

## James 4.5 Reconsidered

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**Jas 4.5 poses several exegetical difficulties. Particularly elusive has been identifying the ‘scripture’ to which James refers. This article suggests a fresh translation and reading of vv. 5–6. It is argued that vv. 5b–6a constitute an indirect discourse construction. This is grammatically possible and best takes into account the paraenetic context of chapter 4. Further, the two main sections of these verses correspond functionally to the two cola of the quotation from Prov 3.34 in v. 6. Hence, vv. 5b–6a serve as an introductory gloss to the proverb designed to advance James’s paraenetic aims.**

The purpose of this article is to reconsider the exegetically thorny passage in Jas 4.5. Erasmus once said there are ‘waggon-loads’ of interpretations on this passage.<sup>1</sup> This article suggests one more. While first surveying the history of interpretation, the present study will make some initial exegetical conclusions before tying them together to propose a reading that most satisfactorily places Jas 4.5 in its paraenetic context. Typically, Jas 4.5 is viewed as a verse that particularly complicates scholarly understanding of James’s view of (OT) ‘scripture’.<sup>2</sup> If the exegesis below is correct, this specific complication is eased somewhat. This is not to deny that James’s hermeneutical method is informed by Second Temple Jewish interpretive strategies. He is clearly influenced by his cultural milieu.<sup>3</sup> It is rather to sug-

1 Related by John Owen in John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of James* (trans. and ed. John Owen; Calvin’s Commentaries 22; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998) 332 n. 1.

2 Most recently, see the discussion by Wiard Popkes, ‘James and Scripture: An Exercise in Intertextuality’, *NTS* 45 (1999) 213–29. He hypothesizes that James’s access to scripture was limited and so he could not check all his citations. As for the ‘scripture’ in vv. 5b–6a not being found in extant (canonical) material, Popkes suggests that ‘James did not know better’. His candour points up the exegetical and citation complications involved: ‘I am the first to admit that these considerations are a *coup de force*, originating from sheer despair about these verses’ (227).

3 On James, see Richard Bauckham, ‘James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude’, in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson; New York: Cambridge University, 1988) 303–17, esp. 306–9; Peter H. Davids, ‘Tradition and Citation in the Epistle of James’, in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation* (ed. W. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978) 113–26. More generally, see E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early* 189

gest that what ‘scripture says’ is neither a sense quotation from the OT per se nor a citation from lost extra-canonical literature. It will be argued that vv. 5b–6a fill out an indirect statement introduced by λέγει and comprise a preparatory gloss on the Prov 3.34 quotation in vv. 6c–d. These clauses functionally parallel the Proverbs verse. Moreover, they serve James’s contextual paraenetic purpose by substantiating his v. 4 invective assertion, on the one hand, and by grounding his v. 7 repentance-inducing exhortation, on the other.

#### A. Jas 4.5 – The Exegetical Problems Stated

The meaning of Jas 4.5 is obscured by several interrelated lexical and syntactical ambiguities. A given proposed resolution of these ambiguities, or exegetical details, does not necessarily yield the unambiguous translation nor reveal the undisputed significance of the verse itself, since the various clues point in different directions. That is, one detail may favour interpretation *X*, whereas another detail may favour interpretation *Y*. Ultimately context will prove crucial for coming to any solid conclusions.<sup>4</sup> Yet even here opposite viewpoints can garner contextual support, and so context may not put an end to all dispute.

The exegetical uncertainties at a glance are these: (1) Is πνεῦμα the subject or the object of the main verb? Or is there another subject supplied by context, namely God? Woven into this question is another. What is this πνεῦμα dwelling in man? Two options present themselves: (a) the vivifying spirit of man given at creation; or (b) the Holy Spirit given in redemption. (2) What is the meaning of φθόνον? (3) How is the prepositional phrase πρὸς φθόνον used in combination with the main verb ἐπιποθεῖ? (4) Further, is v. 5b to be read as a statement or a question?<sup>5</sup> Lastly and most interestingly, (5) what is the identity of the ‘scripture’ James refers to in v. 5a and appears to cite in v. 5b? It does not correspond to any known OT scripture. What are we to make of this, and what does it tell us about James’s view of ‘scripture’?<sup>6</sup> The translation of v. 5 will necessarily inform the

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*Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991) esp. 77, 79–101, 121; Christopher D. Stanley, ‘The Social Environment of “Free” Biblical Quotations in the New Testament’, in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; JSNTSup 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997) 18–27.

<sup>4</sup> See Douglas J. Moo’s concise summary in *The Epistle of James* (Pillar NT Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 188–90.

<sup>5</sup> A related question is whether v. 5 contains an indirect statement or question, as in the NIV and New Living Translation (NLT).

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the serviceable summary by Moo, see the taxonomy of the issues involved presented by Sophie Laws, *The Epistle of James* (HNTC; New York: Harper and Row, 1980) 174–5.

answer to the question about scriptural citation in James, and so the translation question will be addressed first.<sup>7</sup>

Three interpretations, or interpretive trajectories, dominate the scholarly conversation. The first sees James as referring to God's jealousy for the human spirit not to be friends with the world.<sup>8</sup> This is reflected in the NRSV: 'God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'. In the second, James is read as highlighting the human proclivity for envy.<sup>9</sup> The KJV points to this sense: 'Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?' In the third, v. 5 is repunctuated so that two rhetorical questions are asked, both expecting negative answers: 'Or do you suppose that the Scripture speaks in vain? Does the spirit which he made to dwell in us crave enviously?'<sup>10</sup>

## B. Exegetical Problems Considered

### 1. *Is πνεῦμα the subject or the object of ἐπιποθεῖ?*

Because πνεῦμα is neuter, it occurs in the same form in the nominative and accusative, and so could be either subject or direct object. Not unrelated to the syntactical question is the semantic question. Is the spirit divine or human? If divine, it would refer to the Holy Spirit. There is no reason to infer that the Holy Spirit is spoken of here. (James nowhere else mentions him explicitly.) Moreover, the alternative view makes better sense. If human, it is generally agreed that πνεῦμα would refer to the life-spirit principle implanted by God in Gen 2.7. The only other use of πνεῦμα in James is at 2.26, where the spirit vivifies the body.<sup>11</sup> Although in the LXX the term used for 'living soul' is ψυχή, the same semantic

7 One additional problem should be mentioned. The variant reading κατόκησεν in place of κατόκισεν is explained best by itacism due to the latter's being a *hapax*. The latter is causative ('which he has made to dwell'), whereas the former is intransitive ('which dwells'). κατόκισεν is better attested in the MSS, and it is the more difficult reading. Hence, the discussion that follows assumes both that κατόκισεν is the correct reading and that it is causative. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck, 1998) 612.

8 Moo, *Epistle*, 190; Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco: Word, 1988) 150–1, though note that he sees the Holy Spirit (HS) as the subject that jealously desires human obedience; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 164; James B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (London: Macmillan, 1910) 142, 144–5; Martin Dibelius, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Hermeneia; rev. H. Greeven; trans. M. A. Williams; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 223–4.

9 See Joel Marcus, 'The Evil Inclination in the Epistle to James', *CBQ* 44 (1982) 606–21; Lewis J. Prockter, 'James 4.4–6: Midrash on Noah', *NTS* 35 (1989) 625–7.

10 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995) 267, 282; Laws, *Epistle*, 182.

11 Laws seems to take this as decisive (*Epistle*, 177); Johnson, however, believes it to be unhelpful (*Letter*, 280).

capital may be covered by πνεῦμα. For example, in the LXX of Gen 7.15 every animal that had the breath of life (πνεῦμα ζωῆς) breathed into it entered the ark (cf. LXX Gen 6.17; Isa 2.22; Job 27.3; Ps 103.29–30). Given the Fall, it should be recognized that the life spirit which energizes humanity is not extinguished but carries with it the propensity to evil.<sup>12</sup>

A second explanation of ‘spirit’ is that James is adopting something similar to the Jewish notion of a good or evil impulse (רָצוֹן).<sup>13</sup> Such an evil impulse is illustrated in the Noah narrative in Gen 6.5, where it is reported that every inclination (רָצוֹן) of the thoughts of man were only evil continually. In the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* binary spirits, one of truth and one of falsehood, are represented as dwelling within a man, sponsoring him to good or evil. Man must struggle to decide, as it were, between the whisperings of the good angel on his right shoulder and the devil on his left. This leads L. T. Johnson to comment that on this view human freedom operates ‘in allegiance to one or the other of these “spirits”’.<sup>14</sup>

As suggestive as the רָצוֹן option is, it is far from clear that James entertains this dualistic anthropology as a characteristic of his Christian audience. To be sure, he recognizes the strong desire (ἐπιθυμία) against which the Christian must struggle during testing (1.14), but strong desire is not necessarily identical to the Second Temple and rabbinic evil impulse. Moreover, according to James each Christian has been regenerated by the word of truth (1.18), which manifestly differentiates James’s Christian audience from the mass of humanity destroyed in the Deluge. ‘Spirit’ then probably refers to the vitalizing work of God in creation, the life principle that is still inside of humans. It is coordinated with his very being, and as such is subject to the controlling vicissitudes of his particular human constitution.

Two other considerations from the proximate context support this interpretation. First, in the preceding chapter James clearly alludes to God’s creation of the world and of man, whose task it is to exercise dominion over the sundry creatures (3.7–9). He utilizes this fact to expose their bitter jealousy (ζῆλον) and party spirit (v. 14) caused by their untamed tongue. This, he says, does not lead to the proper fruit they were created and redeemed to produce (3.17–18). Creation imagery pervades the exhortation in the latter part of chapter 3; this rebuke rolls over into chapter 4. Second, in 4.14 James mentions that a person’s life (ζωή) is a vapour or breath (ἀτμός), which although not lexically parallel does suggest that James is

12 See Martin, *James*, 150. There is a third possibility: πνεῦμα is the spirit God grants to humans as a gift for prophecy or wisdom. Notwithstanding the references to wisdom in the context starting at 3.13ff., the mostly negative connections drawn to the ‘spirit’ in 4.5 tell against this sense. See Johnson, *Letter*, 280–1, who cites the LXX of Exod 31.3; 35.31; Deut 34.9; Isa 11.2.

13 This is a second explanation not counting the text-critical question addressed in n. 7 above.

14 Johnson, *Letter*, 281. See also Marcus, ‘Evil Inclination’, 621; Davids, *Epistle*, 163.

thinking of his readers' specific abuses of the life given them. 'Spirit' then in 4.5b most likely refers to the life principle implanted by God in humankind.

As for the related syntactical question concerning the subject of the main verb, several factors point in a direction away from taking πνεῦμα as subject. First, it is not only grammatically possible to supply the subject from the context, it seems grammatically preferable. God is unmistakably the subject of δίδωσιν ('he gives') in v. 6, as well as κατώκισεν ('he made to dwell') in the relative clause in v. 5. It would make best sense to take God as the subject of both the subordinate verb and the main verb. Additionally, something must be said about word order. 'The common order of words is subject, verb, object', J. B. Mayor remarks, 'and . . . in this sentence it is easier to supply the subject than the object.'<sup>15</sup> Mayor is pointing to the difficulty of inferring the direct object of the transitive main verb if one takes 'spirit' as the subject.<sup>16</sup> ἐπιποθεῖ takes an object – it means to desire or yearn for something – and the 'spirit' appears to be the most natural candidate.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, taking the human spirit as the subject would not obviously allow the citation in v. 5 to support the warning in v. 4 (although it might well set up a contrast introduced by v. 6).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is probably best to read 'spirit', in the sense of life principle, as the direct object and to supply the subject from the context, which means to supply 'God': God yearns for the spirit.

## 2. *What is the meaning of φθόνος?*

Taking 'God' as the subject of v. 5b is not without its problems. If God is the subject of ἐπιποθεῖ, then πρὸς φθόνον must modify God. The difficulty is that in biblical Greek φθόνος always refers to human envy as a vice; it is never positive.<sup>19</sup> Johnson is right to assert that it is 'virtually impossible, therefore, for James to use *phthonos* for God'.<sup>20</sup> Both Sophie Laws and Johnson following her use this to argue against taking God as the subject and to argue for a construction in which the human spirit is the subject.

## 3. *What is the meaning of πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ?*

Douglas Moo's diagnosis of the exegetical dilemma is a helpful way of summarizing the data hitherto considered. On the one hand, the grammar of v. 5b and

15 Mayor, *Epistle*, 142.

16 See BAGD, 297–8.

17 Note the creative, and strained, attempt by the NLT to supply the direct object: 'What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful?'

18 See Davids, *Epistle*, 163.

19 For NT examples, see Matt 27.18 (Mark 15.10); Rom 1.29; Gal 5.21; Phil 1.15; 1 Tim 6.4; Tit 3.3; 1 Pet 2.1. In the LXX see 1 Macc 8.16; 3 Macc 6.7; Wis 2.24.

20 Johnson, *Letter*, 282. See Laws, *Epistle*, 177; Moo, *Epistle*, 189; Davids, *Epistle*, 163.

the context favour God as the subject; hence, divine jealousy is somehow the concern. On the other hand, the meaning of φθόνος quite clearly supports a reference to the human penchant for envy. The next question pertains to the meaning of the prepositional phrase πρὸς φθόνον in conjunction with the verb ἐπιποθεῖ. The evidence here is mixed.<sup>21</sup>

The question is whether the preposition πρὸς or the verb ἐπιποθεῖ are to be given their natural, most common meanings. And here the spectre of the proper subject reappears. First, if the human spirit is the subject and James's concern is with human envy, then we would expect the construction to mean something like 'tend toward'. Moo's evaluation is to the point: "Toward" is a perfectly acceptable rendering of *pros*, but "tend" is not the most natural translation of the verb.<sup>22</sup> Another possibility, suggested by Mayor and others, is that πρὸς φθόνον is equivalent to φθονερῶς ('jealously'). This adverbial use of πρὸς is attested in classical and Hellenistic Greek.<sup>23</sup> And the adverbial use could work on a human envy reading, although it would still face the objection that this reading must supply a less-than-obvious direct object.<sup>24</sup>

For this reason, it seems best to take the prepositional phrase adverbially ('jealously'), but to do so with the understanding that God is the subject and 'spirit' is the object of the verbal action ('He/God longs jealously for the spirit which he has caused to dwell in us'). The transitive quality of the main verb remains intact, ἐπιποθεῖ retains its normal sense, and the direct object is supplied by the sentence itself. Attractive as this option is, it is not without two difficulties of its own.

First, the verb ἐπιποθεῖν is used only once in biblical Greek with reference to God, but this instance occurs in Jer 13.14 and bears the sense of 'be compassionate', not 'yearn or long for'.<sup>25</sup> More frequently, it refers to human longing, as in Ps 41.2 LXX, where the human soul (ψυχή, not πνεῦμα) longs for God (ἐπιποθεῖ ... πρὸς σέ ὁ θεός). In this example, the same verb and preposition as in Jas 4.5 appear together. The discrepancy between ψυχή and πνεῦμα is not impossible to resolve given overlapping LXX usage. Second, as already mentioned, the jealousy signified by φθόνος is always morally negative and is never used in connection with God. These considerations appear strongly to argue for 'spirit' as the subject

21 Moo, *Epistle*, 188–9. For a list of different solutions – and his balanced assessment – see Mayor, *Epistle*, 141–5.

22 Moo, *Epistle*, 189.

23 See the literature cited in BAGD, 711; *contra* Popkes ('James and Scripture', 225) who asserts that this rendering 'cannot be maintained'.

24 The NIV goes so far as to eliminate a direct object altogether ('the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely'), effectively making the verb intransitive.

25 This lexical exception (οὐκ ἐπιποθήσω λέγει κύριος) is overlooked by Laws, *Epistle*, 177, and by Moo, *Epistle*, 189.

and human envy as James's concern; however, these objections themselves can be met – and met in such a way, when contextual factors are introduced, as is likely to tip the scales in favour of reading 'God' as the subject and divine jealousy as James's concern.

As to the first, in biblical Greek ἐπιποθεῖ always carries a positive meaning.<sup>26</sup> This tells against adopting the human spirit subject construction in this context, since James condemns proud, human cravings because they are disruptive to the church and hostile towards God. As to the second, God is represented frequently in the LXX as jealous (e.g. Exod 20.5; 34.14; Deut 4.24; Num 25.11; Zech 1.14). It is true that in these instances the word used is a form of ζηλωτής or ζήλος. But the idea of envy or jealousy may be translated by either ζήλος or φθόνος. For instance, in 1 Macc 8.16 the two words are coordinated as synonyms.<sup>27</sup> Although out of the ordinary, it is not inconceivable, then, that James would attribute φθόνος to God's jealous longing for his children.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, since James has already employed ζήλος twice negatively in the previous context (3.14, 16) and used the verbal form in 4.2, and since the discussion at the end of chapter 3 is carried over, albeit with more focused concern, into chapter 4, it is quite understandable that James may have wanted to vary his style. This probably led him to choose a different word, namely φθόνος, to contrast human and divine jealousy. This likelihood is made all the more probable when James's polemic is taken into account. Jas 4.4 contains a warning, the sense of which is: 'If you warm up to the world, God's anger itself will ignite.' Or as James puts it: 'Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility against God?' The implication is that there are consequences for his readers' infidelity to their spiritual relationship with God, a common OT idea and one brought to mind by the invective vocative 'adulteresses' in v. 4. When the prophets accused the covenant people of prostituting themselves to other gods, they also announced that God's jealousy for them had been roused. But this divine jealousy always had as its purpose Israel's repentance and as its goal divine grace (e.g. Isa 57.3–19; Ezek 16.32–43). The function of Jas 4.5 is to support the warning in v. 4. Hence, James reminds his readers that God is a jealous God (Exod 20.5). He cautions them that if they are jealous (ζήλος), God himself will become jealous (φθόνος). This divine jealousy stands disproportionately opposite his superabundant grace (v. 6a, d). Both of these realities are elemental to the apostolic call to repentance (vv. 7–10).

Therefore, although the πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ clause itself does not decidedly support either of the two major alternatives we have been considering, the 'divine jealousy' reading faces fewer grammatical and semantic difficulties than does the

<sup>26</sup> See Moo, *Epistle*, 189.

<sup>27</sup> The clause reads: καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν φθόνος οὐδὲ ζήλος ἐν αὐτοῖς.

<sup>28</sup> This point is made by Moo, *Epistle*, 190, and Davids, *Epistle*, 164.

‘human envy’ option. What is more, it draws contextual support that is superior to its rival. In provisional conclusion – that is, until the ‘scripture’ question is settled – Jas 4.5 should be translated: ‘Or do you suppose that scripture says to no effect, “[God] jealously yearns for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us.”’ This reading need not eliminate a contrast between v. 5b and v. 6a, which is made explicit on the human envy reading (i.e. ‘humans have evil desires, but God graciously overcomes them’). Rather, unless in narrative or made clear by the context, the conjunction δέ is almost always adversative.<sup>29</sup> The sense yielded by the general contrast is this: When a person makes himself an enemy of God by flirting with worldly disobedience, God is incited to jealousy against that person, but he may supply abundant grace in the face of the jealousy.<sup>30</sup> God’s grace is greater than his jealousy. With respect to clause order, Jas 4.5a–6b is the reverse of Ps 103.8–9, which speaks first of God’s gracious mercy and then of his jealous anger:

Yhwh is compassionate and gracious,  
 Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.  
 He will not always strive with us,  
 Nor will he keep his anger forever.<sup>31</sup>

This is understandable. James’s immediate purpose differs from that of the psalmist, which is less to assure his readers of pardon than to induce repentance leading to pardon.

Before turning to the problematic issue of the identity of the ‘scripture’, there remains one other reading of v. 5 to be evaluated. It is the proposal of Laws and Johnson that v. 5 contains two rhetorical questions that expect negative answers. In the previous verses James highlights how his readers are struggling with conflicting objects of desire; specifically, they are drawn to the world instead of to God. On the two-questions view, James rhetorically indicates that worldly affection is the reverse of what a Christian should desire. Laws paraphrases the sense of the questions this way: ‘Does scripture mean nothing? Is this (according to scripture) the way the human spirit’s longing is directed, by envy?’<sup>32</sup> James clearly expects the readers to answer no. Repunctuation is necessary for this reading, but nothing prevents such a move.

<sup>29</sup> See BDF §447; M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963) §467.

<sup>30</sup> See Moo, *Epistle*, 191, who comes to similar conclusions although his view of the citation causes his understanding of the relationship between Jas 4.5b and v. 6a to differ from that presented below.

<sup>31</sup> The psalm echoes Exod 34.6 LXX, which is followed in v. 14 by a description of Yhwh as ζηλωτής. By the first century the noun ζηλωτής was in many cases functionally equivalent to the adjective ζήλος (e.g. Gal 1.14; Acts 22.1; cf. BAGD, 338). It bears repeating that James probably opts for φθόνος here in reference to God because he has already used ζήλος in reference to the disobedient within the covenant community.

<sup>32</sup> Laws, *Epistle*, 178. See Johnson, *Letter*, 280.



The most damaging critique of this view is that a rhetorical question which invites a negative answer contains μή to indicate the desired response.<sup>33</sup> That negative particle is lacking here, which, as properly pointed out by Davids, James typically uses when posing such questions.<sup>34</sup> Johnson admits that this is a grammatical hurdle to cross. He merely counters by insisting that the overall benefits of his reading outweigh the cost of this objection. Laws promotes this view more out of allegiance to her proposed identification of the citation than because of grammatical factors. Moreover, the clause ἡ γραφή λέγει in the NT always introduces a direct quotation, with the possible exception of John 7.37–9.<sup>35</sup> This observation will reappear below; here it is put forth to argue against a repunctuation that creates two questions in v. 5. Because of the John exception and because γραφή does not appear with λέγει in v. 6, this latter objection is not as solid as the former. The combined force of these objections, however, is enough to decide against this two-questions view.

#### 4. *What is the identity of the 'scripture'?*

No dearth of explanations has been suggested to make sense of the apparent citation in Jas 4.5b preceded by the term 'scripture' (γραφή) in v. 5a. The puzzle is that the clause in v. 5b is not found explicitly in any known canonical or extra-canonical writing. But because of the introductory formula, it would seem that James is citing a passage of 'scripture' directly. What can account for this?

One suggestion is that Jas 4.5b is a direct quotation. But the remaining quandary is, of what? It could be an unknown version of the OT, but James routinely quotes directly from the LXX, as he will do in v. 6. So this is possible, but not likely. Related is the proposal of Davids and Dibelius that James cites a lost apocryphal work. Both Davids and Dibelius mention other apocryphal or pseudepigraphal literature that resembles Jas 4.5.<sup>36</sup> This view has going for it that the ἡ γραφή λέγει introduction does invite the expectation of a direct quote. Davids believes this fact alone is enough to be fatal to any explanation that takes v. 5 as a sense quotation of an OT passage. Other NT writers such as Jude appear to quote or draw from extra-canonical writings without reservation. This proposal is not falsifiable, but neither is it verifiable. In the end, its adherents adopt it because, they assert, no better suggestion has appeared.<sup>37</sup>

33 BDF §427; Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, §447.

34 See Davids, *Epistle*, 147.

35 *Ibid.*, 162.

36 Davids, *Epistle*, 164; Dibelius, *Commentary*, 223–4. Ellis, *Old Testament*, 153 n. 67, suggests that it is to some extra-canonical, contemporary *Christian* text that Jas 4.5 alludes.

37 Ellis, *Old Testament*, 153; Dibelius, *Commentary*, 222–3. See also Richard Bauckham, *James* (New York: Routledge, 1999) 81, 217 n. 9. A variation of this direct quotation idea explains the text as a rhythmic quotation or proverbial hexameter of some source. For rebuttal of this notion, see Davids, *Epistle*, 163, and BDF §487.

A second, popular proposal with many variations is that Jas 4.5 contains a sense quotation of an OT passage. Precisely what passage's gist is 'quoted' – or more properly alluded to – depends upon how one translates v. 5 and upon what one sees as James's central concern, whether divine jealousy or human envy. Proponents of this alternative adduce John 7.37–9 in support. In John 7.38 Jesus says: 'He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said [καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή], "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."' There is a difference in the introductory formula; Jesus uses the aorist instead of the present tense of λέγειν. More noteworthy is what Jesus means by 'as the Scripture said': his citation appears to paraphrase or reinterpret OT passages whose words do not correspond to his (e.g. Isa 58.11; Prov 18.4). John 7.38 is ostensibly another example of a quotation from scripture whose exact words (*verba*) do not match any single OT passage, but whose voice (*vox*) does.<sup>38</sup>

Some scholars prefer to understand James's manoeuvre as just this sort of sense quotation or a paraphrase of scripture. Moo and Mayor suppose that James has in mind passages that concern God's jealousy, and specifically jealousy for his people's obedience, such as Exod 20.5; 34.14; Zech 8.2; and possibly Gen 6.3–7. On this view, no one passage may be said definitively to be the source.<sup>39</sup>

Sophie Laws, by contrast, endorses an interpretation that understands human desire as James's concern. Jas 4.5 is not a direct quotation but an allusion triggered by the link word ἐπιποθεῖ. Three of its eleven occurrences in the LXX are in the Psalms, where the human spirit is its subject who longs for God (41.2 LXX), for his courts (83.3 LXX), and for his judgments (118.20 LXX).<sup>40</sup> Laws points out that the verb appears in the exact form in the LXX of Ps 41.2 ('As the deer earnestly desires the fountains of water, so my soul [ψυχῆ] earnestly longs [ἐπιποθεῖ] for thee, O

38 John 7.37–8 is complicated by questions surrounding both clause relationship and citation source. In his treatment of both, Maarten J. J. Menken has recently suggested that the source of the John 7.38 quotation is Ps 77.16, 20 LXX, although it is supplemented by Zech 14.8 LXX and Ps 114.8 LXX (*Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form* [Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996] 187–203). Menken's own proposal is that the quotation's 'basic text form has been manipulated thoroughly to arrive at the present textual form' (202). If he is right about the source(s), instead of a quotation the γραφή might be read better as an 'echo', which by metalepsis presents Jesus 'as the new rock in the wilderness, which is also the new temple, from which life-giving water will flow after his death' (203).

39 Moo, *Epistle*, 190–1; Mayor, *Epistle*, 140; apparently Martin, though more tentatively, *James*, 149. For the complications involved in NT 'allusions' to the OT, see Stanley E. Porter, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology', in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (n. 3 above) 79–96.

40 Laws, *Epistle*, 178–9; see also her 'Does Scripture Speak in Vain? A Reconsideration of James IV.5', *NTS* 20 (1973–4) 210–15.

God') and 83.3 ('My soul (ψυχή) longs (ἐπιποθεῖ), and faints for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh have exulted in the living God').<sup>41</sup>

These psalms portray the human soul desiring God, not cultivating envious desires that oppose him. Because either psalm would contradict the tenor of the supposed quotation, Laws insists that 'the argument must be proceeding not by statements about the human spirit but by rhetorical questions', a proposal mentioned above.<sup>42</sup> The point of the two rhetorical questions in Jas 4.5 would be that the Christian who is embittered, warring against others, and hostile towards God is acting contrary to his soul's real desire. Scripture does not depict the human soul hungering after God for no reason.

Of course, we have already taken into account the objections to this view. These psalms have ψυχή whereas James has πνεῦμα, though this is not difficult to overcome. The more pointed and grammatical challenge is that these rhetorical questions, which clearly expect a negative answer, do not contain the usual μή found in such constructions. Laws herself does not consider this objection. Moreover, if Davids is correct, the introductory formula ('scripture says') rules out of the question Laws's allusive solution to the puzzle. But it could be just as well that Laws is forced to locate such an allusion because she mistakenly takes the human spirit as the subject of ἐπιποθεῖ. Davids is right that the scripture references she adduces are not close enough in themselves to convince us of their correctness. Interesting as her suggestion is, it is not finally compelling. Further, James's meaning in context is equally, or better, explained by an alternative proposal, to be set forth presently.

Johnson follows Laws in dividing v. 5 into two rhetorical questions, but he recommends translating λέγει as 'speaks' instead of 'says'. According to him, 'the referent for this speaking is taken to be the explicit quotation in 4:6 from Prov 3:34'.<sup>43</sup> He is wrong about the two rhetorical questions, but need he also be wrong about the referent of 'scripture' in v. 5a being the Proverbs quotation in v. 6c? The answer of this article is no.

### C. Proposed Solution

I want to suggest that λέγει in Jas 4.5a introduces indirect discourse; the indicative follows λέγει but the usual ὅτι does not. On this view, γραφή refers to the actual LXX Prov 3.34 citation that appears in v. 6c. The subject of λέγει in v. 6b

41 On the human envy side, Prockter ('James 4.4–6', 627) more enthusiastically prefers to use the term 'midrash'; he sees Jas 4.4–6 as a midrash on the Noah episode in Gen 6 in which James exhorts his readers to imitate Noah's godly example and so avoid God's punishment of the world's friends.

42 Laws, 'Does Scripture Speak . . .?', 214.

43 Johnson, *Letter*, 280.

is not an implied reference to God but the *γρᾶφή* of v. 5a. The direct quote that in the NT typically follows immediately after the verb of speaking is delayed, but the standard formula does still prepare for a direct citation. What intervenes is an interpretive gloss, a directed paraphrase, of the Prov 3.34 scripture. This serves as a transition between James's foregoing paraenesis, his subsequent scriptural substantiation of it, and his pointed call to repentance in vv. 7–10. Verse 5 still supports the warning of v. 4, but it does so indirectly insofar as it conveys the authoritative gist of biblical teaching. Such a proposal would avoid the speculation of the lost apocryphal work hypothesis; v. 5b refers to what is in the text. It also, for the same reason, escapes the frantic search for the closest reference on the sense quotation hypothesis. As this proposal accounts better than its rivals for the fuller context of the passage, it is also able to explain more satisfactorily the identity of the 'scripture' in vv. 5b–6a.

Mayor and Laws dismiss something like this directed paraphrase proposal out of hand. But because the view I am suggesting may be confused with what Mayor and Laws discard, it is necessary to clarify precisely what they reject. Mayor protests against taking vv. 5b–6a as a mere parenthesis, not as a sort of indirect speech serving as an interpretive introduction to the quotation in v. 6, as is being suggested.<sup>44</sup> Laws quickly disregards the parenthesis proposal: 'This last suggestion can probably be dismissed as syntactically too difficult, and as Prov. iii. 34 is anyway preceded by *διὸ λέγει* a double introduction would be superfluous.'<sup>45</sup> But again, Laws is objecting to it as a parenthetical gloss, *not* as an indirect statement. Neither Mayor nor Laws considered the present proposal.<sup>46</sup>

The only apparent objection that the indirect statement hypothesis faces (which perhaps Laws has in mind) is the absence of *ὅτι* after *λέγει* in v. 5a, since the standard way to introduce indirect speech is to include it. Its inclusion is, of course, typical of direct discourse in Koine Greek as well, although even in direct discourse the *ὅτι* may not appear, especially where two verbs of speaking closely follow one another. An example of this is Mark 14.14: *καὶ ὅπου ἐὰν εἰσέλθῃ εἰπατε τῷ οἰκοδεσπότῃ ὅτι Ὁ διδάσκαλος λέγει, Ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ κατάλυμά μου κτλ.* ('and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, "The Teacher says, 'Where is My guest room . . .'"'). The imperative 'say' is followed by *ὅτι*, whereas the indicative 'says' embedded within the larger discourse construction is not followed by it. Of course, *mutatis mutandis*, it could very well be the case that in

44 Mayor, *Epistle*, 140. His argument is against positing a full stop after *λέγει*, which I am not suggesting.

45 Laws, 'Does Scripture Speak . . .?', 210.

46 Popkes draws attention to the suggestion of Rudolf Gebser, who sees one quotation and reads v. 6a as a commentary on the proverb cited. However, Gebser arrives at this position by what Popkes rightly calls a 'thoroughgoing conjecture'. For Gebser's rearrangement of the clauses in vv. 5–6, see Popkes, 'James and Scripture', 224.

James we do have direct speech recorded from v. 5b through v. 6a – although most interpreters end the supposed citation at the close of v. 5 – but we would then be faced with the source question all over again. And in that case, it would probably be best to see v. 5b – v. 6a as a sense quotation from more than one OT passage. But then the use of λέγει to introduce a sense quotation in one verse and then a direct quotation in the next would be striking, though not impossible.

A better approach may be had by noting other examples in the NT of double (direct and indirect) discourse constructions with both verbs in the indicative, in which the inclusion of ὅτι after the second verb of perception is either repeated or possibly omitted. Two examples in which the second ὅτι is retained in indirect discourse are 2 Cor 13.6 ('But I trust that you will realize that [γνώσεσθε ὅτι] we ourselves do not fail the test') and John 4.1 ('Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that [ἤκουσαν ὅτι] Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John'), but in both of these examples the second verb of perception is *not* a form of λέγειν.

John 3.28 is an example in which the second ὅτι is possibly suppressed after the aorist of λέγειν in direct discourse (see John 1.20): αὐτοὶ ὑμεῖς μοι μαρτυρεῖτε ὅτι εἶπον [ὅτι] οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός κτλ. ('you yourselves bear me witness that I said [ ], "I am not the Messiah . . ."'). This example is interesting because the second half of the quotation ('but am sent before him') may not be direct. It may be precisely because of this ambiguity as to a potentially mixed construction, one of directly and indirectly reported speech, that there is a question about the originality of the second ὅτι after the aorist of λέγειν.<sup>47</sup>

A final example, and one more closely parallel to the James passage, is Jude 17–18: 'But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you [that] (ὅτι ἔλεγον ὑμῖν ὅτι) in the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.' The syntax itself is ambiguous as to whether the apostolic citation is exact or indirect. It is legitimate to read Jude 18 as an indirect summary, a paraphrase, of what the apostles commonly taught. Richard Bauckham seems to favour this view: 'Jude's quotation . . . may not be a precise quotation from a written or oral source, but a statement in his own words of the general sense of some of the prophetic material which was often included in early Christian teaching.'<sup>48</sup>

47 See Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966) 152: 'This is not an exact citation of what John the Baptist had said. . . . while the second clause in the quotation of vs. 28 is in the spirit of John the Baptist, it is really only a composite of what he has said'. That is, unless it is an exact citation of something not recorded by the biblical writers.

48 Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco: Word, 1983) 102. He suggests that the citation is an indirect statement because of the repetition of the catchword 'ungodliness' harking back to v. 16, but he admits an alternative.

If Jude 18 is an indirect statement, and the second ὅτι is rightly omitted, then we have an intra-biblical example of a Jewish Palestinian author electing to bypass the second ὅτι in a double discourse construction.<sup>49</sup>

If an author believed the sense of his statement would be clear enough to his original audience, grammarians recognize that he may not have followed ordinary grammatical procedure – in this case inserting ὅτι to introduce an indirect statement after a form of λέγειν. This is called *constructio ad sensum*: one's meaning is clear, even though the grammar is unconventional.<sup>50</sup> And all scholars are agreed that in Jas 4.5 we are dealing with a unique verse. So it is syntactically possible that in the James passage we find a double discourse construction in which the second ὅτι is suppressed because the sense would have been clear enough to James's readers.

An additional factor, one that takes stock of the meaning produced, tips the scales to make this proposal not merely possible but probable. It is the parallelism established by taking v. 6a as part of the indirect statement, or, better, as part of the interpretive introduction to the Prov 3.34 quotation. Virtually all interpreters and translations end the citation at the end of v. 5. And to do so they all repunctuate, putting a stop at the end of v. 5 and changing the semi-colon (in English the question mark) to another stop or period after χάρις in v. 6a. But it makes good sense to read the text as the editors have it, so that the interpretive introduction, still part of the question signalled in v. 5 by δοκεῖτε, runs through Jas 4.6a. Significantly, each half of the paraphrase *functionally* corresponds to each half of the proverb (see Figure 1). In the first colon of each, God stands in a jealous relationship of opposition to those who resist his will and disobey his commandments. In the second colon, God is depicted as giving to the needy humble abundant grace which is able to overcome his jealous opposition. What is more, this pattern – divine jealousy followed by divine grace – is just what is found in the aforemen-

49 I was unable to conduct the research necessary to claim that this is a definitive Palestinian Jewish-Christian idiom or style. Because, as Nigel Turner notes, the 'author of James never strays far from Jewish Greek, for all his education', it may be possible to identify such a compositional peculiarity common to the likes of John, Jude, and James with which English-speakers are already so familiar in their indirect statements – namely, suppressing one of the *thats*. One consequence of the present study, then, is to invite further investigation into this (potential) grammatical subtlety. See Turner, *Style*, vol. 4 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (ed. J. H. Moulton; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976) 116–17.

50 I was reminded of this by T. David Gordon. The general principle is stated and applied to examples in BDF §§134, 282, 296; in D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 330–3, 337–43, 652, 738; and Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (ed. Moulton) 40, 311–12. Although the examples usually include (dis)concord between nouns and pronouns in gender and number, clauses and participles are discussed. Nothing prevents the general principle from being applied to indirect discourse.

Figure 1

<i>Indirect statement</i>	<i>Proverbs 3.34 citation</i>
4.5b: God jealously desires the spirit which he has caused to dwell in us	4.6c: The Lord opposes the proud
4.6a: but He gives greater grace	4.6d: but he gives grace to the humble.

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tioned prophetic passages and intuitively in Ps 103 (the clause order highlighted above does not alter this fact).

A final strand of supporting evidence comes from the use of the logical conjunctions in the immediate context of James's paraenesis,  $\delta\iota\acute{o}$  in v. 6 and  $\omicron\upsilon\nu$  in v. 7, which work together with v. 5 to substantiate and advance the thought in v. 4. In other words, vv. 4–7 constitute a tight argument which James designs to urge and persuade his readers to repent of their self-serving, worldly ways. First, the word  $\delta\iota\acute{o}$  usually marks an inference that is self-evident.<sup>51</sup> In v. 6  $\delta\iota\acute{o}$  links the Proverbs quotation to the pointed question James poses to his haughty audience ('do you suppose that scripture says to no effect . . .'). Syntactically this is an open question, but the argumentative flow of the passage indicates that, even within the parameters of the genuine interrogative, James does not place much confidence in his readers to answer negatively. Second,  $\omicron\upsilon\nu$  regularly functions as a particle that concludes a process of reasoning. Such is the case in v. 7. We might paraphrastically reconstruct vv. 4–8a, filling in some of the argument's assumptions and gaps this way:

You adulteresses! Don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? So then, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that the scripture says to no effect that God jealously desires the spirit he caused to dwell in us but gives a greater grace? *If you do think so, you are dead wrong. For just this reason it actually says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'* Therefore, *because scripture does not say vainly that God jealously opposes the proud as his enemies*, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. *And because scripture does not say in vain that God gives greater grace to the humble*, draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

The conjunction  $\delta\iota\acute{o}$  ties together the indirect statement embedded within James's question, which anticipatorily paraphrases the Prov 3.34 quote (LXX), and the Proverbs quote itself, which serves as ultimate verification for the assertion in v.4. Verses 5–6a function in the argument as a paraenetic pivot-point. This allows James not only to make a transition from accusation (vv. 1–4) to exhortation (vv. 7–10), but also to contrast his readers' jealous behaviour (3.14, 16; 4.2) with God's

<sup>51</sup> See J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988) §89.50; also BAGD, 198.

jealous response (4.5b, 6c). The γραφή of v. 5 refers to Prov 3.34 in v. 6, and it is also the implied subject of the verb 'says' in v. 6. The NT standard scripture introduction does anticipate a direct quotation from the OT, but in this case the quotation is delayed slightly. There are similar examples of delayed citation in Paul, although these occur with νόμος instead of γραφή.<sup>52</sup>

#### D. Summary and Conclusion

In Jas 4.5–6, therefore, James is quoting one passage of scripture from the LXX, although no doubt the same truth is taught elsewhere, including the Psalms and the prophets. Guided by his paraenetic purpose, he reinforces the twin aspects he wants his readers to glean from the proverb as he anticipates moving on to the pointed call to repentance in vv. 7–10. He interprets it for them and applies it to their situation ahead of time by linking it conceptually with the rebukes and warnings he has made in the previous context. This was a common Jewish exegetical practice, found ubiquitously in Qumran material and later rabbinic Midrash. Taken over by especially Jewish Christian authors, the Second Temple interpretive tool permitted them to bring OT scripture to bear on a new covenant situation, partly by alternating commentary and scripture verse.<sup>53</sup> NT examples include 2 Pet 2.20–2 and Heb 1.4–13 and 2.5–18, where each author makes an argumentative point that he immediately fleshes out, or substantiates, by appealing to direct OT quotations. A more general type of midrash can be seen in James's own letter, as when he interprets and applies the narratives of Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah.<sup>54</sup> For the purposes of this article, however, the important point to observe is that James regards the interpretive paraphrase of Prov 3.34 in 4.5b–6b as what scripture means. And this meaning, insofar as it is the good and

52 See 1 Cor 9.8–9, where the introductory 'the law says . . .' appears but where the quote referred to is delayed; and 1 Cor 14.34, where the 'law' reference is missing altogether. Two other, less clear, instances are worth considering. The actual 'word of the Lord' to which Paul refers in 1 Thess 4.15a may not begin until v. 16, with v. 15b serving as Paul's intervening gloss or preparatory application of the 'word'. Likewise the actual 'mystery' mentioned in 1 Cor 15.51a may not start until v. 52b. In both passages, Paul's directed use of the first person plural followed by an explanatory conjunction may signal a 'delayed' quotation similar to that in Jas 4.

53 See C. A. Evans, 'Judaism, Post-A.D. 70', in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (ed. R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997) 605–11, esp. 606–7.

54 See Davids, 'Tradition and Citation', 113–26. For the difference in Hebrews between the author's exegetical method in chapters 1–2 and 3–4, see Peter Enns, 'The Interpretation of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3.1–4.13', in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (n. 3 above) 352–63, esp. 352: 'It is significant that he does not quote the psalm as a proof-text to support a preceding argument, as is the case for his Old Testament quotations in the first two chapters.'



necessary consequence of what scripture expressly sets down, is part of the whole counsel of God and ought to be received as divinely authoritative because it is the word of God.<sup>55</sup>

James's directed interpretation of Prov 3.34 represents an hermeneutical method produced by his world-view. This method subserves his hermeneutical goal,<sup>56</sup> which in this case is to apply the gospel to his Christian readers by warning them. And he warns them in order to urge their repentance in the following verses. In conclusion, Jas 4.5–6 may be translated: 'Or do you suppose that scripture says to no effect that God jealously desires the spirit he caused to dwell in us but gives greater grace? Therefore it [i.e. scripture] says, "God is opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble."'

55 See *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.4 and 1.6; also Popkes, 'James and Scripture', 228.

56 See Dan G. McCartney, 'The New Testament's Use of the Old Testament', in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic* (ed. H. M. Conn; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988) 101–16; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975) esp. 22–3.