an ordinary word indicating priority.

The first Christians, to whom St. James  
is writing, were as firstborn of the great  
family, dedicated as firstfruits to God.  
Weisinger beautifully says, “The thought  
fully given would be this: they by Regeneration

were dedicated as the firstfruits

of a sacrificial gift which shall only be completed

with the offering up of all *creatures*”)

**of His creatures** (this expression manifestly  
extends wider than merely to the great  
multitude of the regenerated whom no  
mun can number; it embraces all creation,  
which we know shall partake in  
the ultimate glorious perfection of the  
sons of God: see Rom. viii. 20, 21.  
Wiesinger has an important note, shewing  
from this verse what must be the right  
understanding of much which follows in  
this Epistle. “This passage,” he says, “is  
among those which reveal the depth of  
Christian knowledge in which the practical  
and moral exhortations of the Writer are  
grounded: lying as it does expressly  
(‘*wherefore,*’ ver. 21) at the basis of them.  
We will here bring together in a few words  
the teaching of the passage, for the sake of  
its important bearing on the rest of the  
Epistle. It teaches us 1) as a positive  
supplement to vv. 14, 15, that the life of  
man must be renewed, from its very root  
and foundation: 2) it designates this renewal  
as God’s work, moreover as an imparting  
of the life of God, as only  
possible by the working of the Spirit, only  
on the foundation of the objective fact of  
our Redemption in Christ, which is the  
content of the *word of truth:* 3) it sets  
forth this re-generation as an act once for  
all accomplished, and distinguishes it from  
the gradual penetration and sanctification  
of the individual life by means of this new  
principle of life imparted in the re-generation :  
4) it declares also expressly that the  
re-generation is a free act of God’s love  
not induced by any work of man (Eph. ii.  
8, 9; Tit. iii. 5), so that man is placed by  
God in his right relation to God, antecedently  
to all works well-pleasing to God:  
for this the expression **begat He us** involves:  
and in so far as this *begetting*  
necessarily implies the justification of the  
sinner (to use the language of St. Paul), it  
is plain also, that St. James cannot, without  
contradicting himself, make this *justification*,

in the sense of St. Paul, dependent

on the works of faith. 5) *the word of*

*truth* is specified as the objective medium

of re-generation : and herewith we must

have *faith* as the appropriating medium on  
the part of man himself: of the central  
import of which *faith* in St. James also  
we have already seen something (vv. 3, 6),  
and shall see more (ch. ii. 5, 14 ff.).  
6) Together with this act of re-generation  
proceeding from God, we have also  
the high destination of the Christian,  
which the Apostle gives so significantly  
and deeply in these words, that we should be  
a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. And  
that which God has done to him, is now in  
the following verses made the foundation of  
that which the Christian has on his part to  
do: by which that which we said under 3)  
and 4) receives fresh confirmation. This  
passage is one to be remembered, when we  
to know what the Apostle understands  
by the *perfect law* (i. 25, ii. 12),  
and what he means, when (ii. 14 ff.) he deduces  
*justification* from the works of faith.  
As regards the dogmatical use, which some  
make of this passage, wishing to shew that  
regeneration is brought about by the word,  
as distinguished from the Sacrament of  
Baptism (Tit. iii. 5–7), we may remark,  
that seeing that **the word of truth** designates  
the gospel, as a whole, without any  
respect to such distinction, nothing regarding  
it can be gathered from this passage.  
The word of the Lord constitutes, we know,  
the force of the Sacrament also. And is it  
meant to be inferred that the readers of this  
Epistle were *not baptized?*”)

**19—27.]** *Exhortation to receive rightly  
this word of truth.* (See the general  
connexion in the introduction.)

**19.]** On  
the reading,—whether “*Wherefore*, my  
beloved brethren,” or “*Ye know it*, my  
beloved brethren,”—see my Greek Testament.  
**Ye know it, my beloved brethren;  
but** (consequently) **let every man be swift  
to hear** (the word of truth, which has so  
great power for good and for life: the verb  
is absolute and general, having only *reference*  
to the word of truth), **slow to speak**  
(the meaning is, be eager to listen, not  
eager to discourse: the former may lead to  
implanting or strengthening the new life,