

James 4,1-4 in the Light of the Jewish Two Ways Tradition 3,1-6

The close resemblances between the different versions of the Two Ways (including Did 1–6, Barn 18–20 and the *Doctrina Apostolorum*)⁽¹⁾ are generally explained in modern research by their — direct or indirect — dependence upon an earlier Jewish Two Ways document which is no longer known to us. The late David Flusser and I recently attempted to reconstruct this original teaching. Because this source was in Greek, the document may also be called the Greek Two Ways⁽²⁾. For our purpose, it is important to establish that this (hypothetical) version generally reflects the precise wording of the Two Ways in the *Didache*, except for the Christianised sections, 1,3b–2,1 and 6,2-3⁽³⁾. In this paper, therefore, the Christian *Didache* will be followed excluding those parts and details differing from the hypothesized Greek Two Ways.

In the first century of our era, the doctrine of the Two Ways was employed within Christian circles in pre-baptismal instruction⁽⁴⁾. This is explicitly stated in Did 7,1 in a verse that follows right after the rendering of the Two Ways section: “Concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after having previously said these things (ταῦτα πάντα

⁽¹⁾ There are also later recensions of the Two Ways tradition which include church orders, letters, and monastic writings. These recensions are represented by the *Apostolic Church Order*, the *Epitome of the Canons of the Holy Apostles*, the *Life of Shenoute*, the Ps. Athanasian *Syntagma Doctrinae*, and the *Fides CCCXVIII Patrum*.

⁽²⁾ For the above information and a reconstruction of the Greek Two Ways (GTW), see H. VAN DE SANDT – D. FLUSSER, *The Didache. Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (CRI III/5; Assen – Minneapolis 2002) 112-139.

⁽³⁾ In the *Letter of Barnabas* and the *Doctrina Apostolorum* there are no passages that parallel the materials in Did 1,3a–2,1 and Did 6,2-3. For further details on the establishment of an earlier form of the Two Ways and its versions in early Christian literature, see VAN DE SANDT – FLUSSER, *The Didache*, 55-80; 238-270.

⁽⁴⁾ By this I do not mean, however, that the use of the Two Ways teaching was solely restricted to catechetical instruction prior to baptism. That it was used otherwise as well is shown by its insertion into the Letter of Barnabas, which was written to baptized Christians.

προειπόντες), baptize” (7,1)⁽⁵⁾. It makes good sense to assume a baptismal setting influenced James, too, and that some form of Did 1–6 underlies the *Letter of James* to a certain extent. First, Jas 1,21 (stressing the renunciation of all evil) is strikingly similar to 1 Pet 2,1. Since the latter verse belongs to a passage (1,23–2,2) reflecting a baptismal context, a baptismal setting is not unlikely for Jas 1,21 either⁽⁶⁾. Also the statement in Jas 1,18 — about the “word of truth” bringing about a rebirth of God’s creatures — might indicate a similar (baptismal) life-situation (*Sitz im Leben*) as in 1 Pet 1,23⁽⁷⁾. The teaching might have been part of the catechesis for any candidate prior to his or her baptism in James’ community.

The Two Ways may also be the background to the *Letter of James* for another reason. The letter shows a dualistic shape in its teaching and theology. James builds his letter around the polar opposition of two lifestyles, one led in friendship with God, the other in friendship with the world, and this antagonism can be taken as thematic for the composition of James’ letter as a whole (Jas 4,4)⁽⁸⁾. Similar antagonistic wording and clarification is found in the Two Ways.

⁽⁵⁾ As late as in fourth-century Egypt, the Two Ways manual was used as a pre-baptismal teaching and a basic instruction about Christian life to neophytes. See VAN DE SANDT – FLUSSER, *The Didache*, 86-89.

⁽⁶⁾ F. MUSSNER, *Der Jakobusbrief* (HTKNT XIII/1; Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1987) 101; See also W. POPKES, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes* (SBS 125/126; Stuttgart 1986) 176-178; P.H. DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK 1982) 90. For example, the Greek verb ἀποτίθημι (“put aside”) in Jas 1,21 (cf. 1 Pet 2,1) might reflect a baptismal setting. It can be used literally for taking off clothes and laying them aside. In the baptismal ritual clothes were taken off for ritual purification and rebirth into a new life. See also L.T. JOHNSON, *The Letter of James. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York 1995) 201; D.J. MOO, *The Epistle of James. An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK 1985) 80.

⁽⁷⁾ See also Col 1,10; Eph 2,15; 4,21-24; 5,26. Compare K. SYREENI, “The Sermon on the Mount and the Two Ways Teaching of the Didache”, *Matthew and The Didache. Two Documents from the same Jewish-Christian Milieu?* (ed. H. VAN DE SANDT) (Assen – Minneapolis 2005) 91, n. 16.

⁽⁸⁾ Cf. JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 288-289; ID., “Friendship with the World and Friendship with God: A Study of Discipleship in James”, *Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. F. SEGOVIA) (Philadelphia 1985) 166-183; repr. in L.T. JOHNSON, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God. Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK 2004) 202-220; R. BAUCKHAM, *James. Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (New Testament Readings; London – New York 1999) 106; P.J. HARTIN, *James* (Sacra Pagina Series 14; Collegeville, MN 2003) 67-68; DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 161.

In the following study I draw attention to some genuine puzzles in Jas 4,1-4. In order to demonstrate that James had connotations in mind related to vocabulary and ideas in the Two Ways, these obscurities will be clarified in the light of Did 3,1-6. Before continuing, however, one final point should be made with regard to the nature of the *Letter of James*. The writing does not seem to respond to the specific problems and needs of a particular community⁽⁹⁾ although certain impressions with respect to those addressed do emerge. The simple and natural way in which James refers to Jewish law presumes that his readers are familiar with it and its relevance to them. At the same time, nothing is said about the Gentiles and the need to receive them into the community. Apparently the relationship of the Jesus movement to the Gentiles does not amount to a problem or issue for him. The letter appears to be communicating generally with Jewish-Christian congregations in the diaspora.

1. *Three Problems in Jas 4,1-4*

Jas 4,1-4 poses three particularly tantalizing problems. There is the initial problem as to why James refers to wars (πόλεμοι) and battles (μάχαι) in 4,1-2? Is he referencing political or national conflicts? One could consider these verses a warning against membership in a Zealotic revolutionary force meant to kill prominent Romans. Yet it is doubtful whether reference is made here to external conflicts because it does not match with James' suggestion that he is addressing problems within the community (ἐν ὑμῖν). Is he, then, referring to troubles disrupting intra-Christian fellowship? Is it an accusation directed toward concrete circumstances within a community? Such an interpretation fails to fit the preceding and following contexts. For would someone who is inclined to use physical force and outrageous violence be rebuked by James merely for neglecting prayers or praying wrongly⁽¹⁰⁾?

The harsh statement "you murder" is the second puzzling expression. It is even more difficult to understand than the concrete reference to wars and battles since it seems intolerably extreme when written to a congregation of Christians⁽¹¹⁾. Is it a statement about a

⁽⁹⁾ Cf. BAUCKHAM, *James*, 26-28.

⁽¹⁰⁾ M. DIBELIUS, *James*. A Commentary on the Epistle of James (Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1975) 218.

⁽¹¹⁾ Jas 5,6 probably is not a parallel to 4,1-3 as the verse condemns those who are clearly outside the community. Cf also MOO, *The Epistle of James*, 141.

verbal argument, private violence or national conflict? How can one seriously accuse Christian members of the community or the community as a whole of actual murder⁽¹²⁾? Moreover, “you murder” neither fits well with the following “you are envious” (ζηλοῦτε) which sounds slightly out of place after an accusation of an outrageous crime. Erasmus resolved the difficulty by offering a text-critical emendation. He proposed altering “you murder” (φονεύετε) to “you are jealous” (φθονεῖτε)⁽¹³⁾. This might seem an appropriate conjecture since the words φθόνος - ζῆλος are often found paired in biblical and early-Christian literature (1 Macc 8,16; TestXII.Sim 2,7; 4,5; Gal 5,21; 1 Clem 3,2; 4,7.13; 5,2)⁽¹⁴⁾. On the other hand, appeals to textual emendation should always be a last option. There is no textual support whatsoever for this solution since all manuscripts attest to the present reading⁽¹⁵⁾.

The third difficulty regards the sudden address of the μοιχαλίδες (“adulteresses”) in 4,4. How can this diction be explained? The abrupt transition to the feminine vocative describes the community as being an adulterous generation. Indeed, there are many OT references where Israel is presented as God’s unfaithful wife denounced in prophetic books (Ezek 16,38; 23,45) but a marriage of God metaphor is found

⁽¹²⁾ “Every attempt to make sense of ‘you kill’ (*phoneuete*) as it stands in the traditional text produces an intolerable climax...”; cf. J.B. ADAMSON, *The Epistle of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 1976) 167.

⁽¹³⁾ “Non video quid illud verbum *occiditis* ad sensum faciat. Forte scriptum fuit, φθονεῖτε et ζηλοῦτε, id est ‘Invidetis et aemulamini, et non potestis consequi’, ut scriptor dormitans pro φθονεῖτε scripserit φονεύετε; ...” (“I do not see how this word *you kill* makes sense here. Perhaps there was written φθονεῖτε and ζηλοῦτε, that is, ‘you are jealous and you seek, and you cannot obtain’, and so [I conclude that] a sleeping scribe wrote φονεύετε instead of φθονεῖτε; ...”); for text and translation, see J.L.H. KRANS, *Beyond What Is Written. Erasmus and Beza as Conjectural Critics of the New Testament* (Diss.; Zutphen 2004) 112; for information about the conjecture’s reception history, see *ibid.*, 113 and n. 118.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The terms φθόνος and ζῆλος are often used interchangeably as well; cf. JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 271; DIBELIUS, *James*, 217-218; DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 158, 163-164; MOO, *The Epistle of James*, 145; HARTIN, *James*, 192; and M.A. JACKSON-MCCABE, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James. The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom* (NTS 100; Leiden – Boston – Köln 2001) 203-204.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Cf. DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 158; HARTIN, *James*, 197. Various other explanations have been offered: G. KITTEL, “Der geschichtliche Ort des Jakobusbriefes”, *ZNW* 41 (1942) 71-105; esp. 87; P.J. HARTIN, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (JSNTSS 47; Sheffield 1991) 165, n. 2; S. LAWS, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (BNTC 18; London 1980) 171; JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 277.

nowhere else in James. Such symbolic language would differ from the imagery in the rest of the letter where it is precisely friendship and not marriage which is emphasized. James' readers can be friends with God like Abraham (2,23), or they can be friends with the world (4,4). How then to satisfactorily explain the selection of the adultery image in Jas 4,4⁽¹⁶⁾?

The present paper shows that these difficulties can be solved by invoking the aid of the Two Ways tradition, that is, the section as reflected in Did 3,1-6. This is not as simple a task as it may seem. It is true, James' letter is permeated with allusions to other sources such as the teaching of Jesus, the Bible, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and the *Wisdom of Solomon*. It is a redacted work, a text which was constructed from separate blocks of tradition which were then re-arranged to become integral parts of a coherent structure⁽¹⁷⁾. In most cases, however, there is no clear evidence to suggest the direct dependence of James on other writings since these parallels involve language or motifs that are found in more than one of these works. "Determining the precise provenance of any specific expression within James is commensurately difficult, since there are usually too many possibilities"⁽¹⁸⁾. Rather than consciously alluding to the sources he used, James re-expressed, reformulated, and developed these traditional materials as his own teaching⁽¹⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁶⁾ For elaboration of these and other problems connected with the term 'adulteresses' in this verse, cf. J.J. SCHMITT, "You adulteresses! The Image in James 4:4", *NT* 28 (1986) 331-334.

⁽¹⁷⁾ DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 22-24; ID., "The Epistle of James in Modern Discussion", *ANRW* II.25,5 (Berlin – New York 1988) 3621-3645; esp. 3630; M.E. TAYLOR, "Recent Scholarship on the Structure of James", *Currents in Biblical Research* 3 (2004) 86-115; esp. 105-106.

⁽¹⁸⁾ L.T. JOHNSON – W.H. WACHOB, "The Sayings of Jesus in the Letter of James", *Authenticating the Words of Jesus* (eds. B. CHILTON – C.A. EVANS) (NTTS 28/1; Leiden 1999) 431-450; repr. in JOHNSON, *Brother of Jesus*, 136-154; esp. 136.

⁽¹⁹⁾ HARTIN, *James*, 82-85; DAVIDS, "The Epistle of James in Modern Discussion", 3630. See also BAUCKHAM, *James*, 78-83; W.H. WACHOB, *The Voice of Jesus in the Social Rhetoric of James* (SNTSMS 106; Cambridge 2000) 116. According to J.S. Kloppenborg ("The Reception of the Jesus Traditions in James", *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition* [ed. J. SCHLOSSER] [BETL 176; Leuven 2004] 93-141) "the lack of verbatim agreement between a predecessor text and its re-performance" is due to "the rhetorical practice of performance ... The differences between the predecessor text and the paraphrase are not due to the vagaries of oral transmission but due instead to deliberate and studied techniques of verbal and conceptual transformation" (221).

In order to reach our goal, we must now make a detour and take the following (indirect) steps. I shall first examine the verses at issue in their immediate context. Because a detailed treatment of Jas 4,1-6 is beyond the scope of this article, attention will be paid solely to some basic points. I shall also address the relevant background of Jas 4,1-6, found in Jas 1,13-21. As will be supported by the discussion below, there is an undeniable relationship between these two sections (section 2). I next focus upon Jas 1,13-21 and ascertain the section's close affinity with the particular wording of Did 3,1-6, a symmetrically patterned unit of five strophes called the *teknon* ("child") section (section 3). In a subsequent section, I will make clear that Did 3,1-6 exhibits many similarities with rabbinic literature and, especially, with the early layer of *Derekh Erets* tracts (section 4). The relevance of this phenomenon will become all the more evident in the ensuing section where I establish that these particular *Derekh Erets* materials also provide the most appropriate framework for understanding how James writes about the Law in 2,8-11 and 4,11-12 (section 5). Finally, I will focus on the verses at issue. A concluding section will reveal the close associations between Jas 4,1-4 and the Jewish moral tradition represented by Did 3,1-6. I address the question as to how James modified and radicalised this Jewish *Derekh Erets* tradition to fit his ideas (section 6).

2. *Jas 4,1-6 and its Relevant Background in Jas 1,13-21*

The passage in Jas 4,1-4 belongs to the division 4,1-6 which in turn is part of the coherent literary unit Jas 3,13-4,10. This unit which might be "the very heart of the epistle"⁽²⁰⁾ calls to conversion from one way of life to another. It is composed of four subsections: an exposition presenting the distinction James makes between two types of wisdom, the one from above and the other from below (3,13-18), the accusation where the author levels strong criticism against what can be labelled as a life led without wisdom (4,1-6), a call to repentance (4,7-10), and finally some concrete practical advice is given (4,11-12).

Having declared at the end of chapter 3 that true wisdom is peace, James begins in chapter 4 with some remarks about the origins of strife. "From where do wars and from where do battles among you come? Is it not from your desires (ἡδοναί) that are at war among your

⁽²⁰⁾ HARTIN, *James and the Q Sayings*, 31.

members”? He locates the origin of strife in the pursuit of pleasure⁽²¹⁾. The Greek text of the subsequent verse (Jas 4,2) is punctuated in the twenty-seventh revised edition of Nestle-Aland with commas dividing the sentence into three statements: “You desire (ἐπιθυμείτε) and do not have, you murder and are jealous (ζηλοῦτε) and are unable to obtain, you battle and wage war”. The word ἐπιθυμῆν (and ἐπιθυμία) does not always have a bad meaning (Luke 22,15; Phil 1,23), but here, as most often in the New Testament, it refers to egocentric, illicit desire. It might therefore be preferable to translate ἐπιθυμείτε as “you desire evilly”⁽²²⁾. The meanings of ζηλοῦν and ζήλος are equally important here. Although ζηλοῦν is itself neutral, it surely has a negative connotation here, expressing “jealousy”, “envy”. The expression “you are jealous” (ζηλοῦτε) deliberately picks up the theme established by 3,14-16.

Rather than pursuing one’s own desires, it is by asking God that one can receive gifts. Nevertheless, if one does not already live with the wisdom that comes down from God (1,17; 3,17), one will probably not turn to God to fulfil one’s needs. On the contrary, desire, a characteristic feature of the world, might easily infect the religious piety of community members so as to use their prayers to God for their own gain: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly in order to spend it on your desires” (4,3). In 4,4 James charges those who pursue their own desires with his harshest invective: being “adulteresses”.

In support of his argument stressing the need for a whole-hearted, unreserved commitment to God, James next turns to Scripture. He offers two quotations whose citation in 4,5 forms a thorny problem. God is probably the implied subject of κατώκισεν⁽²³⁾ since he caused the human spirit to reside within man (Gen 2,7; 6,17; 7,15; Ps 104,29-30; etc). The phrase “the spirit which he made to dwell in us” then

⁽²¹⁾ The term ἡδονή usually means simply “pleasure”, but it is also found in the sense of “desire for pleasure”. The verb ἐπιθυμῆν in the next verse clearly indicates the latter sense of ἡδονή here. It was the selfish, indulgent desire that was responsible for strife and wars; cf. Titus 3,3 which shows ἡδονή and ἐπιθυμία to be almost synonymous. Further, see JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 276; HARTIN, *James*, 196; R.W. WALL, *Community of the Wise*. The Letter of James (The New Testament in Context; Valley Forge, PA 1997) 195; JACKSON-MCCABE, *Logos and Law*, 202.

⁽²²⁾ See, with respect to Jas 1,14-15, JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 193-194. Cf. also HARTIN, *James*, 196.

⁽²³⁾ See DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 163.

refers to the human spirit by which he has revitalized mankind. Jas 4,5 serves as a warning that if someone turns to the aims and values of the world, God's jealousy would be aroused. Yet in that situation God gives grace to the repentant. The quotation from Prov 3,34 (LXX) in 4,6 confirms that he "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble".

Turning now to the first chapter of James' letter, it is important to notice first that the brief passages dedicated to various subject matters in Jas 1 serve to introduce the major themes subsequently expanded in the body of the letter. Sometimes it is even suggested that the opening chapter is the key to understanding the letter in its entirety. According to Luke T. Johnson, the chapter is "something of an *epitome* of the work as a whole" (24). To be more specific with respect to our section, the contrast between God as the giver of gifts (of wisdom) and man's wicked desire (without wisdom) in 3,13-4,6 is introduced in 1,13-21. On the one hand, comprehension of the positive definition of wisdom in 3,13.17-18 emerges from the background in 1,16-18, while on the other hand the origin of strife located in the human pursuit of pleasure in 4,1-6 is reflected in the relationship between desire, sin, and death in 1,13-15.19-21 (25).

Jas 1,13-15 rejects the idea of God's responsibility for the interior *πειρασμός*. It deepens the concept of *πειρασμός* by narrowing its focus from external circumstances, for example persecutions, to internal measurement, that is the difficulties of life itself including pressures, dangers and vicissitudes in general. The human reaction to this internal temptation is to blame God for the enticement to sin (26). In fact, however, it is the human *ἐπιθυμία* that is actually responsible and this internal force puts the individual on the path of death. In 1,14-15 James champions man's accountability for sin and returns to this theme later in 4,1-4 where he makes this suggested criticism more concrete.

The passage in 1,16-18 gives a positive counterbalance to the negative statements in 1,13-15. In vv. 17-18, James removes God

(24) JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 174-175. Many other scholars "are convinced that ch. 1 holds the key to the letter's structure"; see TAYLOR, "Recent Scholarship", 112. We established above that James is a "redacted work", composed of traditional materials. This does necessarily imply, however, that the employment of these traditions lacks a coherent structure or literary design.

(25) Cf. JACKSON-MCCABE, *Logos and Law*, 206-208.

(26) HARTIN, *James*, 104; DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 83-85; MOO, *The Epistle of James*, 71-72.

completely from this realm of human passion and destructiveness. Rather than testing his creatures, God sends them good things. James speaks of how “by his decision,” God “gave birth” to humans by a “word of truth”. The reversal with regard to 1,13-15 is complete. The meaning of this passage emerges from 3,13-18. Speaking of the divine wisdom giving birth, James uses ἀποκυέω (“to bear young”) instead of the more familiar synonym γεννάω or τίκτω. In our passage, he speaks about the λόγος by which God brings about a rebirth so that we are the “first fruits” of his creations “of truth” (1,18, ἀληθείας).

Verses 1,19-21 begin with the address: “my beloved brothers and sisters”, employing thus the same vocative used at the beginning of 1,16-18. In 1,19-20 the initial result of human ἐπιθυμία is specified as anger (ὀργή)⁽²⁷⁾: “Know this, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God”. A further observation crucial to the remainder of this paper, is that it is not just the particular detail of the general passage in Jas 1,14-15 — which in 1,19d-20 is spelled out as ὀργή — that connects the two passages, but also the formal characteristic of the figure. The form of each of the two passages is best designated as concatenation because they show the repetition of one word from the preceding phrase in the phrase which follows it⁽²⁸⁾. In Jas 1,14-15 the catenated form of “desire” and “sin” lead to death while the chain-syllogism in Jas 1,19-20 draws attention to the result of anger. Since v. 19 of this unit deals with speech, it is probably a sudden outburst of impetuous anger against another Christian which is meant. The angry eruption according to v. 20 does not produce the type of righteousness which reflects the standard God set for humanity.

⁽²⁷⁾ According to WALL, *Community of the Wise*, 192-247, James 4,1-5,6 elaborates on this third member of this triadic proverb: “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”. Each of the three exhortations of this proverb “supplies the thematic interest or orienting concern for each of the three successive units that make up the composition’s main body: ‘quick to hear’ is explained in 1:22-2:26, ‘slow to speak’ in 3:1-18, and ‘slow to anger’ in 4:1-5:6” (69).

⁽²⁸⁾ On the chain-saying form, cf. DIBELIUS, *James*, 94-99; J. MARTY, *l’Épître de Jacques: étude critique* (Paris 1935) 35. Of course, Jas 1,2-4 shows in concatenated form how endurance under testing comes to perfection, while 1,12-15 employs the exact same concepts. “Something similar is found in Jas 1:2-4: the climax, which is presented in the form of a catena, properly reads ‘trials’ – ‘endurance’ – ‘perfection’ (πειρασμοί – ὑπομονή – τελειότης)” but “the passage in Jas 1:14, 15, which we took as our point of departure, offers a purer form of the catena” (see DIBELIUS, *James*, 97).

Jas 1,19-21 exhibits a pattern strikingly similar to 1 Peter 1,23–2,2⁽²⁹⁾. The fact that James and 1 Peter share the word “to put away” (ἀποτίθεμαι) even supports the idea that they rely upon a common tradition. All filthiness, ῥυπαρία, metaphorically indicating evil habits and inclinations, must be discarded like filthy garments (Jas 2,2) and the “implanted word” which is able to save must be “received in meekness” (1,21). The Greek noun πραύτης (“meekness”) is contrasted with ὀργή (“anger”) rather than with κακίας (“wickedness”)⁽³⁰⁾. Verses 1,16-18 and 1,19-21 confirm that the “logos of truth” and “the implanted logos” are one and the same⁽³¹⁾. The “implanted word” does not refer to an inborn, natural quality within man but to wisdom as the greatest gift of God⁽³²⁾. It descends from above (3,15; cf. 1,17). The person is being regenerated and reborn by the word of truth (1,18) as well as transformed by the implanted word (1,21).

3. *Jas 1,13-21 in the Light of Did 3,1-6*

Particularly similar to James’ teaching in 1,13-15.19-21 is the so-called *teknon* section in Did 3,1-6 which belongs to the Greek Two Ways⁽³³⁾. At first sight one is inclined to consider the verses of the

⁽²⁹⁾ For further details, see also M.-E. BOISMARD, “Une liturgie baptismale dans la prima Petri. II. – Son influence sur l’*épître de Jacques*”, *RB* 64 (1957) 161-183; esp. 167-172.

⁽³⁰⁾ DIBELIUS, *James*, 112; HARTIN, *James*, 97. Cf. JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 270.

⁽³¹⁾ “The identification of the ‘logos’ of truth and the ‘implanted logos’ is widely assumed”; cf. JACKSON-McCABE, *Logos and Law*, 214, n. 91. See also BAUCKHAM, *James*, 146; HARTIN, *James and the Q Sayings*, 106, 213; JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 287; HARTIN, *James*, 106.

⁽³²⁾ “From 1:5 and 1:17, the reader recognizes this ‘wisdom from above’ as the wisdom that comes from God, indeed as the ‘word of truth’ that comes from God (1:18) and, as ‘implanted word’, is to be received in ‘meekness’(1:21)”; see JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 287 and compare 218; cf. HARTIN, *James and the Q Sayings*, 106-107, 213; DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 51-55; HARTIN, *James*, 79-80 and WALL, *Community of the Wise*, 67.

⁽³³⁾ The *teknon* section is missing, however, in the *Letter of Barnabas*. On the other hand, it is found in the *Didache, Doctrina Apostolorum* (though this version lacks a counterpart to Did 3,3-4a), the *Apostolic Church Order*, the *Epitome of the Canons of the Holy Apostles*, the *Life of Shenoute*, etc. It may be argued with equal reason, therefore, that Barnabas, who probably rewrote his source, did not preserve these materials. See also VAN DE SANDT-FLUSSER, *The Didache*, 73-74, 133-134.

teknon (“child”) section as wisdom instruction transmitted by older men, matured by experience, to the younger generation. The passage consists of five small textual units, each of which is constructed on the same plan. Its style differs noticeably from the immediate context in that the precepts are formulated here in terms of warm encouragement. The unit consists of five small strophes, each structured according to the same distinctive, symmetrical pattern not present elsewhere in the Two Ways.

The separate strophes in 3,2-6 display a particular repetitive pattern in that each is divided into two parallel halves. The implied reference here is to the division of the commandments into commands of greater and lesser importance, or easier and more difficult. The first half contains a warning against a specific minor transgression because such a sin, so it says, “leads to” a major transgression. Then in the second half an admonishment is offered against two or more lesser sins, for these too “give birth to” a major transgression. With respect to the content of James’ letter we render the first three verses:

- (3,1) My child, flee from all evil and from everything resembling it.
- (3,2)
 - a. Be not angry (μη γίνου ὀργίλος),
 - b. for anger (ὀργή) leads to murder (φόνον),
 - c. nor jealous (μηδὲ ζηλωτής) nor irascible (μηδὲ ἐριστικός) nor hot-tempered (μηδὲ θυμικός)
 - d. for from these murders are born (φόνοι γεννῶνται).
- (3,3)
 - a. My child, be not desiring (μη γίνου ἐπιθυμητής),
 - b. for desire (ἐπιθυμία) leads to fornication (πορνείαν),
 - c. nor foul-mouthed nor indiscreetly peering
 - d. for from all these adulteries are born (μοιχεῖαι γεννῶνται).

In two clauses (a and c) minor transgressions are mentioned which “lead to” or “give birth to” major sins (b and d). Unlike the variety of minor transgressions in the two halves of the separate strophes, the same weighty offence is retained in each of the two halves, with the exception of 3,3, where the major transgression is expressed in two different words (“fornication” and “adultery”)⁽³⁴⁾. The connection with the Decalogue commandments is clear enough as murder and adultery are quickly and easily associated with the second table of the Ten Commandments.

⁽³⁴⁾ The weighty transgressions or sins occurring in this section, then, are murder (3,2), fornication and adultery (3,3), idolatry (3,4), theft (3,5) and blasphemy (3,6).

In order to prove the relevance of the *teknon* section to the Letter of James, our initial concern must be to establish connections. Let us consider Jas 1,14-15 first. Three points may be noted at this stage. First, in both James and the *teknon* section the vice ἐπιθυμία is found. Whereas the noun ἐπιθυμία and the adjective ἐπιθυμητής in Did 3,3 describe specifically sexual passions, the context of the word ἐπιθυμία in James suggests a broader conception. It appears to highlight individual responsibility for sin. In accordance with the *teknon* passage, however, the term's sexual connotation is developed in Jas 1,14-15 with vivid metaphors. "Desire" is personified as a seductive female who, having actively enticed the person referenced in v. 14, conceives a bastard child by him. Second, James describes the consequence of desire in terms of giving birth: personified Desire gives birth to (τίκτει) sin, and sin brings forth (ἀποκύει) death (1,15). The *teknon* section uses a similar "birthing" language in connection with the major sins in the second part (the "d" clauses) of its symmetrical strophes⁽³⁵⁾. Third, both in Jas 1,14-15 and in the *teknon* section the concatenated form is found. Like Jas 1,14-15, the *teknon* section encapsulates its teaching in a chain-saying structure carrying the thought from step to step: "be not angry, for anger.." and "be not desiring, for desire..."

These examples taken together constitute an argument. Yet corroborative evidence is needed before we can be completely certain. Let us focus our interest on Jas 1,19-21. I shall first assess the relation between Jas 1,19d-20 and the *teknon* section, and then discuss v. 21 and its counterparts. I established above that the statements in Jas 1,19d-20 give some detailed information about the content of ἐπιθυμία mentioned in 1,14-15. Of particular interest is also that the statement in 1,19d-20 is shaped in the form of a chain-saying: "(Let every man be) slow to anger (ὀργήν), for the anger (ὀργή) of man does not work the righteousness of God". The clauses might easily recall Did 3,2ab: "Be not angry (μὴ γίνου ὀργίλος), for anger (ὀργή) leads to murder (φόνον). One could admittedly argue that the phrase is too general to carry much weight here as warnings against anger frequently occur in

⁽³⁵⁾ As seen above, however, James prefers the terms τίκτω and ἀποκυέω in this context rather than the usual verb γεννάω as employed in the *teknon* section. He keeps restating his source in his own words and thus developed it as his own teaching; KLOPPENBORG, "The Reception of the Jesus Traditions", 116-121. The verb ἀποκυέω ("to bear young") is also used in 1,18 but with respect to the unusual female image for God as "the father of light" who gives birth.

gnomic literature. The book of Proverbs portrays anger to be hazardous since it leads to evil consequences (6,34; 15,1; 16,14; 27,4; 29,22) while other parallels are found in early Jewish and early Christian literature⁽³⁶⁾. Against this objection, however, it might be argued that the third clause of this directive (“slow to anger”) “breaks the grammatical pattern” of Jas 1,19⁽³⁷⁾. A noun replaces the expected infinitive here and the Greek article τό is dropped. This unevenness may indicate that James links up here with an admonition like the one in the *teknon* section, the more so since each of these warnings is located at a key position in the two texts. Just as condemnation of anger in Jas 1,19d is the first ingredient of ἐπιθυμία, so the admonition against anger in the Did 3,2 is found right after the general introduction in 3,1.

Turning now to Jas 1,21, it is first of all the Greek text that deserves attention. At variance with the punctuation in the text of Nestle-Aland (27th ed.), it is preferable to place a comma after κακίας. By dividing the sentence this way, the virtue of meekness (21b) is in strong contrast with ὀργή (anger)⁽³⁸⁾ rather than with κακίας. The “implanted word” is to be received in “meekness”. More will be said on this shortly. For now we should note that Jas 1,21 reflects elements of the *teknon* section in the Two Ways. First, the admonition to rid oneself of all filthiness and the abundance of wickedness (περισσεῖαν κακίας) in 1,21a might echo the preoccupation in the introduction in Did 3,1. In Jas 1,21a the expression περισσεῖαν κακίας (literally “overflowing” of wickedness) does not make good sense after the appeal to put away πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν. Why did the author deem it necessary to add this wording after πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν (“all meanness”)? Literally ῥυπαρία means physical dirt or filth (as the adjective used in Jas 2,2) but here it stands for what is ethically offensive as “baseness”, “meanness” or “ignobility”⁽³⁹⁾. The expression πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν itself refers to everything below the accepted standards of human worth and dignity. The parallel vice catalogue in 1 Pet 2,1 appears more appropriate: “So put away all malice (πᾶσαν κακίαν), and all deceit

⁽³⁶⁾ Etc. in D.B. DEPPE, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James* (Diss.; Chelsea, MI 1989) 79-80; cf. also JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 199.

⁽³⁷⁾ JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 199.

⁽³⁸⁾ See the references in n. 30, above. Cf. also W.R. BAKER, *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* (WUNT II/68; Tübingen 1995) 89.

⁽³⁹⁾ The word might be equivalent to the Semitic כִּיעוּר (“ugliness”); see below, n. 50.

(πάντα δόλον) and hypocrisy (ὑποκρίσεις) and envy (φθόνους) and all slander (πάσας καταλαλιάς). The negative attitude toward society is specified in order to arouse the readers to leave their antisocial tendencies behind and become aware of their Christian duty.

The expression περισσεῖαν κακίας in James, however, is hardly a detailed description of the previous πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν. It is therefore conceivable that rather than using περισσεῖα in the sense of “overflowing”, James has employed the word in another meaning of the “perisseu”- stem, that is, “remainder” (cf. περίσσευμα in Mark 8,8). The translation of the phrase περισσεῖαν κακίας as “every trace of malice” might therefore be preferable⁽⁴⁰⁾. If this is correct, however, it would not only fit the context neatly, but also precisely render the point made in Did 3,1: “my child, flee from all evil (ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηροῦ) and from anything resembling it” (καὶ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὁμοίου αὐτοῦ). The central moral preventative of Did 3,1-6 is to avoid anything resembling evil. In addition to Jas 1,21, 1 Pet 2,1 also seems to reflect the maxim in Did 3,1. The form of the tradition in James, however, is closer to Did 3,1 than that in 1 Peter which apparently has been reworked and elaborated.

Another aspect of Jas 1,21 requires comment here. Salvation comes through the “implanted word” which must be “received in meekness” (1,21b). The pre-eminent characteristic of wisdom in James is “meekness”⁽⁴¹⁾. Since anger blocks the path to righteousness, one should avoid anything resembling evil and instead be meek. In Jas 1,20-21 meekness is morally contrasted with anger. This contrast returns in Jas 3,13-18 when James makes the distinction between two types of wisdom: from above and from below. A humble and simple dependence upon God is needed since wisdom from above only finds a true home in the lives of the meek (3,13). The εἰ δέ introduction in 3,14 contrasts the desirable προύτητι with the ζήλον in the ensuing verse.

A similar antagonism is found in the Two Ways as well. The virtue

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Cf. DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James*, 94. See also the following statement: “As parallel uses of *perisseia* (literally ‘abundance / overflowing’) suggest, its main function here is rhetorical: with *pasa* it extends the negative admonition to every form of wickedness (see Rom 5:17; 2 Cor 8:2; 10:15)”; JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 201. And compare the following: “This meaning (‘remainder’) cannot be demonstrated for *perisseia* but can be for the noun *perisseuma*. It is an attractive proposal in that it would firmly establish that James is speaking to incomplete Christians”; BAKER, *Personal Speech-Ethics*, 90, n. 13.

⁽⁴¹⁾ HARTIN, *James*, 97, 191-193; 216.

of meekness is a special theme in Did 3,7-10, a separate unit which differs in form and focus from the former (*teknon*) section⁽⁴²⁾. The *teknon* piece and its sequel taken together (Did 3,1-10) likewise suggest an appeal to put aside anger in favour of meekness. The first segment, containing warnings (3,1-6) after the preamble in Did 3,1, begins with cautioning against ὀργή, while the second segment, articulating merely positive exhortations, commences as follows: “But (δέ) be meek (πραύς), since those who are meek (πραεῖς) will inherit the (holy / ἁγίαν)⁽⁴³⁾ land”. The humble man puts his trust in God rather than in selfishly motivated, harsh and violent anger.

The conclusion to be drawn from this evidence⁽⁴⁴⁾ is that when these parallels are considered together the general case for a relationship between Jas 1,13-15.19-21 and Did 3,1-6 seems strong.

4. *Did 3,1-6: a Re-orientation of Halakha in Line with Early Derekh Erets*

We have thus far dealt with the relationship between Jas 1,13-21 and Did 3,1-6. Jas 1,13-21 should be considered the backdrop of Jas 4,1-6 and the passage simultaneously shows a close relationship with the *teknon* section in Did 3,1-6. How does the *teknon* section help solve the exegetical difficulties of Jas 4,1-4? Should we assume that it is coincidence that James displays parallels with a short, early Christian manual? Why would this section or a similar tradition be of relevance to James?

The concept Did 3,1-6 presupposes is the common Jewish

⁽⁴²⁾ The unit is the first part of a section in Did 3,7–4,14 dominated by instructions about constructive social behaviour: “Nach einem Lasterkatalog (Did 3,1-6) steht an der Spitze einer Reihe von Geboten eine Mahnung zur Sanftmut Did 3,7. Durch δέ wird der Gegensatz zu den vorher genannten Lastern markiert. Gefordert wird die Sanftmut (πραύς) im Gegensatz zum Zorn (ὀργηλός)”; cf. H. LOHMANN, *Drohung und Verheissung. Exegetische Untersuchungen zur Eschatologie bei den Apostolischen Vätern* (BZNW 55; Berlin 1987) 38.

⁽⁴³⁾ The Didache omits the specification “holy” in 3,7. In our reconstruction of the GTW (see above, n. 2) we chose to follow here the Latin Doctrina 3,7 (“Esto autem mansuetus, quia mansueti possidebunt sanctam terram”) and thus to supply the adjective “holy” which by implication suggests the object of the promise to be the physical land of Israel. See further VAN DE SANDT – FLUSSER, *The Didache*, 134-135.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ See also the clause Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου in 1,22: “Be doers of the word!” The verb γίνεσθαι (usually: “to become”) occurring here as a substitute for εἶναι (“to be”), might be an echo of the admonishments in Did 3,2-6 which all begin with μὴ γίνου.

distinction between minor and major commandments. A minimalistic understanding of the major commandments is rejected since the passage not only requires strict observance of the major precepts, but also adherence to the minor commandments as well⁽⁴⁵⁾. This ethical sensitivity which includes more than is explicitly obligatory or permitted by specific rules might have aroused James' interest in the *teknon* section. It seems to represent James' own viewpoint at least. His letter seeks ethical perfection (1,4.17.25; 2,8.22; 3,2) and whole-hearted devotion to God (1,8; 4,8). It rebukes those with divided loyalties (*ibid.*), who have become "friends of the world" and emphasizes obedience to the Law (2,8-11) without wavering between loyalty to God and loyalty to the world (4,4).

Focus on the minor commandments is expressed in the introductory sentence of the *teknon* section as follows: "my child, flee from all evil and from anything resembling it" (3,1). A similar statement can be found in rabbinic literature⁽⁴⁶⁾, pre-eminently in the refined ethics represented by the rabbinic *Derekh Erets* tractates. The injunction to avoid anything similar to iniquity serves as a résumé of

⁽⁴⁵⁾ As a matter of fact, further elaboration of the topic is found in the Hellenistic milieu of the Jewish Diaspora and in rabbinic literature. For Philo, the observance of the light commandments is as essential as having no basic part removed or destroyed from a building; cf. *De Legatione ad Gaium*, 117; see also Philo's *Allegorical Interpretation*, III, 241; further, compare I. HEINEMANN, *Philo's griechische und jüdische Bildung. Kulturvergleichende Untersuchungen zu Philons Darstellung der jüdischen Gesetze* (Breslau 1932; repr. Hildesheim 1962) 478-480. An equally strict or even more rigorous attitude is found in rabbinic sources: "Ben Azzai said: Run to fulfil the lightest precept even as the weightiest and flee from transgression; for one precept draws another precept in its train, and one transgression draws another transgression in its train; for the reward of a precept (done) is a precept (to be done), and the reward of one transgression is (another) transgression". Cf. m. Av 4,2; see G.F. MOORE, *Judaism in the first Centuries of the Christian Era. The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge, MA 1927) I, 470-471. See also the instances in m. Av 2,1; cf. b. Men 44a, top; b. Ned 39b; y. Pea 1,15d. An echo of the rabbinic usage of "light" and "weighty" precepts is also found in the wording of Jesus: "... and you have neglected the weightier matters of the Law (βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου) ..." (Matt 23,23b). About the concept of the light commandment being as important as a weighty one, cf. Str-B, I, 900-905; esp. 901-902; E.E. URBACH, *The Sages – Their Concepts and Beliefs* 1 (Jerusalem 1975) 345-350.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ "For R. Eliezer did teach: 'one should always flee from what is hideous and from whatever seems hideous'" and : "But the Sages said: 'Keep distant from what is hideous and from whatever seems hideous'" ; cf. t. Hul 2,24 (cf. Zuck. 503) and t. Yev 4,7 (cf. Zuck. 245), respectively.

moral codes in the Derekh Erets tractates⁽⁴⁷⁾. Oral tracts with subjects concerning Derekh Erets existed as early as the second century CE and part of these writings reflect the teachings of the pious on moral behaviour⁽⁴⁸⁾. These men constituted a concrete group within the society of the rabbis, practising charities, performing deeds of lovingkindness, and possessing virtues of dedication to humility and modesty. The treatise Yir'at Het (“fear of transgression”), a separate denotation of chapters I-IV and IX of the Derekh Erets Zuta, probably dates from Tannaitic times⁽⁴⁹⁾. It states:

Keep aloof from everything hideous and from whatever seems hideous⁽⁵⁰⁾ (הרחק מן הכיעור ומן הדומה לו) lest others suspect you of transgression (Yir'at Het I,13)⁽⁵¹⁾.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Cf. G. KLEIN, *Der älteste christliche Katechismus und die jüdische Propaganda-Literatur* (Berlin 1909) 69: “Die kürzeste Formel für Derech erez lautet: Halte dich fern von der Sünde und von dem, was hässlich ist”.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ The early layer reflects a life-style which is called “derekh hasidut”, the way of the pious. It reveals the teaching of the early Hassidim who “placed extreme stress on self-deprivation and the performance of good deeds and acts of loving kindness in lieu of pure academic ‘ivory tower’ scholarship”; M. B. LERNER, “The External Tractates”, *The Literature of the Sages* (ed. S. SAFRAI) (CRI II/ 3; Assen – Maastricht – Philadelphia 1987) I, 367-404; esp. 380. See also S. SAFRAI, “Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature”, *JJS* 16 (1965) 15-33; esp. 25-28; ID., “Hasidim we-Anshei Maase”, *Zion* 50 (1984-1985) 133-154; ID., “Jesus and the Hasidim”, *Jerusalem Perspective* 42-44 (1994) 3-22; ID., “Jesus and the Hasidic Movement” (Hebr.), *The Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman World. Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* (eds. I.M. GAFNI – A. OPPENHEIMER – D.R. SCHWARTZ) (Jerusalem 1996) 413-436. See also VAN DE SANDT – FLUSSER, *The Didache*, 165-169 and 172-173.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ The early (Tannaitic) part of Yir'at Het is identical with Massechet Derekh Erets Zuta, Chaps. I–III (minus I,18-20), edited by M. VAN LOOPIK, *The Ways of the Sages and the Way of the World* (TSAJ 26; Tübingen 1991) 172-251 (with commentary) = Massekhet Derekh Eretz, Chaps. I–II, edited by M. HIGGER, *The Treatises Derek Erez: Masseket Derek Erez; Pirke Ben Azzai; Tosefta Derek Erez* (New York 1935; repr. Jerusalem 1970) I, 55-96 (Hebr.) and II, 33-42 (English translation). Cf. VAN LOOPIK, *The Ways*, 9 and 16-17.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ The rule of refraining from anything hideous (כיעור) reflects a strongly ethical approach, an attitude that is inspired by a deeply rooted fear of sin. For the term כיעור (“ugliness”) as ethically offensive, see the warning in Seder Eliahu Rabba, Chap. 2: “for ugly things (דברים מכוערים) that aren't fitting” (cf. M. FRIEDMANN, *Seder Eliahu Rabba and Seder Eliahu Zuta* [Jerusalem 1969] 13); cf. also SER, Chap. 25 (cf. *ibid.*, 139); Chap. 7 (cf. *ibid.*, 32); Chap. 14 (cf. *ibid.*, 67); Chap. 18 (cf. *ibid.*, 104). The term corresponds with the literal meaning of its Greek counterpart in Jas 1,21: διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν (“therefore, having put away all *filthiness*...”).

⁽⁵¹⁾ According to VAN LOOPIK, *The Ways*, 194-197 (with commentary) =

The desire to abstain from evil incited pietistic Sages to keep to not only the literal meaning of a commandment but also its broad intention, surpassing the scope of widely accepted precepts. It exceeds the halakha's legal corpus. Certain things, not forbidden by the Law, were taken in these pious circles to be actual transgressions and are referred to as minor sins. Conversely, the current halakhic norms were tightened to the extent that they became minor commands in their own right. The early stratum of *Derekh Erets* literature embodied a refined human ethic highlighting acts of charity, modesty, humility. The most pertinent parallel to the preamble in Did 3,1 and the subsequent strophes in 3,2-6 is found in the treatise *Yir'at Het* II,16-17:

Keep aloof from that which leads to transgression, keep aloof from everything hideous and from what even seems hideous. Shudder from committing a minor transgression (מחטא הקל), lest it leads you to commit a major transgression (לחטא חמור). Hurry to (perform) a minor precept (למצוה קלה), for this will lead you to (perform) a major precept (חמורה)⁽⁵²⁾.

This shows that the popular apophthegm, to be as careful of an unimportant precept as of an important one⁽⁵³⁾, was in its original meaning an alternative form of the counsel “my child, flee from all evil and from anything resembling it”. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that Did 3,1-6 displays a tradition which was very much alive in Jewish *Derekh Erets* circles. James was interested in such a tradition as it embodied a teaching preserved and handed on by pious Jews in his time.

The agreement between the maxims in *Yir'at Het* I,13; II,16-17 and Did 3,1 is not surprising, since there is a close affinity between the ideas and ethical principles in the early *Derekh Erets* doctrine and the

Massekhet *Derekh Erets* I, 12 according to HIGGER, *The Treatises Derek Erez*, I, 63 (Hebr.) and 2, 35 (English translation). Compare also the following saying: “Keep aloof from anything hideous and (even) from whatever seems hideous”; cf. *Derekh Erets Zuta* VIII, 3 according to VAN LOOPIK, *The Ways*, 290 = Massekhet *Derekh Eretz* VII, 2 according to HIGGER, *The Treatises Derek Erez* I, 126 [Hebr.] and II, 50 [English translation].

⁽⁵²⁾ *Yir'at Het* (or *Derekh Erets Zuta*) II, 16-17 according to VAN LOOPIK, *The Ways*, 229-231 (with commentary) = Massekhet *Derekh Eretz* I, 26 according to HIGGER, *The Treatises Derek Erez* I, 78-79 [Hebr.] and 2, 38 [ET].

⁽⁵³⁾ See F. BÖHL, *Gebotserschwerung und Rechtsverzicht als ethisch-religiöse Normen in der rabbinischen Literatur* (FJS 1; Freiburg i. B. 1971) 59-63 and 85-109.

views occurring in the Greek tractate of the Two Ways⁽⁵⁴⁾. The pietistic *Derekh Erets* does not refer to such unique Jewish commandments as circumcision, dietary restrictions, clothing restraints or observance of the Sabbath and festivals. Nor does it display the style of halakhic discussion characteristic to most rabbinic literature or, by way of specific example, a letter from Qumran such as 4QMMT which meticulously discusses the specificities of the Torah or precisely spells out what each commandment requires in specific circumstances. It is not a strict legal, halakhic approach to the Law which is emphasized but a moral, personal and ethical attitude to life. In the following sections I shall make clear that paraenetic materials in James belong to this particular tradition as part of a developing Jewish stream of thought.

5. *An Approach to the Law in Jas 2,8-11 in Line with Early Derekh Erets*

The main section on the law in James' letter is 2,8-11⁽⁵⁵⁾. The passage shows a similar ethical interest in the law as does the segment found in Did 3,1-6 and the ancient kernel of *Derekh Erets* literature as well. The text runs as follows:

8. If you really fulfil the royal Law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", you do well. 9. But if you show partiality, you commit a sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery", also said, "Do not kill". If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the Law.

These verses are part of James' powerful, coherent argument against all forms of partiality or favouritism. In Jas 2,1-5 readers are warned not to practice favouritism in their assemblies. The proof comes in two main sections, vv. 5-7 and vv. 8-11 and we find a renewed admonition in 2,12-13. The first section endorsing the argument consists of three rhetorical questions (vv. 5-6a, 6b, 7) each of which anticipates an affirmative response. The second section seeks to prove that a sin such as is represented by "partiality" (*προσωπολημψία*), is a violation of the Torah (vv. 8-11). Apparently the readers of the letter did not experience it that way.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ See VAN DE SANDT – FLUSSER, *The Didache*, 172-179.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ According to Wachob (*The Voice of Jesus*, 127) Jas 2,1-13 "is the Jamesian argument that says more about the law than any other in the letter".

James sets the royal love commandment as a significant criterion by which all action should be measured. The contrast between v. 8 and v. 9 is that of “really” keeping the law of love (v. 8), while at the same time disobeying one of its provisions (v. 9). He emphasizes that those who claim to live within the kingdom defined by the “royal” law of love cannot practice partiality. The halakha was to be expounded within the parameters of the love commandment, but the prominence of love does not nullify concern for the observance of specific regulations and precepts. In James’ opinion observance of the Torah without love is as inconceivable as the neglect of minor commandments.

In 2,10-11 James argues that failure to obey even “one point” (ἐν ἐνί) of the law is to be guilty of all of it. In fact he agrees with a traditional Jewish view that “whoever violates one commandment, will end up by violating them all”⁽⁵⁶⁾, as proven by v. 11. As long as commandments are viewed as nothing more than a series of individual commands, it is possible to think that disobedience to any particular commandment entailed being guilty of having violated that commandment only. James, however, emphasizes obedience to the entire law which is to be fulfilled in all its parts. The Torah is indivisible. The command against partiality (ἐν ἐνί) is connected explicitly with the above mentioned standard Jewish view that the law is to be considered a unity. James suggests that favouritism be condemned as severely by the law as the major transgressions of adultery or even murder. This argument concurs with the common Jewish distinction between minor and major commandments⁽⁵⁷⁾. Seemingly negligible minor commandments, like the instruction against partiality, are to be included within the scope of the commandment “do not commit adultery” and “do not kill”.

In another passage of James focussing on the law, a prohibition against slander is found. In 4,11-12 it reads:

Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and destroy. But who are you that you judge your neighbour?

⁽⁵⁶⁾ See for instance DIBELIUS, *James*, 144-146 with reference to b. Hor 8b and elsewhere. See also Y. BAER, “The Historical Foundations of the Halakha”, *Zion* 27 (1962) 127-128 (Hebr.).

⁽⁵⁷⁾ See DIBELIUS, *James*, 144-145 and n. 113; MOO, *The Epistle of James*, 95.

One cannot pick and choose which commandments to keep. It is utterly wrong to disregard some prohibitions while obeying the others. Slandering is likely to have been taken as a minor transgression. According to James, however, one sets oneself above the Law in deciding which commands to comply with and which to ignore⁽⁵⁸⁾. Anyone believing himself entitled to ignore the weight of a minor sin like slander claims for himself God's role as the ultimate lawgiver.

James shows great interest in highly developed ethical behaviour. The core of his message is that equating the insignificance of a seemingly lesser offence with the gravity of the major ones entails a definite shift in moral focus and attitude beneficial to one's neighbour. The subsections in Jas 2,8-11 and 4,11-12 are thus most naturally in accordance with Did 3,1-6 and Yir'at Het. In Douglas J. Moo's view, these words of warning were indispensable "because of the tendency to think that obedience to the "heavier" commandments outweighed any failure to adhere to the "lighter" requirements of the law"⁽⁵⁹⁾. Since his readers might have lost the ability to properly assess the value of the minor commandments, James cuts away any grounds the person may have for a light-hearted attitude toward prohibitions of partiality or slander. There was no room for excuses or justifications, by emphasizing for example that one was, after all, keeping the Decalogue very well. The observance of all laws, regardless of their content and their relation to the centre of Torah, is explicitly demanded. In James' mind, "to show contempt for the poor is equivalent to committing adultery or even murder"⁽⁶⁰⁾. In this respect, he is strongly rooted in the specific moral tradition thriving in pious Jewish groups.

6. *Jas 4,1-4: an Interpretation in the Light of Did 3,1-6*

In the first chapter of James (1,14-15) evil is explained as the product of an individual's "desires" (ἐπιθυμίαι). Also in Jas 4,1-4, the connection between desire and sin is shown. In the first subsection below, we will see that both passages, Jas 1,14-15 and 4,1-4, at least partially, seem to correspond closely to a pattern of moral exhortation like the one presented in the *teknon* section. Yet, as will become clear

⁽⁵⁸⁾ See also B.T. VIVIANO, "La Loi parfaite de liberté. Jacques 1,25 et la Loi", *The Catholic Epistles* (ed. SCHLOSSER), 213-226; esp. 223-224.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ *The Epistle of James*, 95.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Cf. HARTIN, *James*, 137. See also the Venerable BEDE (672/3-735) who states that "if one practices partiality, then it is the same as if one had committed murder or adultery" (according to JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 233).

in the second part of this section, there are also major points in which James surpasses the Two Ways imagery.

a) Conformity

In Jas 4,1 conflicting selfish desires (minor vice) are the source of wars and battles (major offences). James probably rearranged traditional material here by rephrasing it in rhetorical questions, a stylistic feature frequently found in this letter⁽⁶¹⁾. In consonance with the tendency exhibited in Did 3,1-6, however, he asserts that hedonistic pleasures and internal passions lead to violence⁽⁶²⁾.

This very same pattern probably underlies Jas 4,2 as well. In order to see this, the two phrases (“you murder” and “you battle and wage war”) are to be regarded as resulting from the preceding observations in this verse, namely, “you desire” and “you are jealous”. Modern editions of the Greek New Testament, however, do not support this conclusion. Instead of a coherent literary pattern substantiating this line of thought, Jas 4,2 often is divided into three disconnected statements:

You desire (ἐπιθυμείτε) and do not have
you murder and are jealous (ζηλοῦτε) and are unable to obtain
you battle and wage war.

The structure of the passage evidences the haphazard arrangement of a number of isolated vices and severe misdemeanours which are apparently applicable to the community. Moreover, the expression “you murder” does not fit well with the following “you are jealous” (ζηλοῦτε). The difficulties resolve themselves when assuming that the author in Jas 4,2 does indeed follow up on ideas in Jas 1,13-15.19-21. This is reflected in the Greek text when a full stop is placed after “you murder”:

- a. You desire and do not have, (so) you murder.
- b. And you are jealous and are unable to obtain, (so) you battle and wage war.

The punctuation adopted here breaks the verse into two statements,

⁽⁶¹⁾ Compare also the rhetorical questions in 2,4.5.6.7.14.15.16. etc. Note the wording ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν as well. This might refer to Jas 3,5, where it says: “the tongue is a small member (μικρὸν μέλος), yet it boasts of great things”.

⁽⁶²⁾ Because the terms ἐπιθυμείν and ζηλοῦν were used interchangeably in his days (cf. JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 271; JACKSON-MCCABE, *Logos and Law*, 204), James might have understood the term ζηλωτής in the *teknon* section as “jealous” or “desirous”.

each including a cause and effect⁽⁶³⁾. Luke T. Johnson has demonstrated that in Hellenistic literature “envy” (φθόνος) and “jealousy” (ζήλος) inevitably lead to hostile acts, such as quarrels, wars, and murder⁽⁶⁴⁾. The latter concepts are standard features of this *topos*. In fact, envy is constantly associated with wars and battles.

For our purposes, however, it is of far greater importance to note that the above Hellenistic *topos* closely corresponds with the form of moral exhortation in the *teknon* passage. The connection between envy, jealousy, and murder is also found in Did 3,1-6. As seen above, the latter section is bent on highlighting that the transgression of minor precepts leads to the transgression of major ones. In Jas 4,2 the same path is depicted: “desire eventuates in murder” and “jealousy results in war”. In addition to these statements, a psychological judgment is also found here explaining the transition from a minor to a major sin. The additions “(you) do not have” and “(you) are unable to obtain” in 4,2 indicate that desires for pleasure and passions are unsatisfied and thus eventually lead to murder, social upheaval, battles and war.

James’ awareness of a tradition like the *teknon* section is evidenced not only in Jas 4,1-2 but also in the entire arrangement of Jas 4,1-4. The author reserves some of his harshest invectives for those who pursue their own desires, addressing them as “adulteresses” (μοιχαλίδες). In Did 3,2-3 being angry, jealous, eager for battle and hot-tempered are all connected to murder, while a lascivious or lustful person (ἐπιθυμητής) is tied to adultery (μοιχεία)⁽⁶⁵⁾ — these are the

⁽⁶³⁾ A similar punctuation can also be found in J.B. MAYOR, *The Epistle of St. James*. The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Comments (1897; repr. Grand Rapids 1954) 134-137; J.H. ROPES, *The Epistle of St James* (ICC; Edinburgh 1916) 254; JOHNSON, *The Letter of James*, 267, 277 etc.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ “James 3:13–4:10 and the *Topos* περί φθόνου”, *NT 25* (1983) 327-347; repr. in L.T. JOHNSON, *Brother of Jesus*, 182-201; ID., *The Letter of James*, 277. See also JACKSON-MCCABE, *Logos and Law*, 201-202; LAWS, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 171.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Unlike the variety of minor transgressions in the two halves of the separate strophes, the same serious offence is repeatedly retained in each of the two halves, with the exception of 3,3, where the grave sin is expressed in two different words (“fornication” and “adultery”). It is, however, hard to believe that the term “fornication” was used in the earlier layer of GTW 3,1-6. The word πορνεία is commonly a translation of the Hebrew term זנות or a related form, which is used as technical terminology for prostitution. In the Torah — both oral and written — prostitution (זנות) is prohibited when sexual intercourse is involved with a cultic and / or commercial prostitute. There is no condemnation of sexual relations that do not violate the marriage bond. Pre-marital, non-commercial sexual intercourse between man and woman is not considered a moral crime in

topics treated by James in 1,14-15.19-20 and 4,1-4. It may be argued, then, that these verses are reminiscent of, and perhaps modelled after, a Jewish moral tradition similar to the *teknon* section. James lays bare the meaning of the requirements of the Law as seen through the eyes of pious Jewish Sages.

b) Radicalisation

Jas 4,1-4 is in agreement with contemporary Hellenistic authors and Did 3,1-6 in its emphasis on the fact that colliding selfish desires prepare the way for violence. Yet there are also essential differences. James deviates from the conventional topic by suggesting that these battles are being fought at this very same moment among the readers. In his letter it is not a potential but actual and tangible situation. Severe violence is already evident among them. The situation among his readers seems to have gotten seriously out of hand. He accuses his addressees of being engaged in wars and other conflicts (4,1-2). They are “killers” (4,2), “adulteresses” (4,4), sinners (4,8). How serious were the sins of these Christian readers?

Since James argued in 2,8-11 that breaking any command amounts to violating the whole law, it follows that the “minor sins” are judged in terms of the most extreme consequences possible. James understands the various paragraphs of the *teknon* section in the sense that all actions which potentially lead to strife, war, murder or adultery must be seen as being as equally grave as major transgressions. He assesses the minor sins of his addressees as being major transgressions. His readers should not think they can plead innocence. If they allow themselves to be carried away by their passions, give in to desires and are jealous, it is the same as if they had waged war or committed murder.

This radicalisation is also the setting which enables us to understand the straightforward accusation of “adultery” in 4,4. The label “adulteresses” applies not only to those who engage in the physical act of intercourse, but also to those who are covetous. They are adulterers because of their failure to resist “desire”. The choice of the specific

the Torah and contemporary Judaism (see, for example, B. MALINA, “Does *Porneia* mean Fornication?”, *NT* 14 [1972] 10-17). Although fornication (πορνεῖα) is presented as a grave sin in 3,3a, it is difficult to believe that the passage’s concern is with cultic or commercial sexual relations. It is therefore likely that the term in the first layer of this unit was adultery (μοιχεία), which also occurs in the second half of the present admonition.

wording was inspired by the major transgression in Did 3,3. James' discussion is based less on the supposed activities of his addressees than on his intensification of the argument in the *teknon* section. By equating the gravity of major legal transgressions and an obviously minor offence, he established a higher standard of liability for his readers⁽⁶⁶⁾.

James' instruction is even more rigorous than the supra-legal conduct prevalent in the pious environment of the Hassidim and the teaching in Did 3,1-6. In the Derekh Erets the basic rule of avoiding minor offences is meant to prevent a person from indulging in major transgressions, thereby eliminating the root cause of murder and adultery, respectively. James starts from the other side. By stressing the major transgressions he makes clear that perpetrating major sins equals all attitudes and actions which potentially lead to such acts. In James' moral approach to the law, armed conflict, murder and adultery happen among his readers because they allow desire to entice them into minor offences⁽⁶⁷⁾.

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⁽⁶⁶⁾ There are obvious agreements with the statements of principle (5,17-20) plus the so-called antitheses (5,21-48) in the Gospel of Matthew; see VAN DE SANDT – FLUSSER, *The Didache*, 193-237. Because a comparison between James and Matthew in this respect would exceed the scope of this contribution, this subject will be dealt with elsewhere.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Other major points at which James exceeds the Two Ways imagery — and especially that of the *teknon* section — are the following. First, unlike the procedure in Did 3,1-6, mentioning each specific minor transgression and the major wrongdoing it gives birth to, James focuses on ἐπιθυμία as the ultimate vice responsible. For James it is “desire”, the internal, psychological temptation, that comes first. Second, James emphasizes the God-given ability of a transformed heart to discern and to carry out God's will. One cannot master the right road without God's help. The Torah is internalised by the gift of wisdom. As the “implanted word” (1,21), wisdom brings regeneration and rebirth. James distinguishes true and false wisdom, the one “from above” and the other “from the world” (3,13-18). Throughout the letter, and particularly in 4,1-6, he emphasizes God's role as the source of good things. The humble person is the one who trusts God and divine control of his life. It is not by way of sating one's own desires (τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν), but by simply asking (τὸ αἰτεῖσθαι) that one can go about “having” or “obtaining” things (Jas 4,3). One must depend humbly, simply and wholly upon God.

SUMMARY

The author of the Letter of James accuses his readers (Jas 4,1-4) of being responsible for war, murder and adultery. How are we to explain this charge? This paper shows that the material in Jas 1,13-21; 2,8-11 and 4,1-4 is closely akin to the *teknon* section in Did 3,1-6. The *teknon* section belonged to the Jewish Two Ways tradition which, for the most part, is covered by the first six chapters of the Didache. Interestingly, Did 3,1-6 exhibits close affinity with the ethical principles of a particular stream of Rabbinic tradition found in early *Derekh Erets* treatises. James 4,1-4 should be considered a further development of the warnings in Did 3,1-6.