

11. What is presented by James to illustrate what can be caused by the erroneous use of the tongue is noun, ὕλη (*húlē*): “forest.” And not just any forest but a “great” forest: ἡλίκος (*hēlíkos*). This is not a brush fire. This is the conflagration of thousands of acres of timber.
12. The verb, *horáō*, “see,” is imperative mood #24. This is an interrogative command. The parishioners are ordered to consider the illustration’s example in light of the magnitude of damage the tongue can cause.
13. In the example, a single flame is used to illustrate how one comment by the tongue can ravage a congregation. When one tongue speaks it can cause the entire congregation to become embroiled in controversy.
14. A forest can be set “aflake” by one flame. The Greek text read uses two words for this event, the first is ὀλίγος (*olígos*): “little,” plus the noun, πῦρ (*púr*): “flame.”
15. This is followed by the verb, ἀνάπτω (*anáptō*): “kindles.” One flame, and a massive forest is consumed. One sinful use of the tongue and an entire congregation goes into combat.
16. **Principle:** When someone uses the tongue to express an idea that ignites controversy, James has already provided the problem-solving device. Apply James 2:8 and give the Lord room to carry out His corrective procedures.

**James 3:5** So in this way the tongue is a small organ in the much larger human body, yet it keeps on arrogantly boasting exceedingly about great things. Perceive [ IM# 24 ] how a great forest is kindled by a single flame! (EXT)

**James 3:6** And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. (NASB)

1. This verse begins with the statement, “the tongue is a fire” confirming the meaning of the previous verses which demonstrate that small objects have the power to control larger objects—horses’ bits, ships’ rudders, and forests’ fires.
2. In the population of a family, a community, or a country, there are small objects including tongues that influence the destinies of men and nations.
3. Verse 6 begins with a summary statement of verses 1–5, “The tongue is a fire.” What about the bit and the rudder? The three-part sequence illustrates the increasing influence the tongue has when a reversionist sinks deeper and deeper into cosmic system.



4. The bit controls a much larger horse, but the rudder directs an even larger ship, and finally the fire consumes and even larger forest.
5. The sinful use of the tongue has to start somewhere. Its initial act is to engage in gossip, judgment, criticism, accusation, argument, enmity, and division.
6. This division includes subscription to at least two points of view that accumulate increasing numbers of combatants who are verbally at odds.
7. One group is going to achieve dominance while the other will choose to vacate the premises. This is illustrated by the forest fire.
8. James's point is that sins of the tongue can figuratively burn down a congregation while the church edifice remains as a shell of what it used to be.
9. Of all the mental attitude sins that populate the soul of a believer, it is the tongue's participation in conveying its inventory of rebellion by means of the spoken word.
10. Therefore, it is not hyperbolic for James to refer to the tongue as, "the very world of iniquity": **ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας** (*ho kósmos tés adikías*). The noun, *adikías*, iniquity, spawns chaos since it refers to "injustice, deceitfulness, wrongdoing, and wickedness and is capable of inflicting each one with a vengeance.
9. The cosmic system that guides and directs this process is reverse process reversionism which is defined as: "The total influence of evil and divorcement from reality. What was previously considered right is now considered to be wrong. It is the status quo of unrestrained and perpetual sinfulness, fragmentation, and cosmic involvement. The believer is brainwashed by satanic propaganda."
10. This mind-set causes the suppression of all seven categories of the Edification Complex of the Soul. Where spiritual advance in the soul was once functional, it is now suppressed; what was once subscribed to is now nonfunctional.
11. The Edification Complex once contained, at most, the following categories of spiritual sophistication: (1) Operation Z, (2) Dispensations, (3) 10 Problem-Solving Devices, (4) Spiritual Self-Esteem and Personal and Unconditional Love, (5) the Copacetic Spiritual Life, (6) Occupation with Christ, and (7) Invisible Historical Impact.
12. But not anymore. In its place is an unruly tongue that is at the mercy of the believer's Law of Freedom. He is free to conjure whatever thought he entertains and to apply it verbally for all to hear.



13. The tongue is simply an organ that has capabilities for taste and speech. It has no mind of its own. The ability to enunciate is multifaceted in that the larynx and tongue in concert may be trained to communicate thought in any language.
14. So, if the tongue is one of the means of verbally expressing thought, then we need to take the time to analyze this phenomenon that is unique to the human being.
15. This effort will be to aggrandize the English language which is the “tongue” of the British Isles, its possessions such as Canada and Australia, and the United States.
16. First of all, we must define terms for the execution of speech before we observe the act of speaking:

**enunciate: to make a definite or systematic statement; announce, proclaim; to utter articulate sounds.**

**larynx: the modified upper part of the trachea that contains the vocal cords.**

**tongue: a fleshly movable muscular process of the floor of the mouths of most vertebrates and functions especially in humans as a speech organ. The power of communication through speech.<sup>5</sup>**

17. I now want to quote from a book written by American journalist, Bill Bryson, in 1990. Its title is *The Mother Tongue: English & How It Got That Way*. Why? Because we speak English.
18. Our ability to understand the Bible requires us to acquire within our streams of consciousness the accurate translation of Hebrew and Koiné Greek manuscripts in English.
18. These excerpts below give background on how we use our native language to understand the transformation of two foreign languages into our souls and then apply their truths by means of language.
19. Whatever is in that inventory is the totality of what we know and think and ultimately what we decide to say. That portfolio contains human viewpoint and divine viewpoint. With the Law of Freedom, we may choose to communicate these ideas from either of these working objects.

**(End JAS3-22. See JAS3-23 for continuation of study at p. 221.)**

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., s.vv. “enunciate,” “larynx,” “tongue.”



20. What follows are excerpts from Bill Bryson's book. They are selected to examine the history of the English language into which our exegesis of the original languages of Scripture must be translated.

**For all their shortcomings, the Anglo-Saxons possessed a language that was, in the phrase of Otto Jespersen,<sup>1</sup> "rich in possibilities," and once literacy was brought to them, it flowered with astonishing speed. The main bringer of literacy, and of Christianity, was St. Augustine,<sup>2</sup> who traveled to Britain with forty missionaries in 597 and within a year had converted King Ethelbert of Kent at his small provincial capital, Canterbury. With that initial victory, Christianity quickly spread over the island, towing literacy in its wake. In only a little over a hundred years England became a center of culture and learning as great as any in Europe.**

**No one, of course, can say at what point English became a separate language, distinct from the Germanic dialects of mainland Europe. What is certain is that the language the invaders brought with them soon began to change.**  
(p. 50)

**There was, in short, a great deal of subtlety and flexibility built into the language, and once they learned to write, their literary outpouring was both immediate and astonishingly assured. This cultural flowering found its sharpest focus in the far northern kingdom of Northumbria.<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> "Jespersen \yés-per-sen\, Otto, 1860–1943. Danish philologist. Professor of English language and literature, Copenhagen (1893–1925); rector of the university (1920–21). Helped revolutionize teaching of languages in Europe and wrote numerous texts; contributed to phonetics and other areas of linguistics" (*Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary*, 544).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., "Augustine. First archbishop of Canterbury; sent (596), with forty monks, as missionary to the English by Pope Gregory I; baptized Aethelberht I, King of Kent (597); consecrated bishop of the English (597) at Arles \ärlz\" (61).

<sup>3</sup> "The history of the English language begins with the migration of the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons from Germany and Denmark to Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries. Their Anglo-Saxon language is known as Old English. Northumbrian was in a position of cultural superiority until the destructive Viking raids of the 9th century caused cultural leadership to pass to the West Saxon kingdom of Wessex. The Norman Conquest of 1066 set in motion the transition to Middle English. The transition from Middle to Modern English started at the beginning of the 15th century" (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. [2010], 4:501).



Here, on the outermost edge of the civilized world, sprang forth England's first great poet, the monastic Cædmon<sup>4</sup>; its first great historian, the Venerable Bede<sup>5</sup>; and its first great scholar, Alcuin \al-kwin<sup>6</sup> of York, who became head of Charlemagne<sup>7</sup> palace school at Aachen \ä-ken\ (p. 51)

Barely had this cultural revival gotten underway than England and her infant language were under attack again—this time by Viking raiders from Scandinavia and Denmark. These were people who were related to the Anglo-Saxons by both blood and language.

These attacks on Britain were part of a huge, uncoordinated, and mysterious expansion by the Vikings. No one knows why these previously mild and pastoral people suddenly became aggressive and adventurous, but for two centuries they were everywhere—in Russia, Iceland, Britain, France, Ireland, Greenland, and even North America.

Then, just as mysteriously, the raids ceased and for half a century the waters around the British Isles were quiet. In 850 their worst fears were confirmed when some 350 heavily laden Viking ships sailed up the Thames, setting off a series of battles for control of territory that went on for years, rolling across the British landscape rather like two wrestlers, with fortune favoring first one side and then the other.

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<sup>4</sup> \kád-mən\ Earliest known English Christian poet [c. 670]. Original 9-line poem on Creation: ["Praise now to the keeper of the kingdom of heaven / the power of the Creator, the profound mind / of the glorious Father, who fashioned the beginning / of every wonder, the eternal Lord. / For the children of men he made first / heaven as a roof, the holy Creator. / Then the Lord of mankind, the everlasting Shepherd, / ordained in the midst as a dwelling place, / Almighty God, the earth to men"] (*Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary*, 166).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Bēde. *Known as* The Venerable. 672–735. Anglo-Saxon scholar, historian, and theologian. Taught Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and theology. Concluded (731 or 732) his ecclesiastical history of England. Instituted custom of dating events from birth of Christ" (92).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., "Alcuin (c. 732–804). Anglo-Saxon scholar. Headmaster of cathedral school of York (778). Author of manuals of instruction in grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics; theological, biblical, and hagiological [biography of venerated persons] works; metrical annals" (22–23).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., "Charlemagne \shär-le-män\ 742–814. Established permanent court at Aachen (794), strengthened Christianity, founded schools; patron of literature, science, and art" (201).



Finally, after an unexpected English victory in 878, a treaty was signed establishing the Danelaw, a line running roughly between London and Chester, dividing control of Britain between the English in the south and the Danes in the North. To this day it remains an important linguistic dividing line between the northern and southern dialects. (p. 52)

The Danish influence in the north was enormous. For a long time, the people in some places spoke only Old English while in other places, often on the next hillside, they spoke only Old Norse.—but for the most part the two linguistic sides underwent a relaxed and peaceful merger. A great many Scandinavian terms were adopted, without which English would clearly be the poorer. Sometimes these replaced Old English words, but often they took up residence alongside them, adding a useful synonym to the language, so that today in English we have *craft* [Old English] and *skill* [Old Norse], *wish* and *want*, *raise* and *rear*, and many other doublets. Sometimes the words came from the same source but had grown slightly different in pronunciation, as with *shriek* and *screech*, *no* and *nay*, or *ditch* and *dyke*, and sometimes they went a further step and acquired slightly different meanings, as with *scatter* and *shatter*, *skirt* and *shirt*, *whole* and *hale*, *bathe* and *bask*, *stick* and *stitch*, *hack* and *hatch*, *wake* and *watch*, *break* and *breach*.

But most remarkable of all, the English adopted certain grammatical forms. The pronouns *they*, *them*, and *their*, for instance, are Scandinavian. This borrowing of basic elements of syntax is highly unusual, perhaps unique among developed languages, and an early demonstration of the remarkable adaptability of English speakers. (p. 53)





One final cataclysm awaited the English language: The Norman conquest of 1066. The Normans were Vikings who had settled in northern France 200 years before. Like the Celtic Britons before them, they had given their name to a French province, Normandy. But unlike the Celts, they had abandoned their language and much of their culture and become French in manner and speech. So totally had they given up their language, in fact, that not a single Norse word has survived in Normandy, apart from some place-names. That is quite remarkable when you consider that the Normans bequeathed 10,000 words to English. The variety of French the Normans spoke was not the speech of Paris but a rural dialect, and its divergence from standard French became even more pronounced when it took root in England—so much so that historians refer to it not as French, but as Anglo-Norman. This had important consequences for the English language today and may even have contributed to its survival. (pp. 53–54)

Norman French, like the Germanic tongues before it, made a lasting impact on English vocabulary. Of the 10,000 words we adopted from Norman French, some three quarters are still in use. In fact, nearly all our words relating to jurisprudence and government are of French origin, as are many of the ranks of aristocracy, such as *countess*, *duke*, *duchess* ... (p. 55)

Because English had no official status, for three centuries it drifted. Without a cultural pivot, some place to set a standard, differences in regional usage became more pronounced rather than less. And yet it survived.

If there is one uncanny thing about the English language, it is its incredible persistence. In retrospect it seems unthinkable to us now that it might have been otherwise, but we forget just how easily people forsake their tongues.



And yet in Britain, despite the constant buffetings of history, English survived. It is a cherishable irony that a language that succeeded almost by stealth, treated for centuries as the inadequate and second-rate tongues of peasants, should one day become the most important and successful language in the world.

Its lowly position almost certainly helped English to become a simpler, less inflected language. “By making English the language mainly of uneducated people, the Norman conquest made it easier for grammatical changes to go forward unchecked.” (p. 56)

It is sometimes suggested that our vocabulary is vast because it was made to be, simply because of the various linguistic influences that swept over it. But in fact this love of variety of expression runs deeper than that. It was already evident in the early poetry of the Anglo-Saxons that they had an intuitive appreciation of words sufficient to ensure that even if England had never been invaded again her language would have been rich with synonyms. In *Beowulf* alone there are thirty-six words for hero, twelve for battle, eleven for ship—in short, probably more than exist today.

It is true that English was immeasurably enriched by the successive linguistic waves that washed over the British Isles. But it is probably close to the truth to say that the language we speak today is rich and expressive not so much because new words were imposed on it as because they were welcomed. (pp. 58–59)<sup>8</sup>

21. The flexibility of the English language continues to welcome new words, terms, and even definitions. A few lessons ago I remarked on the odd use of the past tense of the verb “wake.” “Woke” is being used in a political context but treated as if everyone knows the current definition and meaning.

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<sup>8</sup> Bill Bryson, *The Mother Tongue: English & How It Got That Way*, (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1990), 50–56, 58–59.

