

LOOKING FOR TRACES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LITURGICAL PRAXIS AT UNEXPECTED PLACES? A NOTE ON JAMES 2,3

JOSEPH VERHEYDEN

Abstract. This short note takes its cue from a comment in D.C. Allison’s James commentary on the possible liturgical background of the formula used in Jas 2,3 for inviting a wealthy individual to sit at a prominent place. An analysis of the full verse, a comparison with how the formula is translated in modern commentaries, and a critical re-reading of some old proposals to compare it with phraseology known to have been used later on in Christian liturgy illustrate that if the suggestion cannot be taken for granted there does remain a shadow of doubt about the liturgical connection.

Keywords: Letter of James, Christian liturgy, invitational formulas.

This short essay is the result of a recent consultation of some of the major commentaries on the Letter of James in the context of another project.

NRSV has subtitled the first half of the second chapter of the letter “Warning against Partiality”. It is a good choice. This part does indeed speak of just and unjust ways of dealing with others. The command in the opening verse, formulated in the negative, sets the tone: μή ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν... – “show no partiality in matters of faith” (2,1). In the following, the rule is illustrated from one stereotypical case: the way people tend to treat wealthy and poor individuals in a not further specified type of gathering. As one may naturally assume and then also sees confirmed throughout the passage the reference most probably is to a Christian gathering, or a gathering of Christians, for the language is distinctively Christian: note “your assembly” in v. 2,¹ the address “beloved brethren” in v. 5, the

¹ Attempts at using the term συναγωγή to argue for a Jewish origin of the letter (Spitta) or to date it very early in a time when Christians were still making use of Jewish meeting places (B. Weiss) are discussed and rightly rejected by Martin DIBELIUS, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, herausgegeben und ergänzt von Heinrich GREEVEN (KEK, 15), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ¹¹1964, 165. On the reception of Jewish technical vocabulary by the first Christians, see Hubert FRANKEMÖLLE,



mention of the promised Kingdom in the same verse, the accusation of blasphemy in v. 7, the famous citation from Scripture in v. 8 (Lev 19,18) and the fragmentary references to the Decalogue in v. 11, and the general qualification of partiality in terms of committing sin in v. 9. All of this speaks for a Christian context, as is generally accepted in the literature.² It does not mean that all is clear.³

The partiality is further qualified in v. 3 as giving precedence to the wealthy at the cost of the poor one. The contrast between the two individuals is briefly but vividly sketched on the basis of their clothing. The former is finely dressed (twice λαμπρά),⁴ wearing a golden ring as a finishing touch; the other is twice called poor (πτωχός) and his cloths are said to be shabby (ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἐσθῆτι).⁵ One is given a seat, the other ordered to stand or sit on the ground:

ἐπιβλέψητε δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν λαμπρὰν
καὶ εἶπητε· σὺ κάθου ὡς καλῶς,
καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ
εἶπητε· σὺ στῆθι ἢ κάθου ἐκεῖ ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου

Such a behaviour is disqualified as a wrongly inspired judgement (v. 4; cf. v. 13). It is based on utter shine and outlook and not on what truly matters – living a life of faith. The contrast is stereotypical to the point of becoming artificial: the poor are indifferently praised for their faith and promised reward in heaven (v. 5b), the rich are by definition implicitly declared unfit for the kingdom. The logic recalls that of the story about Jesus and the rich youngster in Mark 10,17–22 parr. Matt/Luke, with the ensuing explanation for the disciples in 10,23–31 and parr. Wealth is an impediment but poverty (almost) a guarantee for entering the Kingdom. The specific reaction, in turn, recalls Lukan criticism of social class differences, including Jesus’ warning against taking the best places at a dinner party in Luke 14,7–11 and his parable on the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18,9–14, and

Der Brief des Jakobus. Kapitel 2–5 (ÖTKNT, 17/2), Gütersloh: Gütersloher – Würzburg: Echter, 1994, 388.

² As always, there are some exceptions; see, e.g., R.B. WARD, “Partiality in the Assembly: James 2:2–4”, *HTR* 62 (1969) 87–97, who rather thinks the setting is that of a judicial court; so also Patrick J. HARTIN, *James* (Sacra Pagina, 14), Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2003, 118: receiving two individuals “unfamiliar with this meeting”.

³ On the contrary, “Vieles andere lässt der Text offen”, as Popkes notes and then illustrates from the many suggestions that can be met in the commentators on specific points; see the survey in Wiard POPKES, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (ThHNT, 14), Leipzig: EVA, 2001, 160–161.

⁴ Cf. also Luke 23,11 and Acts 10,30, both with ἐσθής, and the synonymous expression with the same noun but a different adjective in Luke 24,4 (ἄστραπτύση) and Acts 12,21 (βασιλικήν).

⁵ The adjective is a hapax in James; see the noun in 1,21.

above all the criticism of Pharisaic privileges on seating in the synagogue and at meals in Mark 12,39 par. Matt 23,6 and Luke 11,43 and 20,46.⁶

Commentators as a rule pay quite some attention to the details of the commands in v. 3. A first question that has occupied them is whether we have to do with a scene from real life⁷ or rather with a somewhat stylised description of incorrect Christian behaviour.⁸ A further one is that of the identity and purpose of the two individuals that are invited,⁹ and for that matter of the one giving the

⁶ The first and third of these passages from the gospels also in Dale C. ALLISON, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle of James* (ICC), New York – London: Bloomsbury, 2013, 391, who adds (n. 132) an example from a synagogue honouring a female benefactor with a προεδρία, a seat of honour (see CIJ 2.738 = IJO 2.36).

⁷ “This little vignette of First Century Church life”, as Alexander Ross called it: *The Epistles of James and John* (NICNT), Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1954, 46 (repr. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1970).

⁸ Dibelius (*Jakobus*, 164) thinks that the command to the rich one may indeed have been formulated as it stands in James, with perhaps the exception of καλῶς (with reference to Ewald in 164 n. 3), though there is no reason to suspect that this qualification could not have been added as such. Likewise there is no real reason to assume that the poor was not addressed in person, but put aside “einfach mit einem Wink”. – Peter H. DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1982, 109, is more critical still of whether this whole scene reflects an actual situation: “If this is an assembly for worship, would some stand and others sit? And if these are Christians entering a service of worship, would they need to be told where to go? And is there any realism in describing a wealthy non-Christian visiting a church? Would that situation not be unusual enough to make this a poor example?” Lots of questions for which the answers are out there somewhere, as we have pretty little information on how early Christian liturgy was organized. But perhaps that much can be said: Paul knows of and warns against unchristian behaviour in Corinth where social class differences are played out in full. Also, the Lydia episode in Acts shows that also more well-to-do people felt attracted to the Christian message, so it is perhaps that that unrealistic to imagine a better-off Christian visiting a congregation. As first-time visitors they might have waited till being seated (or not). In short, the actual wording may have slightly differed, but the scene as such is not unthinkable. – Oda WISCHMEYER, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (KEK, 15), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024, rather thinks the passage is an *ethopoiia*, in which the author “im Rahmen der literarisch gestalteten Szene imaginierte Gemeindeglieder, die er mit den Adressaten identifiziert, sprechen lässt” (213). The verbatim rendering of the instructions is called an ironic imitation of what these people might have said in such a situation.

⁹ There is no reason to assume that both of them were (still) unbelievers, *pace* ROSS, *James*, 46. According to Popkes (*Jakobus*, 162), James was not particularly interested in singling out that the two were Christians (“ist für den Bericht unerheblich”); the passage rather describes a common practice of inviting interested strangers (“Die Versammlung ist für unterschiedliche Menschen zugänglich, also wohl eine ‘normale’ Zusammenkunft zum Gottesdienst (wie 1 Kor 14,23ff.)”), except that in this case they are not welcomed in the way they should. CHRISTOPHER BURCHARD, *Der Jakobusbrief* (HNT, 15/1), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, calls them “interessierte ἰδιῶται ἢ ἄπιστοι” (99), with reference to 1 Cor 14,23–25, which would make sense in the context: newcomers should not be treated in the way described and criticised here, lest they would get a

instructions.¹⁰ The matter is only of relative importance for our purpose. Another question that has been addressed in some detail has to do with the formulation of the command to the poor individual. NA28, following ECM, reads σὺ στήθι ἢ κάθου ἐκεῖ ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου. The way the double imperative is phrased is one of a number of variant readings along with στήθι ἐκεῖ ἢ κάθου that was the commonly accepted reading till NA27, ἐκεῖ ἢ κάθου ὧδε, and the two isolated readings ἐκεῖ καὶ κάθου (C*) and ἐκεῖ καὶ κάθου ὧδε (C²). The reading with ὧδε is no doubt the result of an intrusion from the command to the rich person.¹¹ It is debatable whether the reading καὶ for ἢ makes good sense from the perspective of the one giving the command.¹² The preposition ὑπό is slightly difficult if taken literally, which explains the variant with ἐπί in part of the manuscript tradition, unless it is just a way to say “on the ground” (see my translation and often also in commentaries; NRSV has “sit at my feet”).¹³ Commentators disagree whether the reference is to an individual footstool or just a way of speaking, with some arguing that there is not evidence for the use of the former in early Christian gatherings¹⁴ and others accepting this possibility while leaving the matter open.¹⁵ In any case,

wrong impression of what Christian life and praxis is about. Cf. earlier, DAVIDS, *James*, 109. See also James Moffatt’s energetic, “No unseemly deference or obsequious politeness to a rich stranger at the expense of a shabbily dressed visitor!” (*The General Epistles: James, Peter, and Judas* (The Moffatt New Testament Commentary), London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), 32.

¹⁰ Cf. Ralph P. MARTIN, *James* (WBC, 48), Waco TX: Word Books, 1988, 62: “It may be conjectured that those (note εἶπητε is plural) who gave the seating instructions probably held some degree of authority in the congregation, though no such office as ‘doorkeeper’ (*ostiarus*, in the later church) is envisaged. ... It might even be that some of these so-called leaders acted as teachers of the congregation”. None of this is impossible, but we just lack the means and sources to verify it for this early time. *Apost. Const.* 2.58 considers it as one of the tasks of the deacon to assign a place to strangers; cf. Joseph B. MAYOR, *The Epistle of St. James*, London – New York: MacMillan, 1892, 78. See also the Syriac *Didascalia apostolorum* 12. A similar concern to take care of strangers, rich or poor, by assigning them a seat is expressed in the Ethiopic *Statutes of the Apostles* (ed. HORNER, 1904, 195–196) and left there to “the brethren” to handle, including the instruction that if no place is available anymore one of them (“the lover of brothers or of sisters”) should just cease his/her seat. James Hardy ROPES, *The Epistle of St. James* (ICC), Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1916, notes that there is “no sufficient indication that the passage is dependent on James” (191), but it cannot be excluded too easily that this might well be the case.

¹¹ So DIBELIUS, *Jakobus*, 164.

¹² Pace DIBELIUS, *Jakobus*, 164.

¹³ So DIBELIUS, *Jakobus*, 165, and others (cf. ROSS, *James*, 46; FRANKEMÖLLE, *Jakobus*, 388). It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the term footstool about the furniture in the room. An interesting attempt to compare with ancient synagogues in John S. KLOPPENBORG, *James* (NTGuides), London – New York: Bloomsbury, 2022, 96–97.

¹⁴ Cf. DIBELIUS, *Jakobus*, 165: “kaum glaublich”.

¹⁵ Cf. BURCHARD, *Jakobusbrief*, 99: “Hat er (i.e., the one indicating the places) einen Sessel oder handelt es sich um eine Redensart?”.

the contrast between the way the two are treated is most outspoken. One is recognised in the community, while the other is actually at the same time completely ignored and indeed humiliated.¹⁶

But my interest in this essay is in the command to the rich person, and more particularly in Allison's comment on an old suggestion that seems to have gone unnoticed in later commentaries. The fairly simple phrase $\sigma\upsilon$ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς, which in this or a related form is not so frequently met in ancient literature (see below, n. 35), has been translated in various ways.¹⁷ RSV and NRSV render it as "Have a seat here, please", giving up on the pronoun and turning καλῶς into "please".¹⁸ Here are a few other options from Bible translations and commentaries on James:

- "tu sede hic bene" (Vulgate)
- "Sit thou here in a good place" (KJV)
- "Please take this seat" (REB/NEB)
- "Sit here, please" (NAB)
- "Please sit here – it's an excellent seat" (Phillips)
- "Come this way to the best seats" (JB/NJB)
- "Here's a good seat for you" (NIV)
- "Have this best seat here" (Today's English Version)
- "(you) give him the best seat in the house" (Living Bible)
- "Setz dich hier auf den guten Platz!" (EÜ)
- "Setz du dich hierher auf den guten Plätze!" (Lutherübersetzung)
- "Du nimm hier einen der guten Plätze!" (Wilckens)
- "Toi, assieds-toi ici à la place d'honneur" (BJ)
- "Toi, assieds-toi à cette bonne place" (TOB)

¹⁶ So FRANKEMÖLLE, *Jakobus*, 388; BURCHARD, *Jakobusbrief*, 99: "Der Arme bekommt jedenfalls nicht einen schlechten Sitz, sondern keinen". The problem is not so much that one is seated on the ground, which was not uncommon, but that the two are played out against each other (so Jean CANTINAT, *Les Épîtres de saint Jacques et de saint Jude* (Sources bibliques), Paris: Gabalda, 1973, 124). I am not sure one can conclude from this one passage that James was addressing "a congregation rife with practices of discrimination" (so MARTIN, *James*, 62).

¹⁷ Commentators have been intrigued by the unusual form κάθου for κάθησο, but perhaps the solution is rather easy as the form is used also in Ps 110,1LXX (see also Sir 9,9); cf. MAYOR, *James*, 78. The indicative $\sigma\upsilon$ κάθη is met in Acts 23,3 in Paul's self-defence and in a juridical context, which seems to have influenced some to see a similar context also in Jas 2,3 (cf. HARTIN, *James*, above, n. 3). For καθίσατε ὧδε, see Ruth 4,2LXX and Mark 14,32 (ὧδε is missing in par. Matt 26,36).

¹⁸ Followed by, a.o., E.M. SIDEBOTTOM, *James, Jude and 2 Peter* (The Century Bible), Edinburgh: Nelson, 1967, 38. The verse is rendered identically in the translation that is added to the English version of Dibelius' commentary in the Hermeneia series and was prepared by the translator (M.A. WILLIAMS) and editor (H. KOESTER) of the volume.

- “Setz Dich hier, auf den guten Platz” (Hollmann – Bousset, 1917)¹⁹
 --“Sit here, this is a good place” (Moffatt, 1928, 31)
 --“Sit thou here in a good place” (Ross, 1954, 44)
 --“Du setze dich hierhin, bequem” (Schneider, 1961)²⁰
 --“Du da, setz dich schön hier nieder” (Mussner, 1964)²¹
 --“Please sit here in the best place” (Reicke, 1964)²²
 --“Setz dich hier bequem” (Michl, ²1968)²³
 --“Toi, assieds-toi ici confortablement” (Cantinat, 1973, 122)
 --“Mache du dir’s hier bequem” (Grünzweig, 1973)²⁴
 --“Du da, setze dic hier bequem hin!” (Schrage, 1980)²⁵
 --“Toi, assieds-toi à cette belle place” (Vouga, 1984)²⁶
 --“Setz dich hier auf den guten Platz!” (Ruckstuhl, 1985)²⁷
 --“Do sit here, if you will” (Martin, 1988, 56)
 --“Du, setze dich hier bequem hin!” (Frankemölle, 1994, 367)
 --“Setz du dich hier gut hin” (Burchard, *Jakobusbrief*, 2000, 95)²⁸
 --“Here’s a good seat for you” (Moo, 2000, ²2021)²⁹
 --“Du, setze dich hier schön hin” (Popkes, 2001, 152)
 --“Sit here in a good place” (Hartin, 2003, 116)
 --“You, sit here, well” (McCartney, 2009)³⁰

- ¹⁹ Georg HOLLMANN and Wilhelm BOUSSET, “Der Jakobusbrief”, in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt, 3. Die Apostelgeschichte, der Hebräerbrief und die katholischen Briefe*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917, with the further comment, “Der Reiche wird angestaunt und erhält einen reservierten Platz” (230–231).
- ²⁰ Johannes SCHNEIDER, *Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Judas und Johannes* (NTD, 10), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961, 14.
- ²¹ Franz MUSSNER, *Der Jakobusbrief* (HTKNT, 13/1), Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 1964, 115.
- ²² Bo REICKE, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* (AB, 37), Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1964, 26.
- ²³ Johann MICHL, *Die katholischen Briefe* (RNT, 8/2), Regensburg: Pustet, ²1968, 36. The notion of “bequem” has a long history in German exegesis. See Johannes Ed. HUTHER, *Brief des Jakobus* (KEK, 15), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1863, 97: “καλῶς geht auf die Bequemlichkeit (*Wiesinger*); es ist nicht = honorifice (*Wahl*); und noch weniger durch: ‘sei so gut’ (*Storr*) aufzulösen”.
- ²⁴ Fritz GRÜNZWEIG, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Wuppertaler Studienbibel), Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1973, ³1978, 66.
- ²⁵ Horst BALZ and Wolfgang SCHRAGE, *Die katholischen Briefe* (NTD, 10), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980, 25 (Schrage).
- ²⁶ François VOUGA, *L’Épître de saint Jacques* (CNT, 13a), Genève: Labor et Fides, 1984, 69.
- ²⁷ Eugen RUCKSTUHL, *Jakobusbrief – 1.–3. Johannesbrief* (NEB), Würzburg: Echter, 1985, 16.
- ²⁸ Discussing whether it means the best or just a good place: “καλῶς ... geht wohl auf bequemen oder günstigen Sitz ...; schwerlich ‘gütigst’” (99).
- ²⁹ Douglas J. MOO, *The Letter of James* (The Pillar New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2000, ²2021, 128–129.

--“Sit here well” (Painter, 2012)³¹

--“You sit here, in a good place” (Allison, 2013, 367)

--“Du setz’ dich hierhin auf den guten Platz” (Wischmeyer, 2024, 206)³²

Καλῶς is thus rendered either as “good/comfortable” or “in a good spot”, or as “please”. Commentators have sometimes been hesitating between the two, and one can understand why.³³ I was not able to verify Sidebottom’s undocumented reference to the papyri, but good evidence for the alternative meaning of καλῶς is cited in Mayor (and then largely forgotten about by later commentators).³⁴ Ropes begged to differ (“the usage does not fully justify this”) and instead suggested that

³⁰ Dan G. McCARTNEY, *James* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2009, 139, with the further slightly contradictory qualification: “which is fairly easily understood: it is an offer to sit in either a good seat or an honorable one, most likely both”.

³¹ John PAINTER and David A. DESILVA, *James and Jude* (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament), Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2012, 92, with the explanatory comment, “that is, close to the speaker in a good seat” (James is commented upon by Painter).

³² With in note, “Wörtlich: ‘gut’” (206 n. 977) and the paraphrase “Setz dich hier gut hin” (213 n. 1020) and the observation, “ein guter Sitzplatz ist stets Ausdruck eines guten sozialen Status” (Matt 23,6).

³³ See the comment by SIDEBOTTOM, *James*, who after translating the adverb with “please” then continues in the comment: “**please**: lit., ‘you will do well’, the usual way of saying ‘please’ in the papyri. But the versions (Syriac, Latin, Ethiopic) have ‘well’ and this fits the context: i.e., ‘in a good place’ (AV). Cf. 2 Pet. 1.19, where the same expression is rendered by the RSV ‘You will do well’”.

³⁴ *James*, 78. See Alciph., *Ep.* 3.20 ἄγει μέ τις λαβὼν εἰς τὸ θέατρον καθίσας ἐν καλῶ. Aelian, *V.H.* 2.13 ἐν καλῶ τοῦ θεάτρου καθῆσθαι. Cf. the variant, with the adverb as in Jas 2,3, in Arist., *Eq.* 785 καθίζου μαλακῶς (compare Matt 11,8 par. Luke 7,25, for clothing). Mayor was not able to identify a wrongly attributed citation (to Socrates) in Theile’s grammar which says that Ptolemy καλῶς ἐκάθισε a bust for Homer. Actually, the passage is from Aelian, *V.H.* 13.22 and reads Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Φιλοπάτωρ κατασκευάσας Ὀμήρω νέων, αὐτὸν μὲν καλὸν καλῶς ἐκάθισε, ... The list can be slightly expanded with three occurrences (with adverb) in Galen, *De usu partium* (ed. KÜHN, 3, p. 172,16 μηδὲ καθῆσθαι καλῶς ἐνεχώρει, 3, p. 181,3 μόνως γὰρ οὕτως οἷόν τ’ ἦν καθέζεσθαι καλῶς, 3, p. 209,15 ὥστ’ οὔτε καθέζεσθαι καλῶς οὔθ’ ἴστασθαι πίθηκος, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ θεῖν δύναται). See also the slightly more complex case in Aelian, *Nat. animal.* 14.25 ἔργεται δὲ ἐνθα οἱ δοκεῖ καλῶς ἔχειν ἐαυτὸν καθῆσαι καὶ ἐν καλῶ τῆς ἄγρας εἶναι πεπίστευκε. See also, in differing or more indirect combinations, Oribasius, *Synopsis ad Eustathium filium* 9.43.18, l. 2; Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cant. Hom.* 15 (ed. Vol. 6, p. 436, l. 8); Gregory of Nazianzen, *De vita sua*, l. 29; Ephrem, *Sermones paraeneticī* 23, l. 76 and 81; *Apophth. Patrum* (coll. syst.) 7.62, l. 1; Theodore, *In xiv epist. Pauli* (PG 82, 308,52), also cited in *Catena in ep. I ad Cor.* (e cod. Paris. gr. 227), p. 200, l. 22; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Exp. in Psalmis* (Ps 46,9); Nilus Ancyranus, *In Cant.* 44, l. 5; Barsanuphius et Johannes, *Ep.* 554, l. 32; John Moschus, *Pratum spir.* 11, l. 11 and 13; Theodore Studites, *Ep.* 165, l. 15, 342, l. 5, 347, l. 8, 450, l. 31 and *Cat.* 8, p. 52, l. 9 (11, p. 149, l. 18); *Vita s. Athanasiae* 12, l. 11.

“some polite idiom in the sense of ‘please,’ ‘pray,’ is to be suspected”.³⁵ But his more original contribution is the reference to the phrase *στῶμεν καλῶς* that is met Greek liturgies as “the minister’s direction to the worshipping congregation”, as Ropes calls it, and that “presents the same difficulty and suggests the same explanation”, i.e., either meaning something like “stand we all fairly” or rather, “please, let us stand”, as Ropes would prefer it.³⁶

Ropes briefly referred the reader to four passages in Greek liturgical texts and three more in Syriac texts without citing any of these, so perhaps a word of comment might be useful. In the *Liturgy of St. James* (!), the recital of the Creed in the “Mass of the Faithful” is followed by the kiss of peace. The latter is introduced by a short prayer to God and to Christ; then the archdeacon calls upon the congregation to stand and pray (*Στῶμεν καλῶς Ἐν εἰρήνῃ τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν*), after which the priest says a short doxology that is answered with Amen by ὁ λαός; the priest then gives the peace greeting (*Εἰρήνη πᾶσιν*), answered with by the people with *Καὶ τῷ πνεύματι σοῦ*, upon which the archdeacon invites the latter to give each other the kiss of peace (*Ἀγαπήσωμεν ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι αγίῳ*).³⁷ The anaphora are introduced with the same peace greeting, followed by the archdeacon’s longer invitation, with a threefold *στῶμεν*, to stand and pray, *Στῶμεν καλῶς, στῶμεν εὐλαβῶς, στῶμεν μετὰ φόβου Θεοῦ καὶ κατανούξεως· πρόσχωμεν τῇ ἁγίᾳ ἀναφορᾷ ἐν εἰρήνῃ τῷ Θεῷ προσφέρειν*. The people answer with “Ἐλεον εἰρήνης, θυσίαν αἰνέσεως, upon which the priest recites a prayer.”³⁸ The combination of the three invitations might seem to suggest that it is all about adopting the correct

³⁵ *James*, 190.

³⁶ See also most recently, with reference to Ropes, Michael GLÖCKNER, *Bildhafte Sprache im Jakobusbrief: Form, Inhalt und Erschliessungspotential der metaphorischen Rede einer frühchristlichen Schrift* (ABG, 69), Leipzig: EVA, 2021, 185: “Mit *καλῶς* wird die Art und Weise des Sitzens qualifiziert. Vielleicht liegt aber auch einfach eine Form des höflichen Aufmerksammachens vor”; Kalina WOJCIECHOWSKA and Mariusz ROSIK, *A Structural Commentary on the So-Called Antilegomena. I. The Letter of James: Wisdom that Comes from Above* (Eastern and Central European Voices: Studies in Theology and Religion, 3), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021, p. 242 n. 310: “The adverb *καλῶς* can be used as a salutation” (as an alternative to the more common use of “good/comfortable”); the authors offer a fine analysis of the use of the concept of (divine/sapiential) impartiality in James (231–261).

³⁷ Cf. F.E. BRIGHTMAN, *Liturgies Eastern and Western Being the Texts Original or Translated of the Principal Liturgies of the Church*, I. *Eastern Liturgies*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1896, 43. Cf. B.-Ch. MERCIER, *La Liturgie de Saint Jacques. Édition critique du texte grec avec traduction latine* (PO 26/2), Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1946, 185, who translates as “bene stemus”. The Syriac Anaphora in the recension of Mar Ja’qob of Edessa does not have the formula; cf. Adolf RÜCKER, *Die syrische Jakobusanaphora nach der Rezension des Ja’qob(h) von Edessa mit dem griechischen Paralleltext* (Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen, 4), Münster: Aschendorff, 1923, 2-3. It should be noted that the Greek is cited from an eclectic edition and only to give the reader an idea of what the parallel to the Syriac might have looked like (so RÜCKER, xxix).

³⁸ BRIGHTMAN, *Liturgies*, 49.

attitude and intention, but one cannot exclude that the first is indeed rather an invitation to stand which is then further specified. A slightly shorter variant of the second invitation³⁹ is met in the introduction to the anaphora in the *Liturgy of St. Chrysostom*.⁴⁰ A fourth instance is found in the *Liturgy of Antioch* at the beginning of the dismissals when the catechumens are lying on the ground (Οἱ κατηχούμενοι χάμαι κεῖνται!) and the deacon invites the congregation to pray over them (Ἐπερ τῶν κατηχουμένων ἐκτενῶς δεηθῶμεν), to which the people answer Κύριε ἐλέησον, which in turn is followed by an invitation of which it is not clear who is speaking (Στῶμεν καλῶς· δεηθῶμεν) and by the prayer proper (each but one section introduced with ἴνα).⁴¹ All three instances from the Syriac tradition are met in the *Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites*. The first one occurs when the priest prepares for the offertory prayers rising and ascending the steps and saying *Stomen kalos* that is taken over as such in the Syriac, a sign that the phrase had become a fixed formula and as a consequence unfortunately does not teach us much on its meaning. The people respond with a Kyrie eleison (*Kurillison*).⁴² The second instance is found at the opening of the “Mass of the Catechumens” and is identical with the previous one, as is the reply by the people.⁴³ A third instance follows when the people are invited to join in the thanksgiving by the priest, answered with a simple “Amen”. This time the formula is translated and runs “Stand we all fairly”, to which the people reply with “We give thanks to thee”.⁴⁴ To these can be added one more instance from the Syriac *Anaphora of James* edited by Rucker. The first is met after the people’s response to the priest’s prayer over the cup (“Amen”), when the deacon invites them to stand up (*nqum shfir*).⁴⁵ Rucker also cites another instance in his third appendix of which it is not clear where it originally comes from; it has the threefold στῶμεν formula that was mentioned above: *nqum shfir*, *nqum bdehlotho* (μετὰ φόβου), *nqum bnkeftho* (εὐλαβῶς).

Allison has the merit to have brought back Ropes from oblivion, as he is the only one who still refers to him as far as I have been able to trace. But he then also immediately takes his distance when referring to KJV’s “in a good place” and to BAGD “affirming that this is the meaning”, citing Lucian, *Paras.* 50 (καλῶς

³⁹ Without the second στῶμεν and Θεοῦ καὶ κατανώξεως and with the accusative instead of the dative in the second part but dropping τῷ Θεῷ.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 383.

⁴¹ Ibid., 471.

⁴² Ibid., 72.

⁴³ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 104. Cf. RUCKER, *Jakobosanaphora*, 52–53 (*nqum shfir*).

⁴⁵ RUCKER, *Jakobosanaphora*, 7.

κατακειμένῳ) as further evidence, and concluding, “This is probably correct”.⁴⁶ Allison is sceptical about the possibility that James is drawing here on Jesus tradition, even though “the texts from the gospels join he wearing of conspicuous clothes with the desire to have good seats” (see above p. 8, on Mark 12,39 par.), just as Ropes was about linking Jas 2,2–6 to the evidence from the *Apostolic Constitutions* and its parallels (see above, n. 11). But just as the latter cannot be excluded, one has perhaps to be a bit more open to the former option as well.⁴⁷ Allison concludes his comment with a reference to Hermas, *Vis.* 3.9.7 (17), “which presupposes seats of honor in Christian churches”, and in this sense goes beyond the evidence from Mark 12,39 and parallels that spoke of the Jewish synagogue. Hermas calls those taking such seats οἱ πρωτοκαθεδρίται which he equals to the preceding οἱ προηγούμενοι, the community leaders, who are thereby lectured on their lack of self-discipline and even likened to sorcerers.⁴⁸ James does not say that the rich person gets the leader’s seat, but obviously some seats in the room were better than others, or considered as such.

Ropes clearly did not argue that James took the phrase in 2,3 from liturgical praxis, nor that the letter directly inspired the formula in the liturgical texts cited here above, but the similarity in the phrasing (applied to seating/standing) and the shadow of doubt that hovers over the meaning of καλῶς is indeed remarkable. A formula used as an act of welcoming a person in a liturgical gathering (admittedly,


⁴⁶ *James*, 391. Allison adds two more instances from Plutarch’s *Moralia* that would prove his point (n. 134). The first (also cited in Wettstein) is about the flatterer giving up his good seat to a rich person (*Mor.* 58C), the other about Alexidemos being insulted by the seat that is assigned to him (*Mor.* 148E).

⁴⁷ Jas 2,3 is not mentioned among the passages that might link the letter to Jesus (c.q., Q) tradition, but neighbouring Jas 2,5 is one of the more stronger, or at least most frequently cited, cases for the dependence hypothesis; see Patrick J. HARTIN, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (JSNT SS, 47), Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991, 141, 144–145; cf. also John S. KLOPPENBORG, “The Reception of the Jesus Tradition in James”, in Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR and Robert W. WALL (eds.), *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition: A New Perspective on James to Jude*, Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2009, 71–100 (95–100).

⁴⁸ Cf. Norbert BROX, *Der Hirt des Hermas* (KAV, 7), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991, 150–151; Carolyn OSIEK, *Shepherd of Hermas. A Commentary* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1999, 81. In line with Brox, Osiek regards the two titles a synonymous and the scene as evidence “to a seating arrangement for assemblies of the community” (81), apparently not necessarily a liturgical gathering, for which she finds “less likely” evidence also in *Vis.* 3.1.8 (9) and *Mand.* 11.1 (43), in addition to Rev 4,4, Ignatius, *Magn.* 13.1, *1 Clem.* 40.3 and 41.2, and “surely” *Didasc.* 2.57–58 (see above n. 11), concluding, and rightly so, that “most of this is highly conjectural” (81 n. 14), which is certainly true when comparing this other evidence with that of *Did.* and *Vis.* 3.9.7. With Osiek (81) and Brox (151), I see no reason to suspect that the title was meant as “a sarcastic term for would-be ecclesiastical climbers or social elites conscious of their status” (81). Hermas takes the whole situation too seriously for this sort of game, even if he is perhaps “illusionslos” in what he may be able to achieve (so BROX, 151).

LOOKING FOR TRACES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LITURGICAL PRAXIS AT UNEXPECTED PLACES?

an act that is criticised in James) shows up later on as part of the ritual in Christian liturgy. A mere coincidence and a case of “false friends”, or is one entitled to suspect a link of some sort?

Joseph VERHEYDEN 
Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies (KU Leuven)
Leuven, Belgium
E-mail: jos.verheyden@kuleuven.be

Bibliography

- ALLISON, Jr., Dale C., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle of James* (ICC), New York – London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- BALZ, Horst and Wolfgang SCHRAGE, *Die katholischen Briefe* (NTD, 10), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980.
- BRIGHTMAN, F.E., *Liturgies Eastern and Western Being the Texts Original or Translated of the Principal Liturgies of the Church, I. Eastern Liturgies*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1896.
- BROX, Norbert, *Der Hirt des Hermas* (KAV, 7), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991.
- BURCHARD, Christoph, *Der Jakobusbrief* (HNT, 15/1), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.
- CANTINAT, Jean, *Les Épîtres de saint Jacques et de saint Jude* (Sources bibliques), Paris: Gabalda, 1973.
- DAVIDS, Peter H., *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1982.
- DIBELIUS, Martin, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, herausgegeben und ergänzt von Heinrich GREEVEN (KEK, 15), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ¹¹1964.
- FRANKEMÖLLE, Hubert, *Der Brief des Jakobus. Kapitel 2–5* (ÖTKNT, 17/2), Gütersloh: Gütersloher – Würzburg: Echter, 1994.
- GLÖCKNER, Michael, *Bildhafte Sprache im Jakobusbrief: Form, Inhalt und Erschließungspotential der metaphorischen Rede einer frühchristlichen Schrift* (ABG, 69), Leipzig: EVA, 2021.
- GRÜNZWEIG, Fritz, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Wuppertaler Studienbibel), Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1973, ³1978.
- HARTIN, Patrick J., *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (JSNT SS, 47), Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
- HARTIN, Patrick J., *James* (Sacra Pagina, 14), Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2003.
- HOLLMANN, Georg and Wilhelm BOUSSET, “Der Jakobusbrief”, in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt, 3. Die Apostelgeschichte, der Hebräerbrief und die katholischen Briefe*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917.
- HUTHER, Ed., *Brief des Jakobus* (KEK, 15), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1863.
- KLOPPENBORG, John S., “The Reception of the Jesus Tradition in James”, in Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR and Robert W. WALL (eds.), *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition: A New Perspective on James to Jude*, Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2009, 71–100.
- KLOPPENBORG, John S., *James* (NT Guides), London – New York: Bloomsbury, 2022.
- MARTIN, Ralph P., *James* (WBC, 48), Waco TX: Word Books, 1988.
- MAYOR, Joseph B., *The Epistle of St. James*, London – New York: MacMillan, 1892.
- MCCARTNEY, Dan G., *James* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2009.

- MERCIER, B.-Ch., *La Liturgie de Saint Jacques. Édition critique du texte grec avec traduction latine* (PO 26/2), Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1946.
- MICHL, Johann, *Die katholischen Briefe* (RNT, 8/2), Regensburg: Pustet, ²1968.
- MOFFATT, James, *The General Epistles: James, Peter, and Judas* (The Moffatt New Testament Commentary), London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928.
- MOO, Douglas J., *The Letter of James* (The Pillar New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2000, ²2021.
- MUSSNER, Franz, *Der Jakobusbrief* (HTKNT, 13/1), Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 1964.
- OSIEK, Carolyn, *Shepherd of Hermas. A Commentary* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1999.
- PAINTER, John and David A. DESILVA, *James and Jude* (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament), Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2012.
- POPKES, Wiard, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (ThHNT, 14), Leipzig: EVA, 2001.
- REICKE, Bo, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* (AB, 37), Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1964.
- ROPES, James Hardy, *The Epistle of St. James* (ICC), Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1916.
- ROSS, Alexander, *The Epistles of James and John* (NICNT), Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1954, 46 (repr. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1970).
- RUCKSTUHL, Eugen, *Jakobusbrief – 1.–3. Johannesbrief* (NEB), Würzburg: Echter, 1985.
- RÜCKER, Adolf, *Die syrische Jakobosanaphora nach der Rezension des Ja'qob(h) von Edessa mit dem griechischen Paralleltext* (Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen, 4), Münster: Aschendorff, 1923.
- SCHNEIDER, Johannes, *Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Judas und Johannes* (NTD, 10), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961.
- SIDEBOTTOM, E.M., *James, Jude and 2 Peter* (The Century Bible), Edinburgh: Nelson, 1967.
- VOUGA, François, *L'Épître de saint Jacques* (CNT, 13a), Genève: Labor et Fides, 1984.
- WARD, R.B., "Partiality in the Assembly: James 2:2–4", *HTR* 62 (1969) 87–97.
- WISCHMEYER, Oda, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (KEK, 15), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024.
- WOJCIECHOWSKA, Kalina and Mariusz ROSIK, *A Structural Commentary on the So-Called Antilegomena. I. The Letter of James: Wisdom that Comes from Above* (Eastern and Central European Voices: Studies in Theology and Religion, 3), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021.