

The Epistle of Jacob

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This letter of advice to churches has been called Jewish and Christian; it is now collegial, now abusive; it meanders thematically. Efforts have been made to clarify it by dividing it into sections. I construe it as overlaid by later authorial additions. Three topics are notably suspect: (1) rich versus poor, (2) hearing versus doing; or in effect, faith versus works, and (3) complaints against the tongue. They occur at more than one place, they interrupt their context, and they sometimes use strong language.

1. Rich versus Poor

This first appearance of the rich (note “so also shall the rich man”) is mild enough, but even it interrupts a discourse on the acceptance of persecution:

Ja 1:2. Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold **temptations**, [3] knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience . . . [7] For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord, [8] a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways.

[9] But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate, [10] and the rich, in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away [11] For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind and withereth the grass and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings.¹

[12] Blessed is the man that endureth **temptation**, for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life . . .

Ja 1:12 resumes the topic of Ja 1:8 – understanding and enduring persecution.

¹Ja 1:9-11 is treated as a section (not, let me emphasize, as an interpolation) by Ropes, Moffatt, Dibelius, Easton, Reicke, Balz/ Schrage, Laws, Davids, Wall, Moo, and Hartin.

In Ja 2:1f, rich and poor are members of the same congregation, and are cautioned against social prejudice. Into that gentle advice, there intrudes a sudden note of hatred:

Ja 2:1. My brethren, hold not the faith² with **respect of persons**. [2] For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing, [3] and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing . . . [4] do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? [5] Hearken, my beloved brethren, did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which he promised to them that love him? [6a] but ye have dishonored the poor man.

[6b] Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgement seats? [7] Do they not blaspheme the honorable Name by which ye are called?

[8] Howbeit, if ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well, [9] but if ye have **respect of persons**, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors . . .³

The main text argues against **respect of persons** in the community. Ja 2:6b-7 does not; it curses the rich as outsiders and blasphemers. It is intrusive in context, and is thus presumptively late. Ja 2:1-6a / 8-9f, into which it intrudes, is presumptively earlier.

In Ja 4:13-5:6 there suddenly comes a long denunciation of the merchants:

Ja 4:12b. But who are thou that **judgest thy neighbor**?

[13] Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain, [14] whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow . . . [5:1] Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you . . . [4] Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out, and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. [5] Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. [6] Ye have condemned, ye have killed, the righteous one; he doth not resist you.⁴

[7] Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. [8] Be ye also patient; establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] Murmur not, brethren, one against another, **that ye be not judged**; behold, the Judge standeth before the doors. [10] Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. [11] Behold, we call them blessed that endured . . .

A speech against **judging** is here interrupted by a tirade against the rich.

²Ja 2:1b ["of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory"], with 1:1b ["and of the Lord Jesus Christ"], the only two mentions of Jesus in the Epistle, are probably post-authorial additions meant to qualify the Epistle for the emerging Christian canon. See Spitta 7-8, Mayor exc-cxcv, Easton 20f.

³For the reference of Ja 2:8 back to 2:6a, see Dibelius 141f. Ja 2:6b-7 are treated as a unit by Dibelius, Laws, and Moo.

⁴For a classic expression of oppression of the righteous poor by the wicked rich, see Psa 10.

With these faults of the rich in mind, we may turn back to 4:1-10, which like 4:13f condemns the pursuit of wealth as enmity with God, and like the milder 1:9-11 contrasts the coming exaltation of the poor with the coming humiliation of the rich. That passage occurs in a context reproving criticism and enmity among brothers:

Ja 3:17. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable; gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. [18] And the fruit of righteousness is sown in **peace** for them that make peace.

[4:1] Whence come wars and whence fightings among you? Come they not hence, of your pleasures that war in your members? [2] Ye lust, and have not; ye kill and covet and cannot obtain, ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not. [3] Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures. [4] Ye adultresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God. [5] Or think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying? [6] But he giveth more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. [7] Be subject therefore unto God, but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded. [9] Be afflicted and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. [10] Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you.

[11] **Speak not one against another**, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law, but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge . . .

The interrupting diatribe, is not against those who cause friction in the group, but against those who sin by indulging desires; or in other words, by devoting themselves to the pleasures available to the rich.

Summary. We have now examined five passages mentioning the rich, either alone or in contrast with the poor. Their sequence in the Epistle is:

- 1:9-11. Fading of the rich, exaltation of the poor [*interruptive*]
- 2:1-6a, 8-13. Against social discrimination between rich and poor
- 2:6b-7. Oppressions of the rich against the brethren [*interruptive*]
- 4:1-10. Worldly desires lead to evil [*interruptive*]
- 4:13-5:6. Denounces the arrogance of the merchants [*interruptive*]

These passages are different in character (one mild, the others harsh; one even speaks of the rich as murderers). They would not work well if joined as a single chapter in a discourse. The author returns to his subject more than once, and prefers to scatter his statements against the rich across the epistle, perhaps to give them wider exposure and thus greater emphasis. That we do not know. The passage likely to be earliest of them is the mild 2:1-6a and its continuation in 2:8-13. The harsh and probably later 1:9-11 now precedes this in the epistle, as though to update the theme with greater emphasis. We will see this “preposing” pattern again.

We will also see the long passage 4:13-5:16 again; on that second occasion not as an interpolation, but as a passage into which *something else* seems to be interpolated.

2. Hearing versus Doing

Ja 1:22-25 interrupts a discourse against anger and ill speaking:

Ja 1:19. Ye know this, my beloved brethren, but let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to **wrath**; [20] for the wrath of man worketh not the **righteousness** of God. [21] Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted **Word**, which is able to save your souls.

[22] But be ye doers of the **Word** and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. [23] For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror, [24] for he beholdeth himself and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. [25] But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.

[26] If any man thinketh himself to be **religious**, while he bridleth not his **tongue** but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain. [27] Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

The use of a catchword (“Word”) from the context is a common device, meant to make an interpolation seem more topically consecutive than it is. The text before and after contrasts what is righteous with the anger of the individual.

Ja 2:18-26, a diatribe against those who claim that faith⁵ is sufficient without works, follows a milder statement which, like Ja 2:1-6, criticizes neglect of the poor:

Ja 2:14. What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him? [15] If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, [16] and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled, and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body, what doth it profit? [17] Even so faith, if it have not works, is **dead** in itself.

[18] Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith and I have works; show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith. [19] Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. [20] But wilt thou, know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? [22] Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect, [23] and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. [24] Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. [25] And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? [26] For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is **dead**.

With the previous group in mind, the second part of this looks like a harsher update and explanation of the first part; note the repetition of the catchword “dead.”

⁵Faith in what? For Mark's Jesus, faith that God will keep his promises. For the late Paul, acceptance of the proposition that Jesus' death has power to confer salvation.

The last passage, on doing, is interpolated into one previously considered:⁶

Ja 4:13. Come now, you that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade and get gain, [14] whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. [15] For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that. [16] But now ye glory in your vauntings; all such glorying is evil.

[17] To him therefore that knowth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

[5:1] Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. [2] Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten.

This criticism of those who hold back from doing the good they know they should do sits awkwardly in the long denunciation of those who are simply pursuing gain.

On Doing. We have in all four passages, which occur this way in the text:

- 1:22-25. Looking in a mirror [*interruptive*]
- 2:14-2:17. Neglecting one's duty to the poor
- 2:18-26. Example of Abraham proves need for works [*a harsh continuation*]
- 4:17. Knowing and not doing [*interruptive*]

As with the Rich and Poor theme, treated above, these passages are rather different in character (one mild, and at least one notably harsh). They would not work well if grouped together as one chapter in a discourse. Of the four, the earliest is probably the mild 2:14-17. The stronger 1:22-25 has been positioned to precede this, as though by way of update. If this "preposing" device is a pattern, we have seen it before.

3. Against the Tongue

The material surrounding Ja 3:5b-8 sees the tongue as capable of speaking good or evil, and asks that it be controlled. 3:5b-8 instead calls it uncontrollable:

3:5a. So the **tongue** also is a little member, and boasteth great things.

[5b] Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! [6] and the **tongue** is a fire; the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body . . . [8] But the tongue can no man tame; a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

[9] Therewith bless we the Lord and Father, and therewith curse we men, who are made in the likeness of God. [10] Out of the same mouth cometh forth both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

The middle passage is incompatibly drastic, and may be an interpolation.⁷

All three groups seem to be later additions to an earlier text. One test of that proposal is to see if the text without the suspect passages makes sense in its own right. To apply that test, a reconstruction of Jacob follows on the next two pages.

⁶Given the position of 4:17 (from the Doing group) as interpolated into a passage from the Rich group (4:13f), it follows that the Doing group is later than the Rich group. For its absolute dating, in terms of the controversy with Paul, see p79 below

⁷Ja 3:5b-8 is treated as a unit by Moffatt. Many others recognize a 5a/b topic break.

4. The Reconstructed Original Epistle of Jacob

Minus interpolations, with topical subheadings supplied in brackets.

[§1. OPENING SALUTATION]

[1:1] Jacob, a servant of God, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, greeting.

[§2. STEADFASTNESS IN TRIALS]

[1:2] Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; [3] Knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. [4] And let patience have [its] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. [5] But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. [7] For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; [8] a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways.

[1:12] Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which [the Lord] promised to them that love him. [13] Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: [14] but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. [15] Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death. [16] Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. [18] Of his own will he brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

[§3. AGAINST ANGER]

[1:19] Ye know [this], my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; [20] for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. [21] Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.

[1:26] If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain. [27] Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

[§4. EQUALITY OF PERSONS]

[2:1] My brethren, hold not the faith with respect of persons. [2] For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; [3] and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; [4] Do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? [5] Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world [to be] rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him? [6] But ye have dishonored the poor man.

[2:8] Howbeit if ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: [9] but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. [10] For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one [point], he is become guilty of all. [11] For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou dost not commit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law. [12] So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty. [13] For judgment [is] without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment.

[§5. AGAINST JUDGING OTHERS]

[3:1] Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment. [2] For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. [3] Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. [4] Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth. [5a] So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. [9] Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God: [10] out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. [11] Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet and bitter? [12] Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? Neither [can] salt water yield sweet.

[3:13] Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. [14] But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. [15] This wisdom is not [a wisdom] that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. [16] For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. [17] But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. [18] And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.

[4:11]. Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. [12] One [only] is the lawgiver and judge, [even] he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?

[§6. PATIENCE IN AWAITING THE END]

[5:7]. Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. [8] Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors. [10] Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. [11] Behold, we call them blessed that endured; ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful.

[5:12] But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment.

[§7. MUTUAL SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY]

[5:13] Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. [14] Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: [15] and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. [16] Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. [17] Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. [18] And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

[5:19] My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him, [20] let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

5. Comments on the Reconstruction

Main Purpose. Dibelius suggested that the genre of Jacob was paraenesis.⁸ In the general sense of ethical guidance, the reconstructed text agrees, if we remember that this guidance is given to communities in a specific situation of belief and expectation. All but §2 (on persecution) counsel amity in community life, and holding oneself ready for the expected End. The unity of that advice shows up as follows:

- §3. Avoiding the friction of **personal** grievances: all are members
- §4. Avoiding **social** distinctions: God has chosen all
- §5. Avoiding **doctrinal** differences: God will decide
- §6. Patience in awaiting the End
- §7. Mutual support in prayer and forgiveness

It would not be too much to say that §3-5 censure worldly distractions, based on personal ambition or animus, and that §6-7 remind hearers not of what divides them, but of what holds them together: common expectation of the End, and concern for the welfare of others, including those who have yielded to temptation and left the flock. All of §3-7 might be reduced to a sentence: Leave all to God, and await God fervently.

Persecution. §2 is more circumstantial. It urges steadfastness in adversity, and offers understanding (not through teaching, but through prayer) of the persecution. It is vain to search the record for a formal Roman persecution of Christians. None is known, and none are required. From the beginning, Christian communities were in tension with their immediate context in the Jewish synagogues (whence the vigorous persecutions of Paul) and in their own house churches, with their Greek neighbors (whence the changes later recommended in the *Haustafeln* or domestic codes).⁹ Probably the original text consisted of the §3-7 paraenesis, and the persecution counsel of §2 was a response to some later emergency.¹⁰

The Theology of Jacob as here reconstructed is readily summarized:

- The chief fact about the world is that it will soon end in a final judgement.¹¹
- The right of judgement, both now and later, belongs to God alone.
- Attachment to the world is itself an evil; it leads to sin and eternal death.
- Love within the community is required of its members.
- Avoidance of sins is insufficient; there must also be positive good.
- Prayer for specific results is the individual's means of contact with God.
- God forgives even apostasy, if forgiveness is earnestly sought.

Developmentally, much of this has parallels in Mark and, and some aspects, notably the growing emphasis on poverty as virtue, is further developed in Luke.

⁸Dibelius 3, "a text which strings together admonitions of general ethical content." Dibelius 11 then uses this to explain the zigzag character of Jacob: "Associated with this [lack of design] is yet another characteristic of paraenetic literature: the repetition of identical motifs in different places within a writing." No. Ethical advice need not be offered by scatterbrains.

⁹These codes are integral in the Deutero-Paulines, but interpolated in the genuine Paulines. They abandon elements of the originally distinctive character of the Christian communities.

¹⁰It may correspond to a stratum in Mark which first mentions "persecutions;" see below.

¹¹The ejaculatory Aramaic Maranatha prayer ("Come, Lord"), mentioned in *Didache* 10:6, was the primary prayer of the early Christian communities, who awaited the end of the world.

6. Comments on the Later Additions

In these passages, the text seems to be responding to emergencies. What provoked the intensification of Ja 3:5b-8 was probably an increase of doctrinal factionalism, a problem which is also condemned in Paul's letters from the late 50's (eg 1 Cor 1:6f). The other two crises are economic and doctrinal:

The Rich in Mark and Paul. One of Mark's devices for introducing new matter into his text is to change the scene, often from public preaching to a private discourse with the disciples.¹² In some of these second scenes, the disciples are criticized for their lack of understanding; in others, they are simply puzzled or astonished at what they have heard or seen. Both imply the addition of late material to the original Mark. One "Twelve" interpolation in Mark is about the problem of the rich:

Mk 10:21. And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come, follow me. [22] But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful, for he was one that had great possessions.

[23] And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! [24] And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! [25] It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. [26] And they were astonished exceedingly, saying to him, Then who can be saved? [27] And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God.

The absolute exclusion of *all* rich from Heaven comes only in the inset passage, which corresponds in severity to the harsher of the Jacob interpolations on this subject.

Mk 10:23f is late in Mark, but it is not in the *last* strata, which date from 44/45.¹³ I will not here suggest a specific date for Mk 10:23f, but the point for our purposes is that it attests the same situation in the churches (the departure and enmity of the rich) as do the harsher of the Jacob passages against the rich. The preceding Mk 10:17f, with its sad vignette of a man burdened by wealth, seems to correspond typologically to the milder of the items in that Jacob stratum.¹⁴ The inference is that Mark and Jacob are evolving in the same direction, and probably at more or less the same time.

The theme of rich versus poor is faint in Paul (eg 1 Cor 1:26f, "not many mighty, not many noble"), perhaps because the problem assumed a less severe form in the metropolitan churches, but it does seem to exist there also.

¹²For the classic case of Mk 4:10f, see Brooks **Reader** 26-27.

¹³For the last strata, see Brooks **Time**.

¹⁴With due caution, we may note that the disaffection of the rich, and their condemnation by the Christian leadership, is remembered in emblematic form in Acts 5:1-11, the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Logically, holding all property in common (as in Acts) is not the same as a command to divest oneself of all wealth (as in Mark). But the two may be related.

Faith versus Works in Mark and Paul. The issue is the Atonement doctrine; the idea that Jesus' death saves individuals by atoning for their sins. For Paul, "faith" is not trust in God's promise, but *acceptance of the assertion that Jesus' death saves.*

The Atonement doctrine, whose keywords are "ransom" and "blood," appears only in two brief passages in Mark, here italicized:

- Mk 10:45a. For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, [45b] *and to give his life a ransom for many.*
- Mk 14:22. And as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed it, he brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: This is my body. [23] And he took a cup, . . . [24] *And he said unto them, This is my blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many.*¹⁵

The "and to give" in 10:45, which is extraneous to what precedes, may mark a later addendum by Mark, and so may the "And he said unto them" of 14:24.¹⁶ In general, so little developed is the Atonement idea in Mark that it seems reasonable to conclude that these two phrases are late within the formation process of the text.

In his late epistles, Paul insists on the primacy of the Atonement interpretation, and the irrelevance of "works of the Law" to salvation. The Alpha Christians instead relied on the Law in the reduced form in which Jesus himself [Mk 10:19] had left it to them. Here are the relevant passages from Paul and Jacob, structured as a dialogue:

- Rom 3:20-24. Because by works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for through the Law cometh the knowledge of sin. [21] But now apart from the Law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, [22] even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe, for there is no distinction; [23] for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, [24] being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
- Ja 2:18. Yea, a man will say, Thou has faith and I have works; show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith.
- Rom 4:1-3. What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather hath found according to the flesh? [2] For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not toward God. [3] For what saith the scripture? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness."
- Ja 2:20-24. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? [22] Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect, [23] and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God." [24] Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.

This two-way argument most likely is from c57, the probable date of Romans.

¹⁵Luke 22:20 omits the italicized phrase; see Brooks **Silence** 26. 1 Cor 11:25 also lacks it, perhaps a Lukan gesture of Paul's editors (the interruptive 1 Cor 11:23-32 is interpolated). Matthew 26:26 clarifies it doctrinally: "which is poured out for many, *unto remission of sins.*"

¹⁶The Lukan account of the Last Supper has been heavily sacramentalized; for the "Western Non-Interpolation" passages on which this conclusion turns, see Metzger **Textual** 164f.

If so, then the history of the Atonement doctrine is something like the following:

- Devised in Jerusalem by theorists who explained Jesus' death as sacrifice, thus (in their view) ennobling it. This would have been in the early 40's.
- Reflected in Mark, the Jerusalem Gospel (Mark was himself a resident of Jerusalem, and knew the Galilean career of Jesus only at second hand),¹⁷ at about that time. (The latest material in Mark is c45). Still in the early 40's.
- Perhaps known to Paul as early as 1 Thess 1:10b, "Jesus, who delivereth from the wrath to come,"¹⁸ but if so, it has not yet eclipsed the older salvation scenario (2:12 "to the end that ye should walk worthily of God;" 4:3 "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication"). This takes us to the year 51, the probable date of 1 Thess.
- Increasingly adopted by Paul as central to his view of salvation, and argued as such in 1 Cor 5:7f, Gal 1:3f, and the passages of Romans above quoted. Survivals of the repentance and forgiveness idea persist (Rom 2:4, 2 Cor 7:10) simply as part of Paul's inherited doctrine. This takes us to about the year 57.
- Vigorous and animated response to Paul by Jacob, probably also in c57.¹⁹

The rise and spread of the Atonement doctrine thus covers something like 15 years, beginning from Jerusalem and moving outward.²⁰ It was controversial when it did appear. Efforts were apparently made, in editing Paul's letters, to damp down this all too divisive controversy between Alpha and Beta Christians.²¹

7. Date

The c57 skirmish with Paul is the latest datable event in the formation of Jacob; everything else is earlier. Jacob reflects the crisis of the rich, which also registers in late passages in Mark. The bulk of Jacob must be earlier than these two encounters, and should be ascribed at minimum to the early 40's, or quite possibly to the late 30's. This agrees with the conclusion earlier reached, that the formation period of Jacob is parallel to Mark at its early end, and earlier than Luke at its later end.

The purpose of Jacob was to guide the churches between visits of itinerant preachers; it is intrinsically a text of the Apostolic Age. The end of that Age, with the deaths of Paul (c60) and Peter (c64), opened a new era, when the churches organized themselves around their own leaders, as the post-Pauline Pastoral Epistles authorize. The Epistle of Jacob would have had little function in that different context.

¹⁷The knowledge of Jerusalem, and of details of Jesus' days there, imply a Jerusalem author for Mark. The vagueness of Mark's Galilee information agrees with that Jerusalem location.

¹⁸1 Thess 5:9f "through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us" may be interpolated.

¹⁹Commentators have hesitated to acknowledge this tension within Christianity, but the similarity in wording and example, and the sense of engagement on both sides, I believe, make this interpretation inevitable. Neither Paul nor Jacob is talking in abstract terms.

²⁰Nothing in this Jewish concept of atoning sacrifice implies derivation from Greco-Roman civilization. It is otherwise with Paul's conception of baptism, which involves participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus; in effect, a baptism in blood (1 Cor 10:16), and not, as with John the Baptist and the first Christians, a symbol of forgiveness gained by repentance.

²¹Such as the insertion of Alpha material into Gal 5:13–6:10 see Brooks **Two** 43.

8. Influence

It has been claimed that Jacob and the late Synoptics draw on “early paraenetic tradition.” I here suggest that this Epistle, which on its own account was distributed to churches around the Mediterranean world, *is itself* that early paraenetic tradition.

If so – if Jacob was the newsletter of early Christianity; addressed not to one church but to all the local churches for guidance between visits from circuit preachers, the people whose interim manual of procedure was the Didache – then traces of it should be visible in later Christian writings. And they are. Here are a few:²²

Jacob	Later Texts
• Ja 1:2-4	= Rom 5:3 we rejoice in our sufferings
• Ja 2:5	= 1 Cor 1:27 God chose the foolish to shame the wise
• Ja 3:12	= Mt 7:16 no fig tree yields . . .
• Ja 5:12	= Mt 5:37 let your oaths be Yea and Nay
• Ja 5:19f	= Jude 22 [both end with advice about erring brothers]

Often noted parallels between Jacob and such late texts as 1 and 2 Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas (all written in Rome) do not imply a Roman origin for Jacob. The Epistle is a general letter, and was sent to churches all over the Mediterranean world. Its influence will very naturally have soaked into the tradition of those early churches, both in Rome and elsewhere.

Parallels between Jacob and the Qumran documents²³ are probably best interpreted as implying a common background in contemporary Jewish paraenesis.

9. Author

The usual choice is the Lord’s Brother, who was prominent at Jerusalem some time after the killing of the liberal Jacob of Zebedee. The liberal Jacob had decided that Gentiles need not keep Jewish food rules (thus legitimizing shared meals), but the conservative Lord’s Brother later sent agents to Antioch to reverse that liberal ruling, and once again, in effect, forbid communal meals including both Jews and Gentiles.²⁴ It was this reversal (and Cephas’ submission to it) that so enraged Paul in Gal 2:11-14.

The good Greek²⁵ of the Epistle has been thought to argue against Jacob the Brother as its author.²⁶ And it does. That literary Greek was taught in Galilee does not prove that the Brother learned it. The likely author is Jacob of Alphaeus, listed in Mark among the Twelve, probably the brother of Levi of Alphaeus. Levi was a tax collector: not merely literate, but *functional as an official* in a Greek-speaking bureaucracy.

²²For the web of similarities between Jacob and 1 Peter, see Johnson 54f

²³See Versepnt. Similarly, Harris has shown that the core of the Two Ways text is a Jewish prayer; see Brooks **Two**. The c57 date for the last layer of Jacob precludes influence from other texts with which it has also been compared: Matthew, Luke, Hebrews, 1 Clement, and Hermas.

²⁴The riddle of the two Jacobs, in my view, has been solved by Beare **Sequence** 305f.

²⁵Or sometimes even playful Greek; see Yoder **φᾰῦλος**.

²⁶See eg Dibelius 17; Easton 6, Allison 19. A similar argument occurs with the authorship of 1 Peter, which is written in a conspicuously literate Greek, and for that reason is also best considered as not a work of the person with whom it identifies itself.

For Jacob the brother of Levi, with the same advantages of upbringing as Levi, writing literate Greek would present no problem. As Levi's brother, Jacob may have succeeded him as office manager in Galilee. This would make him the obvious person to direct the affairs of the scattered churches between apostolic visits. His membership in the earliest Christianity contrasts with Jacob the Brother's hostility to Jesus in his lifetime (Mk 3:31f) and his hostility toward Gentile converts, and to accommodations of doctrine made in their behalf, in the Brother's own years of power (Gal 2:12).

10. Envoi

I will give the last word to Joseph Mayor: "I have endeavored to show that the Epistle is a natural product of pre-Pauline Christianity" (page clxxxix). Precisely so. A pre-Pauline Christianity that ends in a shouting match with Pauline Christianity.

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