

**THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES;
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES**

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The Epistle of St. James; with an introduction and notes by R. J. Knowling

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R. J. KNOWLING

**THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES;
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES**

WESTMINSTER COMMENTARIES

EDITED BY WALTER LOCK, D.D.

IRVING PROFESSOR OF THE EXEGESIS
OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

THE EPISTLE
OF
ST JAMES

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James
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OF
ST JAMES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY
R. J. KNOWLING, D.D.

THIRD EDITION

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PREFATORY NOTE BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

THE primary object of these Commentaries is to be exegetical, to interpret the meaning of each book of the Bible in the light of modern knowledge to English readers. The Editors will not deal, except subordinately, with questions of textual criticism or philology; but taking the English text in the Revised Version as their basis, they will aim at combining a hearty acceptance of critical principles with loyalty to the Catholic Faith.

The series will be less elementary than the Cambridge Bible for Schools, less critical than the International Critical Commentary, less didactic than the Expositor's Bible; and it is hoped that it may be of use both to theological students and to the clergy, as well as to the growing number of educated laymen and laywomen who wish to read the Bible intelligently and reverently.

Each commentary will therefore have

(i) An Introduction stating the bearing of modern criticism and research upon the historical character of the book, and drawing out the contribution which the book, as a whole, makes to the body of religious truth.

(ii) A careful paraphrase of the text with notes on the more difficult passages and, if need be, excursuses on any

points of special importance either for doctrine, or ecclesiastical organisation, or spiritual life.

But the books of the Bible are so varied in character that considerable latitude is needed, as to the proportion which the various parts should hold to each other. The General Editor will therefore only endeavour to secure a general uniformity in scope and character: but the exact method adopted in each case and the final responsibility for the statements made will rest with the individual contributors.

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WALTER LOCK

PREFACE

IN preparing this edition of the *Epistle of St James* I have tried to keep in view the primary objects of the Westminster Commentaries, and the various classes of readers for whom they are intended. During the passing of these pages through the press, the recent attacks upon the Epistle have received a prompt and vigorous reply from the veteran Professor, Dr Bernhard Weiss, of the University of Berlin. The force and firmness of this reply (to which frequent reference will be found) and the fact that it comes from a scholar of such eminence may well administer a rebuke to those English writers who apparently think that, in their inconsiderate objections to the traditional views of the Church, they may claim the support of every German critic of learning and status.

It is a pleasant duty to express my most grateful thanks to Dr Lock for his many and valuable suggestions, and for his ungrudging care in the revision of the proofs.

R. J. KNOWLING

Sept. 1904

INTRODUCTION

SPECIAL interest must always be felt in a book to which so many able critics assign the earliest place amongst New Testament writings, and in an author who possibly shared in the earthly life and home of our Lord. Such high claims, however, have naturally been subjected to a close examination, and often to a keen opposition, and it is not the purpose of the present Introduction to assume their validity.

I. At first sight, indeed, it might seem that nothing could be more natural than the assumption that the author of this Epistle was a Jew, and that his readers were of Jewish nationality. But as even this assumption is refused to us by some phases of recent criticism, it may be well to note a few of the grounds upon which we believe it to be justified. Thus we might lay stress upon the difficulty in interpreting the address of the letter, ch. i. 1, in a symbolical or spiritual sense (see note *in loco*); or upon the expressions 'Abraham our father,' ii. 21, 'Lord of Sabaoth,' v. 4, comp. Isaiah v. 9; upon the knowledge which the writer presupposes in his readers of the history of Job and the prophets, v. 11, 17; and of Elijah's prayer as a type of successful prayer (see note on v. 17); upon his own knowledge of Jewish formulae in the use of oaths, and of the current disposition to indulge in reckless cursing and swearing, iii. 9, v. 12; upon his employment of the word 'synagogue' for the place of meeting for worship, ii. 2¹; upon the emphasis with which

¹ Dr Grafe, *Die Stellung und Bedeutung des Jakobusbriefes*, 1904, maintains that the word was used for religious pagan associations in Greece, but according to Schürer this was not strictly so, as the word was used rather for the yearly festal assemblies of such associations. But this usage does not alter the significance of the word by St James; see note on ii. 2.

Dr Grafe also tries to weaken the force of the expression 'Lord of Sabaoth' on the ground that it would be known to Gentile as well as to Jewish Christians. But the point is that the expression is used only by St James in the N.T. In Romans ix. 29 it is found in a quotation from Isaiah i. 9.

he refers to the Jewish Law, ii. 9-11, iv. 11, 12, and to the primary article of the Jewish Creed, ii. 19¹.

But in addition to these instances, the cumulative force of which it is difficult to ignore, we may also lay stress upon the general representation which the letter gives us of the social conditions of those for whom it was intended. It is remarkable, for example, that no reference is made to the relationship between masters and slaves. A St Peter or a St Paul, on the other hand, in addressing mixed Churches constantly dwelt upon this social relationship. It is quite true that in a Jewish-Christian document, which is in many respects akin to this Epistle of St James, the *Didache*, reference is made to the bondservant and handmaid in iv. 10, 11, i.e. in a part of the work which may carry us back to a very early date². But it is evident from the context that both masters and servants are regarded as servants of the One God, and that no relationship such as that of Christian servant and heathen master is contemplated. In this connection, too, we may note the vivid picture, iv. 13, of the eager life of commerce and gain, and yet of the comparative homelessness of the traders, a life so characteristic of the Jews always, and specially of those of the Diaspora, facilitated as it was by the easy means of communication throughout the Empire in the days of the early Church³.

¹ On the force of the expression 'do they not blaspheme?' ii. 7, as pointing most probably to unbelieving Jews blaspheming the Name of Christ, see note in *loco*.

Beyschlag draws attention to the fact that the expression 'Abraham our father,' ii. 21, is not explained in any spiritual sense as in Rom. iv. 1. See also on the possible Jewish liturgical formulae in i. 12, ii. 5, Dr Chase, *The Lord's Prayer in the Early Church*, p. 18.

² This document was first published in 1883, although it had been discovered in Constantinople some ten years earlier. In the first part, Ch. i-vi., in which it will be noted that most of the parallels to St James's Epistle are found (see note on p. xiv.), we have probably a series of moral instructions which were originally Jewish, but which with some additions were adopted for use in certain Jewish-Christian communities. The greater part of this portion of the work may have been in use probably in a written form as early as 70 A.D. amongst Christians (Art. 'Didache' in Hastings' *D. B.* v. pp. 444, 448, by J. V. Bartlet, and *Apostolic Age*, pp. 515, 517, by the same writer). In any case there is good reason for placing the *Didache* in its present form at the close of the first century, see Bishop of Worcester, *Church and the Ministry*, p. 417. For English readers an article on the *Didache* by Dr Harnack at the end of vol. i. of Schaff and Herzog's *Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge* will be of interest. Although inclined to date the document in its present form as late as 120-165 A.D., Dr Harnack allows that some of its sources are very old, and he sees in the first part, Ch. i-vi., a catechism of Jewish origin for the instruction of proselytes, which passed over into the Christian Church, and was used as an address at Baptism.

³ See Professor Ramsay, *Expositor*, 1903, on 'Travel and Correspondence among the Early Christians.'