James 1:1–11

Trials, Endurance, Wisdom, and the Exalted Poor

James 1:1–4

Ancient literary context

The letter's opening words do not exude authority directly, but its apparently self-effacing introduction indirectly assumes it. James is "a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ," a rather high calling. In addition, even though James speaks in some ways as the equal of his readers—by using the address "my brothers and sisters" instead of "my sons and daughters"—the number of

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imperative sentences used throughout the letter demonstrates the authority with which the author speaks. James's authority is such that he does not feel compelled to highlight his qualifications to utter such commands or to clarify which "James" he is.

James 1:1 and 2:1 are the only places where James explicitly mentions Jesus, but echoes of Jesus' words and teachings permeate the letter. The first echo can be heard in the address to the "twelve tribes in the Dispersion," which seems to evoke Jesus' eschatological call for the restoration of Israel (cf. Matt. 10:1–23; cf. Gowler 2007: 121–44). Just as Jesus' subversive wisdom is sometimes linked to his eschatological perspective, so too James's commands can be similarly motivated.

The letter's abrupt beginning immediately calls attention to the suffering the intended readers are evidently experiencing. It is therefore no coincidence that the first imperative of the letter (1:2) focuses on "trials," a recurrent theme in the letter, which highlights the necessity for steadfastness through such trials. James does not yet specify what he means by "trials" (cf. Matt. 5:11–12), but we find out later that they include ill-treatment within the church (2:2, 4, 6), economic injustice (4:3, 13; 5:2–5), and illness (5:14–16). James expresses his solidarity with his "brothers and sisters" in these times of difficulty but also has (sometimes difficult) words of wisdom to impart to them.

The recipients of the letter are to consider these trials as "nothing but joy." Joy (*charan*) connects with the earlier "Greetings" (*charein*), one of many such word-linkages in James, and joy is of utmost importance in this section. Trials should be considered as joy because of what they should produce: an active steadfastness of faith—endurance, wholeness, and wisdom.

The interpretations

Ancient and medieval

As noted in the Introduction, Eusebius (ca. 260–339), the Bishop of Caesarea, states that the Epistle of James did not have universal acceptance in the early centuries of the church:

> These things are recorded in regard to James, who is said to be the author of the first of the so-called catholic epistles. But it is to be observed that it is disputed; at least, not many of the ancients have mentioned it, as is the case likewise with the epistle that bears the name of Jude, which is also one of the seven so-called catholic epistles. Nevertheless we know that these also, with the rest, have been read publicly in very many churches (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2.23.24).

In the same work, Eusebius records common opinion over which works are "accepted" (*homologoumena*) as divine scripture, such as the four Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles of Paul, those works that are "disputed" (*antilegomena*), such as James, Jude, and the second epistle of Peter, and those that are "rejected" (*nothoi*), such as the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Apocalypse of Peter (3.25.1–7). Eusebius, it should be noted, is recording common opinion, and his classification of James as among the disputed texts primarily indicates that there are too few witnesses on James's behalf to include it in the *homologoumena*. In other places, Eusebius assumes James to be scripture and its author a "holy Apostle" (Mayor 1990: 84–5).

Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–87) was consecrated as Bishop of Jerusalem in 348, but was deposed three times during his career, including an eleven-year exile, which ended in 378 (Davies 1980: 168). In his catechetical lecture "On the Mysteries" (Lecture XXIII.17–18), which comments on the Lord's Prayer, Cyril attempts to explain the apparent differences between Jesus' and James's statements about temptation (James 1:2, 12, 13; cf. Tertullian, *On Baptism*, Chapter 20). He first illustrates James's point about trials by using a metaphor about swimming through a torrent and then concludes that Jesus does not mean to ask that believers never be tempted at all:

> *And lead us not into temptation, O Lord*. Is this then what the Lord teaches us to pray, that we may not be tempted at all? How then is it said elsewhere, "a man untempted, is a man unproved" ; and again, *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*? But does entering into temptation mean being overwhelmed by the temptation? For temptation is, as it were, like a winter torrent difficult to cross. Those therefore who are not overwhelmed in temptations, pass through, showing themselves excellent swimmers, and not being swept away by them at all; while those who are not such, enter into them and are overwhelmed. As for example, Judas having entered into the temptation of the love of money, swam not through it, but was overwhelmed and was strangled both in body and spirit. Peter entered into the temptation of the denial; but having entered, he was not overwhelmed by it, but manfully swam through it, and was delivered from the temptation.

Cyril concludes by citing the assurances in Psalms 66:10–12 that God tested them, like silver is tested, and God saw them through into a place of rest, thus being delivered from temptation.

Jerome (ca. 340–420) is most famous for his primary role in the production of the Vulgate, a translation of the entire Bible into Latin. Jerome eventually settled in Bethlehem, where he spent thirty-four years translating; writing various commentaries, homilies, letters, and other works; teaching theology to the monks gathered around him; and even starting a school for the children of the

neighborhood. His letters especially demonstrate his fiery and irascible personality, with a biting sarcasm that he unleashes at the slightest perceived provocation. Among the debates in which he engaged were the controversies surrounding Origen and Pelagius, and he specifically attacks people such as Helvidius, Jovinian, and Vigilantius (see MacCulloch 2009: 294–6; Davies 1980: 226).

Jerome writes his *Lives of Illustrious Men* to demonstrate that there were excellent "ecclesiastical writers." His list includes 135 men, with Jerome being the 135th. The second chapter concerns "James, who is called the brother of the Lord," and it notes that some in the church dispute whether the epistle was published by another person using James's name:

> James, who is called the brother of the Lord, surnamed the Just, the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but, as appears to me, the son of Mary sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in his book, after our Lord's passion at once ordained by the apostles bishop of Jerusalem, wrote a single epistle, which is reckoned among the seven Catholic Epistles and even this is claimed by some to have been published by someone else under his name, and gradually, as time went on, to have gained authority.

Jerome cites Hegesippus (see Introduction), who says that James the Just was the brother of Jesus who became head of the Jerusalem church. James, "holy from his mother's womb," was a vegetarian, and abstained from alcohol. Jerome also includes other aspects of James's piety (e.g., entering the Holy of Holies and having knees like that of a camel because of praying so much). He also relates Josephus's version of James's death: Ananias the high priest tried to force James publicly to deny that "Christ was the son of God." When he refused, James was cast down from the pinnacle of the temple. Still "half alive," but with broken legs, James prayed, like Jesus and Stephen, for God to forgive his executioners. Only then was James "struck on the head by the club of a fuller" and died. Jerome also reports that Josephus records that "the downfall of Jerusalem was believed to be on account of [James's] death."

Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 378–444) was the bishop of Alexandria and all Egypt, one of the most important theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries, and a potent political force in his era (e.g., his major role in defending the term *Theotokos* as a title for Mary and the resulting condemnation and deposing of Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople; see McKim 2007: 338–9). In one of his works written against the Arians, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali trinitate*, Cyril argues that James 1:1 proclaims the Trinity. As is his custom in his writings, Cyril focuses on the "nature" (*physis*) of the Son: "And how is it not already clearly evident to all, that the Son is God by nature (*physis*)? The one who in this way exists, how could he be created and made?" Cyril then cites

James 1:1 and states: "Here in this place [James] addresses Jesus Christ as God and Lord, knowing that this one by nature is the herald of the truth" (*Patrologiae Graecae* 75:509; noted by John Kloppenborg in private correspondence).

The Venerable Bede reads "dispersion" (James 1:1) in light of Acts 8:1, where, because of persecution, Christians were "dispersed" throughout Judea and Samaria. These Christians suffered persecution "for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10). But Bede also understands this dispersion as designating those who are exiled because of "different calamities" (1985: 7), thus connecting the dispersion with the trials the readers are going through. The testing has a real purpose—patience and demonstrating a firm faith:

> For this reason, [James] says, you are being tempted by adversities, that you may learn the value of patience and that through this you may be able to show and test that you have in your heart a firm faith in the future reward. What Paul says, "Knowing that tribulation works patience, patience proof" (Romans 9:3–4), ought not to be considered contradictory to this passage but rather in agreement. For patience builds character, because he whose patience cannot be overcome is proven perfect (9).

The preaching of the reformer Jan Hus (1369–1415) often excoriates the luxurious lifestyles of some in the church hierarchy. He derides the pope, for example, by comparing Jesus riding on a donkey with the pope seated on a stallion with people kissing his feet. Hus seeks to lessen the increasing gulf between the clergy and the laity and decries the use of indulgences for raising money. He interprets James 1:1–2 in particular through the lens of his excommunication by Cardinal Odo de Colonna in 1411, as well as the sufferings of like-minded people (Hus 1972: 50). In a letter to John Barbatus and the people of Krumlov, written from Prague in 1411, Hus says:

> I have heard of your tribulation; therefore, "count it all joy when you fall into various temptations," for the testing of your constancy. Dearly beloved, I am now beginning to be tested; but I regard it as a joy that for the sake of the gospel I am called a heretic and am excommunicated as a malefactor and disobedient (Hus 1972: 50).

Hus then compares their situation to that of the apostles under Annas and Caiaphas. The apostles were commanded not to speak of Jesus, but they responded that they had to follow the will of God, not the commands of human beings: "God must be obeyed above all" (51; cf. Letter 25, Hus 1972: 102–3).

Likewise, Hus returns to these verses in a letter he writes in exile (ca. November 1412) to the people of Prague. He alludes to the abandonment of the reform

movement by others, such as Stanislav of Znojmo and Stephen Páleč, because they were in "greater terror of miserable man than of Almighty God who has the power to kill and give life, to condemn and to save (James 4:12), to preserve His faithful servants in temptation and to grant him—in lieu of the minute suffering—eternal life of immense joy" (Hus 1972: 79). Instead Hus exhorts them with James 1:2–4, 12, to count these "various temptations" as "all joy" that leads to steadfastness, perfection, and completion, and then, finally, to "the crown of life." Hus calls upon them to "stand fast in the truth which you have learned" and to trust in God (Hus 1972: 80). If Jesus were declared guilty of heresy, banned, and hanged on a cross as one accursed, Hus argues, the "present-day messengers of the Antichrist" are even worse: "[I]t is no wonder that they calumniate and persecute, curse, imprison, and murder" God's servants (Hus 1972: 81).

Hus's most poignant use of James 1:2–4, however, comes in his letter to Lord John of Chlum, written in prison on June 23, 1415, in Constance, as Hus was preparing to be burned at the stake:

> I am greatly consoled by the words of our Saviour: "You shall be blessed when men shall hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and cast out your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and exult: for behold! great is your reward in heaven" [Luke 6:22–3]. It is good, indeed the best, consolation, but difficult, not in respect of being understood, but to be fully sustained; that is, to rejoice in these tribulations. James held that rule along with the other apostles; he said: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various temptations, knowing that the testing of your faith works patience, and patience then has perfect effect." Surely it is difficult to rejoice without perturbation, and to esteem it all joy in various temptations. It is easy to talk about it and to expound it, but difficult to fulfil it. Even the most patient and valiant soldier, knowing that on the third day He would rise, conquering by His death the enemies and redeeming the elect from damnation, after the Last Supper was troubled in spirit . . .
>
> O most kind Christ, draw us weaklings after Thyself, for unless Thou draw us, we cannot follow Thee! Give us a courageous spirit that it may be ready; and if the flesh is weak, may Thy grace go before, now, as well as subsequently. For without Thee we can do nothing, and particularly to go to a cruel death for Thy sake. Give us a valiant spirit, a fearless heart, the right faith, a firm hope, and perfect love, that we may offer our lives for Thy sake with the greatest patience and joy. Amen (Hus 1972: 186–7).

Early modern and modern

As noted in the Introduction, over the course of his life, Martin Luther wrote some caustic words about the Epistle of James—that it is, for example, "a chaos" and an "epistle of straw" (LW 35: 362, 354). Luther also questions James's canonicity and authorship:

> We should throw the Epistle of James out of this school [Wittenburg], for it doesn't amount to much. It contains not a syllable about Christ. Not once does it mention Christ, except at the beginning. I maintain that some Jew wrote it who probably heard about Christian people but never encountered any. Since he heard that Christians place great weight on faith in Christ, he thought, "Wait a moment! I'll oppose them and urge works alone." This he did. He wrote not a word about the suffering and resurrection of Christ, although this is what all the apostles preached about (LW 54: 424).

In his Preface to the Epistle of James, Luther praises James but then lists his primary objections to it:

> Though this epistle of St. James was rejected by the ancients, I praise it and consider it a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God. However, to state my own opinion about it, though without prejudice to anyone, I do not regard it as the writing of an apostle, and my reasons follow (LW 35: 395–6).

Luther's first reason for denying the apostolic authorship of James is that it is "flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works" (2:24), especially in James's discussion of Abraham (2:21). An apostle would not have made that mistake:

> Now although this epistle might be helped and an interpretation devised for this justification by works, it cannot be defended in its applications to works (James 2:23) of Moses's statement in Genesis 15:6, for Moses is speaking here only of Abraham's faith, and not of his works, as St. Paul demonstrates in Romans 4. This fault, therefore, proves that this epistle is not the work of any apostle.

Second, Luther objects to the fact that although James mentions Jesus, he "teaches nothing about him" and does not mention "the Passion, the resurrection, or the spirit of Christ." A true apostle would speak of those things, and all "the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate Christ": "Whatever does not teach Christ is not yet apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul does the teaching. Again, whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod were doing it."

Third, Luther objects that "this James does nothing more than drive to the law and to its works." What James calls a "law of liberty" (1:25), Luther argues, Paul calls a "law of slavery, of wrath, of death, and of sin." In addition, Luther complains, James throws his verses together "chaotically," and

Luther concludes that the author must have been a "good, pious man, who took a few sayings from the disciples of the apostles and thus tossed them off on paper. Or it may perhaps have been written by someone on the basis of his preaching."

Then Luther declares that James could not have written this text, since James quotes 1 Peter (1 Peter 4:8, cf. James 5:10; 1 Peter 5:6, cf. James 4:10), because James was killed by Herod (in Acts 12:2) before 1 Peter was written. This argument, however, assumes that the alleged author was James the brother of John (whose death is mentioned in Acts 12:2), not James the Just.

Luther's Preface on James concludes with these thoughts:

> In a word, he wanted to guard against those who relied on faith without works, but was unequal to the task [editions prior to 1530 added here, "in spirit, thought, and words. He mangles the Scriptures and thereby opposes Paul and all Scripture"]. He tries to accomplish by harping on the law what the apostles accomplish by stimulating people to love. Therefore I cannot include him among the chief books, though I would not thereby prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him. [editions prior to 1530 read, "Therefore, I will not have him in my Bible to be numbered among the true chief books, though I would not thereby prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him. One man is no man in worldly things; how then, should this single man alone avail against Paul and all Scripture?"] (LW 35: 397).

Luther's sermon on Matthew 8:23–7 (February 1, 1517) observes that the "fool reposes in himself" and forgets God, whereas the "wise one forsakes himself" and seeks refuge in God. The former action, for Luther, is the "very cesspool of all evil," but to seek after God is the sum of all good. He notes how James both says to count it all joy when you encounter various trials (1:2) but also for the rich to "weep and howl for the miseries" that will come upon them (5:1). Luther interprets these verses in the context of the storm at sea in Matthew 8:24, where the boat which held Jesus and the disciples was being swamped by the waves, and uses this story as an allegory of difficulties in people's lives: "Therefore it is well with those who find water breaking into their ship, for this moves them to seek help from God." Christ, by sleeping, apparently abandons us, but he does so to allow us to go through such storms in terror in order to bring us forward. He creates the situation so that we do not perish but turn back to him, so that more and more we are being constantly saved: "Indeed, he wants to arouse in us a desire for him, so that we may continue to cry out to him; he wants us to cry out to him in order that he may hear and answer us. He wants to hear us that he may save us . . . Therefore, sleep on,

Lord Jesus, that thou mayest awake, and let us perish, that thou mayest save us" (LW 51: 24–5).

Luther also writes that the "patience" of James 1:4 applies especially to leaders. In his commentary on Genesis 37:31–3, Luther notes that although Joseph was abused by his brothers, he did not take punitive action against them. Luther understands it to be a "mark of Christians" not to be angry or indignant when evil is inflicted upon them (LW 6: 399), although brotherly reproof and admonition have been entrusted by God as the duty for fathers, teachers, magistrates, and others:

> In this manner those who have the power of chastisement and punishment either with the Word or the sword or the rod should accustom their heart to patience, faith, and love. "Let patience," says James (1:4), "have the perfect work." . . . he who is patient in faith in Christ is truly holy. No sin remains in him. For whatever he suffers is sheer righteousness as pure as it can be (LW 6: 402).

Not all of the Reformers share Luther's doubts about the apostolic authenticity of the Epistle of James. Melanchthon, Tyndale, and Zwingli all defend James's message and/or role in the canon of Scripture, as the following quote from Tyndale demonstrates:

> Though this epistle were refused in the old time, and denied of many to be the epistle of a very apostle . . . it ought of right to be taken for holy Scripture. For as for that place for which haply it was at the beginning refused of holy men, as it ought, if had meant as they took it, and for which place only, for the false understanding; yet if the circumstances be well pondered, it will appear that the author's intent was far otherwise than they took him for (Tyndale 1964: 161).

Likewise, although John Calvin does not explicitly mention Luther (he tends to be reticent about mentioning other commentator's names when he disagrees with their interpretations), Calvin defends James's authenticity, most likely in partial response to Luther's critique of James:

> We know from the testimony of Jerome and Eusebius that this epistle was originally only accepted by many churches after much controversy. Indeed, to this day, there are several who do not rate it worthy of authority. Yet I am glad to include it, without dispute, for I can find no fair and adequate cause for rejecting it. The apparent distortion (in chapter two) of the doctrine of free justification is a matter we shall readily clear up when we come to it (1995: 259).

Calvin agrees that the author could not be James the son of Zebedee, since Herod had him executed not long after the resurrection of Jesus: "Ancient

opinion is almost unanimous that this was one of the disciples, surnamed Oblias, a blood-relation of Christ, who presided over the Jerusalem Church. He is reckoned to be the same man as Paul names (Gal. 2:9) along with Peter and John as 'pillars of the church' " (259). Calvin, however, does not find it likely that this James would be elevated over the other ten apostles as one of the three pillars of the church. He leans towards the idea that Paul is speaking of James the son of Alphaeus, although he admits that there could have been another James who became "president of the Jerusalem Church, who was in fact taken from the band of disciples." Calvin notes the esteem that Oblias was held "in the eyes of the Jews" but concludes: "It is not for me to say firmly which of these two was the author of the epistle" (260).

Calvin considers the epistle a worthy part of the canon: "I am fully content to accept this epistle, when I find it contains nothing unworthy of an apostle of Christ." His reasons are that James is full of instruction on various subjects that benefit every part of the Christian life, including remarkable passages on patience, prayer to God, the excellence and results of heavenly truth, humility, holy duties, the restraining of the tongue, the cultivation of peace, the repressing of lusts, and the contempt of the world (259).

James's opening words about trials and patience is one of the reasons that Calvin admires the book. Calvin argues that "temptations or trials" in this passage include all adverse things that test our obedience to God. We labor under diseases—avarice, envy, gluttony, intemperance, and the innumerable lusts in which we abound—and different remedies are applied to remove them. God "afflicts us in various ways, because, we cannot be cured by the same medicine":

> The effect of telling them to *count it all joy* is to have the whole sum put on the credit side, accounted only as a source of congratulation. There is nothing in our distress which can spoil our rejoicing. He is teaching us both to bear adversity quietly and calmly, and to know why believing men are to be happy under affliction. We know that the natural trend of our feelings is to be grieved and saddened by any kind of temptation. Nor can any of us entirely escape the instinct to break down and cry, when trouble comes: but this does not prevent God's children from rising above fleshly pains, under the guidance of the Spirit. By this means, they may continue to rejoice, even in the midst of sorrow (261–2).

For some interpreters, the canonicity and inspiration of the Epistle of James is dependent upon its authorship. For example, Johann David Michaelis (1717–91), Professor of Oriental Languages at Göttingen, declares that the Epistle of James is inspired and infallible only if an apostle wrote it, either James, the son of Zebedee or James, the son of Alphaeus:

> But if it was written by James, who was a half brother of Christ, and not an apostle, we can have no proof of its inspiration and infallibility. And inspiration and infallibility are not just everyday matters that one can accept without proof. Therefore, if it is not written by a James who was an apostle, I cannot accept the inspiration of the letter—the letter, furthermore, about which the ancient church was so divided (Kümmel 1972: 72).

The New Testament scholar Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), Professor of Church History and Dogmatics in Tübingen, is famous for his dialectical view of primitive Christianity. In this schema, "catholic Christianity" emerged from a conflict between the Pauline Gentile Christianity and the Petrine Jewish Christianity (which includes the Jewish Christianity represented by James the brother of Jesus). Since the Epistle of James displays no direct attack on Paul's theology, Baur concludes that it must be a pseudonymous work. Instead James represents "a more definite formation of Catholic Christianity" which results from "adjustment" of "the two members of the antithesis": Petrine and Pauline Christianity (Baur 1878: 128).

The problem for Baur is that James, in his view, presupposes the Pauline doctrine of justification and James's "tendency is distinctly anti-Pauline, though it may not be aimed directly against the apostle himself" (128). The author of James, since he speaks of the "royal law" and the "law of liberty" is aware of the Pauline idea of "making the law an inward thing." James is acting against "doctrinal formalism," but it is not a "mere polemic against the Pauline doctrine of justification." Instead:

> he places before himself the general task of giving, from the standpoint of his more liberal and spiritualised Jewish Christianity, a comprehensive view of the whole field of the Christian life as it manifests itself in its essentially practical nature, in suffering and in action. He aims at delineating the Christian as he ought to be, as a perfect man in the perfection of the Christian life, which can only be properly conceived as a perfect work. This shows us how well the writer was aware of his position in the age, and of the significance of his Jewish Christian standpoint (130).

Baur argues that James displays a "Jewish Christian standpoint," but it also "bears unmistakable traces of the influence of Paulinism, and of the need that was felt to come to an understanding with it" (131). He thus concludes that James "betrays the circumstances of a later age," is free of any personal polemic, and that it makes an important contribution "to the formation of catholic Christianity" through its doctrine of works and "the practical behaviour of the Christian" (131).

E. J. Hardy, an Irish Chaplain in the Royal Army for over twenty-five years, became famous because of his book, *How to Be Happy Though Married* (1887). Less well known is his sermon, "The Perfect Work of Patience," where he discusses James's view on the relationship between trials and patience:

> Let us remember where it is that we are to get patience in the presence of temptations and sorrows. We must go in prayer, as our Master did in the garden of Gethsemane, to the source of all strength. If He would not go to His trial unprepared, it is certainly not safe for us to do so. By a stroke from the sword the warrior was knighted, small matter if the monarch's hand was heavy. Even so God gives His servants blows of trial when He desires to advance them to a higher stage of spiritual life. Jacobs become prevailing princes, but not until they have wrestled with temptations and prevailed (*The Sermon Bible* 1900: 343–4).

Robert William Dale (1829–95) served as pastor of Carr's Lane Congregational church in Birmingham, UK, for thirty-six years. Dale was active in the life of the church and—as a member of the Liberal party—in the political life of Birmingham. He focuses many of his sermons, for example, on family life in an industrial and urban society, on the relationship between employer and employee, on the stewardship of one's wealth, and the municipal duties of Christians (Fant 1971: 5.146). Socialism would only succeed, Dale believes, if there is a radical transformation of human nature.

In his sermon on James 1:2–11, "The Gospel of Suffering," Dale makes the following observation about James's call to "count it all joy" when tempted:

> This, I say, is stern doctrine. To count it all joy when suffering comes upon us, and suffering that tests our faith, how is this possible? It is only possible when we come to think of righteousness as being infinitely more precious than comfort, happiness, or peace; when we come to see that the great thing for us in this life is not to enjoy ease and prosperity, to get rich, to rise in the world, but to become better men. For this we require wisdom—a true estimate of the nature and ends of human life (188).

John Wesley's 1872 sermon, "On Patience," notes that "as long as any of us are on earth, we are in the region of temptation" (Sermon 83). Wesley speaks of the instantaneous nature of salvation when people are "born of the Spirit," a change from inward sinfulness to inward holiness. In the process of sanctification, peace, hope, joy, and love "are the fruits of patience":

> But what is *Patience?* We do not now speak of a heathen virtue; neither of a natural indolence; but of a gracious temper, wrought in the heart of a believer, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God, in the

> manner and for the time that pleases him . . . We may observe, the proper object of patience is suffering, either in body or mind. Patience does not imply the not *feeling* this: It is not apathy or insensibility. It is at the utmost distance from stoical stupidity; yea, at an equal distance from fretfulness or dejection. The patient believer is preserved from falling into either of these extremes, by considering,—Who is the Author of all his suffering? Even God his Father;—What is the *motive* of his *giving us* to suffer? Not so properly his justice as his love;—and, What is the *end* of it? Our "profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness."

Charles Deems's *Gospel of Common Sense* assumes that James of Jerusalem is the author of James and buttresses the apostolic authority of James by cementing his family connection with Jesus:

> See the modesty of this great man . . . He had played with the holy child Jesus in the house of Joseph and Mary, and down the Nazareth streets close by the Fount of the Virgin. He had grown up under the spell of the matchless character of the wonderful brother whose life was made sublime and simple by the great work which He had to do. With Him, JAMES had climbed the heights above Nazareth, and descended the slopes into the plain below, and in long, deep, earnest talks had received into himself, under the eye of their pure and exalted mother, a formative element which told powerfully upon his own character (1888: 30).

This section of James, for Deems, begins with an acknowledgement of the difficulties of life. Life is never free from trouble—which should not discourage us—but James's readers have "several sources of trouble" in addition to those that are endemic to all human beings (37): They were in exile from their homeland, their "Christian profession" created difficulties with their fellow Jews, and their "natural attachment to their old forms of worship" separated them from Gentile Christians. Finally, "as Jews," they were "exposed to all the depressions which came to them from their Roman conquerors . . ." (37): "The good JAMES saw all this. There was nothing vague and dreamy in him. He took direct and clear views of life. He knew how much their condition of suffering would have a tendency to depress his scattered brethren. He would strengthen that he might cheer them" (37–8). James's admonition was for "his brethren" to have "all joy" in their trials. The reason for this rejoicing "comes in the providence of God" (42):

> A devout and intelligent soul should know that God his Father is not an unconcerned observer of the movements of the universe. Having fashioned that orderly universe, He governs it on certain principles; but He has never surrendered the government of that universe, or turned it loose, to go of itself . . . He may not interfere to stop the operation of the laws He has wisely ordained; but He will

> bring other laws to operate on the results so as to benefit His children. He may not keep the fire from burning a heroic saint who rushes in to pluck a sinner from the flaming house; but He will bring to that saint from his torturing wound and ugly scar a glory princes cannot gain from crowns (43–4).

The effect of trial upon a person actually generates what a person needs most: "the certainty that his faith is genuine" (45).

Frances Jane (Fanny) Crosby (1820–1915) is perhaps best known for composing the hymn "Blessed Assurance," one of the over 8,000 hymns she created. Crosby was blinded by an incompetent doctor at six weeks of age, but she said:

> It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me (www.cyberhymnal.org/bio/c/r/o/crosby_fj.htm).

Crosby's hymn on James 1:2–4, "Never Give Up," echoes similar sentiments for others who undergo trials:

> Never be sad or desponding,
> If thou hast faith to believe.
> Grace, for the duties before thee,
> Ask of thy God and receive.
>
> *Refrain*
> *Never give up, never give up*,
> *Never give up to thy sorrows*,
> *Jesus will bid them depart*.
> *Trust in the Lord, trust in the Lord*,
> *Sing when your trials are greatest*,
> *Trust in the Lord and take heart*.
>
> Never be sad or desponding,
> Lean on the arm of thy Lord;
> Dwell in the depths of His mercy,
> Thou shalt receive thy reward.
>
> (www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/n/e/nevergup.htm).

Joseph Mayor's commentary argues that the author of James clearly either is or wishes to portray himself as being "the President of the Church at Jerusalem, and the brother of the Lord" (1990: 23). Mayor concludes that James was the son of Joseph and Mary, was brought up with Jesus, and was not one of the

twelve apostles or even a follower of Jesus until Jesus appeared to him after the resurrection (73). James observed, loved, and revered the law, as his epistle attests, and Mayor believes that this reverence "was learnt in the well-ordered home of Nazareth," not just from his parents, but the "constant intercourse with Him who was full of grace and truth, in childhood as in manhood, must have prepared James to find in the Ten Commandments no mere outward regulations, but an inner law of liberty and love written in the heart" (78). Mayor postulates that James most likely, although he spoke Aramaic, learned Greek because of the proximity of such cities as Sepphoris, and he shows "the same fondness for figurative speech" as his brothers Jesus and Jude (80).

Mayor's commentary on this text (1:1–4) follows James's arguments that trials test faith, which produces endurance, which then builds "perfectly matured Christian character, thoroughly furnished to all good works." Mayor points to the testing of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30) as an example of such trials. The woman endures Jesus' test (e.g., Jesus calling her a "dog") and ends up victorious (with a healed daughter) because of her "unshaken trust in God." James 1:1–4 speaks to encourage people who are suffering and in danger of "losing heart." It is not God's will for them to escape temptation (cf. the Lord's Prayer), but James encourages them to work through the trial and bring it to "good account." Mayor notes how human it is to wish all tribulations away but argues that the right way to look at such trials is to envision them "as part of our schooling for heaven, helping to form the cross which has to be borne by every Christian" (503).

James Hardy Ropes notes that the term *peirasmos* means "affliction" in the sense that it is a common test of character. These experiences may strain one's faith but are not necessarily due to persecution; they can include distresses of various kinds, such as "grievous poverty." Ropes argues that James expresses his solidarity ("my brothers and sisters") with his readers who "appear to be largely poor and struggling people, subject to the hardships of the poor" (James 1:9–11; 2:1–7, 15–17; 4:13–5:11; 1916: 133). This active steadfastness in the face of adversity and suffering is the middle section of an argument that builds to a crescendo in verse 4. Trials should be considered as nothing but joy because they produce endurance—an active, constant steadfastness. But this is not the final virtue: Active steadfastness should (imperative mood) produce "completeness of character" (137; cf. "make a complete job of it," Mayor 1990: 346), a completeness that is signified by a positive result ("mature and complete") and its negative counterpart ("lacking in nothing").

Ropes and many others argue that faith is as foundational for James as it is for Paul. Not only does the word *faith* appear sixteen times in the letter, but it is essential to James's argument and central message. This introductory section about faith in 1:1–4 is buttressed later by references to the faithfulness of such

people as Abraham (2:21–4), Rahab (2:25), prophets (5:10), and Job (5:11). As Mayor similarly notes, "St. James no less than St. Paul regarded faith as the very foundation of religion . . ." (1990: 345). Key for James, however, is the development of faith through such testing and the resulting expression of faith in concrete actions (e.g., James 2:5–26; 5:15; cf. Johnson 1995: 178).

Elsa Tamez states that James's insistence on recommending patience to his listeners is a clear signal that the readers or communities he has in mind are undergoing difficult problems: "the experience of oppression pervades the letter" (2002: 14). We thus find in the letter of James a community or communities of Christians who are marginalized or deprived of their social, civil, and political rights in the cities or regions in which they live (19). There are two antagonistic groups: the oppressed and the oppressors, and both groups include Christians and non-Christians. Within the Christian community of the marginalized, there are also different social strata: the "poor," who lack the means of subsistence and live from alms; the "less poor," who at least have a job but own no property; and those who live more comfortably (19).

The oppressors are the rich, and James's "antipathy toward them and his sympathy with the poor is undeniable" (21). Most commentaries on James devote many pages to the rich, Tamez observes, which domesticates the contrasting picture that James paints (e.g., by making the "poor" symbolic for pious Christians and the "rich" symbolic of non-Christians). This emphasis on the rich is understandable in commentaries stemming from scholars in Europe or the United States, where there are many rich people in the churches:

> A Latin American reading of the epistle, on the other hand, fixes its gaze on the oppressed and dedicates long pages to them, their sufferings, complaints, oppression, hope, and praxis. From the angle of oppression with which we are reading James, we must adopt the perspective of the oppressed, which, we believe, is that of James (21).

The "trials" of James 1:2, Tamez concludes, thus refer to the variety of oppressions and persecutions that produce suffering. James attempts to infuse courage into his readers by asking them to reflect on their own bitter experiences. The joy of which James speaks is not eschatological; neither is it a masochistic insistence to rejoice in suffering per se. Instead readers are urged to become aware of both the process and the result of those experiences: They strengthen the spirit and form a "militant patience" (Tamez 2002: 31).

Therefore, James is not referring to "patience" in a passive or submissive way. Such an interpretation of "patience," Tamez believes, is harmful for Christian life, because "it encourages resignation, a lack of commitment to concrete realities, and a subjection to governing authorities" (such as in Rom. 13:1).

James's call for a "militant patience" envisions an active and heroic patience that "watches for the propitious moment":

> Here to be patient means to persevere, to resist, to be constant, unbreakable, immovable . . . James is very clear in this regard when he says in 1:3–4 that patience is accompanied by perfect works. This is a militant patience that arises from the roots of oppression; it is an active, working patience (Tamez 2002: 44).

Tamez argues that James thus asks these Christian communities to reflect on the positive side of oppression. Instead of envisioning the recompense of their suffering as being realized in the eschatological end of time, James contends that it is received in the present, in the heart of praxis, in the life of the communities, when they experience wholeness and integrity within themselves: "In the very process of resisting dehumanizing forces, the communities and their members are humanized" (2002: 47). The experience of being perfect/complete should remind those who suffer that they are human beings, not dehumanized things suffering the oppression of the rich, and that they live in community with one another:

> Integrity, then, does not occur only in the body of one member of the community, but rather in the entire community, in which everyone becomes sensitive to the pain of the others within the community and outside of it. To feel what the other feels is truly a gift that should cause us to rejoice (Tamez 2002: 47–8).

Gay Byron is the Baptist Missionary Training School Associate Professor of New Testament and Black Church Studies at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, New York. Like Tamez, Byron applies James in terms important for contemporary Christians. She points out, for example, that James's term *diaspora* (dispersion) could very well describe the millions of Africans dispersed though North and South America, as well as other parts of the world, by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, a great evil whose tragic consequences still affect people today. Yet, Byron argues, one should not focus exclusively on the great "pain, hardship, and despair" resulting from the slave trade; one should also recognize that the "African diaspora is a rich collection of many persons who are an integral part of this rapidly changing world" and that those in the diaspora "are sometimes best positioned to experience the mercy and power of God" (2007: 463).

James's call in 1:1–4, Byron believes, is for Christians to have spiritual discipline in times of trial. She cites Howard Thurman's discussion of how spiritual resources such as commitment, prayer, suffering, and reconciliation can not only aid us to overcome trials but also assist us in "developing strategies for

circumventing the ideological and material traps associated with racism." Like Tamez, Byron insists that James is not calling for passive endurance; it includes an inward spiritual self-mastery and an outward social protest as part of the "inward journey" to freedom. This journey, however, is not an individual one. It is accomplished in community (463–4).

Susan H. Peterson began hymn-writing in 1997, with a goal of composing 100 hymns, a goal she reached before her death just seven years later. Her method was to pick a scripture passage and to compose a hymn based on that passage. Her 1998 hymn "Count It Joy" begins with a reflection on James 1:2 and continues with major themes of the rest of the chapter as well:

> Count it joy, and never be discouraged,
> When by trials your life is sorely pressed.
> For you know that when your faith is tested,
> Your endurance then develops best.
> Perseverance must complete its working;
> You will need to let it have its way.
> When it's done, you'll be complete and perfect,
> Having all you need to meet each day.
>
> So if any one of you lacks wisdom,
> Ask of God, Who always hears and cares.
> He gives freely without asking questions;
> His abundance will become your share.
> But when asking, you must never falter,
> Like a wave that's blown and tossed about.
> If you do, you'll never gain God's blessing;
> Double-minded, you'll succumb to doubt.
>
> Blest the man who perseveres in trial;
> For you know the testing soon will pass.
> When it's o'er and you have stood unmoving,
> You'll receive the crown of life at last.
> But when tempted, never be accusing;
> It's not God who leads you from the path.
> Your own lusts seduce you and entice you,
> Giving birth to sin, and sin to death.
>
> (www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/c/o/u/countjoy.htm)

Thomas Ellsworth illustrates James's call for perseverance with an iconic image from American sports. In the book, *Preaching James*, Ellsworth highlights the relentless perseverance of one of the most famous running backs in the National Football League: Walter Payton of the Chicago Bears. Ellsworth notes that Payton was only 5′ 10″ tall and 202 lb in weight, but that he ran for a (then) record 16,726

yards in his football career. So over the course of his twelve-year career, Payton ran for over nine miles. Ellsworth observes, however, that, on average, Payton was tackled and knocked down every 4.4 yards during those nine miles. He concludes: "That makes his record demand even more respect. All through those twelve seasons, he kept getting up, and getting up, and getting up again. Great victories await those with great endurance" (Baker and Ellsworth 2004: 22).

John Keenan, Emeritus Professor of Religion at Middlebury College in Vermont, has published a number of works integrating biblical studies, Christianity, and Buddhism. His book *The Wisdom of James*, for example, uses Mahāyāna Buddhism to attempt to open "new avenues of the Christian story" that "otherwise are filtered out in the dominant discourse" (2005: 2). Keenan argues that the language of being a slave is similar to the devotional (*bhakti*) cults in India, one of which is "pure land buddhas" who are "ready to respond with compassion to the prayers of those who call upon his attention." In this case, however, James "submits the very center of his person" both to God and "the Lord Jesus Christ." In Mahāyāna scriptures, Keenan observes, the patient endurance of which James speaks is the "outcome of the maturation of the gift of wisdom." Completeness/perfection in Mahāyāna Buddhism can only be achieved by "abandoning efforts to realize it," and in James, "one matures into the perfection of wisdom by abandoning the viewpoint that assures one of final perfection," since wisdom is the gift that God gives from above (2005: 36).

James 1:5–8

Ancient literary context

For James, trials and testing of one's faith produce endurance, and the full effect of this endurance is that one becomes "mature and complete, lacking in nothing." Yet James notes that "lacking in wisdom" (with a *leipomenoi*/*leipetai* word link) is a universal problem of the human condition. Wisdom may be the most important attribute that leads to completeness/perfection, and it provides both the understanding of the true nature of trials and therefore the ability to endure those trials.

Faithful prayer is the means through which to obtain God's wisdom in the midst of trials, and faith is not only the incentive for prayer, it is the necessary condition: One is not led to pray without faith, and prayer is ineffective without faith. This dialogic relationship may indicate that although the main topic in this section may seem to be prayer, the real focus might possibly be an active faith. Prayer requires not only an unwavering faith but also an active faith (e.g., nine

of the fourteen references to faith in James occur in the "faith and works" discussion of 2:14–26). Prayer, wisdom, and faith—three of James's key emphases—are intimately related, however, so it may be a mistake to prioritize one over another in this section. Faithful constancy in prayer is indicative of a person who has full and unwavering confidence in God who gives "generously and ungrudgingly."

Just as God is "single-minded" in the sense of giving generously to "all," believers should be single-minded in their response of faith/trust in God, including confidence in prayer. The "double-souled" (*dipsychos*) person displays the opposite characteristic, and James urges its readers instead to choose friendship with God, not friendship with the world (cf. 4:4). The term *dipsychos* may (or may not) have been coined by James (it also appears in James 4:8); it is not found in extant literature antecedent to James, but a comparable idea is found in numerous Jewish texts (cf. the "double heart" of Ps. 12:2; Sirach 1:28) and Greek texts (e.g., the *diplous anēr* of Plato's *Republic* 397E).

In addition to standing firmly within Jewish wisdom tradition, James also engages the specific wisdom tradition voiced by Jesus of Nazareth. James 1:5, for example, echoes Matthew 7:7/Luke 11:9: "Ask, and it will be given you." A key difference, however, is that James 1:5 narrows the focus, both in regard to the subject of the request (wisdom) and in God's response (generously responding by imparting wisdom; Luke's version, in contrast, narrows the gift to the "Holy Spirit"; Luke 11:13). The gospel passages, in addition, are followed by examples of (imperfect) human fathers giving good gifts to their children and the resulting conclusion that God the (perfect) heavenly father gives good gifts to those who ask (cf. the "every perfect gift" of James 1:17).

James also reflects Jesus' concern for persistence in prayer and the essential element of faith: James 1:6 echoes the words of Jesus in Matthew 21:22: "Whatever you ask in prayer with faith, you will receive" (the parallel in Mark 11:24 omits "in prayer," and James adds "never doubting"). The gist of what both Jesus and James have to say about God and prayer is perhaps best summarized by Douglas Moo's comment on James 1:5–8: "James exhorts them to pray in undivided faith for the wisdom that a gracious God is anxious to give to those who ask" (2000: 57).

The interpretations

Ancient and medieval

Athanasius (ca. 296–373), Bishop of Alexandria, famously defends the doctrine of *homoousios*, the idea that the Father and Son share the same essence, against the Arians, who believe that the Father and Son have similar yet different

essences and that the Son is a created being (McKim 2007: 129). Athanasius writes *Defence of the Nicene Definition* to a friend being challenged by Arians over the use of non-scriptural language in the Nicene Creed. Athanasius defends the Nicene Creed and attacks the Arians' "fickleness" and their "ignorant and irreligious" attempts to reverse an ecumenical council. Setting a pattern for later authors, Athanasius uses James 1:8 to label his opponents "double-minded":

> Are they not then committing a crime, in their very thought to oppose so great and ecumenical a Council? Are they not in transgression, when they dare to confront that good definition against Arianism, acknowledged, as it is, by those who had in the first instance taught them irreligion? And supposing, even after subscription, Eusebius and his fellows did change again, and return like dogs to their own vomit of irreligion, do not the present gain-sayers deserve still greater detestation, because they thus sacrifice their souls' liberty to others; and are willing to take these persons as masters of their heresy, who are, as James has said, double-minded men, and unstable in all their ways, not having one opinion, but changing to and fro, and now recommending certain statements, but soon dishonouring them, and in turn recommending what just now they were blaming?

According to Athanasius, the double-minded "Greeks" differ as far as doctrines, whereas "our Fathers" and those who agree with Athanasius are not double-minded; they are "the holy and veritable heralds of the truth" who agree and preach "the same Word harmoniously" (2.4).

Augustine cites James 1:5 several times, sometimes merely as a pretext to reiterate his views on virginity and marriage (e.g., "Of Holy Virginity"; Chapter 43; cf. his letter to Juliana, "On the Good of Widowhood," where he discusses the two great gifts of God: wisdom and continence; Chapter 21). Like Athanasius, though, Augustine usually mentions James 1:5 against his opponents during major controversies. One key argument Augustine uses against Pelagius, for example, is that wisdom comes from the grace of God (Chapter 17 of *On Nature and Grace*). After citing James 3:17 about the positive qualities of God's wisdom, connecting it to the ability to tame the tongue, Augustine asks:

> Will any one, then, dare to divorce it from the grace of God, and with most arrogant vanity place it in the power of man? Why should I pray to God that it be accorded me, if it may be had of man? Ought we not to object to this prayer lest injury be done to free will which is self-sufficient in the possibility of nature for discharging all the duties of righteousness? We ought, then, to object also to the Apostle James himself, who admonishes us in these words: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and ungrudgingly,

> and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing doubting." This is the faith to which the commandments drive us, in order that the law may prescribe our duty and faith accomplish it.

Augustine discusses the issue more fully in his treatise, *On Grace and Free Will*. This work and the two letters from Augustine that accompany it, are directed to Valentinus and the other monks of Adrumetum, because the "monastery was disturbed with no small commotion" concerning the free will of human beings. Some were denying that humans have free will in light of the grace of God and maintained that "in the day of judgment God will not render to every man according to his works." Augustine urges them to put their faith "in the inspired word of God, and believe both that man's will is free, and that there is also God's grace, without whose help man's free will can neither be turned towards God, nor make any progress in God." His key argument in this section is that James's injunction calls upon humans to be wise, but that it also requires obedience. True obedience, Augustine writes, requires free will. But human beings cannot obey this command merely by free will; they need the help of God's grace, otherwise James would not have commanded us to ask God for wisdom.

Elsewhere, however, instead of using James as a weapon in doctrinal controversies, Augustine can use James to exhort his readers to positive Christian virtues. Note his conclusion to *On Grace and Free Will* (Chapter 46) where he quotes sections of James 1:5 and 3:17, bids his readers to live the godly lives that James enjoins, and warns them against "another wisdom" that they "must repel," one that leads to "bitter envying and strife" (3:14–15). Once again, Augustine argues that since this wisdom has to come from God above—we must ask God for it—it cannot come from human beings.

Likewise, Leo the Great, who served as pope from 440–61, in his eleventh sermon on Lent (Sermon XLIX.4), uses James 1:5 to urge Christians to examine themselves in light of the standards of God's commands. This examination should propel them to prepare their minds and bodies and thus to invoke the help of God so that they could "fulfill all things through Him." No one is exempt from this injunction, because God grants both the will and the power to ask of wisdom from God, and God will grant wisdom to anyone who asks. People also have enough knowledge to realize the virtues they should "cultivate" and the vices they should "fight against." Human beings have enough reason "to understand the character of [their] mode of life" and the "secrets of [their] heart." Christians should not seek after the "delights of the flesh," but instead examine themselves and their actions according to the standards set by God. In that way, Leo argues, we can see our "conformity or dissimilarity to God's image" before it is too late to "throw off awhile our

carnal cares and restless occupations, and commit ourselves from earthly matters to heavenly."

Like Augustine, Bede connects the argument in James 1:5 to the Pelagian controversy: Since "all saving wisdom . . . must be begged from the Lord" (and Bede also cites Sirach 1:1), "no one is able to understand and be wise of his own free will without the help of divine grace, although the Pelagians argue a lot [about this]" (1985: 9). Then Bede connects James 1:2 with 1:5, in a move approved by such later commentators as Mayor (1990: 348) and Johnson (2004: 179)—questioned by Laws (1980: 54–5)—by saying that such wisdom is necessary in order for believers to understand that temptations should bring joy:

> But here particularly he seems to be talking about that wisdom which is necessary for us to use in temptations. If anyone of you, he says, is not able to understand the usefulness of temptations which befall the faithful for the sake of testing, let him beg from God that there be given him the realization by which he may be able to recognize with what great kindness the father chastises the sons whom he carefully makes worthy of an eternal inheritance (1985: 9).

On the other hand, people who doubt or hesitate because of their consciousness of sin, "easily abandon" their faith at the onslaught of temptations and are "carried away at the will of the invisible enemy as if by a blast of wind through different kinds of errors and vices" (10).

Early modern and modern

Luther considers Psalm 90 to be the only Psalm written by Moses, and his exegesis of Psalm 90:17 cites James 1:8, specifically the petition to "establish Thou the work of our hands" (LW 13: 137). This petition is still necessary, Luther believes, because "this work of God which we perform in our ministry is attacked on the outside by the devil and on the inside by our own heart." It is difficult in such an environment "to cling to the faith that God is kindly disposed toward us and not to doubt God's work." Luther notes, however, that one's ability to teach or learn is hindered by doubt, since that person is "unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). In Luther's view, Moses prays in Psalm 90:17 for the establishment and confirmation of the "work of our hands," because he wants them to be certain of the "Word and work of God" (LW 13: 140).

Luther defends his Thesis #7 with James 1:5–8 as well. In that thesis, Luther declares that each person taking the sacrament must have faith, otherwise that person would take that sin "to his own damnation." Luther defends this idea in

the "proceedings at Augsburg" and states that James 1:5–8 ". . . is certainly a most unequivocal statement, which also leads me to the conclusion that no one can receive grace or wisdom who doubts that he will receive it." Likewise, in his "Defense and Explanation of All the Articles," Luther declares, "It is heresy to hold that the sacraments give grace to all who do not put an obstacle in the way" (LW 31: 100–1, 261).

Luther furthers his arguments about the sacraments by using James 1:5–8 in part of his answer to Pope Leo X's bull *Exsurge Domine*, a document which censured forty-one of Luther's statements as "heretical, scandalous, erroneous, offensive to pious ears, misleading to simple minds, and contrary to Catholic teaching." It gave Luther sixty days to recant or face being excommunicated. On the sixtieth day (December 10, 1520), Luther burned his copy of the bull and was subsequently excommunicated by the pope. In his response, Luther notes the necessity of faith and repentance for the efficacy of the sacraments:

> Does that not say clearly enough that the man who prays and does not firmly believe that he will receive what he asks, cannot receive anything from God? How much less can he receive anything who does not pray, does not believe, does not repent, has no intention to do good, but only, as they teach, "removes the obstacle of an evil design." How can the sacraments give grace to hearts that are without faith and desire, unrepentant, and unkind? May God protect all his Christians against such an un-Christian error as taught by this deceitful bull and leaders of the same sort (LW 32: 13–14).

Luther argues that if people pray while doubting God's fulfillment, praying without interest (*Abenteuer*) in whether the prayer is fulfilled, they destroy their own prayers and labor in vain. James 1:5–8 means, for Luther, that God cannot give anything to people with such unstable hearts: "Faith, however, keeps the heart firm and makes it receptive to God's gifts" ("On Rogationtide Prayer and Procession"; LW 42: 88).

Calvin's *Commentary on James* expands God's generous and ungrudging gift of ordering "all things to fall out for our good" to the "whole range of right understanding." All people "by nature" are without wisdom. Some do not want it, but others are "endowed with a spirit of prudence." James thus reminds people who are not yet fully convinced of their salvation—given by God through the cross of Christ—that they are to ask for wisdom. Calvin proclaims that God gives to "all" who ask and that no person "should cut himself off from such a benefit": "As sure as the command prescribes to every man his duty, so the promise declares that they will not be disappointed in its fulfillment." Calvin then notes the similarity of this verse with Matthew 7:7/Luke 11:9 ("Knock, and

it shall be opened"), which demonstrates that if one asks of God it will not be in vain: God is always ready "to add new blessings to former ones, without any end or limitation" (1995: 263–4).

James 1:6 shows, for Calvin, what James means by true faith, since James adds the explanation "*nothing doubting*." Faith relies on God's promises, ensures we receive what we ask, and is intimately connected with the certainty of God's love towards us. James wants us to be so convinced of what God has promised that we do not doubt whether God will hear us. God, on the other hand, punishes the unbelief of those who waver or doubt God's promises by their own "worries": "they torture themselves inwardly." Thus Calvin also uses this verse to argue against the "sinful teaching" of the "papacy" about praying "in diffidence, with no sure thoughts of succeeding." Instead, Calvin holds that our prayers are heard by the Lord only when we pray with confidence that we shall obtain what we ask. James thus implicitly contrasts the liberality of God with the double-mindedness (i.e., one with "two souls" who hesitates between faith and unbelief) of human beings (265). Just as God gives to us generously, so we should open our hearts to do the same to others.

James Hardy Ropes connects this double-minded or double-souled person with a minor character in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, "Mr. Facing-both-ways" (Part I, Section VI), since this person exists "with soul divided between faith and the world" (Ropes 1916: 143). This term from Bunyan often can merely illustrate hypocrisy, as in an 1876 cartoon about the two-facedness of presidential candidate Samuel Tilden (Plate 2.1a). Tilden appears two-faced, with one face declaring his support of civil service reform and against political patronage, whereas his other face is associated with his alleged Confederate sympathies and to his connections with the corrupt Boss Tweed. This cartoon reflects the bitterness of the disputed election. Tilden actually won the popular vote against Rutherford B. Hayes and led in the electoral college results, with some electoral college votes still in dispute. The Compromise of 1877 resolved the disputed election in favor of Hayes, an agreement that ended Reconstruction by removing federal troops from the southern US states.

Mr. Facing-both-ways, however, also can depict the "saint versus sinner" aspects of human beings, as a *Harpers Weekly* cartoon did with the 1892 presidential ticket of Grover Cleveland and Adlai Stevenson. In that cartoon (Plate 2.1b), Cleveland is depicted as a "saintly" good-government reformer, whereas Stevenson is portrayed as the sinful deliverer of political patronage jobs to political bosses and other allies.

A closer connection to the double-minded person in James is found in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*. In the play, Faust yearns for heavenly

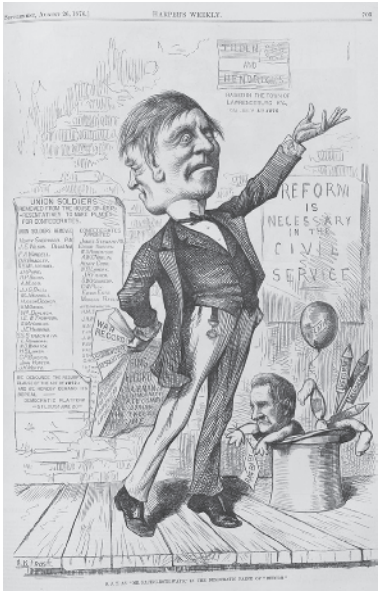

Plate 2.1a "S. J. T. [Samuel Tilden] as 'Mr. Facing-Both Ways' …" Cartoonist: A. B. Frost. *Harper's Weekly*, August 26, 1876

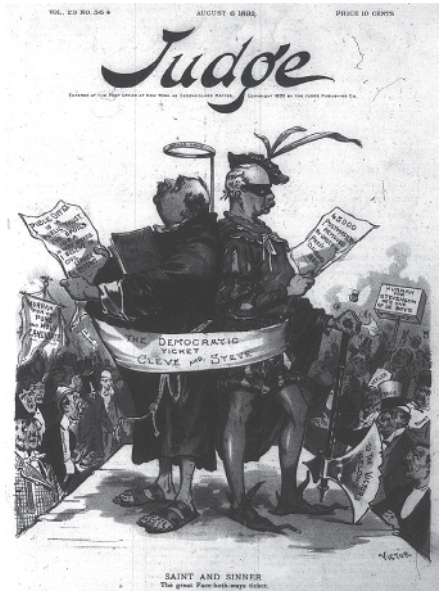

Plate 2.1b "Saint and Sinner" (Grover Cleveland and Adlai Stevenson). Cartoonist: Victor Gillam. *Judge*, August 6, 1892, p. 81

things but is powerfully attracted to aspects of the physical world, a tension that remains unresolved in the work. As Faust explains to Wagner:

> Ach!
> Two souls cohabit in my breast,
> each one struggling to tear itself from the other!
> The one, like a coarse lover,
> clings to the earth with every sensual organ;
> the other struggles violently from the dust and
> soars to the fields of the great departed spirits.
> (Goethe 2004: 44–5)

The English poet A. H. Clough's poem *Dipsychus*, however, makes the most explicit connection with James (1:8) by using James's Greek term for "double-souled." Clough's poem is based on Goethe's *Faust* (in early drafts of the poem, the two speakers were named Faustulus and Mephistopheles), but the Epilogue seems to downplay the parallels (Ryals 1963: 187). Several of Clough's works focus on indecision and the paralysis of the will to act, as in poems such as "Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth," "Thesis and

Antithesis," and "Easter Day." Does *Dipsychus* reflect Clough's disillusionment with life that results from the conflict between "the spirit's aspiration for ideals and reason's demand for action"? Or is it a satire in which Dipsychus "is applauded for accepting the course which common sense dictates" (182–3)?

The section most relevant to James 1:8 is found in Part I, Scene XI, "The Piazza at Night," where Dipsychus says:

> . . . And, oh! this woman's heart,
> Fain to be forced, incredulous of choice,
> And waiting a necessity for God.
> Yet I could think, indeed, the perfect call
> Should force the perfect answer. If the voice
> Ought to receive its echo from the soul,
> Wherefore this silence? If it *should* rouse my being,
> Why this reluctance? Have I not thought o'ermuch
> Of other men, and of the ways of the world?
> But what they are, or have been, matters not.
> To thine own self be true, the wise man says.
> Are then my fears myself? O double self!
> And I untrue to both?

Dipsychus goes on to describe the positive times when such things as "love, and faith, and dear domestic ties" seem "ignoble," "mean," and "nought as I would have it." Yet at other times:

> My mind is in her nest; my heart at home
> In all around; my soul secure in place,
> And the vext needle perfect to her poles.

This "double self" means that:

> Aimless and hopeless in my life I seem
> To thread the winding byways of the town,
> Bewildered, baffled, hurried hence and thence,
> All at cross-purpose even with myself,
> Unknowing whence or whither.
> (Clough 1974: 274–5)

Yet, as Ryals notes, Clough seems to conclude that Dipsychus and the Spirit must join together:

> By himself each is incomplete, for worldly wisdom without ideals and spiritual aspiration without a basis in reality are, Clough maintains, as nothing. Though the

> world is not as we would ideally have it, it must, Clough learned, be accepted . . . Experience had taught him that "no man moves without having one leg *off*, as one leg always *on* the ground" (1963: 186).

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard envisions how the doubt and indecision of such "double-mindedness" is the equivalent of despair:

> For what is despairing other than to have two wills? For whether the weakling despairs over not being able to wrench himself away from the bad, or whether the brazen one despairs over not being able to tear himself completely away from the good: they are both double-minded. They both have two wills (1956: 61).

For Kierkegaard, James's admonitions are not paranesis that merely collects aspects of ancient lists of vice and virtue; instead James maps out moral equivalencies and oppositions with both receptivity and doubt at the center of that map. Since it is the double-minded person who does not ask in faith, although God gives generously to all, that person is not receptive. James links faith with receptivity—they almost become synonyms—and double-mindedness with doubt (Polk 1988: 207). God freely and generously gives; the problem is that many human beings are not receptive to God's gifts. What is required, James insists, is "purity in heart," a whole-hearted and single-minded devotion to God, and a consistency "of heart with word and deed" and "of speech with action" (Kierkegaard 1956: 60; Bauckham 1999: 165–7).

As Joseph Mayor puts it, "the *haplotēs* [liberality] of the giver must be met with a corresponding *haplotēs* of the suppliant, as in the case of Solomon" (Wisdom of Solomon 8:21; 1990: 350). In other words, just as Jesus calls for believers to be perfect as God is perfect (Matt. 5:48), James calls for believers to be *haplotēs* just as God is *haplotēs*.

For Charles Deems, the epithet "the giving God" is "exceedingly encouraging," and James cites three characteristics of God's giving: It is universal, abundant, and unselfish. God gives liberally to all human beings, never tires of giving, and "never upbraids." God delights in our petitions and would rather have us more ashamed of *not* coming before God with petitionary prayer for wisdom "than for any other fault or sin."

We have assurance, then, that "every true prayer" is answered by God, as long as the prayer is "in faith" and not plagued by doubt:

> How positive is the assurance of an answer to this prayer for wisdom! You may pray for a change in circumstances, for more land or money, or for success in some undertaking, or from deliverance from some trouble; and the Father may

> see that it is better to leave you just as you are, and answer your prayer in some other way. In some way for good every prayer is answered . . . because God has ordained the connection between the real prayer, intellectually meant and heartily felt prayer, with the production of some spiritual good. The law of gravity is not more sure in its existence, or more unerring in its action, than the law of spiritual prayer (Deems 1888: 51–2).

Deems ends with a simple caveat about the necessity of faith and the problem of doubt: If a person "is not willing to give God *trust*, how can he expect God to give him *wisdom*?" (53).

On September 30, 1962, James Meredith arrived at the University of Mississippi, the first African-American student to enroll in that university in the Deep South. On the same day, in this racially charged atmosphere, Robert Walkup entered the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in Starkville, Mississippi, and delivered a sermon entitled, "Not Race but Grace." By focusing his sermon on James's call for those lacking wisdom to ask God in faith, Walkup clearly suggests that the people responding negatively to Meredith's arrival at the university are lacking in wisdom (Houck and Dixon 2006: 468). Walkup begins by saying that he, "as just a common garden-variety Christian," was "troubled" by the "difficult days" they were facing:

> "If any of you lack wisdom?"
>
> Isn't that a courteous way for James to put it? Wasn't that nice of James to put that "if" in there? Was there really any doubt in his mind about whether or not we lack wisdom? Wisdom to James did not mean learning or profundity of thought but the ability to use the trials of life—the ability to discern in life itself the will of God. Now, do we lack that? For all of our supposed learning . . . for all our big talk . . . do we lack wisdom? There is no hope really for us as long as we think that we're wise. As long as we keep on believing that wisdom was born with us and that understanding shall perish with our going. Only men who confuse themselves with God will dare to pretend in this anguished and troubled day that they know the exact route to the Promised Land. Only men who take upon themselves the omnipotence that belongs to the Lord God Almighty alone will believe that they have in their own mind this day every answer and every truth.
>
> . . .
>
> We could spend the rest of this Lord's Day praying—for wisdom—for light—for understanding! We need light today, not heat. What we need today is not men with hot heads and big mouths, but men with cool heads and warm hearts . . . [God] promises wisdom if we ask for it, provided we ask in faith, nothing doubting. Nothing "wavering" the Greek really says . . . We must come dependent, wholly and completely dependent upon God's wisdom, God's mercy, God's providence (Houck and Dixon 2006: 470–1).

As Elsa Tamez notes, James argues that maturity and integrity are the fruit of painful experience. James 1:5–8 also illustrates that James is opposed to the two-faced person, the person who lives a "double life" (2002: 48), and the one who prays "with vacillation, with hesitancy":

> Such people are a problem for the community principally because no one can trust them, because they are both with the community and not with it. Moreover, they have no willpower, no decisiveness. With such members of the community the battle against oppression is lost (48).

The double-minded person who prays with a "duplicitous spirit" cannot pray with faith, because we cannot approach God with two hearts:

> The intimate encounter with God through prayer strips human beings and confronts them with their own selves. They experience moments of self-consciousness and self-criticism. This prayer is able to jolt and destroy the two hearts to create one heart, solid and honest. Divided persons who want to pray with faith will be able to do so only insofar as they allow themselves to stand naked before God and become persons of simple hearts (57).

James, Tamez argues, says that you cannot live in the ambiguity of a double-minded person, because you either believe that God generously answers prayers or that God does not. In the same way, you are either in the community, or you are not.

John Keenan reports that the image of a wave of the sea being driven by the wind as symbolizing a deluded mind is also found in Mahāyāna Buddhism. There it symbolizes a person who focuses on the self, one who "falsely distinguishes self from everything else." A truly wise person works for the benefit of others, following the path of selfless action. James, Keenan argues, never identifies the content of God's imparted wisdom. Instead, James stresses trusting God and living out that faith in one's daily life and practice:

> Everything is concrete, for faith is not an ideology. It is not a something you think, but a something you do, or, better said, it is not a "something" at all. It is a way in which you live, open to God and open to listening to the needs of other people. This letter, of all the books of the New Testament, enunciates most strongly the mandate for justice and for treating people justly on earth—for addressing the needs of the poor, of the oppressed, those who are underpaid for their work, who are cheated. One can see how James becomes a primary source for liberation theology, and it is not by mistake that liberation theology bases its social practice on wisdom, a wisdom that enables one to go beyond self, to see that we are all one (2005: 39–41).

James 1:9–11

Ancient literary context

This section picks up another major theme of James: the relationship between the rich and the poor, an argument—as seen by the use of the particle *de*—that continues and builds on the arguments in the previous verses. Here James focuses not just on status, but primarily on status reversal, a double reversal of wealthy and poor that echoes teachings of Jesus (e.g., Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14: all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted) and is a major theme of Luke (e.g., 1:52–3; 12:20; 16:25: the lowly will be lifted up, and the rich will be sent away empty). Thus James focuses on the fact that wealth does not provide any type of security—other than a false sense of safety—and draws special attention to the brevity of its duration and the certainty of reversal. The "degraded poor" should not be deceived by the apparent security of the "greedy rich" (Batten 2008). The rich will be humbled and will fade away as assuredly as the (flowers of the) grass in the withering heat—just like the grass of the field in Matthew 6:30/Luke 12:28 is "thrown into the oven."

James here is congruent with Hebrew Bible passages concerning the fleeting nature of every human being (e.g., Isa. 40:6–8; Ps. 90:5–6) but focuses specifically on the ephemeral character of wealth (cf. Job 24:24; 27:21; Ps. 49:16–20; Matt. 6:19; Luke 12:16–21; 16:19–31), including the use of vegetation to illustrate such transitoriness (e.g., Job 14:2; Ps. 37:2; 103:15). Boasting is a prerogative of God, not human beings (cf. Jer. 9:23–4), but James calls for the lowly to boast in God's actions of reversal. The imagery is not necessarily eschatological (cf. Luke 12:15–21), but it does appear to be so here, since reversal itself can be an eschatological motif, in anticipation of the faithful poor's exaltation in the age to come (James 4:6–10; cf. Hartin 2003: 61–3). The readers are to "count it all joy," because God will bring about a reversal of fortunes at the eschaton.

The interpretations

Ancient and medieval

Bede argues that James speaks ironically and connects Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–21) with James's statement about the lowly or humble believer being raised up and the rich being brought low: ". . . let [the rich man] remember that his glory, in which he takes pride about his wealth and looks down on or even oppresses the poor, must come to an end, that having been humbled he may perish for ever with that rich man in purple who looked down

upon the needy Lazarus" (1985: 11). Yet Bede warns not to universalize the saying of James and, by implication, the teaching of Jesus about the rich and poor:

> He is talking not about every rich man but one who trusts in the uncertainty of riches. For in contrasting a rich man with a humble brother, he has shown that he was speaking about that sort of rich man who is not humble. For even Abraham, although he was a rich man in the world, nevertheless received a poor man after his death into his bosom, a rich man he left in torments. But he did not leave the rich man because he was rich, which he himself also had been, but because he had scorned being merciful and humble, which he himself had been; and on the contrary, he did not receive Lazarus because he was poor, which he himself had not been, but because he had taken care to be humble and innocent, which he himself had been (12).

Bede connects the brief beauty and pleasant smell of the flower in the field with the present happiness of the ungodly—it lasts for a brief day or two and vanishes into nothing. The rising sun represents the strict judge who puts a quick end to the transient glory of the reprobate. The righteous, on the other hand, flourish forever (13).

Although perhaps not directly reflective on James 1:11, the last verses of the great English poet Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* reflect upon the immutability of God, the mutability of God's creation, and the mortality of human beings (Book VII, Canto viii). These final verses first appeared in the 1609 folio of the work. Since they are fragmentary in nature, it is difficult to understand them in the context of the rest of the allegorical work, but they may, like James, connect to a theme of constancy (Spenser 2001: 17):

> When I bethinke me on that speech whyleare,
> Of *Mutability*, and well it way;
> Me seemes, that though she all unworthy were
> Of the Heav'ns rule; yet very sooth to say,
> In all things else she beares the greatest sway;
> Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
> And love of things so vaine to cast away;
> Whose flow'ring pride, so fading and so fickle,
> Short *Time* shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.
>
> Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
> Of that same time when no more *Change* shall be,
> But stedfast rest of all things, firmly stayd
> Upon the pillours of Eternity,
> That is contrayr to *Mutabilitie*:
> For, all that moveth, doth in *Change* delight:
> But thence-forth all shall rest eternally

> With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
> O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight.
> (Spenser 2001: 712).

Early modern and modern

Calvin explains that James enjoins the poor to be content with their humble condition and forbids the rich to be proud. The poor person should "glory in his high estate, finding gratitude to God for the full and sufficient recompense of sheer adoption, and avoiding over much distress in straitened circumstances of life" (1995: 265–6). The admonition to the rich (1:10) pertains, according to Calvin, not only to the wealthy but also to "all who rise above their neighbours in rank or birth or other outward thing." James's point is that all worldly things are to be despised:

> He tells them to glory in their lowliness, their smallness, to restrain those lofty notions that swell out of prosperity. He says *low*, because the revelation of the Kingdom of God should bring us to think little of the world, and to teach us that all things which earlier were greatly admired are really of no account, or only of the slightest. Christ Himself, Teacher of the poor, has a message which rejects entirely the pride of the flesh. In case the wealthy get enmeshed in the empty delights of the world, let them become used to glorying in the loss of their carnal splendours.
>
> . . . [G]lorification over riches is folly and absurdity, since they are gone in a flash. Philosophy teaches the same, but the moral goes unheard, until men's ears are opened by God to heed the eternal reality of the Kingdom of heaven. This is why he speaks of *brother*, meaning that this doctrine can only begin from our entry into the ranks of the family of God (Calvin 1995: 266).

Robert William Dale (1854–95), the Congregationalist pastor of Carr's Lane Church in Birmingham (UK), preached a sermon, "The Gospel of Suffering," in which he observes that the "believer who is lowly" is a child of God through Christ and an "heir of eternal blessedness." So a poor person should not resent his poverty and obscurity, because each believer is a "prince on the way to his kingdom." Dale acknowledges that such a life may contain many rough roads and hardships, including "suffering from hunger, cold, and weariness." In addition, his fellow travelers do not know of his greatness. The key point, though, is that "*he* knows":

> It is a hard thing for a Christian man to maintain this high and cheerful manner while he is enduring hardships. The hardships are so real, so distressing, that they fill all his thoughts. How is it possible for him not to be depressed? It is only possible when he comes to see how brief are his earthly sufferings when compared

> with eternal glory. Let him look at things as they are; let him have true wisdom, wisdom to form right judgments about this world and the next, about earthly sorrows and divine blessings, and then the brother of low degree will "glory in his high estate" (Fant 1971: 5.191).

In a similar way, Dale argues that James declares that a rich man should glory whenever he is brought down from his "imagined security of eminence," because it demonstrates to him that his riches will soon disappear, "and the great question for him to consider is what he is," for he may discover that apart from his money, he is worthless (192).

Charles Deems understands the "lowly . . . being raised up" in economic terms, such as an acquisition of wealth by a poor person through the "providence of God" (1888: 57). It is easier, in some ways, for that person to "boast," although it is extremely important not to become ensnared in the lure of riches. In contrast, it is much more difficult for a rich person to boast in being brought low. Deems calls upon that person to rejoice, however, because now "the formerly rich brother can glorify God by showing that divine grace can sustain him as well in narrow and poor limits as it has done in large and wealthy places. Let the reduced brother rejoice" (58). Yet Deems concentrates on what he calls a "manifestly higher thought": That although James's readers do not have high political, social, or economic positions in the world's estimation, they have exalted lives with high spiritual power and inner spiritual capabilities, which included the gift of eternal life (59–60). It is this exalted spiritual position in which believers should rejoice; the "poor in faith"—whether rich or poor in the economic sense—cannot.

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1916) was the premier theologian of what came to be called the Social Gospel movement in the United States. Rauschenbusch was a professor at Rochester Theological Seminary in New York, and his book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, argues that James and Revelation are "more or less directly the product of . . . Jewish Christianity," a group, which although it survived until the fifth century, was marginalized by larger Christianity and even deemed heretical. Jewish Christianity, however, represents "the radical social wing of the primitive church," leavened as it were by the "democracy" of the Hebrew Bible prophets and post-exilic Judaism. Rauschenbusch also adds that these Jewish Christian churches treasured and preserved the sayings of Jesus, another indication of their "radical social spirit." Rauschenbusch then cites James 1:9–11 as an example of this radical, egalitarian spirit inspired by its roots within Judaism:

> In popular Jewish thought the poor and the godly were simply identified, and there was a frequent and strident note of hostility to the upper classes. The Epistle of James shares this Jewish spirit. It is one of the most democratic books of the New Testament (1908: 98; cf. Dibelius 1975: 39).

Foy Valentine's short commentary on James applies James's "prophetic indignation" of the injustices perpetuated by the rich upon the poor to contemporary Christians:

> The church has nearly always been reluctant to hear the word of God about wealth. The words of Jesus at this point are all too often glossed over. The message of the prophets regarding riches is thought by many to be particularly obnoxious. The teaching of James in this regard is considered especially offensive by many. Why? This is true because it is a hard doctrine, and hard doctrines are much more easily ignored than confronted. They are much more easily discounted than accepted. They are much more easily explained away than obeyed. It was not the disposition of James, however, to mince words, so he shared his spiritual insight at this important point. Wealth is a great danger to the spiritual life. Human beings need a little bit but are choked by a lot. Riches may buy special status in this world's clubs but in the church, bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, everybody is somebody.

That is why, Valentine writes, James returns again and again to the issues of wealth and poverty (1981: 72).

Pedrito Maynard-Reid, Professor of Biblical Studies and Missiology at Walla Walla University, objects to the idea that the terms *poor* and *rich* in 1:9–11 connote a primarily spiritualized "semireligious" sense of wealth and poverty. Maynard-Reid believes that such interpretations (he cites Martin Dibelius and Ralph Martin as examples) seem to be created to "placate the wealthy Christians within our own contemporary communities" (1987: 44). Instead, he notes, both James and the rest of the New Testament have a generally negative view of the economically rich in first-century Palestine. Maynard-Reid believes that James's "scorching heat is a blasting, scorching southeast wind of the desert which blows incessantly day and night during the spring." This extreme, dry, withering heat "is fatal to young growth and flowers." Maynard-Reid, though, argues that for James, the "flowers" are not "weaklings." They symbolize the (apparently) strong and powerful rich. The imagery thus "is more forceful and poignant, for the rich in the height of their glory and majesty are cut down." The judgment upon the rich, Maynard-Reid concludes, will be abrupt and final (46).

Although Elsa Tamez stresses that James focuses on the present experience of a militant patience and fully developed works, she also notes that beyond the joy of service and hope in the midst of suffering from oppression, there also is an eschatological joy: "knowing and believing that at the end of time the oppressed will be favored" (2002: 31). Therefore the oppressed can rejoice in anticipation of the eschatological new order that will bring about such a reversal. Thus James calls upon the oppressed to glory in their (future) exaltation (42).

This "boasting" is meant in a positive sense; it connotes anticipated happiness. The idea of a future reversal of an unjust present order, common in Hebrew thought, includes judgment in favor of the poor and against the rich. The antithesis between the one in a lowly condition (*tapeinos*) and the rich (*plousios*) means that the humility of the lowly cannot be a "moral or spiritual characteristic." The person is lowly because she or he is economically poor within the Christian community. James proclaims, Tamez writes, that the poor should rejoice because God will soon enact a dramatic change where the poor Christians will be exalted (42).

Tamez notes that James declares the rich "will suffer the opposite fate." They will fail in their business dealings, "which are precisely the cause of their ruin since usually they are rooted in injustice and the desire for gain." James's call for the rich to "glory in their humiliation" thus, for Tamez, is sarcasm, because James later announces that the rich "should begin to weep because of what awaits them. For now James leaves the rich no glimmer of hope: not only their wealth will perish, but also their business and they themselves" (34–5).

According to Tamez, then, the "rich" in the letter do not belong to the Christian community (or, at least, the author of James does not believe they should belong in it). The rich are condemned to failure in all their pursuits (1:11), and this judgment occurs because they oppress other human beings. James seems to be reacting against a church that is beginning to "open widely" to the rich, a development that James opposes (25–6).