείζον κρίμα as *the greater or heavier condemnation*, because the words refer to the sentence of God, and not to the opinions of men.”

⁶⁶⁴ Townsend, *James*, 57. James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 141, sees the same Matt. text in the background: “Greater responsibility brings greater judgment. If every idle word will be weighed at the Judgment (Matt. 12:36f.), how much more the utterances of the teacher? We may be tempted to think the diatribe on the tongue approaches too near to exaggeration; but it goes no further than James’s deep feelings for his vocation would justify. Any attempt, therefore, to emend or to evade its plain meaning is not only inapposite here but also ruinous to the passage, as a whole, on the tongue.”

introduction.⁶⁶⁵ Moo notes that κρίμα “usually refers to the negative outcome of judgment, for example, ‘condemnation,’ in the NT,”⁶⁶⁶ but Laws concludes with the majority that “it seems unlikely that James would hold out to all teachers, and indeed himself, only the prospect of greater or lesser punishment, but rather that of particularly rigorous scrutiny at the final judgment (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 10-15).”⁶⁶⁷ Arguably, James foresaw a very real risk of unfavorable judgment to teachers who either failed to match their actions to their teaching (contra 1:22-25; ch. 2) or failed to teach accurately and were themselves δίψυχος. He leaves it uncertain whether this condemnation occurs at the final judgment, but presumably if one’s words and teaching consistently fail to match, the possibility is open. At the very least, this statement is no harsher than Jesus’ in Matthew 12:36-37.

A little further on, James 4:11-12 gives an intricate warning against judging others, placing the role of judging firmly in God’s hands:

Μὴ καταλαλεῖτε ἀλλήλων, ἀδελφοί. ὁ καταλαλῶν ἀδελφοῦ ἢ κρίνων τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καταλαλεῖ νόμου καὶ κρίνει νόμον· εἰ δὲ νόμον κρίνεις, οὐκ εἶ ποιητῆς νόμου ἀλλὰ κριτῆς. εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ νομοθέτης καὶ κριτῆς ὁ δυνάμενος σῶσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι· σὺ δὲ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων τὸν πλησίον;

Do not slander one another, brothers/sisters. For whoever slanders his brother slanders the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not doers of the law but judges. There is One Lawgiver and Judge who is able to save and destroy. But who are you who judges your neighbor?

This passage again links the tongue to judgment. Here, speaking against another believer is shown to be a far greater sin of pride against God than one might realize. This follows from a section (4:4-10) in which the audience is entreated to repent from prideful ways of acting and humble themselves before God with mourning. The warnings of 4:11-12 follow

⁶⁶⁵ Moo, *James*, 149-50, sees the danger to occur in the teacher’s use of speech: “But the logic of James’s argument, as we follow it into v. 2, suggests a third interpretation of the ‘greater judgment’: teachers, because their ministry involves speech, the hardest of all parts of the body to control, expose themselves to greater *danger* of judgment. Their constant use of the tongue means they can sin very easily, leading others astray at the same time” (cf. the warnings of Matt. 18:6, Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:2). So also Martin, *James*, 108, and Davids, *James*, 137, wherein the latter notes: “it must have been a common teaching that teachers would be held to a stricter standard. . . . And that is only right in that the teacher has the possibility of greater damage and claims to have a more perfect understanding of doctrine and ethics.”

⁶⁶⁶ Moo, *James*, 149.

⁶⁶⁷ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 144.

logically, covering an area of their lives that most likely was both a widespread problem and too common to be noticed.

These verses have four of the six uses of κρίνω in the epistle, as well as two of the four uses of κριτής. It begins with the idea of slandering another, but that leads quickly to James' bigger concern: the one who slanders feels superior not just to the other person but to the law itself, thus approaching a rivalry with God himself.⁶⁶⁸ The crucial point for James here is the identity of *who has the right to judge*. By gossiping, his audience has claimed that right. By judging one another, they in truth judge the law which places all humans on a level below God.⁶⁶⁹ And this returns them to James' concern that they be ποιητής νόμου, subject and obedient to the law of God in humility (cf. 1:22-25; 3:13).

James' concern then focuses on God's role as the only lawgiver and judge. Because God gave the law, he is the only one with the right to judge whether it has been fulfilled appropriately. In a theologically loaded statement of God's role that echoes his creedal statement of 2:19, James affirms both the unity of God and the roles of God, intimating that his audience have forgotten both in their pride. God's unity means that he alone is the one who can fulfill both roles of lawgiver and of judge, and ties both roles into him alone. Laws defends this relationship, noting "The order of the sentence, lit. *one there is*, serves to stress again the oneness of God (cf. ii. 19); here he is *one* as having the sole title of the functions of law-giver and judge, and thus uniting them."⁶⁷⁰ This divine judge has the

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 187, notes "To set oneself over against another in this way is to break the law of love, and this in turn must be seen as implicitly taking up a critical attitude toward the law itself, for not to keep it is to judge it to be invalid or unnecessary. The transgressor thus puts himself into the position of being **not a doer of the law but a judge**. The phrase [doer of the law] would in classical Greek denote a law maker rather than one who obeys the law, cf. on i. 22. James may be conscious of this other meaning, when he describes God as the 'lawmaker' in v. 12: God and man are 'doers of the law' in different ways, and man must not take on himself the rôle that is God's; only God is above the law."

⁶⁶⁹ Johnson, *James*, 293, observes the link back to the discrimination of 2:1-4 and with Jesus' teaching regarding reciprocal judgment: "What is most pertinent for James is that such judgment is a form of arrogance. . . , in which one asserts superiority over another. In effect, we find here the hidden form of the same sort of discrimination described in 2:1-4. James' language here and in 5:9 recalls the sayings of Jesus in Matt 7:1."

⁶⁷⁰ Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 188, agrees: "That God is *judge* is a biblical commonplace. . . ; that he is the *law-giver* is a basic assumption of the Pentateuch and expressed in the Sinai tradition. . . . The noun *nomothetēs*

ability σωσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι,⁶⁷¹ and James’ rhetorical question at the end, “who are you?” warns that pride in slandering a fellow believer could actually lead to destruction by the true Judge.⁶⁷² Gossip is no mere matter between people but an act of pride that can lead to a person’s eschatological destruction. Verse 12 moves from the realm of the “here and now” to the divine courts, and thus the destruction here is far more than physical death—it is the opposition to σωσαι and at the hands of the one Judge. James appears to warn that final judgment comes to the one who slanders a fellow believer in pride.⁶⁷³

Finally, in James 5:9-12, one last warning is issued concerning the link between speech and sin. He admonishes:

μὴ στενάζετε, ἀδελφοί, κατ’ ἀλλήλων ἵνα μὴ κριθήτε· ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν. ὑπόδειγμα λάβετε, ἀδελφοί, τῆς κακοπαθίας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας τοὺς προφῆτας οἱ ἐλάλησαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου. ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας· τὴν ὑπομονὴν ἰωβ ἤκούσατε καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε, ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρμων. Πρὸ πάντων δέ, ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ὀμνύετε 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.

Do not grumble, brothers/sisters, against one another, lest you be judged. Behold, the judge is standing outside the door. Take as an example of suffering and endurance the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who endured. Heed the patience of Job and see the purpose of the Lord, the Lord who is full of compassion and mercy. But above all, my brothers/sisters, do not swear either on heaven or the earth or any other oath. But let your yes be yes and your no be no, lest you fall under judgment.

This passage gives indication of James’ sense both of the imminence of judgment as well as his indebtedness to the teaching of Jesus. Here James returns to the themes of

used to express this is used in the LXX only in Ps. ix. 21, though God is described in a participial phrase as *ho nomothetōn* in Ps. lxxxiii. 7.”

⁶⁷¹ Kistemaker, *Epistle of James*, 145, observes, “the significance of the aorist tense in these two active infinitives lies in the finality of God’s verdict on the day of judgment.”

⁶⁷² Wiard Popkes, “The Mission of James in His Time,” in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner (Louisville: WJK, 2001), 93, warns of James’ concern of spiritual arrogance: “The church has to face judgment as well; it would be a fatal error to indulge in a premature feeling of being saved. This is exactly the key which also Matthew strikes against a church which forgets ‘to bring forth fruit’ (Matt. 21:33-41).”

⁶⁷³ Penner, *James and Eschatology*, 180-81, justifies an eschatological reading of this text as well as the subsequent ones: “the theme of eschatological judgment and reversal ties 4.6-5.12 together into a unified section centering on the imminent judgment of the wicked and the hope of the righteous. It is evident that the writer has an eschatological event in view, and that this undergirds the structure of 4.6-5.12. The eschatological reversal is anticipated, so the writer exhorts the believers into submission and humility, and condemns and denounces the rich and proud, announcing the imminent judgment which awaits them. The unit is then concluded with further admonition to the community in light of the impending judgment. Jas 4.6-5.12 is thus formed within an explicit eschatological horizon.”

endurance in suffering and controlling one's tongue, tying the two themes from chapter 1 more closely together than he has at any point yet in his epistle and linking both to his concern that the audience pass through judgment without fault. He has already reminded his audience of the Lord's parousia in verse 7, and, as he continues on, he turns to the other side of the perspective of imminence: the nearness of judgment. He clearly marks his return to addressing fellow believers, though, through the repetition of ἀδελφοί in verses 7, 9, 10, and 12, an emphasis warranted after the fiery denunciation of 5:1-6.

First, James warns his audience against grumbling against one another, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε. The problem of complaining against another believer is a specific misuse of speech James reiterates from 4:11-12. This particular sin of speech reaps harsh consequences, perhaps based again on the principle of 4:11-12 and the equation of judging another with judging the law and thus usurping God's place.⁶⁷⁴ This warning is compounded by the intimidating statement, ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτῆς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἕστηκεν.⁶⁷⁵ This, together with 2:12 and 5:1-6, impresses upon the readers that judgment could happen at any moment. The perfect ἕστηκεν reveals that the judge is already there and able to hear their complaints, that he could enter at any point and hold them to account for their wicked speech. In contrast, James calls them to emulate the prophets or Job—both of whom ironically were noted for speaking out—whom James uses as examples of

⁶⁷⁴ Kistemaker, *Epistle of James*, 166.

⁶⁷⁵ Sawicki, "Person or Practice?," 388-90, notes several different interpretations for this statement, including the very practical position that there could be eavesdroppers who are spying on behalf of the established government: "Living in an oral-aural culture, this community might be wary of surveillance. Grumbling (στενάζειν) is audible and would attract the attention of anyone who happened to be snooping around. . . . On this interpretation the 'judge at the doors' of v. 9 would be present not physically but virtually through his agent, the informant." She also offers the interpretation of the imminence of a divine judge, but opts in the end for an echo of Hebrew imagery of doors and judgment occurring at the city gates. Johnson, *James*, 317, notes the intertextual allusions within the NT itself pointing to the imminence of eschatological judgment: "The noun *thyra* means simply a door or gate, with the plural form (as here) having the equivalent meaning. . . . There is an obvious sense in which being 'at the gate' suggests proximity (see Acts 5:9; 12:6). The image here, however, strongly resembles that in the eschatological discourse in Mark 13:28-29. . . . Note the combination of harvest (*theros*), being near (*engus*), and door/gate (*thyrai*). The saying is repeated virtually verbatim in Matt 24:32-33, whereas Luke omits the wordplay. . . . The play of *theors/thyra* in Mark 13:28-29 is found here also (*therizantes*, 5:4; *thyrais*, 5:9) in combination with the specifically Christian language concerning the *parousia tou kyriou* and its location as 'near' (*engiken*). Such a clustering makes it difficult not to see (as in Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:8) the *kritēs* ('judge') as Jesus (so Mussner, 205; Marty, 195), although James' usage in 4:12 again makes that conclusion a cautious one."

correct speech: the prophets who spoke denunciation only at the word of the Lord and Job who complained directly to God but who endured his sufferings so that in the end God honored and rewarded him.

Indeed, the witness of Job bearing through undeserved miseries leads James to comment on the evident nature of God: πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρμων. Although James describes God/Christ as ὁ κριτής, he then also affirms God's nature of mercy toward those who endure.⁶⁷⁶ This reality of God's mercy supports the injunctions of all of 5:7-11, wherein "the good result accomplished by the Lord reveals his attributes of compassion and mercy."⁶⁷⁷ The audience is encouraged to show the same sort of endurance as Job so that they also might see God's character revealed to them in the same way.⁶⁷⁸

James may have created the term πολὺσπλαγχνος, but it bears close relation to the highly freighted term πολυέλεος (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Psa. 86 [LXX85]:5, 15; 103[LXX 102]:8; 145 [LXX144]:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; 3Mac. 6:9; Ode. 12:7), the latter used only in contexts of God's character and paired with descriptions of him as slow to anger, long-suffering, loving towards his people and longing for them to return to him, but also paired with statements of his justice and judgment upon unrepentant sinners.⁶⁷⁹ James, in his presentation of God's character parallels the former category and appears to draw on the tradition of God's self-identification both as just to sinners and as merciful to the repentant. Having warned his audience of the imminence of the judge, James moves to remind them of the judge's covenantal character of mercy.

⁶⁷⁶ The verb μακροθυμέω appears three times in James, solely in this larger passage: twice in 5:7 and once in 5:8, tying to the injunction in 5:10 to endure like the prophets, there using the noun μακροθυμία. Even though he has varied from the term ὑπομονή that he used consistently in chapter 1, the theme of endurance remains.

⁶⁷⁷ Johnson, *James*, 321.

⁶⁷⁸ Sawicki, "Person or Practice?," 399-400, comments: "Judgment is the opposite of patience, it seems. Judgment does not produce justice: patience produces justice. Or rather, patience waits and gives God time to work. . . . Patience holds out against closure, while judgment settles things."

⁶⁷⁹ Although he does not connect it with πολυέλεος, Johnson, *James*, 321, notes the use of πολὺσπλαγχνος by the Shepherd of Hermas. Where πολυέλεος appears only in the LXX, never in the NT, πολὺσπλαγχνος has not appeared before James.

God's merciful character, however, does not lessen the audience's need to strive for holiness. In verse 12, James makes his most direct allusion to the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 5:33-37⁶⁸⁰) but adds the warning ἵνα μὴ ὑπὸ κρίσιν πέσητε. Whereas Jesus does not directly warn of judgment for oaths (but cf. Matt. 12:36-37), he does call anything beyond straight speech as ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, a reality which James may be improvising upon as he warns of the imminence of judgment for those who misuse speech. As in 3:1, James presents a direct link between inappropriate uses of speech and divine judgment. Here, the language of "falling into" judgment leads one to hear this as eschatological judgment. Thus failure of honest speech puts one into God's judgment and away from God's mercy.

The quick flips between God's nature as judge and as merciful in James 5:5-12 are consistent with James' overall theology that wrongful living brings one into judgment and humble endurance is rewarded by mercy. Two sins of speech are threatened by judgment, but these frame the model of the endurance of Job, endurance that revealed God's character as merciful. James clearly seeks to encourage his audience away from a natural complaining, angry response to hardship toward one that looks to God to see what τὸ τέλος κυρίου might be.

B. FAITH AND PRAYER

A smaller intersection occurs between faith and prayer, first hinted at in 4:1-11 and expanded in 5:13-18. In the former, faith is not explicitly mentioned, but this passage gives the clearest expression to friendship and loyalty language in the text. The shocking warning of 4:4 in the context of their failed prayers: μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὅς ἐάν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται, places two options before the reader. Clearly

⁶⁸⁰ Deppé, *Sayings of Jesus*, 134-49, discusses the probability of both Matthew and James citing a *verbum Christi* and concludes that James "preserves the more original character of the saying than Matthew" (147).

their prayers fail here because they fall into the category of friends with the world. The language of adultery here, anticipating the second use *δίψυχος* in 4:8, sets prayer into a context of a faithful commitment to God alone. Those who have sold their affection to the *κόσμος* and its values are called to a humble, wholehearted repentance, forsaking the path of sin and doublemindedness. Faithfulness in the relationship with the divine is crucial for favorable response from God in prayer and judgment (4:11).

James 5:13-18, a section on confession and sickness, adds to our understanding of God's relation to his people and their sins. In a turn from what might be expected, in 5:15-16 James promises forgiveness *before* commanding confession, a promise that may well serve as impetus *for* confession. Knowing that God is merciful (5:11) and that he will forgive (5:15), confession becomes not a groveling in fear of judgment but an opportunity to return to the mercy of God. The communal nature of prayer, confession, and forgiveness, however, must also be noted. It appears that God works through the community praying and confession *ἀλλήλων*, yet again revealing the collective ethos in James.⁶⁸¹

James 5:15 with its promise, ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα καὶ ἐγερεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος, leads to the question of the best translation for “faith” and “save” here. Throughout the first two chapters, *πίστις* appeared to move in the direction of “faithfulness,” or perhaps more precisely, the inability of a faith not demonstrated in faithfulness to bring a person through judgment (“save”) in the eschaton. Perhaps most relevant, however, is a return to the initial discussion of praying in faith in 1:5-8, wherein faith refers to a steadfast confidence in God's character as generous and the one who gives what his people need. The prayer *τῆς πίστεως* here, then, cannot refer to a presumption

⁶⁸¹ In this passage, Sawicki, “Person or Practice?,” 400, makes an intriguing observation of the characters James includes: “These two examples, Elijah and Job, emphasize the merciful and non-final quality of even the most severe divine action. They also suggest that the patience of human beings can affect the mode of divine action. When human beings are patient, God can be merciful. Or it might just as well be said: when human beings are merciful, God can be patient.”

on God’s methods, but a steadfast confidence in his nature as τὸν διδόντος θεόν (1:5), likewise confident that he is the God who hears the cries of his people (5:4). Moreover, the expression ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως parallels the δέησις δικαίου of 5:16, urging at least an overtone of faithfulness in the interpretation of πίστις.⁶⁸²

Mußner points to the difficulty of the three future tense verbs, σώσει, ἐγερει, ἀφεθήσεται, for determining whether 5:15 promises present healing or a future saving.⁶⁸³ On the one hand, throughout the rest of the epistle σώζω refers to eschatological salvation (1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:20). In contrast, Martin leans toward a present “healing” interpretation,⁶⁸⁴ but Johnson points to a parallel with the language of “faith saving” in Mark and Matthew, commenting that, “especially when combined with ‘faith,’ [σώζω] tends to mean ‘saved’ in a religious sense.”⁶⁸⁵ Johnson thus emphasizes the “polyvalence” of James’ language, such that the “saving” and “raising up” of 5:15 could intend either present or eschatological result. The link with Jesus’ expression ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε (Matt. 9:22), points to the integration of spiritual and physical healing that Jesus worked. Jesus did heal physical problems, but his intention was a holistic healing that included the forgiveness of sins, reinstatement in community, and ultimately, restoration of the divine-human relationship. Likewise here James most likely intends physical healing as the outcome of prayer, but he is not limited to that.

Finally, this restoration can be seen in the last two verses of the epistles. James concludes with the elusive statement (5:19-20):

Ἄδελφοί μου, ἐάν τις ἐν ὑμῖν πλανηθῆ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἐπιστρέψῃ τις αὐτόν, γινωσκέτω ὅτι ὁ ἐπιστρέψας ἀμαρτωλὸν ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ σώσει ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκ θανάτου καὶ καλύψει πλῆθος ἀμαρτιῶν.

⁶⁸² It is worth noting what I have not seen suggested anywhere else: embedded in the Elijah story James alludes to in 5:17-18, namely 1 Kings 17-18, is the story of Elijah raising the dead boy in 1 Kings 17:17-24, which perfectly fits this context of prayer for healing.

⁶⁸³ Mußner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 221.

⁶⁸⁴ Martin, *James*, 217.

⁶⁸⁵ Johnson, *James*, 332.

My brothers/sisters, if any of you wanders from the truth and someone should turn them, know that the one turning the wanderer from their path saves their soul from death and covers a multitude of sins.

If the community is responsible for praying with and confessing to one another, in concluding the epistle, verses 19-20 reveal how essential it is to James that the members of his audience watch for one another as well. Πλανηθῆ parallels the use of the same verb in 1:16, again concerning people being deceived or willingly wandering from the truth they know.⁶⁸⁶ These people, as in the context in chapter 1, contrast with the divine character that does not waver, a parallel that can also be seen from the other figurative use of ὁδός in 1:8. The role of the believer in this situation is turn the straying one back into the path of truth. In so doing, *someone* is saved, whether the believer or the one straying is not entirely clear.

The expression, however, καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν is of particular interest. This expression traces back to Proverbs (10:12; 17:9) wherein “covering” refers to a person’s willing forgiveness of another’s offenses rather than stirring up strife. Because of his consistent concern of the effects of an unruly tongue on community, James may well have had this voluntary silence in mind. One advantage of this interpretation is that it allows for a human agent, which is what the sentence gives us (ὁ ἐπιστρέψας). The difficulty, however, is that the statement of saving a soul lies between the subject and the expression of covering, something a human agent cannot fully do.⁶⁸⁷ So there may well be a divine agent hidden within James’ thought, a potential example of divine mercy.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁶ Townsend, *James*, 110, notes the willfulness involved in the straying, commenting, “The idea of straying rather implies an element of absent-mindedness, as with lost sheep. But it is stronger and more deliberate than that; there is an element of deliberate apostasy involved. The writer may have in mind those who found it difficult to hold on to their Christian discipleship in the teeth of some of the persecutions envisaged elsewhere in the epistle, but more likely he is thinking of those who fall by the wayside in a moral or practical sense. They are said to stray from the truth, but given the context of this writing it is extremely unlikely that James is implying that they have given way to false doctrine.”

⁶⁸⁷ Kistemaker, *Epistle of James*, 184, argues, “This last statement of this verse ought not to be taken literally, for man is unable to cover sin. Scripture teaches that not man but God has the authority to forgive. The expression *covers over* implicitly refers to God's act of forgiving sin.”

⁶⁸⁸ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 549, sees the intertextual echo as Ps. 32:1-2; 85:2, wherein God is the agent, and concludes “if we take seriously the intertextual echo, it seems likely that the one whose sins are

Following the discussion of physical healing and repentance in 5:13-16, the “saving” done here may be a physical salvation from a life of sin that could lead to death (cf. particularly vv. 15-16). Its position in the final verse of the book, however, lends itself toward a reference to eschatological salvation, particularly since the only other reference to θάνατος in James comes in 1:15 as the final result of sin. With the possible exception of 5:15, which we have argued is ambiguous, in James both death and salvation are eschatological terms, a reality this final warning emphasizes. The whole epistle concludes with this reminder that faithfulness to the path of truth is necessary for a person’s final salvation, and encourages the community to continually encourage each other in this reality.

C. PURITY FROM THE Κόσμος

Darian Lockett’s *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James* argues very well for the importance of the issue of purity in James, arguing that “purity is a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition in order to achieve perfection.”⁶⁸⁹ This purity is in specific reference to the taint τοῦ κόσμου (1:27), the worldly view that corrupts the individual and leads them down the path of temptation and death (1:13-16). This theme, which might also be described at times as faithfulness to the path of humility also appears throughout the rest of the epistle.

For instance, the “wisdom” section of James 3:13-18 highlights the need for purity in one’s deeds. This section bears a marked resemblance to 2:14-26. Again, the possession of something—here, wisdom—is questioned and the only adequate response is “show me.” Verse 13 has the final use of ἔργον in the epistle, again tying this passage to the earlier discussion of faith and works. Like faith, wisdom does not exist apart from the deeds that express it. Indeed, the only way to tell between these two ways is by the sorts of

covered by such an act is the one who is the agent of conversion. Thus the final clause means something like “this act covers a multitude of sins,” and James probably has in mind the eschatological tribunal when such mercy will be shown.”

⁶⁸⁹ Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 143-44.

deeds they inspire. While wisdom should be revealed by τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, the alternative is ζῆλον πικρὸν, ἐριθείαν, or φαῦλον πράγμα. Also bringing echoes of earlier passages is the brief expression ἐν πραύτητι. One of the distinguishing marks of a wise person is the humility of their actions, which contrasts strongly with the pride and infighting of the unwise. The foolish know only to fight for worldly position and power, creating chaos and instability rather than the simplicity of way that God seeks from his people. The way a person lives reveals whether they are wise or filled by an anti-wisdom that is ἐπίγειος, ψυχική, δαιμονιώδης (3:15, everything in contrast to ἄνωθεν, 3:17). The person who lives that way is condemned as deceiving themselves—again a deception that most likely has eschatological implications. One cannot live according to the wisdom of the world and yet consider oneself righteous.

The list of 3:17, in contrast and reminiscent of Paul’s lists of spiritual gifts,⁶⁹⁰ gives us clear insight into the “works” that are expected of the wise person—the person of true faith. James starts the list with the term ἀγνή, which many suspect is more than simply an accident of order.⁶⁹¹ This term functions as the capsule for the other terms, such that Ropes can conclude that ἀγνή is “the quality from which they all proceed.”⁶⁹²

Ultimately the goal of this wisdom is a person τοῖς ποιούσιν εἰρήνην. In interesting parallel, people in James are urged to be ποιηταὶ λόγου, (1:22), ποιητῆς ἔργου (1:25), and ποιητῆς νόμου (4:11): here the concern is to be “doing peace.” Throughout the epistle, the verb ποιέω and the noun ποιητῆς appear 16 times, a concerted effort from the author to motivate his audience to correct living. The diversity of referents—word, deeds, peace, the law—reveals a rich picture of obedience. In this passage, the foolish person produces πᾶν φαῦλον πράγμα while the wise one will

⁶⁹⁰ See. Mariam J. Kamell, “Wisdom in James: An Examination and Comparison of the Roles of Wisdom and the Holy Spirit” (MA Thesis, Denver Seminary, 2003), for an extended study of this idea. See also Davids, *James*, 51-56.

⁶⁹¹ Davids, *James*, 154; Martin, *James*, 133; Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 188; Ropes, *Epistle of St. James*, 250; Johnson, *James*, 274.

⁶⁹² Ropes, *Epistle of St. James*, 249.

produce καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν and καρπὸς δὲ δικαιοσύνης. Quite literally, the fruit reveals the source (cf. 3:12), and a tainted source is by definition not pure and does not lead to the harvest that God rewards (cf. 3:10-12).

Likewise, 4:1-10 continues the contrast of tainted worship versus pure faithfulness. In this passage, the amount of language showing conflict and impurity is overwhelming: ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων (4:1); κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε (4:3); μοιχαλίδες (4:4); ἁμαρτωλοί, δίψυχοι (4:8). In contrast stand the ideas of friendship that cannot share allegiances and the need for repentance and humility from the sin of conflicted loyalties. The warning of 4:4 states this focus most starkly: μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὅς ἐάν οὖν βουλευθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται.

Lockett summarizes the danger here, warning:

To be a friend of the world is to live in harmony with the values and logic of the world in the context of James 4.1-10, namely envy, rivalry, competition, and murder. Friendship language is the language of alliance or coalition and here in 4.4 those allying themselves with ‘the world’ are labeled ‘adulteresses’, or those unfaithful to covenant relationship. These references to ‘the world’ in James refer to something more than the material world or humanity in general; it is the entire cultural value system or world order which is hostile toward what James frames as the divine value system.⁶⁹³

The OT/covenantal language here is unmistakable (cf. Isa. 57; Jer. 9:2; 23:10; Hosea). The question surfaces, however, whether the repentance called for is ritual or moral. For instance, Painter warns that “This easy separation of the moral and ritual elements in the law is nowhere suggested by the letter of James and is not supported by evidence from the first century. Indeed there was no characteristic linguistic distinction to describe ritual and moral elements of the law.”⁶⁹⁴ He argues from the purity language in 1:27 but also the language in 4:8 of washing (καθαρίσατε) and cleansing (ἀγνίσσατε). Gruenwald agrees with Painter, stating

⁶⁹³ Lockett, *Purity and Worldview*, 144.

⁶⁹⁴ Painter, “The Power of Words,” 251.

that “James appears to place a greater emphasis on the doing of rituals than Paul does,” finding that on the whole James supports a Jewish-looking Christianity.⁶⁹⁵ James 4:8 makes clear, however, that the purifying imagery is of an internal transformation from being sinners and doubleminded.⁶⁹⁶ Although James echoes ritual language, he uses it to import the weight of unfaithfulness into his discussion and thus set up his call to repentance. From 1:21 onward, he has used this language of cleansing for a changing of one’s moral condition.

Ultimately, the concern here is that the audience repent from their misguided allegiances. As Johnson states, “The central religious polarity in James is between the ‘wisdom from above’ that leads humans into ‘friendship with God’ and the ‘wisdom from below’ that manifests itself in a ‘friendship with the world’ that is also enmity with God (3:13-16, 4:4). All human activity . . . is defined in terms of these two allegiances.”⁶⁹⁷ The purity of God’s wisdom stands in contrast to the doubleminded nature of those who love the κόσμος. This passage also echoes James’ earlier description of Abraham as φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη (2:23). Abraham’s faithfulness stands in stark contrast to those who vie for position and pray greedily (4:1-4), and helps further illumine the defining nature of friendship for the reader.

While 4:13-17 continues to reveal one instance of unconscious lapsing into the world’s view, James 5:1-6 is perhaps the ultimate example of the rules of the κόσμος.

⁶⁹⁵ Ithamar Gruenwald, “Ritualizing Death,” 468. His defense of this statement is rather weak: “This impression derives from the fact that Paul engages in long theological discourses, as James does not” (468). Gruenwald also notes that many commentators desire to smooth over the differences between James and Paul regarding the law (469). Johnson, *Brother of Jesus*, 8-9, however, argues, “James does not connect *nomos* to any form of ritual observance,” and that “*nomos* in the Letter of James encompasses a set of moral rather than ritual norms established by divine authority and providing the basis for God’s judgment of human actions. It focuses on the love of neighbor, and explicates that love through specific attitudes and actions prescribed by Torah. The law also provides narrative examples for imitation, models of *faith* in several dimensions.” Thus, both sides claim James’ silence for their own support.

⁶⁹⁶ Seitz, “James and the Law,” 481-82 does a careful study of the purity language found in James as compared to the LXX and does not find any convincing parallels of overtly ritualistic or cultic language.

⁶⁹⁷ Johnson, *James*, 265.

Addressed to οἱ πλούσιοι, this passage appears as a “woe oracle” against the wealthy who fail to practice concern for the poor. In many ways it more closely parallels prophetic diatribes than wisdom texts, but texts like Sirach 5:1-8 or the Epistle of Enoch 103:9-104:6 also show the frustration wisdom texts have with the arrogance of the wealthy who fail to care for those under them.⁶⁹⁸ Here as there, problems are revealed in the failure to obey Levitical laws of fair payment of wages and thereby to practice neighbor love. This passage appears to address its condemnation toward a group outside the congregation, possibly to comfort the poor who suffered under the oppression of these rich but also serving as a warning to those within the congregation against emulating or even admiring the rich merely because they have money and status.⁶⁹⁹

The rich are warned to weep over their coming ταλαιπωρία, a command in which James echoes and yet overturns the initial command from 1:10 to boast in their ταπεινώσει.⁷⁰⁰ The language here is of the eschatological judgment, with inanimate objects witnessing against the landowners and the incorruptible shown to be corrupted because of the incorrect use to which it has been put.⁷⁰¹ Both the greedily-held wages and the oppressed workers cry out against them for vengeance from God,⁷⁰² and his designation of God as the κυρίου σαβαώθ who hears the cries of the helpless reveals the danger in which the avaricious stand. Phrases such as καὶ φάγεται τὰς σάρκας ὑμῶν

⁶⁹⁸ VanLandingham, *Judgment & Justification*, 99, notes the similarity to the Enochic tradition, wherein “the sinners have not violated rules specific to the Enochic community, but rather have committed transgressions condemned in the Hebrew Bible. In this case [1 En. 98:9-10] the sin described pertains to the wealthy who increase their wealth through oppression and exploitation and then flaunt their wealth by wearing expensive clothing and jewelry.”

⁶⁹⁹ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 526.

⁷⁰⁰ Everyone will experience the state of ταπείνως, it is merely a question of whether it is done willingly (through humility before God) or enforced by God at judgment, see, Kamell, “Economics of Humility,” 157-75. Johnson, *James*, 299, observes that “the noun form used here (*talaiḗōria*) can be used of miseries in general, such as those connected to poverty or mockery . . . but it is used predominantly in connection with the miseries suffered by those who have resisted God (Pss 13:3; 139:6; Hos 9:6; Amos 3:10; 5:9; Mic 2:4; Joel 1:15; Hab 1:3; Zeph 1:15; Isa 16:4; 47:11; 59:7; 60:18; Jer 4:20; 6:7).”

⁷⁰¹ This passage may well be James’ expansion of Jesus’ teaching in Matt. 6:19-20 on the correct place to store treasures.

⁷⁰² Mayor, *St. James*, 146, notes that “the withholding of wages is one of the four sins which are said to cry to heaven,” and it is a sin repeatedly condemned throughout the Hebrew texts as bringing physical death to the one so deprived and divine judgment to the one depriving (cf. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5; Tob 4:14; Sir. 34:27).

ὡς πῦρ οὐ ἐθρέψατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγῆς show what the danger entails: fire, slaughter, and eschatological judgment.⁷⁰³ Finally, one more charge is laid at their door, that of having “condemned” and “murdered” τὸν δίκαιον, revealing their complete opposition to the way of God.⁷⁰⁴

One question follows: if these πλούσιοι would not count themselves as followers of Jesus, what exactly does this passage add to one’s understanding of themes of salvation? James makes evident yet again that something of God’s final judgment does rest upon a person’s deeds. If a person fails to care for those who are dependent upon them, choosing instead to live for their own pleasures, they fall into danger of ultimate judgment. Additionally, whether they claim to be followers of Jesus or not, James designates them only by their title as πλούσιοι and their actions of greed. Their religious affiliation counts for naught in the light of their failure in mercy. In keeping with passages like Proverbs 21:13, Sirach 6:7-8 and 35:16-26, the Epistle of Enoch, Matthew 25:31-46, or Luke 6:24-26, judgment is swift and merciless for those whose greed has led them to ignore the plight of the needy and live solely for their own pleasures.⁷⁰⁵ Those who, in proud defiance, define themselves as πλούσιοι fail to exhibit the humility necessary of “those loving him” and thus find themselves excluded from the kingdom by their own choices.

⁷⁰³ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth*, 96, notes both the prophetic ties as well as those with *1 Enoch* 94:6-99:15: “But even more significant is the judgment upon the rich being called ‘a day of slaughter.’ This manner of speaking recalls the prophetic prediction of carnage and war and slaughter which would be inflicted upon the nations or Jerusalem. The apocalyptic threat of judgment upon the rich in James recalls even more strikingly the intertestamental apocalyptic ideas. One cannot fail to observe the striking resemblance in language and thought between James and Ethiopian Enoch.”

⁷⁰⁴ This may be a faint echo of Matthew 12:7. The Pharisees misguidedly condemned (κατεδικάσατε) those with Jesus (who were τοὺς ἀναιτίους), bringing themselves into danger of eschatological condemnation. While ἀναιτίος is not an exact match with δίκαιος, the connection of ideas—failure to understand mercy leading to wrongful condemnation—is also in play in this text. Here, in the failure of the rich to care for those under them, they fall into the same trap, against which James levels one last condemnation.

⁷⁰⁵ This leaves the question of the identity of the δίκαιον and the purpose of their lack of resistance. Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora*, 185, sees this person’s lack of resistance, along with “the ‘miserics coming upon them,’ for the purpose of bringing them to repentance, and not simply to bring punitive judgment upon them.” In contrast, Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 530, f.n. 426, notes the commonality of the view that this “righteous one” was Christ in the church fathers, and adds that such a connection “suggests that Christ was seen as a divine figure, to whom is applied the Yom Yahweh traditions about the coming judge” (532), a suggestion that would indicate that the time had passed for repentance and instead the time for judgment had arrived.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Briefly then, we can see how the themes of judgment and faithfulness in particular weave through the rest of the text of James. The threat of judgment is a powerful motivator for a person to watch their speech, actions and loyalties. Where the first two chapters contrast ἔλεος and κρίσις, having established the opposition, the rest of the epistle picks up the language salvation, most notably in 4:12 (ὁ δυνάμενος σῶσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι). Salvation may be the goal (5:20), but to achieve it one must attain mercy in judgment, which requires a faithful, humble obedience, pure in its dedication to God. Those who reveal in their lives that they value the world's priorities more than God's (particularly 5:1-6), can anticipate nothing but judgment and its corresponding condemnation.

CONCLUSION

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND CAUTIONS

The contribution of this study traces the development of thought across wisdom literature to James regarding the relationship of humanity to God's judgment. The diachronic approach used here allowed for development within the traditions, whether in audience or goal, and for recognition of the modifications introduced in the Jesus tradition. Whereas James scholarship has neglected developing a coherent Jacobean soteriology, this thesis answers that absence through examining both God's character as the merciful judge and humanity's call to the virtuous life as empowered by the implanted word.

This emphasis on moral character subtly reorients the questions asked of James, for it gives the "faith and works" dilemma a new focus. Within the holistic paradigm explored here, "works" are the outcome of a character shaped by the implanted new covenant, a "word" given by God's grace that, when rightly received, shapes the entire disposition of a person into one of mercy and obedience. Echoing a long tradition teaching the need to show mercy in order to receive mercy, James incorporates Jesus' emphasis on the temporal priority of grace as shown in stories such as the sower (Matt. 13) or the two debtors (Matt. 18). Because of the re-creative power in the λόγος, disciples are now empowered to live according to the merciful nature of God, shaping their communities in paths of peace.⁷⁰⁶ Those who persist in judgment, anger, or pride reveal that their hearts have been untouched by the λόγος, a failure that will lead to their downfall at the time of judgment.

⁷⁰⁶ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Christian Character, Biblical Community, and Human Values," in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. William P. Brown (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 16-17, argues for a Christian ethic amidst plurality of interpretation: "Jesus takes familiar cultural and religious values and, without introducing any unheard of moral value or norm, rearranges virtues into a new pattern, so that love, mercy, and justice are at the very center of righteous existence under God. . . . What is profoundly original about Christian ethics and about Christian understandings of moral character is the claim that, in and through Jesus, disciples are really empowered to exist in this way."

One result of the developmental nature of this thesis is to free the epistle of James from a works-based theology wherein people must earn salvation through enough good works. Across all the literature, a commitment to developing a character in line with God's own is evident, emulating the God who in Deuteronomy 10 describes himself as “the LORD your God [who] is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing” (vv. 17-18). The text continues in Deuteronomy 10:19, “You shall also,” and instructs hearers in the character they should develop: one both just and merciful, caring for the helpless and refusing to favor the wealthy. These commands continue through all of the varied emphases in the wisdom literature, with the additional concern regarding careless speech, pointing disciples to obedience in character, not simply to accumulation of deeds.

This study also challenged some of the underlying paradigms that, consciously or unconsciously, often drive NT studies. In some James scholarship one finds the assumption that a particular reading of Galatians 2:16, “a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ,” is the grid through which all other texts ought to be interpreted. James fails this framework.⁷⁰⁷ A commitment to such a specific reading of Paul's theology often entails neglect of prior Hebrew literature and encounters difficulty with such NT texts as Matthew 25, all of which encourage a more robust understanding of “faith” and “justification.”⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁷ See again the discussion of James and Paul in the introduction. Neusner, “Sin, Repentance, Atonement,” 432, turns things around: “From the perspective of the Rabbinic and the Jacobean constructions, the focus of Paul's thinking on the issues of sin, repentance, atonement, resurrection and judgment is quite awry. At issue for Paul is the matter of faith versus works, to which all else is subordinated.”

⁷⁰⁸ Ortlund, “Justified by Faith,” 333, warns, “The snag is that our Protestant ears have been so deeply trained to understand human actions—especially when it emerges in the context of δικ-language—to be set in antithesis to faith. Yet the contrast of Rom 2:13 is not human action and faith but human action and hearing. It is the ποιηταί rather than the ἀκροαταί—not the ποιηταί rather than the πιστεύοντες—who are justified,” a contrast identical to the one James builds in 1:22-25. He concludes that “obedience [in Paul] is not merely evidential but is rather built into the very fabric of salvation itself” (338).

Likewise, overemphases on power struggles between early Christian communities leads to premature conclusions that different theologies presented in the NT are contradictory and historically one “lost.”⁷⁰⁹ This forces the reader to assume that there were at least two developing tracks of theology in the NT period, tracks that were hostile towards each other—rather than considering the option that theology does not require only one perspective, neither then nor now.⁷¹⁰ Confronted with forced false dichotomies, other scholars move to unnatural harmonizations of the texts, whereby all texts actually say the same thing if examined long enough.⁷¹¹ In such readings, diversity is lost under the weight of ensuring that the textual witnesses all teach the same thing despite differences in terminology or sense. Again, this often leads to choosing a certain reading of Paul.

In contrast, by tracing a path of development across a range of wisdom literature, this study seeks to avoid creating unnecessary conflicts across different contexts and evade conflating diverse witnesses into a single voice. The goal has been to show varied material within a single genre; material James inherited and shaped to communicate his message that all of life should demonstrate humility and obedience once one has come into contact with the good God. And for James, an unchanged life indicates a person who, because of pride, has failed to receive God’s redemptive word. Bauckham summarizes this chain of action:

The God of James, as of Jesus, is preeminently the giving, generous (1:5, 17-18; 4:6), merciful, and compassionate one (2:13; 5:11). From the conviction that God is the generous giver of all good gifts comes the expectation, shared with Jesus, that those who ask will receive, provided they ask in faith, not with divided loyalties and self-seeking motives (1:5-7; 4:2-3; 5:15-18; cf. Matt. 7:7-11; 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24; Luke 11:9-13). . . . That God’s mercy will be shown in showing

⁷⁰⁹ E.g. McKnight, “Parting in the Ways,” 83-129; Hartin, *Spirituality of Perfection*, 3; Viviano, “La Loi Parfaite,” 213-26; Sawicki, “Person or Practice?,” 385.

⁷¹⁰ Markus Bockmuehl, “Antioch and James the Just,” in *James the Just and Christian Origins*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 189, warns, “Nothing in Luke or Paul suggest that James had fundamental theological or soteriological disagreements with Paul, or that his mission was anti-Pauline in intent. . . . At the same time, there were clearly genuine halakhic differences between James and Paul.” Bockmuehl distinguishes that, despite “halakhic differences,” Paul and James sublimated those in favor of “one gospel” (191).

⁷¹¹ E.g., Bede, *Commentary*, 25-26; Glaze, “Relationship of Faith to Works,” 35-42; Popkes, “The Law of Liberty,” 131-42.

mercy to those who themselves have shown mercy to others (2:13), a principle already found in Jewish wisdom tradition (Sir. 28:1-4; Prov. 17:5 LXX), is especially characteristic of Jesus' teaching (Matt. 5:7; 6:12, 14-15; 18:23-35; Mark 11:25). *Put otherwise, from the abundant mercy of God flows the abundant mercy shown by his people (3:17), especially to the needy (1:27; 2:15-16), and from the generous giving of God comes the generous giving of God's people to those in need (2:15-16).* God's judgment is not to be imitated (4:12; cf. Matt. 7:1-5), but his mercy and generosity are.⁷¹²

Bauckham notes both the familiar lessons across the literature and highlights the breadth of James' theology. He rightly develops the notion that the mercy and generosity of God's people originate from God's own mercy and generosity, but he does not develop the implications of judgment for failure, implications that can lead to a quagmire of works-based salvation theology. Therefore while affirming Bauckham's summary, this thesis also explores the consistent threat of judgment across the literature for those who fail to live righteously.

SUMMARY OF THE THEMES

1. The Word and The Law

This first pairing is at the background of James' theology. Because of the importance of the *λόγος* in redeeming (1:18) and the requirement for obedience to the *λόγος/νόμος* in 1:22-25 and again in 2:11-13, as well as the potential Pauline conflict regarding views of the law, these terms should not be assumed as straightforward, whether the Gospel or the Mosaic Law. James' use is subtle: this word/law redeems, instructs, frees, and judges.

Nearly all of these aspects can be seen across the literature. In Proverbs, the hearer is repeatedly instructed to "guard" the words and teachings of the instructor, where the terms for "words," "instruction," "law," and "commandments" appear almost interchangeably.⁷¹³ Instruction is to be taken to heart, internalized into the person's very

⁷¹² Bauckham, "James and Jesus," 129, emphasis mine.

⁷¹³ There has been a growing trend toward seeing Proverbs as encouraging Torah-obedience, such that Whybray, *Proverbs*, 103, can tentatively speak of a "convergence of wisdom and Deuteronomistic teaching," a trend overstated in Bullock, "Wisdom," 5-18. This move away from a non-covenantal perspective may have implications for witnessing a trend of encouraging Torah-obedience (or simply covenant-obedience) across the literature.

character. In Sirach, the Torah is central as the revealed will of God, the *gift* of God's wisdom to his people, enabling them to live in a manner pleasing to God. As with Proverbs, the ritual aspects of the law are largely untouched, the focus is on the character of obedience. Wisdom develops the creative side of God's λόγος, God's agent in creation—thereby opening the likelihood that wisdom is also his agent for *re*-creation and redemption. With its focus on לִי נְהַיֶּה, 4QInstruction develops the reality that God's will cannot be known apart from committed study and obedience, worked out within the community. The later texts focus on the λόγος, the Epistle of Enoch and Pseudo-Phocylides avoiding the term νόμος altogether. In contrast, 4 Maccabees celebrates the very rationality of complete obedience to the entirety of the Mosaic Torah, the first text where we have the whole of the Torah as a clear referent.

Together, then, a development in the wisdom texts can be traced as they teach obedience to their content. Whether it is the instructions of the teacher (Prov., 4QInstruction, Ps-Phoc.), of Lady Wisdom (Sir., Wisd.), or the Torah proper (4Macc.), the trend is towards the acknowledgment of the divinely given nature of the revelation, revelation that requires *obedience*, which indicates that it has been heard and accepted. Those who do not control their tongues are fools. Those who do not show mercy to the poor and oppressed can expect no mercy. The teachings of wisdom require the corresponding actions.

Matthew shifts the referents for both λόγος and νόμος with his presentation of Jesus. No longer do the “words” refer to any instructor's teaching: Jesus' λόγοι hold an authority that shocks even his initial audience. Matthew places nearly every use of νόμος in Jesus' mouth, so that *he* defines the scope and direction of the law for his hearers—broadening and deepening it until it is no longer a legal code but a code of ethics, a description of the character of the righteous person.

With these texts as background, then, James' λόγος/νόμος conjunction is unsurprising. He is committed to the unity of the law because of the unity of the lawgiver. Likewise, his creative λόγος (1:18) readily derives from an entire tradition of the creative word of God forming and shaping his people. While his λόγος finds its realization in the prophecies of the New Covenant fulfilled in Christ's blood, James' redemptive λόγος refers not only to the death and resurrection but also to the entirety of the λόγοι and life of Jesus. The word and law find their fulfillment in Christ but their breadth of meaning, the joy in them, and the absolute inseparability of instruction from obedience, comes from a long tradition of rejoicing in the law of God (best seen in Ps. 119).⁷¹⁴

2. Faith and Works

This pairing flows readily from the previous one, for if the λόγος requires hearing and doing, ἔργα develops the content of obedience, the life of πίστις. The terms πίστις and ἔργα develop in tandem, particularly in James 2:14-26, wherein the whole point of the argument is to ascertain whether a workless faith has any saving power. In the larger context of properly receiving the redemptive word—a reception concretely realized in obedience to the word and law—πίστις and ἔργα rightly belong together. Faith without works (2:14-26), like hearing without doing (1:22-25), is an exercise in self-deception.

This type of understanding occurs throughout the literature, developing from the “fear of the Lord” in Proverbs to the theological inquiry into the Law in 4 Maccabees. The literature consistently compares the “righteous” with the “others” (e.g., fools, wicked) who do not practice faithful obedience. In Proverbs, faithfulness is the central concern, while intellectual belief remains nearly unobserved. The path of the wise is marked by obedience, careful ethical behavior, while the path of the fools wanders and strays into every available

⁷¹⁴ Regarding a continuing ambiguity, Cahill, “Christian Character,” 10, observes, “In a framework of character ethics in which ‘character’ indicates a process of communal formation of individual identity, the Bible does not necessarily have to produce specific moral rules in order to be authoritative. Rather, it orients Christian persons and communities around general values, principles, or virtues that reflect God’s self-disclosure in Christ. Central among these are, for example, repentance, love of neighbor, self-sacrifice, cross-bearing, forgiveness, nonviolence (closer to a moral rule), and compassion.”

temptation; the righteous display humility while the wicked boast in their ways. Proverbs emphasizes moral and ethical imperatives in daily life—caring for the poor, guarding one’s tongue, avoiding laziness or other sins, or simply shunning temptation—over legal regulations. It is in the daily acts of life that the covenant is worked out.

Sirach emphasizes the correctness of its teaching in contrast to more apocalyptic wisdom, focusing on the Torah as God’s revelation through wisdom. As with Proverbs, *fidelity* to Sirach’s teaching reveals the righteous person. Indeed, then, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ functions as a covenant term, signifying faithfulness and obedience.⁷¹⁵ In such a paradigm, “works” serve as an example of faithfulness, not an additional requirement (e.g., Sir. 51:30). In contrast, Wisdom offers a more theologically nuanced understanding of faith, now focused on the reasonable nature of faith in Israel’s God. While the terminology of faith is minimally used, the condemnation of idolatry reveals a theological commitment to a specific form of monotheism. Faithfulness marks the elect, those whose deeds bear fruit that is readily seen. Outside the traditional concern for the poor and for controlling one’s speech, the specific works of the faithful are not heavily outlined except for the sin of idolatry—perhaps for Wisdom the most nearly unforgivable sin in which humanity engages. Faith in (the true) God leads to faithfulness and to life; idolatry prevents one from finding God and thus ends in futility and death.

In 4QInstruction are to be found the most specific instructions regarding the “works” of the faithful, teaching them from the perspective of poverty. Far from indicating a blessed state as in Proverbs, wealth now most indicates a sinner while the audience of the righteous draws from the poor. The faithful are instructed on everything from marriage and oaths to humility. “Faith,” however, is underemphasized in favor of dedicated study of the אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ, which teaches its student the ethics of humility and poverty. The Epistle of Enoch encourages its audience to have faith in God’s justice

⁷¹⁵ Lindsay, *Josephus and Faith*, 46.

despite contrary evidence, continually repainting the scene of judgment where the righteous—the faithful—will be vindicated while the wicked are judged, tormented, and cast aside. Thus, the Epistle encourages faithfulness in hardships and endurance in trials, counting on future justification at the time of judgment. Fourth Maccabees determinedly points to God’s vindication of the faithful as reason to remain faithful. The passions are to be kept under strict control, temptation is to be endured, and strict obedience to the Torah to be maintained, trusting that the God of Israel’s forefathers still controls history. Pseudo-Phocylides continues 4 Maccabees’ emphasis on moderation, even as it returns to a Proverbs-like practicality of deeds.

These same concerns continue in Matthew. Faith is revealed by faithfulness, in works that reveal belief. Repeatedly emphasizing that a “tree is known by its fruit,” Matthew draws a firm line between those who bear fruit and those who do not, the latter being destined for destruction. Matthew emphasizes the development of a righteous character—that while no particular quantity of fruit is required, bearing fruit is necessary. Ultimately, the faithful recognize Jesus and appropriately respond to his λόγῳι. Repeatedly, Jesus points to mercy and forgiveness as the crucial disposition of the faithful.

James follows in this line. He lays emphasis on wisdom ἔργα such as controlled speech and endurance in temptation and draws a connection between faith and faithfulness, but also shows the faithful as characterized by mercy and humility. “Faith” can be intellectual assent (2:19), but in order to save it must bear fruit. The wealthy are judged because they have oppressed the poor, the businessmen rebuked for pride, the oppressed reproved for grumbling, while the merciful are offered hope, the peacemakers a fruitful harvest, and the humble a kingdom. Endurance “works” toward the desired goal of perfection, and the epistle concludes with the call to bring back those who “wander” from the correct path.

3. Judgment and Mercy

These themes flow naturally from the prior ones, as conclusions of the patterns already set out. James urges obedience to the word, because that is how reception of the word is judged. Faith without works, like hearing without action, remains nothing more than self-deception that cannot save at the time of judgment. Most crucially, mercy and judgment function as the two sides of justice: the merciful “doers” obtain ἔλεος, while the merciless “hearers” receive κρίσις. James 2:12-13 abridges all of the epistle’s teaching regarding soteriology into short aphorisms that also concisely summarize the literary history surveyed here.

Proverbs provides the “simplest” understanding of these terms: while its text urges mercy to the oppressed, God’s judgment or mercy is worked out within the span of a person’s life. As people live, so will they be rewarded or punished. This ethical paradigm is followed by Pseudo-Phocylides. Sirach acknowledges that the simple paradigm does not always work: the righteous often live lives of poverty while the wicked prosper, so it solves this injustice by assuring the reader that God will execute justice at least at death, so the unrighteous will have painful deaths while the righteous will die in peace. Here again a major indication of the righteous is their character of mercy, especially as revealed in almsgiving, but a repentant heart is also required.

The Wisdom of Solomon moves in a different direction, adding the dimension of immortality thereby increasing the scope for justice to be enacted. The righteous, even those who seemed to fall under judgment through dying young, receive God’s mercy in eternal life while the wicked disappear, destroyed by their own choices. God is initially merciful to all humanity, but at judgment only the merciful attain immortality from God. We find that 4QInstruction affirms God’s initial mercy in sustaining creation, but develops further the notion that everyone will be judged. The elect—the righteous who obey the teaching in 4QInstruction—are promised God’s mercy at the time of final judgment, while

the others—the wicked—have worked their own judgment. In this vein, the Epistle of Enoch opposes God’s protective “salvation” with his “judgment” of the wicked at the time he enacts his justice. These categories are clear, based simply on the life a person has lived; character determines outcome. In 4 Maccabees endurance in faithfulness becomes the pivotal virtue by which eternal life is won, but also the propitiatory work of faithfulness points to a mercy that encompasses faithful *Israel*, not simply the hope of a single individual.

In Matthew, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the human requirement for human mercy, a disposition shaped by forgiveness. Regardless of the generosity of God’s original mercy, if the recipient does not then act in mercy, that one will not be judged among the righteous. Matthew’s picture is complex and involves a variety of aspects such as controlled speech and obedience to the instruction, but ultimately it returns to the two categories of the righteous and the wicked, groups distinguished by their fruit.

James’ soteriology thus fits within a well-developed trajectory wherein people’s character as revealed in their “works” determines their categorization as righteous or wicked. Although James’ use of the term “works” may have been unfortunate in light of later theological developments, his conclusion that the word must bear fruit in order for salvation to be possible has significant biblical precedent. This does not lead to a “legalistic” obedience, as James quite clearly states that it is the “implanted word” that *δυνάμενον σωσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν*. For the word to be effective, it must be received in obedience; otherwise it simply is a cause for judgment as self-deception. Those who wander from its ways stray from the unchanging God. God’s mercy is generous at the time of justice, responding to the merciful in triumph and returning to the merciless only their own measure.

CONCLUDING JAMES' SOTERIOLOGY

A Jacobean theology as explored in this thesis, therefore, presents a coherent picture. From God's initial grace in implanting the new covenant and thereby creating a restored creature able to fulfill God's will, through to a justice tempered by mercy, James says little that is entirely original in this diachronic reading. Shaped by Jesus' teaching, however, James emphasizes both the gift of the original λόγος and reasonably requires that the seed produce fruit. God, the unchangingly good and merciful Judge, gives to his people the saving word and therefore shows only his justice when he executes judgment on those who reject his νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικόν. Far from a question of "getting in" or "staying in," God wills for an entirely renewed character, a disposition shaped in his image, inclined to mercy and purity. James never answers queries such as "how much" or "how many times," stating merely that "faith works." Moral character—a character shaped by God and not a tally of deeds—allows mercy to triumph.

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