

## The Epistle of James

The central thought of God is to have Christ as His expression through the church (Col. 1:15, 19; Eph 1:22-23; 3:10). Christ is the embodiment and expression of the Triune God (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3), and the church is the enlargement and expression of Christ (John 12:24; Eph. 1:23). In order to obtain what He desires, God has an economy, a plan, which is to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen and redeemed people (v. 10; 3:9). In the New Testament the fourteen Epistles of Paul fully unveil God's economy (Col. 1:25), each covering a particular aspect of this revelation. The remaining Epistles, from James through Jude, further unveil God's economy but in a supplementary way, by adding to, extending, and strengthening certain matters that have already been mentioned but giving them more extensive attention. Thus, the Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude focus on subjects that Paul's Epistles deal with only in a subsidiary way.<sup>1</sup>

In the Fall 2009 issue of *Affirmation & Critique*, for example, "Touchstones" looked at the subject of the government of God in the Epistles of Peter (85-89). Although Paul refers to the government of God in his Epistles (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:5-11; 2:3; 4:1; 6:8; 10:27-31, 39; 12:29; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 4:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10), Peter develops this subject in a fuller way. Nevertheless, even though he is dealing with a supplementary matter, Peter's writing is according to the main focus of God's economy. In his Epistles we see the Triune God's operation to accomplish a complete salvation for His chosen people in order that He may have a dwelling place and that we might be glorified to express Him.

The Epistle of James supplements the revelation of the New Testament in the matter of practical Christian perfection. Although Paul speaks about this on many occasions (Rom. 12:9—15:13; Gal. 6:1-10; Eph. 4:25—6:20; Phil. 4:5-9; Col. 3:12—4:6; 1 Thes. 4:1-12; 5:12-22; 1 Tim. 2:1—3:16; 5:1—6:10; Titus 2:1—3:2; Heb. 13:1-19), James presents this matter in a way that is both "distinguished and remarkable" (Recovery Version, James 1:4, note 1). James emphasizes practical Christian perfection so that the believers might be "perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (v. 4). Moreover, as part of the New Testament, the Epistle of James also contributes to the revelation of God's economy, briefly alluding to some significant touchstones of God's economy.

### Practical Christian Perfection in James

According to James, practical Christian perfection is to have a Christian conduct that is perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. This is illustrated by the perfection of Abraham's faith when he offered up Isaac: "You see that faith worked together with his works, and by these works faith was perfected" (2:22). James reveals that it is not sufficient for Christians merely to proclaim that they have the faith in order to be justified by God. Faith must also be demonstrated by the fruit borne in their living, that is, their works: "I will show you my faith by my works" (v. 18). Therefore, believers must not only pursue faith, but they must also confirm this faith by practical Christian perfection.

Among the many virtues of Christian perfection covered in this book, of particular prominence is the virtue of asking God for wisdom (1:5-8; 3:13-18). James himself must have received wisdom from the divine source through his seeking by prayer, for the entire book shows his wisdom and experience in matters concerning human life. Moreover, 5:13-18 testifies of the importance that he places on prayer. In 1:6 he uses the surge of the sea to illustrate a doubting heart, and in verse 10, the flower of the grass to portray the fading of a rich person. In verse 11 he uses the sun in the heavens with its scorching heat to illustrate the factor that causes riches to fade under God's governmental dealing. Then in verse 17 he uses the turning of the planets to illustrate variability, which is in contrast to the invariableness of God the Father. In dealing with the problem of the tongue in 3:3-12, James uses twenty different things as illustrations: the bridles of horses, the rudders of ships, a wildfire, the world of unrighteousness, fire from Gehenna, the wheel of birth, beasts, birds, reptiles, creatures of the sea, the human nature, a restless evil, a deadly poison, a spring, a fig tree, olives, a vine, figs, salt (bitter) water, and sweet water. In 4:14 he uses vapor to portray the brief appearing of our life, and in 5:7-8, the farmer's long-suffering to teach us how to await the Lord's coming.

James's wisdom reminds us of Solomon, the wise king in the Old Testament, who spoke three thousand proverbs and discoursed about trees, from the lofty cedar to the tiny hyssop, and about animals, birds, creeping things,

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and fish (1 Kings 4:29-34). However, although James was rich in wisdom concerning human life, it seems that he was lacking in wisdom concerning the divine economy. His view of Christian perfection was under the influence of Old Testament precepts concerning human behavior, morality, and ethics (Prov. 4:5-9). Such wisdom does not attain to the height of the wisdom concerning the hidden mystery of God's New Testament economy regarding Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ (1 Cor. 2:6-8; Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4, 9-11; 5:32); it does not compare to God's wisdom, which is Christ given to the believers for their righteousness, sanctification, and redemption in God's complete salvation (1 Cor. 1:30). Moreover, it is a wisdom of divine gift, not wisdom obtained by the exercise of a spirit of wisdom and revelation and through the understanding of an enlightened heart that knows the hope of God's calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of the resurrection power in Christ that is being transmitted to the church (Eph. 1:17-23). Nevertheless, his wisdom enabled James to portray matters that concern the practical Christian life.

### Touchstones of God's Economy in James

In addition to his wisdom related to practical Christian perfection, James briefly touches some matters that are central to God's economy including the divine birth, the indwelling Spirit, and the local expression of the church. The divine birth, through which we receive the divine life, is the first of three touchstones of God's economy in this Epistle. Chapter 1 verse 18 says, "He brought us forth by the word of truth, purposing that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." *He* refers to the Father of lights in verse 17, a title that denotes God as the Creator of the universe, and here, specifically, He is the Creator of the heavenly luminaries. Unlike these variable, shadow-casting lights, such as the moon, whose light wanes as it revolves, and the sun that can be eclipsed, with God there is no variableness or shadow cast by turning. He is not variable or changeable; He is incapable of being tempted, and He does not tempt anyone. *The word of truth* is the word of the divine reality of what the Triune God is (John 1:14, 17), and this word is the seed of life, by which we have been regenerated (1 Pet. 1:23). Through God's begetting, we become "firstfruits." This contrasts to the begetting of sin (the source of darkness) that brings forth death in James 1:15. The Father of lights brought us forth to be the firstfruits of His creatures, "full of the vigorous life that matures first. This refers to the divine birth, our regeneration (John 3:5, 6), which is carried out according to God's eternal purpose" (Recovery Version, James 1:18, note 1). We are firstfruits "of His creatures," signifying that God will renew His entire creation to have a new heaven and a new earth with the New Jerusalem as the

center (Rev. 21:1-2). Our receiving of the divine life is for us to live a life of practical Christian perfection, which one day will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the living center of God's eternal new universe.

In speaking of the Father's regeneration, James refers to the renewing of God's creation in the new heaven and the new earth in the future. However, the significance of regeneration in the eternal purpose of God has greater implications than merely the renewing of God's material creation in the future. For a deeper understanding of the significance of our being begotten of God we must look to the other Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John. These reveal that the significance of regeneration is to make us living members of the church, the Body of Christ, for God's corporate expression in Christ. Each of the apostles has a particular emphasis concerning this point:

Paul focuses on Christ living and being formed in us (Gal. 2:20; 4:19) and Christ being magnified in us and lived out of us (Phil. 1:20-21) that we as the church, His Body, may become His fullness, His expression (Eph. 1:22-23). Peter stresses the fact that God regenerated us through the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3), making us partakers of His divine nature, that we may live a life of godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-7) and be built up as a spiritual house to express His virtues (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). John emphasizes the eternal life, given to us for our fellowship with the Triune God (1 John 1:2-3), and the divine birth, which brings into us the divine life as the divine seed that we may live out a life that is like God (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:17) and be the church, a lampstand, which bears the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:9, 11-12) and which will consummate in the New Jerusalem for God's expression unto eternity (Rev. 21:2-3, 10-11). (Recovery Version, James 1:26, note 1)

The renewing of the physical creation, wonderful though it will be, is of minor importance in God's purpose compared to the believers' being born of God to be His sons with His divine life and nature for the corporate expression of God today in the church that will consummate the New Jerusalem in eternity (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:14; Eph. 1:5, 22-23; Rev. 21:7).

The second touchstone of God's economy in James is the indwelling Spirit. Chapter 4 verse 5 says, "Do you think that the Scripture says in vain: The Spirit, whom He has caused to dwell in us, longs to envy?" The Spirit here is the Triune God Himself, who in Christ has been processed and consummated through incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to become the life-giving, all-inclusive Spirit of the processed and consummated Triune God (John 7:39; 20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17).

This consummated Spirit is the One whom God "has

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caused to dwell in us.” The Spirit “has been caused to make His permanent home in us” (Wuest 545) by occupying our entire being for God, causing us to be wholly for Him. The Spirit’s indwelling here corresponds to Christ’s being in us in Romans 8:10, Christ’s being formed in us in Galatians 4:19, Christ’s making His home in our hearts in Ephesians 3:17, God’s operating in us in Philippians 2:13, and the Triune God’s dispensing of Himself as life into our tripartite being in Romans 8:2, 6, and 10-11.

James says that God’s Spirit within us “longs to envy” (4:5). This refers to the jealousy of a husband for his spouse. God desires to be a Husband and His chosen people to be His wife (Isa. 54:5). Hence, Christ is our Bridegroom (Eph. 5:31-32), and the consummated Spirit is our Bridegroom (Rev. 22:17). The indwelling Spirit as our Bridegroom longs to envy, because it is possible that we may be adulteresses and enemies of God through friendship with the world (James 4:4). The world is against God (1 John 2:15). Concerning the world we should be chaste and love God with our entire being. If our heart is divided by loving the world, we will surely be adulteresses.

When God acquired us to be His spouse, He put His Spirit into us to make us one with Him (1 Cor. 6:19, 16-17). He is a jealous God (Exo. 20:5), and His Spirit is jealous over us with the jealousy of God (2 Cor. 11:2), longing, jealously desiring, that we not make friends with His enemy and be His lover at the same time. (Recovery Version, James 4:5, note 1)

In chapter 4 James, like the apostle John in 1 John 2, deals with the three major enemies of the believers: the flesh—implied by our pleasures that war—in verse 1, the world in verse 4, and the devil in verse 7. These are related to one another: the flesh is against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17), the world is against God (1 John 2:15), and the devil is against Christ (3:8). “The flesh indulges in pleasures by loving the world, and the world usurps us for the devil. This annihilates God’s eternal purpose in us” (Recovery Version, James 4:7, note 3). In order to deal with the world, James speaks of the Spirit within us, who longs to envy, and John points to the word of God, which needs to abide in us. In the matter of overcoming the world, James sets forth the negative function of the Spirit, who longs to envy over us, against the world, for our undivided love, whereas John shows the positive aspect of the word’s supply, which strengthens us with the divine riches (1 John 2:14-17).

The third and final touchstone of God’s economy in James is the church, mentioned in 5:14: “Is anyone among you ill? 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.” This reference is to the church in its local aspect because the church here has elders who can be called for by a sick member.

There are two aspects of the church revealed in the New Testament. The universal aspect is revealed in Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-27, 29, and 32. This aspect of the church refers to the unique Body of Christ, including all believers in Christ in time and place. The local aspect is revealed in Matthew 18:17; Acts 8:1; 13:1; Romans 16:1, 4-5; 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 3:15; and Revelation 1:11 and 20. These passages reveal the local church as the unique expression of the one Body of Christ in a certain locality. After the Lord Jesus said that He would build His universal church in Matthew 16:18, He set forth the way to solve a problem between two of His members (18:17). If a matter cannot be resolved between them alone, and if it cannot be resolved upon the testimony of two or three witnesses, it can be brought to the church

for judgment. Here, the church is a definite entity that can be located. In the light of Acts 11:30 and the Epistles in general, such matters can be brought to the representatives of the church, the elders.

In James 5:14 the church is spoken of in a way that strongly confirms the fact that New Testament believers should meet together locally to practice the life of the Body of Christ in oneness. James 5:14 speaks about members who are sick and in need of the church’s prayer for healing. Whom should they call on? In the church there are elders who are representatives of the church to members in need of practical assistance. This indicates that the believers were practicing the local aspect of the church as the Lord revealed in Matthew 18:17.

In this reference to the church there is also an important principle concerning church government, that is, that the leadership of a local church is invested in a group of elders, not in one individual. This principle is maintained consistently in the New Testament. In Acts 14:23 the apostles appointed elders (plural) in every church (singular), and in Acts 20:17 Paul calls for the elders of the church in Ephesus to come to him. When Paul speaks of elders, he also addresses them as overseers (v. 28), proving that *overseers* and *elders* refer to the same persons. This is contrary to the writings of Ignatius, who erroneously taught that an

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overseer (bishop) is above an elder. In Philippians 1:1 Paul writes to the saints in Philippi, a local church, “with the overseers and deacons.” The plurality of the elders safeguards the church from many evils and affords many opportunities to learn spiritual lessons and to testify of the reality of the Body of Christ. Watchman Nee mentions this when speaking about the appointment of elders in *The Normal Christian Church Life*:

In Scripture we see that there was always more than one elder or bishop in a local church. It is not God’s will that one believer should be singled out from all the others to occupy a place of special prominence, while the others passively submit to his will. If the management of the entire church rests upon one man, how easy it is for him to become self-conceited, esteeming himself above measure and suppressing the other brethren (3 John). God has ordained that several elders together share the work of the church, so that no one individual should be able to run things according to his own pleasure, treating the church as his own special property and leaving the impress of his personality upon all its life and work. To place the responsibility in the hands of several brethren, rather than in the hands of one individual, is God’s way of safeguarding His church against the evils that result from the domination of a strong personality. God has purposed that several brothers should unitedly bear responsibility in the church, so that even in controlling its affairs they have to depend one upon the other and submit one to the other. Thus, in an experimental way, they will discover the meaning of bearing the cross, and they will have opportunity to give practical expression to the truth of the Body of Christ. As they honor one another and trust one another to the leading of the Spirit, none taking the place of the Head, but each regarding the others as fellow members, the element of mutuality, which is the distinctive feature of the church, will be preserved. (49-50)

### The Background of the Epistle of James

However, there is also a particular background to this Epistle that must be recognized in order to adequately interpret this book. Most of the New Testament Epistles were written with a particular background, and in order to interpret these books it is important to study their backgrounds. For example, Paul wrote to the Galatians because Judaizing believers were troubling them, trying to bring them under the law. He wrote to the Colossians because Greek philosophy, particularly aspects of Gnosticism, was threatening to invade the church there. These negative factors burdened Paul to write and resulted in the release of many riches of Christ that might not otherwise have been made so clear to the church. In Galatians Christ is set forth as the Son of God revealed in us, living in us, being formed in us to replace the law, and being versus man’s religion and tradition (1:16; 2:20;

4:19; 3:24-26; 4:3-5; 1:14-16). In Colossians Christ is revealed as the all-inclusive One, who has the first place in all things as the mystery and embodiment of God, the Head and constituent of the church, the allotted portion, life, constituent, and hope of the saints, and the body (reality) of all positive things (1:15-18; 2:2, 9; 1:18-19, 12; 3:4, 11; 1:27; 2:17).

The Epistle of James also has a particular background. However, this background differs from the other Epistles in that it involves the writer’s background. James did not see that when Christ came, the age of the law was over (John 1:17; Rom. 7:1-6; 8:3-4; Gal. 3:23-25). Instead, he mixed items from the dispensation of the law with God’s New Testament economy. The history of the church in the New Testament shows this to be the case. In Galatians 2:11-14 some, who came from James, negatively influenced Peter and Barnabas to momentarily forsake the truth of the gospel and practice hypocrisy by separating themselves from the Gentile believers. In Acts 15:21 James’s own words indicate that he was still under the influence of the Mosaic law. Moreover, in Acts 21:23-24 James directed Paul to participate in a Nazarite vow according to the Mosaic law (Num. 6:2-5). At the completion of this vow, Paul would have had to offer an animal sacrifice in the temple (Acts 21:13-21). However, he was rescued from this by the uproar of the Jews against him (vv. 27-30).

In God’s sovereignty James wrote an Epistle of the New Testament. Just as the New Testament record of James’s life demonstrates that he failed to fully forsake Judaism and enter into the New Testament economy, his Epistle also manifests aspects of this failure. James made a grave mistake by failing to give up items that belonged to God’s Old Testament dispensation while embracing the New Testament faith (2:1; cf. Acts 15 and 21). In doing so, his writing demonstrates a mixture of the Old and New Testament dispensations. This background is clearly evident in his Epistle. In reading this Epistle we should not be those who are “inexperienced in the word” but instead be those who “have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil” (Heb. 5:13-14). In this verse “good and evil” refer not to the moral nature of things but to what is superior in contrast to what is inferior). By honestly confronting this background, not ignoring or denying it, we will gain much profit in the matter of God’s eternal economy when reading the Epistle of James, and our spiritual faculties will indeed be exercised and able to distinguish more accurately the divine revelation in the New Testament. We will also have a keener discernment to differentiate the matters that belong to God’s New Testament dispensation from those that belong only to the Old Testament dispensation, which should be put aside. The following instances demonstrate that James was not clear about the distinction between

the dispensations of law and grace and that the dispensation of law was over.<sup>2</sup>

First, James addresses the Jewish believers to whom he writes as “the twelve tribes” (1:1). These are New Testament believers, whom James acknowledges are of the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ (2:1), justified by faith (v. 24), regenerated by the word of truth (1:18), indwelt by the Spirit of God (4:5), and members of the church (5:14). But he describes them using a term that denotes God’s people, the Jews, under the old covenant (Acts 26:7; Luke 22:30). This indicates that he did not see that in the New Testament God had delivered and separated the Jewish believers in Christ from the Jewish people, who in God’s eyes had become a crooked generation (Acts 2:40). In God’s New Testament economy the church is distinct and separate from both Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:32).

Second, James appraises the law of Moses highly and fails to see that in the New Testament the law is over and has been replaced by grace. In James 1:25 he speaks of the law as “the perfect law, the law of freedom.” Some consider that these terms refer not to the Mosaic law but to the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), which is the inner law of life (Heb. 8:10; Rom. 8:2). However, in his Epistle James uses the same term *the law of freedom* again in 2:12, and this time there is no ambiguity. Verses 8 through 11 clearly show that he is talking about the Old Testament law, because he speaks of the “royal law” from Leviticus 19:18 and of the commandments from Exodus 20:13-14. James’s description of the law as “the perfect law” and “the law of freedom” may be derived from Psalms 19:7-8 and 119:11. In James 1:25 he blesses the one who “looks into” this perfect law of freedom; the sense of this word is of one “who with eagerness and concentration has pored over the perfect law” (Wuest 541). Whereas the New Testament reveals that the dispensation of the law is over (John 1:17), that the law can do nothing to perfect us (Heb. 7:19), and that to keep the works of the law is to be in the flesh (Gal. 3:2-3), James seems to consider the Old Testament law as a primary means of practical Christian perfection, alongside the divine life received through regeneration and the indwelling Spirit.

Third, in his Epistle James speaks positively of the Christian’s conduct as being religious and as religion (1:26-27). The word *religion* refers to ceremonial service and worship to God (implying the fear of God). These terms are used only twice elsewhere in the New

Testament: in a general sense in Acts 26:5 and negatively in Colossians 2:18 for the worship of angels. According to Vincent, the adjective *religious* refers to “a zealous and diligent performance of religious services” (735). James must have been very religious and still under the background of the old Judaic religion, the primary elements of which were to worship God by ceremonies and to live a life in the fear of God. This is proved by his words in Acts 21:20-24 and James 2:2-11. “Because his spiritual sight was covered by Judaism, he could not fully enter into the revelation of God’s New Testament economy as Paul, Peter, and John were able to do” (Recovery Version, James 1:26, note 1).

Fourth, in 2:2 James refers to the meeting place of the believers as “your synagogue.” In the New Testament this word is used to denote both the congregation of the Jews and their congregating place (Acts 13:43; 9:2, Luke 12:11; 7:5).

James’s use of this word here may indicate that the Jewish believers considered their assembly and assembling place as another of the synagogues among the Jews. If so, this bears, as does the whole Epistle, a Jewish character and

may indicate that the Jewish Christians regarded themselves as still a part of the Jewish people, the chosen people of God according to the Old Testament, and that they lacked a clear vision concerning the distinction between God’s chosen people of the Old Testament and the believers in Christ of the New Testament. (Recovery Version, James 2:2, note 1)

Finally, James not only appreciates the law of Moses but expects believers to keep the law and to be doers of the law (v. 10; 4:11). Thus, he does not honor the uniqueness of grace in God’s New Testament economy, and he disregards the distinction between the law, which belongs to a dispensation that has passed, and grace in God’s present dispensation. Such a disregard is a great damage to God’s economical plan for the building up of the church in the age of grace (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:10-17). James tells the believers in his Epistle that they will be judged by the law of Moses (2:12).

However, according to God’s New Testament economy the believers should speak and do things according to the law of life, which transcends the law of letters. They should live according to the law of life. This kind of living surpasses the keeping of the law of letters. The unbelievers will be judged at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15) by the law of letters, which is the law of

James’s life demonstrates that he failed to fully forsake Judaism and enter into the New Testament economy; his Epistle also manifests aspects of this failure.

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Moses; the believers will be judged at Christ's judgement seat (2 Cor. 5:10) by the law of life, which is the law of Christ. (Recovery Version, James 2:12, note 2)

James's words concerning keeping the law indicate that, in his view, the New Testament believers should keep the moral and ethical precepts of the Old Testament law so that they might be perfect according to the law. However, the New Testament reveals that we should live and magnify Christ for the building up of His Body to express Him and for the building up of God's house to satisfy Him (Phil. 1:20-21; Eph. 1:22-23, 1 Tim. 3:15). This is what will accomplish God's eternal purpose as revealed in the New Testament. Even if we could become perfect by keeping the Old Testament law, we would still not reach God's eternal goal.

Only our living by the inner law of life avails for this. Such a living spontaneously and automatically fulfills more than is required under the Old Testament law (Rom. 8:4), even to the standard of the constitution of the kingdom, as revealed in Matt. 5—7. (Recovery Version, James 4:11, note 1)

This is the genuine Christian perfection according to God's New Testament economy.

### Conclusion

By recognizing that the Epistle of James does not make a clear separation between the dispensation of the grace of God and the dispensation of the law, the real benefits of this Epistle are threefold:

First, it supplements the main definition of God's economy as the central revelation of the New Testament with the matter of practical Christian perfection. To be healthy in the Christian life, there is the need for conduct that confirms our living faith and regeneration in the divine life. However, when receiving this charge, we must reject James's appreciation and utilization of the law as the means for achieving this end. Instead, we should look to the other writers of the New Testament to know the content of genuine Christian perfection and how we ought to pursue this as New Testament believers.

Second, it speaks of receiving and enjoying items in God's New Testament economy that are revealed in James. These include being brought forth by the invariable Father to be firstfruits of His creatures, the indwelling Spirit who longs to envy within us for us to overcome the world, and the church in its local aspect. However, for the full knowledge concerning these items of God's economy, we also need the other Epistles in the New Testament.

Third, the negative background in this book warns that it is possible to mix the New Testament economy of God with the elements of the law and religion from our natural background and thereby be seriously hindered from attaining the goal of God's economy in the New Testament. We must sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts (1 Pet. 3:15) by making a complete distinction between the Old Testament law of figures and shadows and the New Testament reality. If we sympathize with James because his writing accords with our natural concept of morality and religious preference, we are in peril of being obscured in our vision, of ending up in a cloud of mixture, and of falling short of the full reality of the New Testament faith. Further, our Christian perfection will not advance beyond the moral and ethical realm of the Old Testament precepts. We will never reach the genuine Christian perfection that can accomplish the goal of God's economy, that is, living and magnifying Christ for His corporate expression in the built-up church as the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

by Jim Batten

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For a full explanation of this understanding, see Witness Lee, *A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 3: Hebrews through Jude*, published by Living Stream Ministry, 1999.

<sup>2</sup>We are not questioning the divine inspiration of the Epistle of James. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), and we receive all twenty-seven books of the New Testament and thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as the God-breathed Scriptures. However, not all the words in the Scriptures, although written through the inspiration of Spirit of God (2 Pet. 1:21), are the words of God; indeed, many are words spoken by persons (including Satan) other than God, e.g., Gen. 3:1, 4-5; Job 3—37; Matt. 16:22; 17:4; and Acts 10:14. Such words are recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for our instruction and enlightenment (see Witness Lee, *Crystallization*, 75-94).

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