

SCRIPTURE CLASS NOTES

The Epistle of St. James.

A baseless theory of antagonism between Paul's precepts of faith, and James' practice of works should never have survived the perusal of chap 1, 2-4. "Count it all joy when ye fall into trials, my brethren, knowing that the proof of your faith worketh endurance; and let endurance have a perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." The perfectibility of humanity through aspiration and endeavor is nowhere more clearly entertained, as is natural for an apostle of a gospel whose injunction "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect," takes no account of an alleged depravity fatal to such development.

A misconception as to what faith is leads to many errors, and if we distinguish between belief, the mere acceptance of certain statements or propositions, and faith, an attitude of dependence upon and growth towards the Divine, we will avoid many difficulties. St. James speaks of faith in this sense of aspiration, the innate wisdom of progress, as Paul does, and insists, 1: 6 8, that there must be no wavering, no facing both ways, and that no advance is possible to the double-minded man trying to live for both worlds at once. See iv: 8.

It is said that St. James was of Joseph's first family, and was well grown at the time of his father's marriage to Mary. This would account for his relationship as "brother of the Lord," without doing violence to a common belief regarding Mary's maternity. He was well-grounded in the mystic writings of the Jews, and his devoutness and learning were recognized in the position accorded to him by the saints at Jerusalem. His evident familiarity with occult teachings, and his constant allusions to such writers is apparent in the Epistle. For example i, 17, he uses technical language, showing astronomical, and consequently, in that age, astrological learning, in speaking of "the Father of Lights" dwelling at the shadowless centre, without variation or growth (Deut., xxxiii., 14), or ordinances (Job, xxxviii., 33). In iii., 6, he displays occult knowledge in mentioning the "tongue-fire," which may be either of Pentecost or Pluto, and which sets in motion the "wheel of birth," or reincarnation, the "wheel of

the Law," the swastika. In iv., 5, a puzzle to the commentators, he refers to the Buddhist principle and its influence. In iii., 15, he speaks of the astral, psychic and kamic planes of consciousness. In v., 14, 15, he displays familiarity with mesmeric effects on the plane of prana, using oil to localize and serve as a medium for the vital forces of the operators, and to prevent the debasement of higher mental currents as so dangerously practised by faith and mental healers, Christian Scientists, and other modern practitioners.

The fallacy of "righteous indignation" is put aside i., 20. Worship, translated religion, is defined i., 26, 27, in terms that ranks most people's worship as "vanity." Class and caste notions are severely censured throughout. It is one of God's attributes which society cannot tolerate, but all the apostles agree that God is no respecter of persons, ii: 1-9. See also 1 Peter, 1: 17; Acts x: 34, etc. The miseries of those who have centred their affections in wealth which they must abandon at the close of the cycle, are foretold, and every age reaps its own harvest in these respects.

St. James is a preacher of faith, the knowledge of the law, "the royal law," ii: 8, the "perfect law," the "law of freedom," i: 25; ii: 12; and of works, the observance of this law, and his occult knowledge and ascetic life illustrate both. "Who is wise and understanding among you? let him shew by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom," iii: 13.

HERE is the position of many of our friends defined in a letter recently received. "I do not believe that anyone ever penetrated the mysteries of nature beyond the grave while still retaining hold on the physical body. If anyone has had the power, or has the power of lifting aside the Veil of the One that is and was and shall be, they should give this priceless knowledge to those poor stragglers and strugglers who sincerely want to find the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Putting aside the inconsistency of the avowed disbelief, we can only say that this knowledge is open to all who are willing to receive it. The Masters have spoken, and their very existence is doubted and scoffed at, their messengers defamed and derided. And yet the "small old path" still lies before us. "They who live the life shall know of the doctrine."