

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

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II. PETER.

Exposition and Homiletics
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Homilies by Various Authors.

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THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

INTRODUCTION.

I. GENUINENESS OF THE EPISTLE.

1. *External Evidence.*

IN considering the genuineness of this Epistle we are confronted at once with the well-known words of Eusebius. He says, in his 'Ecclesiastical History,' which seems to have been finished in A.D. 325, "One Epistle of Peter, which is called the first, is accepted; and this the presbyters of old have used in their writings as undoubted. But that which is circulated as his Second Epistle we have received to be not canonical. Nevertheless, as it appeared to many to be useful, it has been diligently read with the other Scriptures" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 3). In the same chapter he says that he knows only one genuine Epistle among the writings attributed to St. Peter; and in bk. iii. 25 he classes the Second Epistle with those of James and Jude, as "disputed, indeed, but known to most men."

There are no direct quotations from this Epistle in the Christian writings of the first two centuries; there are, however, some scattered allusions which seem to imply acquaintance with it. Thus Clement of Rome, in his 'Epistle to the Corinthians,' written about A.D. 100, says (ch. xxiii.), "Let that Scripture be far from us where it says, Wretched are the double-minded, . . . who say, These things we heard even in the time of our fathers, and, behold, we have grown old, and none of these things has happened to us." The same passage is quoted with slight differences in the so-called second epistle of Clement, where it is introduced with the words, "For also the prophetic word (ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος) says." Clement seems to have had in his mind recollections of ch. iii. 4 and Jas. i. 8. The words of the second epistle (written, perhaps, about the middle of the second century) remind us also of ch. i. 19 (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον). The remainder of the passage, as quoted in 1 Clement xxiii. and 2 Clement xi., is quite different from St. Peter. It is therefore possible that Clement may be quoting some

apocryphal writing; but it is at least probable that he is mixing together reminiscences of Jas. i. 8 and ch. iii. 4, with additions derived from some unknown source. The early Fathers were accustomed to give the sense, not the exact words, of their citations, often, it seems, quoting from memory; but even if we suppose that the passage was borrowed immediately from some unknown writer, it remains probable that that writer, older than Clement or contemporary with him, was acquainted with this Epistle. The *μεγαλοπρεπὴς δόξα* of 1 Clement ix. looks like a recollection of the same remarkable words in ch. i. 17. It is also probable that in 1 Clement vii. and ix. there is a reference to ch. ii. 5, and in 1 Clement xi. to ch. ii. 6—9. In the 'Shepherd of Hermas' (written about A.D. 140) there are three or four apparent allusions to this Epistle. Thus the words, *τῆς τρυφῆς καὶ τῆς ἀπάτης ὁ χρόνος ὥρα ἐστὶ μία* ('Sim.,' vi. 4) remind us of ch. ii. 13. So in 'Vis.,' iii. 7. 1 the words, "Who . . . have forsaken the true way," may be an echo of ch. ii. 15, and "Ye who have escaped the world" ('Vis.,' iv. 3. 2), of ch. ii. 20. Justin Martyr (about A.D. 145) says, in controversy with the Jew Trypho, "As there were false prophets in the time of your holy prophets, so now there are many false teachers among us," in which words there seems to be a reminiscence of ch. ii. 1. In the same book he says, "The day of the Lord is as a thousand years," which may be suggested by Ps. xc. 4, but more nearly resembles ch. iii. 8—a passage to which possible allusions occur in the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, in Irenæus, and Hippolytus.

In the Apology addressed to Antoninus by Melito of Sardis, about A.D. 170, there is a passage which closely resembles ch. iii. 5—7. Irenæus also speaks of the conflagration of the universe as a "*diluvium ignis*;" and it may be noted, as at least a remarkable coincidence, that in speaking of the death of St. Peter he has the same word, *ἐξόδος*, which is used in ch. i. 15. In the writings of Theophilus of Antioch, who wrote about the same time, there is a possible allusion to ch. i. 19, and an almost certain reference to ch. i. 21, "Men of God, moved by the Holy Ghost, and becoming prophets, inspired and made wise by God himself, became taught of God" ('Ad Autoly-cum,' ii. 9).

Eusebius tells us ('Hist. Eccl.,' vi. 14) that Clement of Alexandria wrote expositions, not only of the canonical Scriptures, but also of the disputed books, as the Epistle of Jude and the remaining Catholic Epistles. Some doubt is thrown upon this assertion by some contradictory statements of Cassiodorus; but, on the whole, it seems probable that the Second Epistle of St. Peter was known to the great master of the catechetical school.

Hippolytus of Portus, who wrote about A.D. 220, has a passage which seems to be an expansion of ch. i. 20. He says ('De Antechristo,' c. 2) that "the prophets spoke not of their own power, nor did they preach what they themselves wished; but first they were gifted with wisdom through the Word, then were well instructed about the future through visions." And in another place he speaks of the "wicked angels chained in Tartarus as a

punishment for their sins" ('Adv. Hær.,' x. 30). Origen, who died A.D. 253, was certainly acquainted with both the Epistles of St. Peter. He is quoted by Eusebius ('Hist. Eccl.,' vi. 26) as saying, "Peter has left one acknowledged Epistle: let it be granted that he left also a second, for this is disputed." In the 'Homilies,' which we have only in the Latin translation of Rufinus, he thrice mentions the Second Epistle: "Peter sounds forth with the two trumpets of his Epistles" (Hom. vii. on Joshua); "And again Peter says, Ye have been made partakers of the Divine nature" (Hom. iv. on Leviticus); "As the Scripture saith in a certain place, A dumb animal, answering with human voice, forbade the madness of the prophet" (Hom. xiii. on Numbers). But there are no quotations from the Epistle in his extant Greek works, and he twice speaks of the First Epistle as the Catholic Epistle of Peter.

Firmilian, Bishop of the Cappadocian Cæsarea (about A.D. 270), has a clear allusion to this Epistle. He speaks of "Peter and Paul, the blessed apostles, . . . who execrated heretics in their Epistles, and warned us to avoid them." There is no passage in the First Epistle of St. Peter to which these words can refer. Athanasius and Cyril of Jerusalem accepted all the seven Catholic Epistles as canonical.

After the time of Eusebius the Epistle seems to have been generally received. Doubts were occasionally expressed, as by Gregory of Nazianzen and Theodore of Mopsuestia, who is said to have rejected both Epistles. Jerome writes, in a well-known passage, "*Scriptit (Petrus) duas epistolas quæ Catholicæ nominantur, quarum secunda a plerisque ejus esse negatur propter stili cum priore dissonantiam.*" In another place, however, he explains the difference of style by supposing that the apostle had used different interpreters. He contributed largely to the general acceptance of the Epistle by including it in his own Latin translation; and from his time the doubts of its authenticity seem to have rapidly disappeared.

The Epistle is not in the Peschito, or Old Syriac, Version, but it was received by Ephrem Syrus, and is contained in the Philoxenian, or Later Syriac. It is not in the Old Latin, which was used before the time of Jerome. It is not mentioned in the Muratorian Canon; but that fragment omits also the First Epistle, which was universally accepted.

The Second Epistle of St. Peter was recognized as canonical by the Councils of Laodicæ¹ (about A.D. 366), Hippo (393), and Carthage (397). Laodicæ, we must remember, was one of the Churches of that Roman province of Asia to which (among other countries of Asia Minor) St. Peter's Epistles were addressed. It is probable that a much larger amount of ancient testimony than we now possess was within the reach of the Fathers of these Councils. They appear to have exercised great care and discrimination. They excluded some writings from the canon which had been read

¹ The authenticity of the catalogue of the sacred books in the sixtieth canon of this Council is very doubtful (see Dr. Westcott, 'On the Canon of the New Testament,' p. 433).

in Churches and classed with the Scriptures, as the 'First Epistle of Clement' and the 'Epistle of Barnabas.' We cannot but believe that they had the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the performance of their difficult and momentous duty. We attach, therefore, very great weight to their judgment. At the same time, it must be admitted that, apart from their authority, the *external* evidence for our Epistle, though considerable, cannot be regarded as entirely convincing.

2. *Internal Evidence.*

We come next to the evidence which may be derived from the Epistle itself. It has been urged against its genuineness: (1) That the writer labours to identify himself with the apostle in a manner forced and unnatural. (2) That the reference to St. Paul in ch. iii. 15, 16 is not such as might be expected from St. Peter. (3) That, as Jerome had long ago remarked, there is a striking *stili dissonantia* between the two Epistles. (4) That the key-note of the Epistle and its leading thoughts differ widely from those of the First Epistle. (5) That the relation between the second chapter and the Epistle of St. Jude is perplexing, and suggests doubts as to the apostolic authority of the writers. (6) That the resemblances between this Epistle and certain passages in Josephus is so close as to show that the writer must have been acquainted with works which were not published till after the death of St. Peter. It will be convenient to discuss these points in order.

(1) The writer of the Epistle calls himself "Symeon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." In ch. i. 14 he refers to the Lord's prophecy concerning the death of St. Peter in John xxi. 18, 19. In vers. 16—18 of the same chapter he tells his readers that he was one of the witnesses of the Transfiguration, and heard the voice that was borne from heaven: he calls the scene of that great sight "the holy mount." In ch. iii. 1 he refers to the First Epistle; and in ch. iii. 2, according to the received text, he again asserts his apostleship.

It has been urged that the double name, Symeon Peter, betrays an anxiety on the part of the writer to identify himself with the apostle; the apostle would simply say Peter, as he does in the First Epistle. But, on the other hand, it is altogether improbable that an imitator would vary the form of address. An unknown Christian, wishing to assume the personality of the great apostle, would not begin at once with a change so unnecessary, so sure to excite questionings. A man uses his own name with a certain freedom: sometimes he writes it in full; sometimes he uses initials; sometimes, if he has several names, he omits some of them. The variation, if it surprises us a little in the apostle, would surprise us much more in the case of an imitator. It is rather, as far as it goes, a point in favour of the authenticity of the Epistle.

The reference in ch. i. 14 to the interview with our Lord described in

John xxi. 15—22 is sometimes compared with the reminiscence of the same interview in 1 Pet. v. 2. The last, it is said, is unconscious—it comes from the fulness of the heart; while the direct assertion of ch. i. 14 is in the manner of a falsarius. But this, surely, is hypercriticism. St. Peter, when standing before the Sanhedrin, asserted his personal knowledge of the great facts of the gospel (Acts iv. 20), much as he does in this Epistle. Apostles, like other men, may sometimes relate at length events of their previous history, sometimes make allusions to them. In this very chapter there are two such unconscious reminiscences. The use of the word “tabernacle” in vers. 13 and 14 reminds us of St. Peter’s suggestion, “Let us make three tabernacles;” and the word *ξῆδος* occurs in the sense of “decease” nowhere in the New Testament except in ch. i. 15 and in St. Luke’s account of the Transfiguration. These two allusions are exactly in the manner of the First Epistle. Compare also the unconscious adoption of Christ’s words in ch. ii. 20; the reference in ch. iii. 10 to Matt. xxiv. 43; the apparent reminiscence of Matt. vii. 6 in ch. ii. 22, and of Matt. xxv. 46 (*κρίσις*) in the use of the word *κολαζόμενος* in ch. ii. 9. Surely neither the assertions of ch. i. 14—18, nor those of 1 John i. 1—3 give the very slightest reason for doubting the genuineness of either Epistle.

The same may be said of the account of the Transfiguration; there also we find minute evidences of Petrine authorship. The change of number from the singular in ver. 14 to the plural in vers. 16, 18 may well come from an unconscious recollection that, while the Lord’s words recorded in John xxi. 18 were spoken to St. Peter only, two other apostles were witnesses of the Transfiguration. And we may regard it as certain that a falsarius of the second century would have quoted the words of the voice from heaven exactly as they are given in one of the synoptic Gospels, which were then well known. The description of the scene of the Transfiguration as “the holy mount,” doubtless implies that the Epistle was written in the later apostolic period, when the leading facts of the gospel history were generally known among Christians. But it cannot be fairly insisted on as an argument for a post-apostolic date. Why should not the mount of the Transfiguration be regarded as a holy place by the early Christians as Mount Sinai was by the ancient Israelites?

In ch. iii. 2 the true reading seems to be *ἡμῶν*, so that St. Peter may be understood as confirming by his apostolic authority the teaching of St. Paul, as he does in ver. 15 of the same chapter, and in 1 Pet. i. 12, 25; and, as some think, in 1 Pet. v. 12. But, even if the reading of the received text is retained, there is no reason why the assertion of apostleship should be regarded as an indication of a non-Petrine authorship, any more than the assumption of the title, “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” in both Epistles. St. Paul often asserts his apostleship: why should not St. Peter do the like?

(2) Another objection is drawn from the reference to St. Paul in ch. iii. 15, 16. One apostle, it is urged, would not be likely to give his imprimatur to the writings of another; he would not speak in this way of the difficulties in

them; he would not class them with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Again we ask, Why not? It seems a very natural thing that an apostle, writing at a time when some at least of St. Paul's Epistles had become generally known, should refer to writings of such importance. St. Peter's first letter is full of references to St. Paul's Epistles, though the apostle is not mentioned by name. And there may have been good reasons. We know that St. Paul's authority had been questioned in the Churches of Galatia; St. Peter may have thought it desirable to support that authority. We know that St. Paul's teaching had sometimes been misrepresented; St. Peter may have thought it necessary to warn his readers against hasty conclusions from difficult parts of that teaching. St. Paul himself had done the like in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in Rom. iii. 8, and elsewhere. Nor is there any reason to be startled at the application of the word "Scripture" to the Epistles of St. Paul. St. Paul again and again asserts his own inspiration; he says that he received the gospel "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 12); he tells the Corinthians that the spiritual among them will understand that the things which he writes "are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37; see also 1 Cor. v. 3, 4; 1 Thess. ii. 13); he applies the word "Scripture" to what seems to be a quotation from the Gospel of St. Luke (1 Tim. v. 18). St. Peter himself, in his First Epistle (i. 12), classes "them that have preached the gospel unto you," of whom St. Paul was the chief, with the prophets of the Old Testament. The only inference to be fairly drawn is that, at the date of this Epistle, some of the writings of the New Testament were generally known among Christians, and were accepted among them as sacred books, of equal authority with the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

(3) Undoubtedly, there is a difference of style. The style of both Epistles is nervous and energetic; in both there is an abundance of unusual words; there is an obvious fondness for striking and picturesque expressions, as well as for mysterious subjects. These characteristics, common to both Epistles, are more marked in the second than in the first; the style is here and there more rugged, the rare words are more startling; we meet here and there with anacolutha and strange participial connections. The connecting particles commonly used in the First Epistle appear rarely in the second; we notice also, as a peculiarity of the Second Epistle, a remarkable tendency to repeat a word three or four times. The style of the Second Epistle is perhaps, as a rule, less Hebraistic; while in some parts the Greek seems more classical and more periodic than that of the first. But these differences can be accounted for. The First Epistle was written calmly. It is a treatise rather than a letter; it was intended to arm the Christians of Asia Minor against the coming sufferings, to console them, to remind them of the high privileges and blessed hope of their heavenly calling. It is the thoughtful production of a man writing deliberately. The Second Epistle is a more hasty composition; the effect is produced by a few bold,

hurried strokes. The apostle, it seems, had heard of the errors of the false teachers; they had already done much harm; they were beginning their evil work in Asia Minor. Perhaps St. Jude's Epistle was put into St. Peter's hands; he flashed into something of his old passionate impetuosity. St. Jude's burning words fixed themselves upon his memory, and gave their own colour to the diction of the whole Epistle. This hypothesis is, to say the least, not improbable. St. Peter had read the Epistle of St. James and some of those of St. Paul; these writings had considerable influence upon the thought and style of the First Epistle. Is it not possible that a subsequent perusal of St. Jude's Epistle may not only have given him fresh information, but may have communicated something of its fire and something of its own peculiar character to his impressionable mind? There is a strongly marked difference of style between the preface of St. Luke's Gospel and the narrative which follows. The preface is in the ordinary style of the writer; the narrative took its colour from the Aramaic documents which he consulted, or from the Aramaic language of the persons who related to him the events of which they had been eye-witnesses.

It is possible, as St. Jerome suggests, that the difference of style between the two Epistles of St. Peter may have arisen from the employment of different interpreters. But there does not seem to be much ground for the hypothesis that St. Peter wrote originally in Aramaic, or dictated his letters to an interpreter. Galilee was a half-Greek country; Peter's own brother bore a Greek name; it is probable that the family always spoke Greek as well as Aramaic. It is scarcely possible that St. Peter could have been ignorant of Greek towards the end of a life of which much had been spent away from Palestine.

We must remember also that the Epistles, especially the second, are short compositions; they furnish us with scarcely sufficient data to enable us to form an authoritative decision on a question so complicated and so delicate as that of style. Thus one commentator says that the Greek of the First Epistle is better than that of the second; another, also a good scholar, pronounces in favour of the Second Epistle as more classical and less Hebraistic than the first.

But if there is a difference, there are also many points of resemblance. We have said that the style of both Epistles is lively and picturesque; in both there are many words which occur nowhere else in the New Testament. Attention will be drawn to them in the notes; but it is, perhaps, desirable for readier comparison to note some of the most remarkable of them here. In the First Epistle we have *ἀναγεννήσας* (i. 3), *ἀμάραντος* (i. 4), *ἀνεκκλητός* (i. 8), *ἀναζωσάμενοι* (i. 13), *πατροπαράδοτος* (i. 18), *ἀρτιγέννητος* and *ἄδολος* (ii. 2), *ἱεράτευμα* (ii. 5, 9), *ἐποπτεύω* (ii. 12; iii. 2), *ὑπολιμπάνω* and *ὑπογραμμός* (ii. 21), *μώλωψ* (ii. 24), *ἐμπλοκή* and *ἔνδυσις* (iii. 3), *οἰνοφλυγία* (iv. 3), *ἀνάχυσις* (iv. 4), *ἀλλοτριοεπισκόπος* (iv. 15), *ἀμαραντίνος* (v. 4), *ἐγκομβώσασθε* (v. 5), *ἀρχιποίμην* (v. 4), *ὠρνόμενος* (v. 8), *συνεκλεκτός* (v. 13). Among the remarkable words of the Second Epistle

are *ισότιμος* (i. 1), *ἐπάγγελμα* (i. 4), *παρεισενέγκαντες* (i. 5), *μνωπάξων* (i. 9), *ταχυνός* (i. 14; ii. 1), *ἐπόπτης* (i. 16), *διανγάζω*, *αὐχμηρός*, *φωσφόρος* (i. 19), *ἐπίλυσις* (i. 20), *ἔκπαλαι* (ii. 3; iii. 5), *πλαστός* (ii. 3), *ταρταρώσας* and *σειροῖς* or *σειραῖς* (ii. 4), *τεφρώσας* (ii. 6), *ἄθεσμος* (ii. 7; iii. 17), *βλέμμα* (ii. 8), *μιᾶσμός* (ii. 10), *τολμηταί* (ii. 10), *μῶμος* and *ἐντρυνφάω* (ii. 13), *ἀσθήρικτος* (ii. 14; iii. 16), *ἀκατάπαυστος* (ii. 14), *παραφρονία* and *ἐλεγξις* (ii. 16), *ἐξέραμα*, *κύλισμα*, and *βόρβορος* (ii. 22), *ἐμπαιγμονή* (iii. 3), *ροῖζηδόν* (iii. 10), *καυσώ* (iii. 10, 12), *δυσνόητος* and *στρεβλοῦσιν* (iii. 16), *στηριγμός* (iii. 17). Forty-eight *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα* have been counted in the Second Epistle, fifty-eight in the first. Thus the use of unusual words is characteristic of both Epistles; one or two in the second, as especially *ταρταρώσας*, may be stranger and more startling than any in the first; but this may be accidental (there are but a few such), or it may be due to the difference in subject; and surely an imitator in the second century would be far more likely to copy some of the more uncommon words of the First Epistle, than to show an amount of literary skill which we cannot attribute to any Christian writer of that period, by catching the manner of St. Peter without anything like a servile reproduction of his expressions.

But although there is no direct imitation, there are words and phrases which occur also in the First Epistle or in St. Peter's speeches as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, sufficient in number and importance to form an element in estimating the genuineness of our Epistle. Thus, in the first chapter, the words *ισότιμος* of ver. 1 and *τίμια* of ver. 3 remind us of the *τίμος* of 1 Pet. i. 7, 19. The salutation of ver. 2 corresponds exactly with that of the First Epistle. In ver. 3 we have the word *ἀρετή* (a very unusual word in the New Testament) ascribed in a very remarkable way to God himself, as in 1 Pet. ii. 9. In ver. 5 the word *ἐπιχορηγήσατε* points back to the *χορηγεῖ* of 1 Pet. iv. 11. In ver. 7 we have the *φιλαδελφία* which we have already met with in 1 Pet. i. 22 and iii. 8. In ver. 14 the *ἀπόθεσις τοῦ σκηνώματός μου* brings to our memory the words of 1 Pet. iii. 21, *σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις ῥύπον*. In ver. 16 *ἐπόπται* reminds us of the *ἐποπτεύοντες* of 1 Pet. ii. 12. In the first verse of the second chapter the use of the verb *ἀγοράζειν* reminds us of the description of the redeeming work of Christ in 1 Pet. i. 18. In ver. 4 the words *εἰς κρίσιν τετηρημένους* turn our thoughts to 1 Pet. i. 4, where the heavenly inheritance is said to be *τετηρημένην ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς*. In ver. 7 we have the word *ἀσέλγεια*, which occurs also in 1 Pet. iv. 3. In ver. 14 *κατάρας τέκνα* reminds us of the *τέκνα ὑπακοῆς* of 1 Pet. i. 14, and *ἀκαταπαύστους ἁμαρτίας* of the *πέπανται ἁμαρτίας* of 1 Pet. iv. 1. In ch. iii. 3 the words, *ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν*, remind us of the *ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων* of 1 Pet. i. 20, and in ver. 14 the exhortation to be found, *ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι*, points back to the "Lamb without blemish and without spot (*ἀμώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου*)" of 1 Pet. i. 19. The use of the word *ἴδιος* (1 Pet. iii. 1, 5; ch. i. 3; ii. 16; iii. 17) and the frequent omission of the article may also be noticed as points of similarity between the two Epistles: *ἀναστροφή*, conversation, and the cognate verb, are favourite words in both. Again,

the verb *λαγχάνειν* in ch. i. 1 reminds us of St. Peter's use of the word in the same sense in Acts i. 17 (the only two New Testament passages in which the word occurs in this meaning). The somewhat uncommon word *εἰσέβεια* in ch. i. 3, 6, 7, and iii. 11, recalls the same word in St. Peter's speech in Acts iii. 12. The "cleansing from his old sins" of ch. i. 9 seems to point back to the baptism "for the remission of sins" preached by St. Peter, Acts ii. 38. The word *φερόμενος* of ch. i. 21, which we find also in 1 Pet. i. 13, occurs in Acts ii. 2, in the description of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, when St. Peter preached his great sermon. In ch. ii. 1 St. Peter says that the false teachers denied the Lord that bought them; he had used the same word *ἀρνεῖσθαι*, to deny (that word to him so full of solemn memories), twice in the speech in Acts iii. (ver. 13, 14). The words of ch. ii. 13, "to riot in the daytime," recall Acts ii. 15. The *μισθὸς τῆς ἀδικίας* of ch. ii. 15 is found in St. Peter's speech in Acts i. 18. The Lord Jesus is called the "Saviour" five times in this Epistle; St. Peter had described him as "a Prince and a Saviour" in his speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts v. 31).

On the whole, while we recognize the existence of that dissonance of style which was noticed long ago by St. Jerome, there are also many points of resemblance, and the difference is not greater than can be accounted for. The two Epistles were separated by an interval of, perhaps, two or three years; the occasion and subject-matter are different; the apostle seems to have incorporated into the second chapter the substance of another writing which may have tinged the style of the whole Epistle; and it is at least possible, as St. Jerome suggests, that St. Peter may have used the services of different interpreters.

(4) The leading thoughts of the Second Epistle are not those of the first. The key-note of the First Epistle is *hope*; that of the second is *knowledge* (*ἐπίγνωσις*). The First Epistle directs our thoughts to the great events in the life of Christ—his sufferings, death, his descent into Hades, his resurrection and ascension. It dwells on the doctrines of grace, the new birth, the atonement; it enforces the necessity of patient endurance in view of the coming persecutions, the duty of loyal obedience to rulers, the blessedness of humility; it asserts the priesthood of all true Christians; it represents the Church as a spiritual temple, in which individual believers are living stones. It is full of the Old Testament; there is an abundance of quotations from Isaiah, the Proverbs, the Psalms; there are constant reminiscences of the Epistle of St. James, and some of St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans and Ephesians. The Second Epistle is very different; it does not dwell on the great events and doctrines insisted upon in the First Epistle. There are no *certain* quotations from the Old Testament or from St. Paul. But the difference of purpose is quite sufficient to account for these differences of treatment. The false teachers and the scoffers are the most prominent figures in the Second Epistle; the writer's mind is full of the dangers to be apprehended from them. The full knowledge (*ἐπίγνωσις*) of

our Lord Jesus Christ is the best safeguard against these dangers ; therefore *knowledge* is the apostle's leading topic now, as *hope* was when his object was to comfort and support his suffering brethren. There are, however, points of contact between the Epistles. In both great stress is laid on ancient prophecy, as also in St. Peter's speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In both the end of all things is a prominent thought. St. Peter, in ch. iii. 12, speaks of Christians as not only "looking for," but also "hasting" the coming of the day of God ; he had long before expressed the same remarkable conception in his speech (Acts iii. 19, 20). An imitator would not have been likely to vary the apostle's expression ; he would not have adopted the form *parousia*, or "day of the Lord," in describing what is called the "Revelation of Jesus Christ," or "the end of all things," in the First Epistle ; he would probably have met the taunts of the scoffers rather by maintaining that the day of the Lord was close at hand (after the manner of 1 Pet. iv. 7), than by giving reasons for its apparent delay. Again, we have the doctrine of election in both Epistles, and in both the necessity of holiness in heart and life is earnestly pressed upon the readers ; both Epistles draw attention to the warnings of the Deluge and the fewness of the saved ; both dwell on the long-suffering of God ; both regard the history and privileges of God's ancient people as typical of the temptations and blessings of Christians (comp. ch. ii. 1, 5, 6, 7, 15 and 1 Pet. ii. 9). The "sinful angels" of the Second Epistle, in pits or chains of darkness, remind us of the "spirits in prison" of 1 Peter. The Lord preached (*ἐκήρυξε*) to those spirits (1 Pet. iii. 19) : Noah was a preacher (*κῆρυξ*) of righteousness to the men of Sodom (ch. ii. 5). And if the writer of the Second Epistle does not dwell upon those great facts of our Lord's life which are mentioned in the first, as an imitator would have done, he does dwell upon another, the Transfiguration. If he does not quote verbally from the Old Testament, he directs his readers' attention to the word of prophecy, and his thoughts are full of Old Testament examples, "the false prophets among the people" (ch. ii. 1), Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot, Balaam ; while he has two apparent references to the Old Testament in ch. ii. 22 and iii. 8. If he does not quote St. Paul directly, he refers to his Epistles generally in ch. iii. 15, 16 ; and there are words and expressions here and there which seem to imply familiarity with the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians ; thus *ἐπίγνωσις*, the key-note of the Epistle, is found in Rom. i. 28 ; iii. 20 ; x. 2 (comp. also ch. i. 17 with Rom. ii. 7 ; ch. ii. 13 with Rom. xiii. 13 ; ch. ii. 18 with Rom. vi. 16 ; ch. iii. 7 with Rom. ii. 5 ; ch. iii. 15 with Rom. ii. 4 ; and ch. iii. 2 with Eph. ii. 20 and iii. 5). There are other points of contact with other Epistles of St. Paul, most of which are noticed in the Exposition ; and there are two apparent reminiscences of the Epistle of St. James ; ch. i. 9 recalls to our thoughts Jas. i. 23, 24 ; and the remarkable word *δεδιάζω*, used in ch. ii. 14, 18, occurs also in Jas. i. 14. It is sometimes urged as an additional point of difference between the Epistles that while our Lord is usually called "Christ" or "Jesus Christ" in the first, in the

second the simple name is never used. This is not quite true (see ch. i. 1) : but, if it were, it would seem a point of very little importance in a short Epistle like this, separated from the first by an interval probably of two or three years.

(5) We come now to the relation between ch. ii. of this Epistle and the Epistle of St. Jude. There can be no doubt but that one of the two sacred writers borrowed from the other, unless both derived their materials from a common source. No such common source is known : which then, we cannot but ask, was the original composition—St. Jude's Epistle or 2 Pet. ii. ? If St. Peter wrote first, the difficulty is shifted from our Epistle ; but, while commentators are divided on the subject, the balance of authorities is in favour of the priority of St. Jude. And this seems the more probable alternative. When we compare the two Epistles, we see that St. Jude is much stronger in his denunciation, fiercer in his invective ; his words seem to flow out of a burning indignation, an intense horror. He, perhaps, had been brought into personal contact with the wicked men whom he describes ; St. Peter had only heard from others of their evil lives and false doctrine. It seems more likely that the vehement, fervid Epistle was the original rather than the calmer chapter ; it is more probable that St. Peter, reproducing, perhaps from memory, the warnings of St. Jude, would soften some of its sterner language, than that St. Jude should have taken the words of St. Peter and breathed fire and passion into them. It is more probable that St. Peter should have omitted the reason which St. Jude apparently gives for the fall of the angels, and the dispute between Michael the archangel and the devil, than that St. Jude should have made these additions to St. Peter's words from apocryphal books or Jewish legends. It does not seem likely that St. Jude, while adopting a portion of St. Peter's Epistle, would have omitted all reference to the remainder ; it is especially unlikely that he should have altogether omitted the solemn description of the day of the Lord in the third chapter, so suitable for his purpose. On these grounds, therefore, we believe that St. Peter, having heard of the doings of the false teachers, inserted into his Epistle much of the earlier Epistle of St. Jude, from which, it may be, he derived his knowledge. There is nothing inconsistent with his apostolic dignity in doing so, while it is in accordance with his character, always open to impressions from without. During his residence at Antioch (as St. Paul tells us in Gal. ii. 11, 12), when "certain came from James," he was led by their influence to separate himself from the Gentiles. His First Epistle, written while he was in the society of Mark and Silvanus, was largely coloured by the Epistles of St. Paul ; it is not surprising that in his second, if he had just read the Epistle of St. Jude, he should have made use of a large portion of that vehement and striking letter.

(6) Dr. Abbott, has called attention, in the *Expositor*, to some verbal coincidences between this Epistle and the writings of Josephus, especially two passages in the 'Antiquities.' In the fourth section of the Preface,

Josephus says that Moses deemed it exceedingly necessary to consider the *Divine nature*; that "other legislators *followed fables*, and by their discourses transferred the most reproachful of human sins unto the gods;" but that Moses demonstrated that "God was possessed of perfect *virtue*;" and that there is nothing in his writings "disagreeable to the *majesty* (*μεγαλειότης*) of God." The coincidences between this passage and ch. i. 4, 16, 3 are obvious; yet we must remember that *ἀπερί* is ascribed to God in 1 Pet. ii. 9; that *μῦθος* occurs four times in St. Paul's pastoral Epistles; and that *θεῖος* is not uncommon in the Septuagint. Again, in bk. IV. viii. 2, where Josephus is relating the last address of Moses, he uses seven or eight words which are found in this Epistle; such as "departure" in the sense of death, "the present truth," etc. Dr. Abbott has also pointed out several other scattered parallels, besides those contained in the two passages referred to; as well as some remarkable coincidences with the writings of Philo. St. Peter could not have seen the 'Antiquities' of Josephus, which were not published earlier than A.D. 93. It seems most unlikely that Josephus, who shows no acquaintance with any other part of the New Testament, should have read this one Epistle. But, on the other hand, it does not seem much more probable that a Christian writer of the second century (and no one assigns a later date to this Epistle) would care to reproduce the words and phrases of the Jewish historian, especially if he wished that his production should be regarded as the work of St. Peter; he would be adopting one of the surest means to show that it was not the writing of the apostle. It is quite possible that these resemblances may be accidental; many of the words instanced by Dr. Abbott are ordinary expressions in common use. It is possible, again, that they may have been derived from a common source, such, as the writings of Philo. Philo had visited Rome in the reign of Caligula; Eusebius ('Hist. Eccl.,' ii. 17) accepts the legend that he then had intercourse with St. Peter. It is at least probable that Philo's influence would have made itself felt during his embassy among the Roman Jews, and so St. Peter, if writing at Rome, might have derived some words and phrases directly or indirectly from his writings. At any rate, Dr. Salmon has proved, in his 'Historical Introduction to the Books of the New Testament,' that "affinity with Philo is a point of likeness, not of unlikeness, between the two Petrine Epistles" (pp. 650, 651); and also that "even St. Paul's letters, written from Rome, present coincidences with Philo" (see note, p. 652, furnished by Dr. Gwynn). It is probable that, as Philo's works became known to educated Jews, many words and thoughts derived from them would find their way into popular use among the scattered Hebrew nation. This seems a much more likely explanation of the coincidences (the most remarkable of which had been already noted by many commentators) than the hypothesis that the writer of this Epistle borrowed from the Jewish historian.

On the whole, the internal evidence seems decisive. The Epistle bears the strongest testimony to its own genuineness. The writer's claims are

not to be lightly set aside; he asserts himself to be the Apostle St. Peter so plainly and repeatedly that it is hard, on the hypothesis of imitation, to acquit him of deliberate falsehood, and to regard the Epistle as an innocent attempt to strengthen the influence of a good and holy writing by investing it with apostolical authority. We have to deal, not only with direct assertions, as ch. i. 1 and 12—18; ch. iii. 1, 15, 16; but also with indirect reminiscences and allusions, such as the use of the word *δελέζω* (ch. ii. 14, 18), which points back to St. Peter's early occupation; the evident references in ch. ii. and iii. to that solemn discourse of the Lord upon the Mount of Olives, which, it seems, was heard only by St. Peter and three other apostles (see Matt. xxiv. 11, 12, 24, 29, 30, 43); the constant recollection of the solemn charge which the Lord had given him, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren;" three times in this Epistle that word *στήριξον* seems to be in the writer's thoughts (see in the Greek, ch. i. 12; iii. 16, 17).

Again, there is considerable weight in the negative evidence for the early date of this Epistle implied in the absence of references to the more developed heresies of the second century. A writer of that date, dealing, as St. Peter does, with the false teachers of his time, must have shown, at least unconsciously, an acquaintance with some of the various forms of Gnosticism. It would have been difficult for him, when describing the tremendous circumstances of the day of the Lord, to suppress altogether his knowledge of the fall of Jerusalem—the great catastrophe which in our Lord's prophecies was so closely associated with the end of all things. And probably in a writing of that date we should find at least some indications of the more complete ecclesiastical organization of the time.

Another important element in the evidence for the authenticity of this Epistle is its own intrinsic power and beauty. We have several Christian writings of the second century; they are precious for many reasons; we should be very sorry to be without any one of them. But the value of them all put together is as nothing compared with that of this Epistle. They are such books as good men might write now; full of piety and holiness, but not beyond the reach of men endued with the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. But is there any man living, however wise and holy, who could write an Epistle like this? Could any of the sub-apostolic Fathers whose writings have come down to us have produced anything to be compared with it? The books of Holy Scripture and human compositions lie in different planes; they do not bear comparison. There is an indescribable something in the Word of God which appeals to the human nature which God created, to the conscience which bears witness of him—something which tells us that the message comes from God. The Second Epistle of St. Peter possesses that authority, that holy beauty, those notes of inspiration which differentiate the sacred writings from the works of men.

II. INTEGRITY OF THE EPISTLE.

Some critics call in question the integrity of the Epistle. Some regard the second chapter as an interpolation from St. Jude. Lange enlarges the supposed interpolation, making it extend from ch. i. 20 to ch. iii. 3. One holds the first chapter only to be genuine; the critical discernment of another pronounces for the first twelve verses of the Epistle and the concluding doxology. This want of agreement is a strong argument against the attempts to disintegrate the Epistle. There is no evidence whatever in favour of the theory of interpolation from manuscripts or versions or ancient authority of any kind. Neither is there any trace of such interpolation in the Epistle itself. The writer sums up the substance of his teaching in the last two verses: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." He keeps these two purposes in view throughout; he passes from one to the other by simple and natural transitions. Such differences of style as may be found in the different sections of the Epistle can be accounted for by change of subject and in part by the influence of St. Jude. There is no such difference as to warrant the disintegration of the Epistle.

III. READERS: TIME-AND PLACE OF WRITING.

The Epistle is addressed generally to "them that have obtained like precious faith with us." But vers. 12 and 16 of ch. i. seem to imply some acquaintance, either personal or by letter, with those to whom the apostle is writing; and in ch. iii. 1 he identifies them with the readers of his First Epistle. The dangers to be apprehended from the false teachers threatened other Churches besides those of Asia Minor; therefore the apostle gives his letter a more general character, probably intending it for a wider circulation. But he addresses principally the readers of the First Epistle. The spiritual dangers to which they were now exposed were more to be dreaded than the persecutions of which so much had been already said; therefore now he dwells upon the errors and evil practices of the false teachers, not on the sufferings which were gathering round the Church.

The apostle was looking forward to the putting off of his earthly tabernacle. His martyrdom may have taken place about the year 68; probably this Epistle was written not long before. There is no evidence of any sort which can help us to determine the place of writing; the apostle may have been at Babylon, or at Rome, or at some intermediate point in the journey between the two cities.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE.

St. Peter addresses his letter to those who have obtained the like precious faith with himself. He strikes at once the key-note of the Epistle, the full knowledge of God. He dwells, as in the First Epistle, on the blessings and the high privileges of the Christian life, and urges his readers, in the strength of God's promises and of fellowship with God, to bring in all diligence; they must go on from grace to grace—beginning with faith, they must go on to charity. Such continual progress is necessary for the attainment of full knowledge; without it men are blind, forgetting that they once were cleansed. Therefore they must be diligent to make their calling and election sure by holiness of life. The apostle will not be negligent to keep them in remembrance of what they knew already. For his end would be swift; he would have no time for death-bed admonitions; he wished, therefore, now to say all that was necessary. He had the sure knowledge of an eye-witness; he had seen the glory of the Transfiguration, and had heard the attesting voice which came from heaven. And this was not the only evidence of the certain truth of St. Peter's message; there was also the word of prophecy, to which Christians should give heed, for it came from God through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Ch. ii. But as there had been false prophets of old, so there would be false teachers now, who would even deny the Lord that bought them, bringing in heresies of destruction, leading many astray, seeking their own gain. They would bring upon themselves swift destruction, as did the angels that sinned, and the contemporaries of Noah, and the cities of the plain. Then the faithful few were saved; so now the Lord will punish the wicked and deliver the godly. The characteristics of these false teachers are their impurity, their presumption, their railing, their covetousness. They are like Balaam in these things; they promise, but do not perform; they talk loudly of liberty, but they are slaves themselves. Whatever knowledge they may once have possessed makes their guilt the greater; their latter end is worse than the beginning; they exemplify the old proverb, and return, like unclean animals, to their uncleanness.

Ch. iii. Therefore the apostle writes a second Epistle, urging his readers to keep in remembrance the warnings of the prophets and apostles. There would be mockers who would scoff at the delay of the Lord's coming. Let them remember that by the Word of the Lord was the world made; by that Word it would be dissolved. Let them remember that the world had once perished by water; it would be destroyed by fire. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The delay of the judgment comes, not from slackness, but from the Lord's long-suffering mercy. He gives us time for repentance. But the day of the Lord will come, and that suddenly, and with tremendous portents. Therefore they must prepare to meet their God. We have the promise of new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; therefore, we should diligently

prepare ourselves for that new home. St. Paul had taught the same things; but there were some things hard to be understood in his Epistles, as in other Scriptures. The apostle ends by urging his readers to be on their guard and preserve their steadfastness, bidding them, as he did at the beginning of the Epistle, to grow in grace and knowledge.

V. COMMENTARIES.

Those mentioned in the Introduction to the First Epistle. It may be added that, while the authenticity of this Epistle has been denied, not only by Baur, Schwegler, Hilgenfeld, Mayerhoff, Reuss, Bleek, Davidson, but also by such critics as Weiss, Huther, and Godet, it has been defended by Hug, Guericke, Windischman, Thiersch, Schott, Brückner, Fronmüller, Hoffman, and other German writers; and, among English scholars, by Lardner, Alford, Wordsworth, Professor Lumby. Archdeacon Farrar says, "I believe there is much to support the conclusion that we have not here the words and style of the great apostle, but that he lent to this Epistle the sanction of his name and the assistance of his advice." Bertholdt, Ullman, Bunsen, and Lange admit the authenticity, but question the integrity of the Epistle, holding that it has been interpolated in various degrees.

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—Simon Peter. "Symeon" seems to be the best-supported spelling in this place. The same form of the name is found in Luke ii. 25 and Acts xiii. 1; it also occurs in Acts xv. 14, where St. James refers to St. Peter's speech on the great question of the circumcision of Gentile Christians. It is the form always used in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. The old man's thoughts go back to his early years; he describes himself by the familiar name of his youth; he uses that Greek form of it which was most distinctively Jewish. But he joins with the old name, which spoke of Judaism, the new name which the Lord Jesus had given him—the name which describes him as a stone or rock, which indicates also his close connection with that Rock on which the Church is built, which is Christ. His names combine Hebrew and Greek, Jewish and Christian, associations. He is writing probably, as in his First Epistle, to Churches of mingled Jewish and Gentile elements. The first word of the Epistle supplies an argument for the genuineness of the Epistle. It is scarcely possible that an imitator, who was acquainted with the First Epistle (ch. iii. 1), and shows, as some say, so much anxiety to identify himself with the apostle (ch. i. 12–18), would have announced himself by a name different from that used in the First Epistle, and would have adopted a form of the Hebrew name varying from that which occurs so frequently in the Gospels. A servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. St. Peter, like St. Paul, describes himself as a servant, literally, "a slave," a bondman of Jesus Christ. We are not our own; we are bought with a price; we have work to do for our Master. St. Peter's work was that of a missionary, an

apostle sent into the world to win souls for Christ (comp. Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 1; Jas. i. 1; Jude 1). To them that have obtained like precious faith with us. The word rendered "obtained" (*τοῖς λαχοῦσιν*) means properly "to obtain by lot," as in Luke i. 9. It is noticeable that one of the few places in which it occurs in the New Testament is in a speech of St. Peter's (Acts i. 17); its use here implies that faith is a gift of God. The word for "like precious" (*ισότιμον*, equally precious) is found only here in the New Testament; it calls to our memory the *πολύ τιμιώτερον* of 1 Pet. i. 7, and indicates a correspondence with the First Epistle. St. Peter addresses this Epistle simply to those who have obtained an equally precious faith "with us." By the last words he may mean himself only, or the apostles generally, or, possibly, all Jewish Christians. He is writing apparently to the same Churches to which his First Epistle was addressed (ver. 16 and ch. iii. 1); he says that their faith is equally precious with that of the apostles, or perhaps that the Gentiles have received the like precious gift with the chosen people. By "faith" he may mean the truths believed, as Jude 3; or, more probably, faith in the subjective sense, the grace of faith, which receives those truths as a message from God (comp. 1 Pet. i. 7). Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; rather, as in the Revised Version, *in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Some commentators, as Luther, Estius, etc., understand by "righteousness" in this place, the righteousness which God gives, as in Rom. x. 3, etc. But this seems unsuitable here; for faith is not given in righteousness, but rather righteousness in faith. Others take righteousness as the object of the faith—"to them that have obtained faith in the righteousness;" i.e. who are

enabled to believe in God's righteousness and to trust in it. This seems a forced interpretation. It is better to take the preposition as meaning "in the working of God's righteousness," in the sphere of its operation, and to understand "righteousness" as the attribute of God, his just and holy dealing with men. There is no respect of persons with God; in his righteousness he bestows the like precious faith on all who come to him, without distinction of race or country. According to the strict grammatical construction of the passage, "God" and "Saviour" are both predicates of "Jesus Christ," as in Titus ii. 13. The First and Second Persons of the blessed Trinity are distinguished in the following verse, and this has led several commentators to think that the same distinction should be made here. It is true that the absence of a second article does not make it absolutely certain that the two words "God" and "Saviour" must be taken as united under the one common article, and so regarded as two predicates of "Jesus Christ;" but it furnishes at least a very strong presumption in favour of this view, especially as there is not here, as there is in Titus ii. 13, any word like *ἡμῶν* to give definiteness to *σωτήρ* (see Bishop Ellicott's note on Titus ii. 13, and, on the other side, Alford's notes on both passages). The Lord Jesus is called "our Saviour" five times in this Epistle. The word does not occur in the First Epistle; but in St. Peter's speech (Acts v. 31) the apostle declared to the Sanhedrin that God had exalted Jesus "to be a Prince and a Saviour."

Ver. 2.—Grace and peace be multiplied unto you. The order of the words in the Greek is the same as in 1 Pet. i. 2. The exact correspondence should be noticed. The writer of the Second Epistle, if not St. Peter himself, must have been attempting to imitate of set purpose the opening salutation of the First Epistle. Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord; rather, *in the knowledge*. The knowledge of God is the sphere in which grace and peace are communicated to the soul; they cannot be found outside that sphere. "Full knowledge" (*ἐπίγνωσις*) may be regarded as the key-note of this Epistle, as "hope" is of the first. *Ἐπίγνωσις* is a stronger word than *γνώσις*; it means "knowledge" directed towards an object, gradually approaching nearer and nearer to it, concentrated upon it, fixed closely upon it. So it comes to mean the knowledge, not merely of intellectual apprehension, but rather of deep contemplation; the knowledge which implies love—for only love can concentrate continually the powers of the soul in close meditation upon its object.

Comp. 1 Cor. xiii., where, after saying in ver. 8 that "knowledge (*γνῶσις*) shall be done away," St. Paul continues, in ver. 12, "Now I know (*γινώσκω*) in part, but then I shall know (*ἐπιγνώσσομαι*) even as also I am known (*ἐπεγνωσθήναι*)." He contrasts our present imperfect knowledge with the full knowledge which the blessed will have in heaven, and which God now has of us, using the verb *ἐπιγινώσκω* of that fuller knowledge, as he had used *γνῶσις* of the imperfect knowledge. The word *ἐπίγνωσις* occurs several times in the Gospels, and is common in St. Paul's Epistles; it seems to imply a sort of protest against the knowledge that "puffeth up" (1 Cor. viii. 1), and especially against the knowledge "falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20), which was claimed by the false teachers, who were the precursors of the coming Gnosticism (comp. Col. i. 9, 10; ii. 2; iii. 10). St. Peter had learned more of the doings of these false teachers since he wrote the First Epistle, and this may perhaps be a reason for his frequent use of the word *ἐπίγνωσις* in the second. "Jesus our Lord" is a variation of the more common form, such as "the Lord Jesus;" it occurs only here and in Rom. iv. 24.

Ver. 3.—According as his Divine power; better, *seeing that*, as in the Revised Version. The construction is the genitive absolute with *ὡς*. The words are to be closely connected with ver. 2: "We need not fear, for God has given us all things that are necessary for our salvation; grace and peace will be multiplied unto us, if only we seek the knowledge of God." This is better than, with Huther and others, to make a full stop after ver. 2, and to connect vers. 3 and 4 closely with ver. 5. The word for "Divine" (*θεῖος*) is unusual in the Greek Testament; it occurs only in two other places—ver. 4 and Acts xvii. 29. *Hath given unto us all things* that pertain unto life and godliness; rather, as in the Revised Version, *hath granted*. St. Peter does not here use the ordinary verb for "to give," but one (*δωρόμαι*) which in the New Testament occurs only in this Epistle and in Mark xv. 45. "God hath given us all things for (*πρός*) life," *i.e.* all things necessary for life. By "life" St. Peter means the spiritual life of the soul; that life which consists in union with Christ, which is the life of Christ living in us. "Godliness" (*εὐσέβεια*) is a word of the later apostolic age; besides this Epistle (in which it occurs four times) and a speech of St. Peter's in Acts iii. 12, it is found only in St. Paul's pastoral Epistles; it means reverence, true piety towards God. Through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; literally,

through the full knowledge (*ἐνὶ γνώσει*) of him that called us (comp. John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"). The best-supported reading seems to be that followed by the Revised Version, "By his own glory and virtue (*διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀρετῆς*)."¹ Bengel says, "Ad gloriam referuntur attributa Dei naturalia, ad virtutem ea quæ dicuntur moralia; intime unum sunt utraque." All his glorious attributes make up his glory; *ἀρετή*, virtue, is the energy, the activity of those attributes. The other reading, also well supported (*διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀρετῆς*, "through glory and virtue"), would mean nearly the same (comp. Gal. i. 15; *καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ*). God calls us through his attributes; his glorious perfections invite us, the revelation of those perfections calls us to his service. The word *ἀρετή*, with one exception (Phil. iv. 8), occurs in the New Testament only in St. Peter's Epistles (see 1 Pet. ii. 9; ch. i. 3 and 5). This is, so far, an argument in favour of identity of authorship.

Ver. 4.—Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; rather, as in the Revised Version, *whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises*. Does the word "whereby" (*δι' ὧν*, literally, "through which things") refer to the immediately preceding words, "glory and virtue"? or is its antecedent to be found in the more distant "all things which pertain unto life and godliness"? Both views are possible. God first granted unto us all things necessary for life and godliness; through those first gifts, duly used, he has granted unto us others more precious still. But it seems better to connect the relative with the nearer antecedent. It is through God's glory and virtue, through his glorious attributes and the energetic working of those attributes, that he has granted the promises. The verb (*δεδώρηται*) should be translated "hath granted," as in the preceding verse. The word for "promise" (*ἐπαγγελία*) occurs elsewhere only in ch. iii. 13; it means the thing promised, not the act of promising. The order of the words, "exceeding great and precious," is differently given in the manuscripts; on the whole, that adopted by the Revised Version seems the best supported. The article with the first word (*τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα*) has a possessive force, and is well rendered, "his precious promises." They are precious, because they will be certainly fulfilled in all their depth of blessed meaning, and because they are in part fulfilled at once (comp. Eph. i. 13, 14, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the

earnest of our inheritance"). The word "precious" reminds us of 1 Pet. i. 7, 19; the resemblance with 1 Pet. ii. 7 is apparent only, in the Authorized Version, not in the Greek. That by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature; literally, *that through these (promises, i.e. through their fulfilment) ye may become partakers*. It is true that the verb is aorist (*γένησθε*), but it does not follow that "might be" is the right translation, or that the writer regarded the participation as having already taken place (comp. John xii. 36, "Believe in the light, that ye may be (*ὅτι γένησθε*) the children of light"). As Alford says, the aorist seems to imply "that the aim was not the procedure, but the completion, of that indicated; not the *γίνεσθαι*, the carrying on the process, but the *γενέσθαι*, its accomplishment." The end of God's gift is the complete accomplishment of his gracious purpose, but it is only by continual growth that the Christian attains at length to that accomplishment. St. Peter's words seem very bold; but they do not go beyond many other statements of Holy Scripture. At the beginning God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." St. Paul tells us that believers are now "changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18; comp. also 1 Cor. xi. 7; Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10; Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 49, etc.). Christians, born of God (John i. 13; 1 Pet. i. 23), are made "partakers of Christ" (Heb. iii. 14), "partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. vi. 4). Christ prayed for us that we might be "made perfect in one" with himself who is one with God the Father, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter (John xvii. 20—23; xiv. 16, 17, 23). The second person is used to imply that the promises made to all Christians (unto us) belong to those whom St. Peter now addresses. Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; literally, *having escaped from the corruption that is in the world in lust*. These words express the negative side of the Christian life, the former clause describing its active and positive side. God's precious promises realized in the soul enable the Christian to become partakers of the Divine nature, and to escape from corruption; the two aspects of the Christian life must go on simultaneously; each implies and requires the other. Bengel says, "Hæc fuga non tam ut officium nostrum, quam ut beneficium divinum, communionem cum Deo comitans, hoc loco ponitur." The verb used here (*ἀποφεύγειν*) occurs in the New Testament only in this Epistle. It reminds us of St. Paul's words in Rom. viii. 21, "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." The corruption or destruction

(for the word *φθορά* has both those meanings) from which we must escape has its seat and power in lust; working secretly in the lusts of men's wicked hearts, it manifests its evil presence in the world (comp. Gen. vi. 12; 1 John ii. 16).

Ver. 5.—**And beside this, giving all diligence; rather, but for this very cause also.** *Ἀλλὰ τοῦτο* is frequently used in this sense in classical Greek, but in the New Testament only here. It refers back to the last verse. God's precious gifts and promises should stimulate us to earnest effort. The verb rendered "giving" means literally "bringing in by the side;" it is one of those graphic and picturesque expressions which are characteristic of St. Peter's style. God worketh within us both to will and to do; this (both St. Paul and St. Peter teach us) is a reason, not for remissness, but for increased exertion. God's grace is sufficient for us; without that we can do nothing; but by the side (so to speak) of that grace, along with it, we must bring into play all earnestness, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The word seems to imply that the work is God's work; we can do very little indeed, but that very little we must do, and for the very reason that God is working in us. The word (*παρεισενέγκαντες*) occurs only here in the New Testament. Add to your faith virtue; literally, *supply in your faith*. He does not say, "supply faith;" he assumes the existence of faith. "He that cometh unto God must believe." The Greek word (*ἐπιχορηγῶσατε*) means properly to "contribute to the expenses of a chorus;" it is used three times by St. Paul, and, in its simple form, by St. Peter in his First Epistle (iv. 11). In usage it came to mean simply to "supply or provide," the thought of the chorus being dropped. So we cannot be sure that the idea of faith as leading the mystic dance in the chorus of Christian graces was present to St. Peter's mind, especially as the word occurs again in ver. 11, where no such allusion is possible. The fruits of faith are in the faith which produces them, as a tree is in its seed; they must be developed out of faith, as faith expands and energizes; in the exercise of each grace a fresh grace must issue forth. Virtue is well described by Bengel as "strenuus animi tonus et vigor;" it is Christian manliness and active courage in the good fight of faith. The word "virtue" (*ἀρετή*), with the exception of Phil. iv. 8, occurs in the New Testament only in St. Peter—in this chapter three times, and in 1 Pet. ii. 9, thus forming one of the links between the two Epistles. **And to virtue knowledge.** St. Peter here uses the simple word *γνῶσις*, discretion, a right understanding, "*quæ malum a bono discernit,*

et mali fugam docet" (Bengel). This practical knowledge is gained in the manly self-denying activities of the Christian life, and leads on to the fuller knowledge (*ἐπίγνωσις*) of Christ (ver. 8).

Ver. 6.—**And to knowledge temperance; rather, self-control** (*ἐγκράτεια*). The words *ἐγκράτεια ψυχῆς* are the heading of a section in the Greek of Ecclesi. xviii. 30, and are followed immediately by the maxim, "Go not after thy lusts, but refrain thyself from thine appetites." This self-control extends over the whole of life, and consists in the government of all the appetites; it must be learned in the exercise of that practical knowledge which discerns between good and evil. True knowledge leads on to self-control, to that perfect freedom which consists in the service of God; not to that liberty promised by the false teachers, which is licentiousness. **And to temperance patience; and to patience godliness.** The practice of self-control will result in patient endurance; but that endurance will not be mere stoicism; it will be a conscious submission of our human will to the holy will of God, and so will tend to develop and strengthen *εὐσέβεια*, reverence and piety towards God (see note on ver. 3).

Ver. 7.—**And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.** The word for "brotherly kindness" (*φιλαδέλφια*) is another link between the two Epistles (see 1 Pet. i. 22; iii. 8). "In your godliness," St. Peter says, "ye must develop brotherly kindness, the unfeigned love of the brethren;" for "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John v. 1). And as God is loving unto every man, and "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," so Christians, who are taught to be followers (imitators) of God (Eph. v. 1), must learn in the exercise of love toward the brethren that larger love which embraces all men in an ever-widening circle (comp. 1 Thess. iii. 12). Thus love, the greatest of all Christian graces (1 Cor. xiii. 13), is the climax in St. Peter's list. Out of faith, the root, spring the seven fair fruits of holiness, of which holy love is the fairest and the sweetest (comp. Ignatius, 'Ad Ephes.' xiv. 'Ἀρχὴ μὲν πίστις, τέλος δὲ ἀγάπη'). No grace can remain alone; each grace, as it is gradually formed in the soul, tends to develop and strengthen others; all graces meet in that highest grace of charity, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God. Bengel says well, "*Præsens quiaque gradus subsequenter parit et facilem reddit, subsequens priorem temperat ac perficit.*"

Ver. 8.—**For if these things be in you, and abound; literally, for these things belonging to you and abounding make, etc.** The word

used here (*ὁράματα*) implies actual possession; these graces must be made our own; they must be wrought into our characters; then they will increase and multiply, for the grace of God cannot lie still, it must ever be advancing from glory to glory. They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; literally, *they make you not idle nor yet unfruitful towards the full knowledge*. The Greek word for "knowledge" is *ἐπιγνώσις* (on which see ver. 2, and note there). Here we know only in part, we see through a glass darkly; but that imperfect knowledge should be ever growing, increasing in fulness and distinctness (see ch. iii. 18). The various graces of the Christian character, realized in the heart, will lead us on towards that fuller knowledge of Christ; if they are really ours, they will not allow us to be idle, they must bring forth the fruit of good works; and the life of righteousness by faith draws the Christian onwards in the knowledge of Christ: we learn to know him by following him (comp. Phil. iii. 9, 10; Col. i. 10).

Ver. 9.—*But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off; literally, for he to whom these things are not present is blind, short-sighted*. We cannot attain to the knowledge of Christ without these graces; for he who has them not is blind, or, at the best, short-sighted, like one who blinks with his eyes when he tries to see distant objects, and cannot bear the full light of day. Such a man can only see the things which lie close around him—earth and earthly things; he cannot lift up his eyes by faith and behold "the land that is very far off;" he cannot "see the King in his beauty" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). The word for "short-sighted" (*μυωπία*) occurs only here in the New Testament. And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins; literally, *having incurred forgetfulness of the cleansing from his old sins*. St. Peter is apparently thinking of the one baptism for the remission of sin. Ananias had said to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts xxii. 16); St. Peter himself had said, in his first great sermon, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Those who do not realize in the religious life that death unto sin of which holy baptism is the sign and the beginning, incur forgetfulness of the cleansing from sin which they then received; they do not use the grace once given for the attainment of those higher graces of which St. Peter has been speaking. The one talent once entrusted to them must be taken from them; they are idle and unfruitful, and

cannot reach unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 11; Eph. v. 26; 1 Pet. iii. 21).

Ver. 10.—*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence*. The two first words, *διὰ μᾶλλον*, "wherefore the rather," are by some understood as referring only to the last clause; as if St. Peter were saying, "Rather than follow those who lack the graces enumerated above, and forget that they were cleansed from their former sins, give diligence." *Μᾶλλον* is not unfrequently used in this antithetical sense, as in 1 Cor. v. 2; Heb. xi. 25. But it seems better to refer *διὰ* to the whole passage (vers. 3—9), and to understand *μᾶλλον* in its more usual intensive sense, "all the more," as in 1 Thess. iv. 10, etc. Because God has bestowed such gifts on men, because the use of those gifts leads on to the full knowledge of Christ, therefore all the more give diligence. The word *σπουδάσατε*, "give diligence," recalls the *σπουδὴν* *πάντων*, "all diligence," of ver. 5. The aorist seems, as it were, to sum up the continued diligence of daily life into one vivid description. This is the only place in which St. Peter uses the vocative "brethren;" he has "beloved" in the First Epistle (ii. 11) and in ch. iii. 1, 8. Both words imply affectionate exhortation. Two ancient manuscripts, the Alexandrine and the Sinaitic, insert here, "Through your good works (*διὰ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων*, or *τῶν καλῶν ὑμῶν ἔργων*)." To make your calling and election sure. Alford calls attention to the middle voice of the verb, "Not *ποιεῖν*, which lay beyond their power, but *ποιεῖσθαι*, on their side, for their part. But the verb must not be explained away into a pure subjectivity, 'to make sure to yourselves;' it carries the reflexive force, but only in so far as the act is and must be done for and *quoad* a man's own self, the absolute and final determination resting with Another." The calling and election are the act of God (comp. 1 Pet. i. 2; ii. 21). All the baptized, all who bear the name of Christ, are called into the Church, but few comparatively are chosen, elect (*ἐκλεκτοὶ* δὲ *ἐκλεκτοί*, Matt. xx. 16). We look, as it were, from far below up to the mysteries of God's sovereign government; we cannot read the list of blessed names written in the Lamb's book of life; we cannot lift ourselves to a point high enough to comprehend the secrets of God's dealing with mankind, and to reconcile the Divine foreknowledge and omnipotence with the free agency of man. But we feel the energy of that free agency within us; we know that Holy Scripture bids us to work out our salvation, and tells us of some who receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1), or frustrate the grace of God (Gal. ii. 21); and we feel that when

the apostle tells us to make our calling and election sure, he means that we must try to realize that calling and election, to bring its solemn responsibilities and its blessed hopes to bear upon our daily life, to live as men who have been called into God's Church, who are elect unto eternal life, and so (if we may dare to say it) to ratify God's election by our poor acceptance. He calls us into covenant with himself; we answer, as the children of Israel said at Mount Sinai, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exod. xxiv. 7). Our obedience makes the covenant sure to us; holiness of life is the proof of God's election, for it implies the indwelling presence of "that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. "If ye do these things," i.e. "If ye make your calling and election sure." The plural shows that the apostle considered this making sure a very many-sided act" (Dietlein, in Huther). Others refer the *ταῦτα*, "these things," to the graces just enumerated. Ye shall never fall; literally, ye shall never stumble (*οὐ μὴ πταίσῃτε*). *Πταίειν* is "to strike one's foot against some obstacle," and so to stumble. St. James says, "In many things we offend (*πταλούμεν*) all" (iii. 2). St. Peter here means to stumble so as to fall (Rom. xi. 11); while Christians "do these things," while they make their calling and election sure by holiness of life, they cannot stumble; it is in unguarded moments that they fall into temptation.

Ver. 11.—For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly; rather, as in the Revised Version, *for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance*. The verb *ἐπιχορηγήσεται* looks back to *ἐπιχορηγήσατε* in ver. 5, and "richly" to "abound" in ver. 8. If we do our poor best in supplying the graces mentioned above, the entrance shall be richly supplied. St. Peter seems to imply that there will be degrees of glory hereafter proportioned to our faithfulness in the use of God's gifts here. The adverb "richly" is fitly joined with the verb *ἐπιχορηγῆναι*, which signifies properly to provide the expenses for a chorus. The article defines the entrance as the great object of the Christian's hope. Into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; rather, the eternal kingdom. Notice the exact correspondence of the Greek words here, *τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ Σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, with those in ver. 1, *τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ Σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, as a strong argument in favour of the translation, "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," in that verse.

Ver. 12.—Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance

of these things; rather, as in the Revised Version, *wherefore I shall be ready*. This reading (*μελλήσω*) is better supported than that of the T.R. (*οὐκ ἀμελήσω*). (For this use of *μελλῶν* with the infinitive almost as a periphrasis for the future, compare, in the Greek, Matt. xxiv. 6.) The apostle will take every opportunity of reminding his readers of the truths and duties which he has been describing, and that because faith in those truths and the practice of those duties is the only way to Christ's eternal kingdom. Though ye know them, and be established in the present truth; better, as in the Revised Version, *and are established in the truth which is with you*. These words seem to imply that St. Peter knew something, through Silvanus (see 1 Pet. v. 12), of those to whom he was writing; they were not ignorant of the gospel; now they had read his First Epistle, and earlier they had heard the preaching of St. Paul or his companions (comp. Rom. i. 13). (For the word rendered "established" (*ἐστηρικμένους*), comp. 1 Pet. v. 10; ch. iii. 16, 17.) St. Peter seems to have kept ever in his thoughts the solemn charge of the Saviour, "When thou art converted, strengthen (*στήριξον*) thy brethren" (Luke xxi. 32). For "the truth which is with you" (*παρούσα*), comp. Col. i. 6.

Ver. 13.—Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle; rather, as in the Revised Version, *and I think it right*. The natural body is but a tabernacle for the soul, a tent to dwell in during our earthly pilgrimage, not a permanent habitation. The word reminds us of 2 Cor. v. 1-4, where St. Paul uses the same metaphor; and also of St. Peter's words at the Transfiguration, "Let us make three tabernacles." To stir you up by putting you in remembrance; literally, *to arouse you in reminding*. The phrase occurs again in ch. iii. 1. St. Peter's readers knew the facts of the gospel history; they needed, as we all need, to be aroused to a sense of the solemn responsibilities which that knowledge involves.

Ver. 14.—Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle; literally, *knowing that swift is the putting off of my tabernacle*. St. Peter may mean by these words either that his death was near at hand, or that, when it came, it would be sudden, a violent death, not a lengthened illness. So Bengel, "Qui diu ægrotant, possunt alios adhuc pascere. Crux id Petro non erat permissura. Ideo prius agit quod agendum est." Compare the use of the same word (*ταχὺν*) in ch. ii. 1. St. Paul, in 2 Cor. v. 1-4, speaks, like St. Peter here, of *putting off* a tabernacle or tent as we talk of putting off a garment.

Alford quotes Josephus, 'Ant.' iv. 8. 2, where Moses says, "Since I must depart from life, I have thought it right not even now to lay aside my zeal for your happiness." The word used here for "putting off" (*ἀποθεῖναι*) is one of the links between the two Epistles; it occurs also in 1 Pet. iii. 21. Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me; better, as in the Revised Version, *signified unto me*. The aorist points to a definite time. St. Peter is thinking of our Lord's prophecy, which St. John afterwards recorded (John xxi. 18); he could never forget that touching interview; he had already referred to it once in 1 Pet. v. 2.

Ver. 15.—Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance; rather, but I will also give diligence that ye may be able at every time after my decease to call these things to remembrance. Of the two particles used here the *δέ* connects this verse with ver. 13; the *καί* implies a further resolve. St. Peter will not only stir up the minds of his readers during his life, but he will give diligence to enable them to call to remembrance, after his death, the truths which he had preached. These words may refer simply to the present Epistle; but it seems more natural to understand them of an intention to commit to writing the facts of the gospel history; if this be so, we have here a confirmation of the ancient tradition that the Second Gospel was written by St. Mark at the dictation of St. Peter. The verb *σπουδάζω* is that used in ver. 10, and should be translated in the same way; they must give diligence to make their calling and election sure. St. Peter, for his part, will give diligence to furnish them with a lasting record of the truths of Christianity. The adverb *ἐκαστοτε*, at every time, whenever there may be need, occurs only here in the New Testament. (For *εἶχειν* in the sense of "to be able," compare the Greek of Mark xiv. 8.) It is remarkable that we have here, in two consecutive verses, two words which remind us of the history of the Transfiguration, "tabernacle," and "decease" (*ἐξόδος*; see Luke ix. 31). Then Peter proposed to make three tabernacles; then he heard Moses and Elijah speaking of the Lord's decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The simple unconscious occurrence of these coincidences is a strong proof of the genuineness of our Epistle; it is inconceivable that an imitator of the second century should have shown this delicate skill in adapting his production to the circumstances of the supposed writor. The last words of the verse may mean (and in classical Greek would mean) "to make mention of these

things;" but the usual rendering seems more suitable here. St. Peter was anxious rather that his readers should have the truths of the gospel living in their memories, than that they should talk about them; that would follow as a matter of course: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Some Roman Catholic commentators think that this passage contains a promise that the apostle would still, after his death, continue to remember the needs of the Church on earth, and to help them by his intercessions; but this interpretation involves a complete dislocation of clauses, and cannot possibly be the true meaning of the words.

Ver. 16.—For we have not followed cunningly devised fables; rather, did not follow. The participle (*ἐξακολουθήσαντες*) is aorist. This compound verb is used only by St. Peter in the New Testament; we find it again in ch. ii. 2 and 15. Bengel and others have thought that the preposition *ἐξ*, from or out of, implies wandering from the truth after false guides; but probably the word merely means "to follow closely," though in this case the guides were going astray. Perhaps the use of the plural number is accounted for by the fact that St. Peter was not the only witness of the glory of the Transfiguration; he associates in thought his two brother-apostles with himself. The word *μῦθοι*, fables, with this exception, occurs in the New Testament only in St. Paul's pastoral Epistles. There is a remarkable parallel in the proemium of the 'Antiquities' of Josephus, sect. 4, *Οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι νομοθέται τοῖς μύθοις ἐξακολουθήσαντες*. St. Peter may be referring to the "Jewish fables" mentioned by St. Paul (Titus i. 14), or to the stories about the heathen gods such as those in Hesiod and Ovid, or possibly to some early inventions, such as those ascribed to Simon the Sorcerer, which were afterwards to be developed into the strange fictions of Gnosticism (comp. 1 Tim. i. 4; iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 4). The word rendered "cunningly devised" occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 2 Tim. iii. 15; but there a different part of the verb is used, and in a different sense. When we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Peter can scarcely be referring to St. Paul or other missionaries, as the following words identify the preachers with the witnesses of the Transfiguration; he must be alluding either to his First Epistle (comp. 1 Pet. i. 7, 13; iv. 13), or to personal teaching of his which has not been recorded, or, just possibly, to the Gospel of St. Mark. St. Peter had seen the power of the Lord Jesus manifested in his miracles; he had heard the announce-

ment of the risen Saviour, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" he had, like the rest of the apostles, been "endued with power from on high." By the coming (*παρουσία*) he must mean the second advent, the invariable meaning of the word in Holy Scripture (see ch. iii. 4; Matt. xxiv. 3, 27; 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 19, etc.). But were eye-witnesses of his majesty. The word for "eye-witnesses" is not the common one (*αὐτόπται*, used by St. Luke i. 2), but a technical word (*ἐπόπται*), which in classical Greek designates the highest class of those who had been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. The choice of such a word may possibly imply that St. Peter regarded himself and his brother-apostles as having received the highest initiation into the mysteries of religion. The noun is found only here in the New Testament; but the corresponding verb occurs in 1 Pet. ii. 12 and iii. 2, and in no other of the New Testament writers. Here again we have an undesigned coincidence which points to identity of authorship. The word for "majesty" (*μεγαλειότης*) occurs in St. Luke's description of the healing of the demoniac boy immediately after the Transfiguration (Luke ix. 43), and elsewhere only in Acts xix. 27.

Ver. 17.—For he received from God the Father honour and glory. The construction here is interrupted; the literal translation is, "Having received," etc., and there is no verb to complete the sense. Winer supposes that the apostle had intended to continue with some such words as, "He had us for witnesses," or, "He was declared to be the beloved Son of God," and that the construction was interrupted by the direct quotation of the words spoken by the voice from heaven ('Grammar,' iii. xlv. b). (For a similar anacoluthon, see in the Greek 2 Cor. v. 6.) "Honour" seems to refer to the testimony of the voice from heaven; "glory," to the splendour of the Lord's transfigured Person. When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory; more literally, *when such a voice was borne to him*. The same verb is used in Acts ii. 2 of "the rushing mighty wind" which announced the coming of the Holy Ghost; and in 1 Pet. i. 13 of "the grace which is being brought." It is repeated in the next verse. It seems intended to assert emphatically the real objective character of the voice. It was not a vision, a dream; the voice was borne from heaven; the apostles heard it with their ears. The preposition *ὅθεν* must be rendered "by," not "from." The "excellent" (rather, "majestic," or "magnificent") glory was the Shechinah, the visible manifestation of the presence of God, which had appeared in ancient times

on Mount Sinai, and in the tabernacle and temple above the mercy-seat. God was there; it was he who spoke. For the word rendered "excellent" (*μεγαλοπρεπής*) compare the Septuagint Version of Deut. xxxiii. 26, *ὁ μεγαλοπρεπὴς τοῦ στερεώματος*, literally, "the Majestic One of the firmament;" where our Authorized Version gives a more exact translation of the Hebrew, "in his excellency on the sky" (see also the 'Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,' ch. ix., where the occurrence of the same remarkable words, *μεγαλοπρεπὴς δόξα*, suggests that Clement must have been acquainted with this Epistle). This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Our translation makes these words correspond exactly with the report given by St. Matthew in his account of the Transfiguration, except that "hear ye him" is added there. In the Greek there are some slight variations. According to one ancient manuscript (the Vatican), the order of the words is different, and there is a second *μου*, "This is my Son, my Beloved." All uncial manuscripts have here, instead of the *ἐν ᾧ* of St. Matthew's Gospel, *εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα*. The difference cannot be represented in our translation. The construction is pregnant, and the meaning is that from all eternity the *εὐδοκία*, the good pleasure, of God the Father was directed towards the Divine Son, and still abideth on him. The same truth seems to be implied in the aorist *εὐδόκησα* (comp. John xvii. 24, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"). An imitator of the second century would certainly have made this quotation to correspond exactly with the words as given in one of the synoptic Gospels.

Ver. 18.—And this voice which came from heaven we heard; rather, *and this voice borne from heaven we heard*. The pronoun is emphatic; we, the apostles who had that high privilege. They heard the voice when it was borne (*ἐνεχθεῖσαν*; he repeats for emphasis the remarkable word of ver. 17) from heaven, they heard it come from heaven. When we were with him in the holy mount. This description of the Mount of the Transfiguration supposes a knowledge of the history in St. Peter's readers; but it gives no support to the theory of a post-apostolic date. Mount Horeb was "holy ground," because God appeared there to Moses, because it was the scene of the giving of the Law. Mount Zion was a holy hill, because God had chosen it to be a habitation for himself; the Mount of the Transfiguration was holy, because there God the Son manifested forth his glory. God hallows every place which he pleases to make the scene of his revealed presence. This whole passage shows the deep and

lasting impression which the Transfiguration made on those who were privileged to witness it (comp. John i. 14).

Ver. 19.—We have also a more sure word of prophecy; rather, as in the Revised Version, and we have the word of prophecy made more sure; or, we have the word of prophecy more sure (than the testimony of the heavenly voice). The rendering of the Authorized Version is ungrammatical; we must adopt one of the other modes of representing the original. The second seems to be preferred by most commentators. Thus Archdeacon Farrar, translating the passage, "And still stronger is the surety we have in the prophetic word," adds in a note, "Why more sure? Because wider in its range, and more varied, and coming from many, and bringing a more intense personal conviction than the testimony to a single fact." But when St. Peter applied the epithet "surer" (*βεβαιότερον*) to the word of prophecy, does he mean in his own estimate of it, or in that of others? If he is speaking of himself, it is surely inconceivable that any possible testimony to the truth of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ could be comparable with the commanding authority of the Divine voice which he himself had heard borne from heaven, and the transcendent glory which he himself had seen flashing from the Saviour's human form and bathing it in an aureole of celestial light. That heavenly voice had made the deepest possible impression on the apostles. "They fell on their faces," as Moses had done under the like circumstances, recognizing it as the voice of God. Peter had said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here;" and evidently all through his life he felt that it was good for him to dwell in solemn thought on the treasured memories of that august revelation. No written testimony could be "surer" to St. Peter than that voice from heaven. But is he rather thinking of the confirmation of the faith of his readers? He is still using the first person plural, as in vers. 16 and 18; in this verse, indeed, he passes to the second; but the retaining of the first person in the first clause of the verse shows that, if he is not still speaking of apostles only, he at least includes himself among those who have the word of prophecy; and to him certainly the testimony of that word, though sacred and precious, could not be "surer" than the testimony of the heavenly voice. To Jewish Christians the evidence of the prophets of the Old Testament was of supreme importance. Nathanael, the "Israelite indeed," was drawn to the Lord by the assurance that, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write." The

Lord himself insisted again and again upon the testimony of the prophets; so did his apostles after him. Still, it seems difficult to understand that, even to Jewish Christians, the testimony of the prophets, however sacred and weighty, could be surer than that of those apostles who made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, having been eye-witnesses of his majesty; while to Gentile Christians the testimony of those apostles of the Lamb who declared "what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what their hands had handled, of the Word of life," must have had greater power to convince than the predictions of the Hebrew prophets, though these predictions, fulfilled as they were in the Lord Jesus, furnish subsidiary evidence of exceeding value. On the whole, the more probable meaning of St. Peter seems to be that the word of prophecy was made more sure to himself, and, through his teaching, to others by the overwhelming testimony of the voice from heaven and the glory of the Transfiguration. He had become a disciple long before. His brother Andrew had first told him that Jesus was the Messiah; he himself, a week before the Transfiguration, had confessed him solemnly to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." But the Transfiguration deepened that faith into the most intense conviction; it made the word of prophecy which spoke of Christ surer and more certain. It is not without interest that the writer of the so-called 'Second Epistle of Clement' quotes (ch. xi.) from "the prophetic word" (*προφητικὸς λόγος*), passages which resemble Jas. i. 8 and ch. iii. 4. Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. There is a parallel to the first clause of this in Josephus, 'Ant.,' xi. 6. 12; to the second in 2 Esdr. xii. 42. The word rendered "light" is rather a lamp or torch; our Lord uses it of John the Baptist (John v. 35). The word translated "dark" (*ἀσχυρὸς*) is found only here in the New Testament; it means "dry, parched, and so arid, desert;" there seems to be no sufficient authority for the rendering "dark." God's Word is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path; the word of prophecy guides us to Christ. Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts; literally, *until day dawn through*; i.e. "through the gloom." There is no article. The word for "day-star" (*φωσφόρος*, lucifer, light-bringer) is found in no other place of the New Testament; but comp. Rev. ii. 28; xiii. 16. St. Peter seems to mean that the prophetic word, rendered more sure to the apostles by the voice from heaven, and to Christians generally by apostolic witness, shines like a guiding

lamp, till the fuller light of day dawns upon the soul, as the believer, led by the prophetic word, realizes the personal knowledge of the Lord, and he manifests himself according to his blessed promises to the heart that longs for his sacred presence. He is the Bright and Morning Star, the Day-star, the Light-bringer; for he is the Light of the world—he brings the light, the full light of day. The prophetic word is precious; it sheds light upon the surrounding darkness—the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of the heart that knows not Christ; but its light is as the light of a torch or a lamp, compared with the pervading daylight which the felt presence of Christ sheds into those hearts into which God hath shined to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 9; Luke i. 78). Some understand "day" here of the great day of the Lord. Against this interpretation is the absence of the article, and the fact that the last words of the verse seem to give a subjective meaning to the passage.

Ver. 20.—Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. By "knowing this first" (*γινώσκοντες*) is meant that we must recognize this truth as of primary importance, or, before we commence the study of prophecy; the phrase occurs again in ch. iii. 3. The literal translation of the following clause is, "that all prophecy of Scripture [there is no article] is not;" "all . . . not" (*πᾶσα . . . οὐ*) being a common Hebraism for none, *οὐδέμια*; but the verb is not *ἔστι*, "is," but *γίνεται*, "becomes, arises, comes into being." The word for "private" is *ιδίαις*, "special," or commonly, "one's own" (see 1 Pet. iii. 1, 5; ch. ii. 16, 22; iii. 3, 16, 17). The word rendered "interpretation" is *ἐνάλυσως*, which is found nowhere else in the New Testament; the corresponding verb occurs in Mark iv. 34, "He expounded all things;" and Acts xix. 39, "It shall be determined or settled." These considerations, strengthened by the context, seem to guide us to the following explanation: No prophecy of Scripture arises from the prophet's own interpretation of the vision presented to his mind; for it was from God that the prophecy was brought, and men spoke as they were borne on by the Holy Spirit. This view of the passage is also supported by the remarkable parallel in the First Epistle (I. 10—12). The prophets searched diligently into the meaning of the revelation vouchsafed to them; they did not always comprehend it in all its details; they could not interpret it to themselves; the written prophecy arose out of the interpretation of the revelation supplied by the same Spirit from whom the revelation itself pro-

ceeded. Therefore the prophetic books of Holy Scripture are sacred and precious, and we do well in giving heed to them; though the day-star of the Lord's own presence, shining in the illuminated heart, is holier still. Other views of this difficult passage are: Prophecy is not its own interpreter; the guidance of the Spirit is necessary. Or, prophecy is not a matter for the private interpretation of the readers; only the Holy Spirit can explain it. But the explanation adopted seems most accordant with the Greek words and with the general sense of the context (compare St. Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. xii. 10). The gifts of the Spirit are divided as he will; to one man are given "divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues." Not every one, it seems, who had the first gift, had also the latter. Tongues and the interpretation of tongues were two distinct gifts. It may be so with prophecy and the interpretation of prophecy.

Ver. 21.—For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; literally, *for not by the will of man was prophecy borne at any time*. The verb is that already used in vers. 17, 18, "was not borne or brought;" it refers not to the utterance of prophecy, but to its origin—it came from heaven. But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; literally, *but being borne on by the Holy Ghost, the holy men of God spake*; or, if we follow the Vatican Manuscript, "But being borne on by the Holy Ghost, men spake from God." We have again the same verb, "being borne on" (*φερόμενοι*); comp. Acts xxvii. 15, 17, where it is used of a ship being borne on by the wind. So the prophets were borne on in their prophetic utterance by the Holy Spirit of God. They were truly and really inspired. The mode of that inspiration is not explained; perhaps it cannot be made plain to our human understanding; all the points of contact between the finite and the Infinite are involved in mystery. But the fact is clearly revealed—the prophets were borne on by the Holy Spirit of God. This is not, as some have fancied, the language of Montanism. Prophecy is but a lamp shining in a dark place; it is not the day-star. Prophecy came not by the will of man; the prophets were moved or borne on by the Holy Ghost. But St. Peter does not say that their human consciousness was suspended, or that they were passive as the lyre when swept by the plectrum. Had this passage been written after the rise of Montanism early in the second century, the writer, if a Montanist, would have said more; if not a Montanist, he would have carefully guarded his words from possible misunderstanding.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The address.* I. ST. PETER'S DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF. 1. *His name.* He wrote "Peter" simply in the First Epistle; he writes "Symeon Peter" now. Apparently he is writing to the same Churches as before; but it is a Second Epistle, he seems to know more of them—he gives his full name. That name contains the history of his soul: the first tells of his admission into the old covenant by circumcision; the second, of his admission into the new covenant through faith in Jesus Christ. He had passed through a great spiritual change; so had those to whom he was writing; they had been gathered, one by one, into the fold of Christ, some from heathenism, some from Judaism. His first name seemed to speak to his fellow-countrymen; he was a Jew, as they were; he bore the name of one of their old patriarchs. It means "hearing." God once heard the prayer of Leah, and gave her a second son; God had heard the prayers of Simon Barjona, had given him a new name, and had made him not only one of the living stones in the spiritual temple which he described in his First Epistle, but also one of those twelve foundations on which are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. xxi. 14). 2. *His office.* He described himself in the First Epistle as "an apostle of Jesus Christ;" he again claims the same high title; but here adds the lowlier name of "servant." Christ's ministers must learn of their Master, who is meek and lowly in heart; if his providence has set them in high positions, they need all the more the precious grace of humility; it is the only safeguard against the many temptations of earthly ambition. And they must remember that they are the bondservants of Jesus Christ; he has given them work to do for him. They must watch for souls, as men that must give account: woe is unto them if they preach not the gospel!

II. HIS DESCRIPTION OF HIS READERS. 1. *What they are.* They are believers. They had listened to the preaching of St. Paul and his companions. St. Paul had said, in his first sermon in Asia Minor, "By him all that believe are justified" (Acts xiii. 39); he and Barnabas, Silvanus, and Timotheus, and other holy men, had gone about preaching the gospel of Christ. Many souls had been gathered in; they had obtained like precious faith with those who had preached the faith to them. That faith was now their lot, their inheritance, their most precious possession. Faith is the gift of God: let it be our most earnest prayer, "Lord, increase our faith." For faith is precious exceedingly, above all earthly price. Sight is precious; blindness shuts a man out from so much brightness and joy. Faith is spiritual sight: by faith the believer sees "him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27); he sees the promises afar off, and embraces them, and confesses that he is a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth. Spiritual blindness shuts a man out from all this bright and holy hope. "The world seeth me no more," the Lord said; "but ye see me" (John xiv. 19). Then faith is far more precious than sight; without faith we are blind, ignorant, lost. Christ is the Way, and without faith we cannot find that Way, the only Way to life eternal. And the faith of the humblest Christian now is equally precious with the faith of the holiest apostle; it is the gift of the same God. It has the same blessed, justifying influences; it leads on to the same blessed end, everlasting life with God in heaven. 2. *How they became so.* "In the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." He was in the form of God; he took upon him the form of a servant; thus, taking our nature to cleanse it, dying in that nature to atone for our sins, he became our Saviour. And in his righteousness he became the Saviour of the world, "the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe:" he tasted death for every man. Jew and Gentile are alike invited; the gospel is to be preached to every creature; all that are weary and heavy-laden are called to come to him. And none that come are cast out; in the holy working of his righteousness they obtain from him that precious faith which justifies the true believer. It is only within the sphere of the working of that righteous love that we can gain this precious gift. "Lord, increase our faith."

III. THE GREETING. 1. *The blessing invoked upon his readers.* It is the old form of salutation which he had used in his First Epistle, word for word the same. He could express no holier wishes for them: what more can they need on whom the gracious favour of God abideth, who have received from him the blessed gift of peace? He

prays again, as he had prayed before, that that grace and peace may be multiplied; "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." 2. *Where those blessings are to be found.* "In the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." "This is life eternal," the Lord Jesus said, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." There is no spiritual life, there is no grace and peace, outside the sphere of the knowledge of God. But the knowledge which is life is personal knowledge; not that external knowledge which may be gained from books; but inner spiritual knowledge gained by communion with the Lord in prayer and holy sacrament, in the daily life of faith and self-denial, in the constant adoring contemplation of the life and death of Christ, in the habitual effort to live unto the Lord and to do all to the glory of God. St. Paul might well count all things but loss for the excellency of this knowledge; for the grace of God flows abundantly into the soul that seeks this heavenly wisdom, and the peace of God that passeth all understanding keepeth the heart that longeth for this inner knowledge of God and his Christ. 3. *Our warrant for expecting them.* Grace and peace are very precious, above all that we can ask or think; we might shrink from asking for blessings so far above our deserts. But God hath called us, the invitation comes from him; freely of his own sovereign bounty he bids us come to him. He attracts us by his own glory and virtue, revealing to us his glorious attributes, manifesting his love and power in the ceaseless activity of his providence and his grace. Thus he kindles in the Christian soul the strong desire of the knowledge of God, he satisfies that desire by the revelation of himself; and through that full and holy knowledge, granted to them that hunger after righteousness, he gives them all things necessary for life and godliness—promises precious and exceeding great, precious beyond all price, inconceivably great in their grandeur and magnificence, and yet within our grasp, weak and helpless as we are, because the Divine power hath given them and the Divine word is pledged. 4. *Their greatness.* The gifts of God must be great and precious, worthy of the Giver; the blessings which come from the energy of the Divine power must be deep and sacred. They are twofold. (1) Escape from corruption. The world is corrupt—it lieth in wickedness; it is lust, the sinful desire of the flesh, that hath corrupted the fair creation of God. And this corruption is all around us; we hear of its workings daily, we see its miserable defilement spreading everywhere; we feel its taint in our own souls. It is hard to escape from it. As God's angels once laid hold of the hand of Lot, and brought him out of the doomed city, and said, "Escape for thy life: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed;" so now it is the Divine power only which can give us strength and resolution to escape from the many sins which do so easily beset us. (2) The mountain to which we must escape is the mountain of the Lord's house, the place where his honour dwelleth. We can be saved from the corruption of the world only by being made partakers of a holiness not our own. "He that is born of God cannot commit sin, for his seed abideth in him." To be kept safe from sin, we need the abiding presence and growth of the heavenly birth; we need, as St. Peter tells us, to be made partakers of the Divine nature. This seems so lofty a state as to be above our reach. The promise of the Spirit is a promise precious and exceeding great; it seems sometimes so great that we cannot lift up our hearts to receive it. "Will God indeed dwell with man?" we say in our unbelief. "Can these poor bodies of ours become the temples of the Holy Ghost?" But we have his blessed word, his precious promise; and we know that he is the God of truth. We have the assurance of his holy apostles; we have the experience of thousands of his saints who have proved in their inmost lives the deep reality of this heavenly gift; and something of its blessedness, it may be, we have felt ourselves, though our sin and our want of perseverance have sadly grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and interfered with the free working of the new life within us. But "all things are possible to him that believeth." Let us believe his Word; he has given us the promises, that through them we might become partakers of the Divine nature. Let us trust him; let us only do what he bids us, giving diligence to make our calling and election sure; and, doubt it not, but earnestly believe, he will fulfil his holy promise: "We will come," saith the Lord; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, will come and evermore abide with those humble, happy souls who love the Saviour Christ and keep his Word.

LESSONS. 1. Faith is precious exceedingly; the knowledge of God and of his Christ is eternal life. Let us earnestly seek those sacred treasures. 2. God has given us all

things necessary for life and godliness. Let us thankfully accept his gifts and faithfully use them. 3. Would you realize that highest gift of all, to be made partakers of the Divine nature? Then "love not the world: . . . the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but are of the world."

Vers. 5—11.—*Exhortation to earnest effort.* I. OUR DUTY. 1. *To use all diligence.* God's Divine power is with us; he has granted us all necessary helps. But this, says the apostle, is the very reason why we should work all the more strenuously. It would be heartless work, if we had not the great power of God to help us; but he hath endowed his Church with power from on high. This gift of power is the very ground on which the apostle bases his exhortations; the great argument, not for remissness and security, but for persevering, self-denying labour. God's power is fighting for us; we are told to bring in by the side of that almighty aid all our earnestness. It may seem strange to be bidden to put our weak trembling endeavours by the side of the strength of God; the two things are incommensurate: how can the Infinite and finite work together? But it is the teaching of Holy Scripture; the saints have proved its value in their daily lives. The work is God's work; he hath begun it; he will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ; but just on that very ground we must work too, with fear and trembling indeed, but in trustful faith, out of love and adoring gratitude. 2. *To go on from grace to grace.* The first great gift of God is faith, that precious faith of which St. Peter speaks so warmly. Faith, St. Augustine says, is the root and mother of all virtues; St. Peter says the same. He tells us that in the life of faith, in the active energy of faith, we must furnish the attendant chorus of graces. The word which he uses implies that we must spare no effort, no expense; the Christian must be willing to spend and to be spent in order to provide that fair train of graces which is the meet adornment of the temple of the Holy Ghost. Faith, the first gift of God, cannot remain alone; it must work, and out of its active energies must issue virtue. (1) *Virtue* is manliness, the holy courage which enables Christians to quit themselves like men in the service of the Captain of our salvation. In the midst of the assaults of temptation we need a resolute determination to do what is right in the sight of God, a steadfast strength of will to choose always the good part. This is the virtue of the Christian warrior, and this is acquired in the active work of faith; faith ever working, ever energetic, strengthens the soul: who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth? Hence faith leads on to virtue. (2) With virtue comes *knowledge*. Courage and firmness may do harm unless they are directed by knowledge: true Christian virtue will lead on to knowledge. Irresolute men, double-minded and undecided, waver between right and wrong; they are constantly tempted into dangerous compliances with evil; they profess to hate sin, but they have a lingering love for it; and so they do not attain to that keen perception of good and evil which can be developed only in the active resolute conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. That holy discretion grows from Christian virtue, and it guides and informs the virtue from which it springs. (3) *Temperance*. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil has its dangers. There is need of discretion to form a right judgment, and of virtue to remain steadfast in that judgment. The union of virtue and knowledge will bring in temperance, or self-control, which enables a man to govern his appetites, and to keep them under the sovereign rule of conscience. Without that self-control there is no unity of purpose. The Christian must strive, like St. Paul, to devote his energies to the one thing needful; and to do that he must keep under his body and bring it into subjection; he must check the tumult of earthly desire by the light of knowledge and the strength of virtue. (4) *Patience*. Side by side with self-control comes patient endurance; he who controls his appetites will learn to endure hardness. Some of God's people have to wait for him in patient endurance, some to work for him in active labour. Both may serve him with equal faithfulness. It is not outward work in itself, but inner faithfulness of spirit, that wins the praise of God: the suffering Church of Smyrna is commended; the active Church of Ephesus is blamed (Rev. ii. 1—11). (5) *Godliness*. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, must help to strengthen and develop godliness. Godliness is the spirit of reverence, the holy fear of God. The godly man sets God always before him; the thought of God controls his whole life; his effort is to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, to live unto

the Lord, to seek his glory only. This holy reverence for the felt presence of God can only be maintained in the life of faith and self-control; in the worldly life of mere pleasure and business it cannot flourish. God is the centre of the devout life, the life of godliness; and to fix the eye of the soul on him we must learn the great lesson, "love not the world." (6) *Brotherly kindness*. Out of godliness must flow the love of the brethren; for Holy Scripture tells us that "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" God's elect are knit together in one communion and fellowship; all loving their Father in heaven, they must for his love's sake love all who in virtue of the heavenly birth are made the children of God. There is no love truer and holier than that which lives in the communion of saints; the nearer they draw to the heavenly Father, the Fountain of all holy love, the more fervently out of a pure heart they love one another. (7) *Charity*. Christian love must not be confined within the limits of the Christian Church. It is specially due, indeed, to those who are of the household of faith; but it cannot stop there. For it comes from God, who is Love, whose love is without limits in range and in intensity; and that love which his children learn of him must be, in its poor measure, like his love—it must not be cribbed and confined within conventional boundaries; it must continually increase in depth, and as it increases in depth it must increase also in extent. It will do so, if it is real and true; for it is a living thing, nay, the very life of the soul with God, and that life which it has of God involves the necessity of constant growth. Love is free, spontaneous, full of life and energy and warmth. All Christian graces meet in it; for it is the crown and centre of the Christian character, the golden link that binds together into one glorious whole all the fair adornments of those holy souls that have been created anew after the image of Christ.

II. REASONS URGING US TO THE ZEALOUS PERFORMANCE OF OUR DUTY. 1. *The positive reason*. If only we give all diligence, we must succeed, for the Divine power is with us; and when, by the help of that power working in and with us, those precious graces are made our own, they will not let us be idle or unfruitful. Love, the crown of all the rest, is not a mere sentiment; it is a force, an energy; it will not allow the Christian to be idle; it must work, and in its working it will bring us ever nearer to the full blessed knowledge of Christ, that knowledge which is eternal life, in comparison with which all the good things of this world are as dross, as very dung. 2. *The negative reason*. Without those graces men are blind; for faith, the first of them, out of which all the others spring, is the eye of the soul. He that hath not faith is spiritually blind; he is not blind to the outward objects which lie close around him,—those he can see; but the things that belong to his peace are hidden from his eyes. He cannot discern the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; he cannot see the awful realities of the eternal world; he cannot discern the spiritual powers that are working even now in the Church—the Lord's body that is offered to the faithful in the Holy Communion (1 Cor. xi. 29), the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism (1 Cor. xii. 13). Through that spiritual blindness he has incurred forgetfulness of the cleansing from his old sins; and it is not the outward washing of baptism that saves us, but the inquiry of a good conscience after God. He will not inquire after God who has received the grace of God in vain; his baptism will not profit him, for he is fallen from grace. Then let us give all diligence not to be idle or unfruitful, but to seek earnestly after those special graces which by the mighty working of the Divine power we may obtain of God.

III. FURTHER ENFORCEMENT OF THAT DUTY. 1. *For present safety*. St. Peter again urges us to earnest diligence, to the active use of the blessed means of grace. He uses the language of entreaty: "brethren," he says, in tones of affectionate appeal. He knows how hard it is to persevere, how much need we all have of encouragement and exhortation. God's exceeding great gifts, the danger of misusing them, the profit to be gained by faithfully using them,—all this, he says, should urge us on to continually increasing diligence. Such diligence, brought in by the side of the Divine power (ver. 5), working with that Divine power which alone is the source of our salvation, will tend to make our calling and election sure. While we are diligent in working out our own salvation, we feel God's working in us; doubts arise if we relax our energies. Satan suggests from time to time that miserable doubt, "If thou be a child of God,"

If we listen to him and cease to trust in our Father's care, labouring more for the meat that perisheth than for that which endureth to everlasting life; or if we indulge visions of spiritual pride, and tempt God by putting ourselves into perilous positions to which he has not called us,—then the doubts increase and vex the soul. But humble, earnest work for God deepens the Christian's assurance of God's love and choice. "I follow after," said the holy apostle St. Paul, "if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus;" and again, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Therefore give diligence; that very diligence is a sign of God's election. "No man can come to me," said the Lord, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" and it continually deepens our trustfulness in that electing grace. If we are bringing forth the sevenfold fruit which issues out of the root of faith, we may be sure that our faith is true and living. And we must try to live as men called of God and chosen unto everlasting life should live, in trustfulness and thankfulness, in the abiding sense of God's presence, in the persevering effort to please him in all things. The life of obedience and spiritual diligence tends to deepen continually the consciousness that the Divine power is with us, giving us all things needful for life and godliness, and so to make our calling and election sure. While we live thus we shall not stumble; for the godly consideration of our election in Christ doth not only "greatly establish and confirm the faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ," but doth also "fervently kindle love towards God;" therefore Christian men, while by God's grace they are enabled to keep the faith of their election in Christ steadfastly before their eyes, must walk religiously in good works, and will not fall into sin. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." So long as we abide in the grace of that heavenly birth, in the faith of our election unto everlasting life, so long we cannot sin. It is when we are off our guard, when we are not "as men waiting for their Lord," that we fall away. Then all the more we ought to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure." 2. *For future blessedness.* The entrance into Christ's eternal kingdom shall be richly furnished to those who use all diligence to make their election sure. While we are preparing our hearts by his gracious help, while we are striving to furnish the fair train of Christian graces to make that heart ready for him, we know that he is preparing a place for us in heaven, interceding for us, praying that where he is there we may also be. That entrance shall be richly furnished; with glory and with triumph shall the Christian soul enter into the golden city; there are the true riches—riches of blessedness beyond the reach of human thought, riches of knowledge, riches of holiness and joy and love in the unveiled presence of God, who is rich in mercy, rich in power and glory and majesty, rich in tender and holy and unspeakable love for his elect.

LESSONS. 1. God's bounty should stir us to show our thankfulness in our lives. His gifts are great, so ought our diligence to be great. 2. Our hearts are the chosen temple of God; we must furnish that temple richly with Christian graces—its proper decorations. 3. By that holy diligence we are bidden to make our calling and election sure. 4. Let us earnestly strive to do so, looking forward in faith to the great reward.

Vers. 12—21.—*Reasons for diligence in his apostolic work.* I. THE TIME IS SHORT.

1. *We need continually to be aroused.* We may know all things necessary for salvation; we have known them, it may be, all our lives; we are firmly convinced of their truth; but we need to keep that knowledge vividly before our hearts, to bring it to bear upon the circumstances of our daily lives. Few of us have this recollectedness, this persevering watchfulness; we need constant exhortation. St. Peter's readers had the knowledge of the gospel; they had heard it from St. Paul and his companions. St. Peter gladly acknowledges it—exhortation is better received when it is expressed in kindly terms. But he has a duty to perform; he felt, like St. Paul, that he was a debtor both to Jews and Greeks; that he must do his utmost to preach the gospel of Christ, and to keep alive the flame of holy love in those who knew the truth. So he will take all opportunities of arousing those whom he is addressing; he will never relax his efforts as long as he lives; he knows that they will always need the word of exhortation; he knows that it will always be his duty to exhort them.

St. Peter is an example to all Christian ministers. They must watch for souls; they must never weary in their work; at all times and in all places they should strive, sometimes by word, always by example, to arouse men to a sense of the momentous importance of the things which belong to their peace. They are never "off duty," as men are in other occupations; they should be always on the watch for opportunities of saving souls, of building up believers in their most holy faith, of comforting the feeble-minded, of arousing the careless, of warning, guiding, encouraging, according to the needs of those with whom they have to do. 2. "*The night cometh when no man can work.*" St. Peter looks forward to his death with sweet and holy calmness; he knew that it would be swift—the sharp death of martyrdom. He may have felt that it was near at hand; for he was an old man now, and the hour of which the Lord had spoken (John xxi. 18, 19) could not be long delayed. He calls it the putting off of his tabernacle. His earthly body was but as a tent, perishable, temporary; the tent was old, worn out; it could not last long. The apostle knew, like St. Paul, that he had "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and, knowing this, he could calmly await the dissolution of the earthly house of this tabernacle. But the approach of death, the thought that, when it came, it would be speedy, was a reason for more earnest work while there was time. It is good for us to keep the thought of our approaching death in continual remembrance, to accustom ourselves to reflect calmly and thoughtfully upon it. Such meditation throws a clear light upon the solemn meaning of our earthly life, on the deep importance of finishing the work which God has given us to do. Sometimes we can do that work all the better when the shadow of approaching death is falling upon us. Our testimony seems more real, deeper, and more convincing, when it comes from men who are on the point of departure, whose immediate future is in the world beyond the grave. The thought of coming death will make true Christians all the more eager to work for God; they will pray that Christ may be magnified in them, whether it be by life or by death; they will pray for a holy, peaceful death, not only for their own sakes, but also that others, seeing how Christian men can die, may be led to follow their faith. They will work for the salvation of souls even on their death-bed, and they will do what lies in their power to leave behind them a legacy of holy example and holy memories, or, it may be, of holy writings, which may benefit those who remain. To such holy souls death is a departure, an exodus, out of a life of sorrows into the land of promise, the heavenly Canaan. The Lord who died for them is with them when they die; he accomplished his decease at Jerusalem for them. His death hath destroyed the power of the king of terrors, and taken away the sting of death; his death was a departure out of humiliation into glory. He told Peter once that he could not follow whither he was going then, but that he should follow him afterwards. And so now it is his will that all those whom the Father hath given him should be with him where he is.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. *They are not fables.* There were many strange stories current, some among Jews, some among Gentiles; there were many legends, many myths. But the gospel history stands apart from all these in its unimpeachable truthfulness. It contains many wonderful works of power, many wonders of grace; it announces the future advent of our Saviour Jesus Christ. But all these are related with a simplicity which has the stamp of truth. The gospel speaks to us as with a voice from heaven; it awakens echoes in our hearts; it brings with it its own evidence. 2. *They have the testimony of eye-witnesses.* There were many eye-witnesses of the Lord's life and works—five hundred brethren at once had seen him after he was risen from the dead. But there were three who had received an august initiation into the holiest mysteries, who had been eye-witnesses of his majesty when the splendour of the Divine glory flashed through the veil of human flesh, and saints long ago departed from the world came to do him homage, desiring, as the blessed angels desire, to look into the mysteries of redemption, and to understand something of the blessed and awful meaning of his most precious death. 3. *The direct testimony of God the Father.* On the day of the Transfiguration sure and irresistible proof of the Saviour's Divine majesty was vouchsafed to eye and ear alike. That radiant glory came from God the Father; the highly favoured three had then a foretaste of the glorious vision which the blessed shall behold in heaven according to the Saviour's prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be

with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." That great sight was to prepare them for the awful agony that was to follow. God gives from time to time glimpses of the blessedness of heaven to his saints; the Saviour manifests himself to his chosen as he doth not unto the world. And sometimes those who are most highly favoured with the vision of his love are called to be in a special manner partakers of his suffering, to bear about with them in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. But the three apostles did not only behold the glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father; a further heavenly witness was vouchsafed. A voice uttered by the excellent glory was borne out of the bright cloud to the transfigured Lord; it was borne along towards him, as if riding on the cherubim, flying on the wings of the wind; it came like a living thing, a strange startling reality, a voice such as no other man had heard except the holy Baptist. Borne along in majestic course, it came to the transfigured Jesus, and recognized him as the eternal Son. "This is my Son, my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased." None other than God the Father could have uttered that voice; the emphatic *I* (ἐγώ) announced his presence. He was well pleased in the adorable Son; ever from all eternity had the love of the Father beamed upon the everlasting Son of God. Now, in his incarnation, in his voluntary humiliation, the Father was well pleased; he had declared his good pleasure at the baptism, he declared it again at the Transfiguration. The Lord Jesus might he despised and rejected of men; he was owned by the Lord God Omnipotent as the Son of God most holy. And surely, as God was well pleased in him who humbled himself and became obedient even unto death, so he is well pleased now with those to whom the only begotten Son hath given power to become the children of God, when they abase themselves, when they learn of the Lord Christ humility and submission of will, and pray in his holy words, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." The chosen three heard that august voice as it was borne from heaven; they heard it, as the emphatic *ἑαυτοῖς* signifies, themselves, with their own ears; there was no room for doubt, no possibility of error. The voice was borne from heaven; it was borne to Christ; the three chosen witnesses heard it, as they were with him in the holy mount. We have their testimony, the testimony of eye-witnesses, who declare unto us that which they saw and heard. The witnesses were men whose truthfulness could not be impeached. They had nothing to gain in this world, but everything to lose; all were persecuted, two of them suffered the death of martyrdom. We may well thank God for the strength and certainty of the evidence of Christianity. 4. *The testimony of prophecy.* The Law and the prophets testified of Christ. The Lord himself appealed to that testimony when, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded the things concerning himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). All the varied testimony of all the prophets converges in the Person of Christ, and finds its fulfilment there. No other deliverer has arisen answering to ancient prediction; in the Lord Christ only meet all the voices of the prophets. Many recognized the power of this testimony in apostolical times: the eunuch who was reading the great prophecy of Isaiah when Philip drew near to his chariot; the multitudes who listened to the apostles as they persuaded them out of the prophets, witnessing, as they did again and again, that "all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." This testimony of the prophets, so convincing in itself, so especially weighty and sacred to Hebrew believers, was rendered surer by the most august and authoritative of all testimonies, the direct testimony of God the Father, given in the voice that was borne from heaven. None who heard that voice could entertain one moment's doubt that the Lord Jesus was indeed he "of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write." 5. *The value and use of prophecy.* It is good to give heed to prophecy, to study the prophetic Word. The external evidences of our religion are very helpful to inquirers after truth; ancient prophecy is an important factor of those external evidences. It is like a lamp that shineth in a dark place. The world is a dark dreary place; we could not find the strait path and narrow way that leadeth unto life without the guiding light of the holy Word of God. The heart is a dark place, gloomy, dry, and squalid, when it is not illumined by the Holy Spirit of God. In that dark place the light of prophecy shineth. It guided the steps of many an anxious inquirer in the early days of Christianity; doubtless the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah led many thoughtful men, besides the

Ethiopian eunuch, to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That chapter, like so much more of Old Testament prophecy, appeals to the deepest yearnings of the awakening heart, to the sense of sin, the feeling of need, the longing for atonement, the reaching forth of the soul for a personal Saviour. Prophecy is a "burning and a shining light," as John the Baptist was; his office was to lead men to Christ, to say, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Such is the office of prophecy. Its guiding lamp is precious; but more precious far to the individual soul is the revealed presence of that Saviour of whom all prophecy speaks. His presence, manifested according to his promise into the Christian heart, is the dawn of the spiritual day. He is the Day-star, the Light-bringer; for he is the Light, the Light of the world. Precious above all price is the clear brightness of that holy day; precious, therefore, is prophecy, as it guides us onward through the encircling gloom till the dawning of the day, and the rising of the Bright and Morning Star. And we shall value the guidance of prophecy the more when we consider the source from which it comes. The prophecies of Holy Scripture are not the result of human thought. The prophet did not himself unravel the mysteries of the future. It was not Joseph who interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, or Daniel who interpreted the visions of Nebuchadnezzar. It was not for the prophet to interpret the revelation presented to himself. Interpretation as well as vision comes from God. "It is not in me," said Joseph: "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," said Daniel to the king. Prophecy came from heaven, like the voice which spake at the Transfiguration; it was borne to the prophet, as that voice was borne to the Lord. The holy men who uttered the prophecies were borne along by the Holy Spirit of God. God who spake at the Transfiguration is the God who spake by the prophets. Both forms of testimony come from him; both are sure and certain; the one makes the other surer.

LESSONS. 1. St. Peter looked forward calmly to the approach of death; we should learn to do the like. He regarded the nearness of death as an incentive to earnest work; we should follow his example. 2. The external evidence of our religion is sure; we have the testimony of eye-witnesses, who themselves had the testimony of God. We have the testimony of prophets who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. 3. But the surest evidence to each individual soul is the manifestation of Christ, the Day-star, rising in the heart. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Peter's primacy.* We have, in the career and the fame of St. Peter, an extraordinary instance of a man rising from obscurity to renown. A Galilean fisherman became the leader of the college of apostles, and has for centuries been acknowledged by the whole of Christendom as one of its inspired teachers and counsellors; whilst by a great part of Christendom Peter has been regarded as the chief human head and ruler of the Church, first in his own person, and afterwards by those considered to be his successors. It is certainly very remarkable in how very many respects Peter stands first among our Lord's apostles. Confining ourselves to the scriptural narrative, disregarding all traditions, and giving no heed to superstitious claims, we cannot but admit the many evidences of St. Peter's primacy.

I. PETER WAS THE FIRST AMONG THE LITTLE GROUP OF CHOSEN DISCIPLES ADMITTED TO WITNESS CHRIST'S GLORY. Peter was the first-mentioned of the three who saw the transfigured Son of man upon the holy mount; and it was he who, as the spokesman of the others, exclaimed, "It is good for us to be here."

II. PETER OCCUPIED THE SAME POSITION AMONGST THOSE CHOSEN TO TESTIFY OF THE SAVIOUR'S HUMILIATION AND AGONY. In the garden of Gethsemane, Simon was one of the same band of three whom Jesus kept near to himself; and his prominent action in his Master's defence is proof of his admitted leadership.

III. PETER WAS THE FIRST OF THE APOSTLES TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE LORD'S MESSIAHSHIP AND DIVINITY. It was his exclamation, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," which called forth the Lord's approval and original blessing, "Blessed art thou, Simon," etc.

IV. PETER WAS THE FIRST TO PROCLAIM THE SAVIOUR'S RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. Paul himself records that the risen Redeemer first appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. "The Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon,"—such were the joyful tidings which circulated among the little company during the resurrection-day.

V. PETER WAS THE FIRST, AFTER THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO HIS FELLOW-MEN. Upon the Day of Pentecost he stood up, and in the name of the brethren published to the multitude the explanation of the marvellous events of that day. As the chief speaker and representative of the Church, he proclaimed, not only the facts of the Resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit, but pardon and salvation through the redemption which Christ had wrought.

VI. PETER WAS THE FIRST AMONG CHRISTIAN CONFESSORS TO ENDURE AND TO DEFY THE RAGE OF THE PERSECUTOR. The storm broke upon the loftiest oak of the forest. Peter was naturally selected by the enemies of the faith as its most public and powerful representative, that he might be made to feel their power. But his attitude and language proved that he was conscious of the presence and support of One mightier than all those who were opposed to him.

VII. PETER WAS THE FIRST AMONG THE TWELVE TO WELCOME BELIEVING GENTILES INTO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. The case of Cornelius, the circumstances attending the "Council of Jerusalem," are sufficient proof of this. Although the "apostle of the circumcision," it is plain that Peter was in fullest sympathy with that Divine movement of expansiveness which was to represent Christianity as the religion for mankind, and Christ as the Saviour of the world.

VIII. PETER WAS THE FIRST CONCERNING WHOM IT WAS FORETOLD THAT HE SHOULD SUFFER A DEATH OF MARTYRDOM FOR THE LORD WHOM HE LOVED. Jesus himself forewarned him of the fate which was before him, and even signified what death he should die. He who counted it an honour to fulfil his Lord's will, and to proclaim his Lord's grace and love, when the time came, counted it a joy to share his Master's reproach and to bear his Master's cross.—J. R. T.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The bounty of God.* The lot of the primitive Christians whom the apostles addressed in their spoken and written utterances must, for the most part, have appeared to ordinary observers far from desirable. Not only were they drawn from the lowly and unconsidered classes of society, but they often had much to endure as a consequence of their reception of the gospel and their fidelity to Christ. Especially did they meet with the contempt of the great, on account of their adhesion to what the world deemed an unreasonable superstition, and with the hostility, now of a mob, and again of a governor, who attacked them with the weapons of persecution. Yet these primitive Christians took an independent view of their own position, and judged themselves very differently from the world's judgment. They were taught by their inspired instructors and counsellors—as by St. Peter in this passage—to consider themselves objects of the Divine favour, recipients of the Divine bounty—nay, even partakers of the Divine life. Such an appreciation of their position and spiritual endowments might be deemed by their unenlightened and worldly neighbours mere fanaticism. But events proved that the Church of Christ was under no illusion in cherishing a profound conviction that all its true members were enriched with incomparable wealth, and called to a glorious destiny. High thoughts of privilege prepared for deeds of daring and of endurance; and the world which could not comprehend the Church's faith and claims was constrained to feel and to acknowledge the Church's power.

I. THE DIVINE GIVER. 1. His *boundless power* accounts for the plenitude and variety of God's bestowments upon his people. If we speak of him as "the Almighty," when considering his material creation and all its illimitable extent, and its teeming wonders, much more evidently is such an appellation justified when we turn to regard those higher manifestations of creative energy which are furnished in transformations wrought in the individual and the social life of man.

"'Twas great to speak a world from nought,
'Twas greater to redeem."

2. His *wonderful generosity.* The endowments of the Church are said to be "granted"

or "given." And this must have been so; for they are altogether beyond human acquirement, whilst nothing that man could do could earn such blessings. And when the sinfulness of the whole race of men is considered, the generosity which was expressed in the bestowment of such gifts upon such recipients must be acknowledged to be wonderful indeed.

II. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT. There are two parties to every gift, and in order to appreciate it, it is necessary to look at the gift in relation to him who gives and to those who receive. 1. Looked at on their Divine side, these gifts are the fulfilment of "promises precious and exceeding great." It would be absurd and sinful to suppose that what God bestows upon his creatures is flung to them in a momentary and capricious fit of liberality. As a matter of fact, from the earliest periods of human history, from the time of man's "fall," the revelation of God had been one intended to inspire hope of salvation; and the primæval promise had been renewed, both by language and by symbol, from age to age. These promises might not always be fully understood, clear as they are to us when we read them in the light of their fulfilment. But they were glorious with a glory exceeding any human assurances of help and blessing. And the purport of them all was to reveal a Divine intention to provide spiritual blessings—knowledge, deliverance, and life—for a needy and a sinful race. Great as were the promises, the fulfilment was greater still. A Saviour was promised, and in the fulness of time a Saviour came; the incarnation and advent of Christ were the accomplishment of the predictions and the purposes of eternal wisdom and eternal love. The diffusion of the Spirit throughout a society which needed enlightenment and healing and fertilization was the accomplishment of some of the most striking and poetical prophecies of Old Testament Scripture. 2. Looked at on their human side, these Divine gifts include "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." A marvellously comprehensive description! Spiritual death and ungodliness prevailed in the world. And there was no human means by which their power could be destroyed and the salvation of men secured. But in the fulfilment of the Divine promises, in the mediatorial dispensation, in the coming of the Son of God, and of the Spirit of life and holiness, the amplest provision was made for the highest and immortal welfare of men. We may compare this declaration with the reasoning of Paul, who argues that he who spared not his Son, but gave him up for us all, will with him also freely give us all things.

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE DIVINE GIFT IS APPRECIATED BY THE HUMAN RECIPIENT. 1. There is a call, a summons, an invitation of God. Very fine, very elevating and encouraging, is St. Peter's representation of the method adopted by Divine wisdom to secure that the gift shall not be lost. It is "by his own glory and virtue" that God calls us to salvation, *i.e.* by an exhibition of his natural and moral attributes eminently fitted to reveal himself to our hearts, and to produce upon those hearts a deep impression, winning them to faith, devotion, gratitude, and love. The beginning of good must be, and is, a movement on the part of the Almighty Ruler and Saviour. 2. There is a consequent "knowledge" of our redeeming God, which the revelation makes possible to us, furnishing us with an object of knowledge. Such teaching as this is directly opposed to the agnosticism with which so many are content. Our Lord himself, in his intercessory prayer, laid the greatest stress upon the knowledge of himself and of the Father. Doubtless this is a knowledge of a higher kind than is our knowledge of nature; and it is far more powerful to affect the character, to mould the life. Yet it is knowledge which is within the reach of the lowliest and the least cultured. To know God in Christ is life eternal.—J. R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Partakers of a Divine nature.* Readers of classic literature are aware that the cultivated pagans of antiquity broke down the distinction between the human and the Divine, by representing their emperors and other great men as taken after death into the rank of the gods. But this apotheosis was rather an exaltation in rank than an assimilation to, an incorporation in, a higher moral nature. The religion of Christ, on the other hand, evinces its immeasurable superiority to these human religions by representing the participation in the Divine as moral, and by holding out the prospect, not merely to a limited class, but to all who receive the gospel.

I. THE RESPECTS IN WHICH MAN MAY SHARE THE NATURE OF GOD. 1. This partaking is not in the natural attributes of Deity, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and

omniscience, which are incommunicable. 2. But in the moral attributes. Of these may be especially mentioned holiness, or the disposition and habit of loving and doing all things that are just and pure; and love, or the disposition and habit of seeking the true and highest well-being of all whom it is possible to benefit. It is a proof of the elevated conception of God which Christianity has introduced into the world, that these Divine attributes should occur to the mind as those most worthy of our admiration and imitation. And Christians must feel at once that, if these are wanting to the character, it is out of the question to pretend to trace assimilation to the nature of our holy and loving God.

II. THE CONSTITUTION IN VIRTUE OF WHICH MAN MAY SHARE THE NATURE OF GOD.

1. The human constitution is in complete contrast with that of the inferior animals, which may in their life carry out the purposes of God, but can only do this blindly and unintelligently. It is, says Kant, the prerogative of an intelligent being to act, not merely according to law, but according to the representation of law; i.e. to conceive, adopt, and voluntarily obey, the law. 2. Thus it is that man is endowed with a nature capable, through God's mercy, of acquiring the moral nature of his Divine Maker and Lord. Constituted as he is, fashioned in the likeness of God (however that likeness has been marred by sin), man can, under heavenly influences, perceive the excellence of the moral attributes of his God, can admire and can aspire to them, can resolve and endeavour to participate in and acquire them.

III. THE PROVISION MADE WHEREBY THIS POSSIBILITY MAY BECOME ACTUAL. It is not to be supposed that, merely by aspiring, a man can share the nature of God, any more than by merely desiring to fly he can raise himself into the air and cleave it as with wings. An interposition of a supernatural character is necessary. 1. A condition and means by which this end may be secured is deliverance by the redemption of Christ from the corruption of the world. There is no harmony between the lusts of the world and the flesh, and the life of God. The Redeemer came in order to set men free from the power which debases and degrades—in order, as St. Peter says in the context, to enable men to escape from the corruption that is in the world by lust. And experience has shown that the mediatorial grace of Christ is able to effect what do human power can bring to pass. 2. The renewal and purification which are the work of the Holy Spirit of God are the moral power by which the participation in question is actually accomplished. He brings the life of the Eternal into our human nature, and pours that life through the whole being of the believing and grateful disciple of Christ, so that he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

IV. THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE DIVINE NATURE. 1. A Divine nature involves a Divine life. This is not a merely sentimental, or even a merely mystical and transcendental, change; on the contrary, it is a change actual, discernible, and progressive; a change by which its Divine Author is glorified. 2. A Divine nature involves an immortal life of blessedness. To live in God is to live in the fulness of joy, and to live thus for ever.—J. R. T.

Vers. 16—18.—*Witness to Christ.* The Divine Saviour was the theme of apostolic preaching. They, whom he himself commissioned for the purpose, published the tidings of their Lord's first advent as the object of human faith, and of his second and future advent as the object of human hope. Thus the "power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ" was the great thought that inspired the apostles' minds, and animated them in their labours. And it was most natural and wise that, for their own sake and for the sake of their hearers and readers, they should ever keep before their hearts, and should often mention in their discourse, those great facts concerning the Master upon which their new life and their new work were based. This accounts for the reference in this passage to the marvellous scene of Christ's Transfiguration.

I. THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER TO THE SON. On three occasions during our Lord's earthly ministry was the silence of heaven broken, and audible testimony borne by the Eternal to the "Son of his love." Of these occasions the Transfiguration was the most glorious and impressive. It was more than a majestic scene; it was an appeal to human intelligence and devoutness. 1. There was a voice from heaven. God chose an avenue which he himself had designed and fashioned, in order to reach the minds and hearts of men. 2. Expressed by this voice was the Father's personal relationship of affection

towards Jesus. In his humiliation our Lord was acknowledged as the "beloved Son." 3. Witness was also borne to the complacency with which the Father regarded the Son, as fulfilling his will in the ministry and mediation he had undertaken. 4. The Transfiguration was justly regarded by the apostles as a bestowal upon their Lord of "honour and glory." Not that to them the outward splendour was everything; doubtless it was the symbol of a spiritual glory.

II. THE WITNESS OF THE DISCIPLES TO THEIR MASTER. This was a matter of fact, and is to us matter of history. Place and time are duly specified. 1. The disciples, who were serious and credible men, declared themselves to be eye-witnesses of Christ's majesty. 2. And ear-witnesses of the Divine attestation borne to him. 3. They expressly asserted that in this matter they were neither deceivers nor deceived. And, indeed, the case of their being either the one or the other is utterly incredible, is scarcely to be constructed by the imagination. They were not following cunningly devised fables; neither did they invent the incidents, nor did they adopt the inventions of others. In accepting the gospel narrative we build upon a sure foundation of fact.

III. THE PRACTICAL INFERENCE TO BE DRAWN BY THOSE WHO RECEIVE THIS TWO-FOLD WITNESS. Human nature is such that it is not possible for us to believe such facts as those which St. Peter here records, and not be affected by such belief in our spirit and our conduct. 1. As regards Jesus himself, whosoever receives the gospel is constrained to confess his power, presence, and coming. 2. As regards himself, he is bound to trust, love, honour, and serve the Saviour and Lord, who is thus made known to his spiritual nature by the revelation of the eternal Father, and by the testimony of his believing and devoted followers and apostles.—J. R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The lamp and the dawn.* Notwithstanding Peter's personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, and the abundant evidence which had come before him, during Christ's ministry, of his Master's duty and authority, Peter was far from disparaging the value of those attestations to the authority and sway of the Messiah-Prince to be found in the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

I. THE NIGHT OF TIME. The world is, apart from special illumination from above, a dark place. The human race, in this condition of being, are like wanderers in midnight gloom. Ignorance of what it most concerns us to know, sinful habits which cloud the reason and even corrupt the conscience, hopelessness as to the future beyond this brief mortal existence,—such are the elements of moral darkness. The gloom is not unrelieved, but it is real and undeniable.

II. THE LAMP OF REVELATION. The darkness of man's moral condition has been to some extent dispelled and scattered by the light which God himself has kindled in the minds of holy and devout men, and which they have shed upon their fellow-mortals' path. In them has been verified the grand saying of the poet—

"Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves."

The prophets, whose writings form a large part of the sacred volume, have rendered a service to humanity which in our day is inadequately acknowledged. Certainly they have introduced into human thinking and literature many of our sublimest conceptions of God, of morality, of society. And certainly they have done much to sustain the faith of men in a Divine rule, and to inspire the hope of men in a glorious future for the moral universe. Not only did they reveal the coming of the King whose way to empire should be through suffering and death; they revealed the prospect of a kingdom which has yet to be realized, and which is to secure the highest welfare of man and to exhibit the eternal glory of God.

III. THE DAYBREAK OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM. The lamp is well enough for the night; but how welcome and how precious to the watcher or the traveller is the break of day! The day-star, the light-bringer, shines with rays of lustrous promise. Then the grey dawn appears in the east, and reddens as the sunrise approaches. Soon the sun rises in his strength and floods the world with light. The process is a picture of what happens in the spiritual history of humanity. 1. *What* the day is deserves to be considered. It is the day of knowledge, of holiness, of hope. Through the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, they who sometime were darkness are now light

in the Lord. 2. *Where the day shines* is also matter of great interest. To St. Peter the glory of noontide splendour was still in the future. Certain it is that the kingdom of Christ, like the path of the just, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." What we have hitherto seen has been the beauty and the promise of the morning. The full noontide splendour has yet to be revealed. But in indulging bright hopes for the world, for the destiny of our redeemed and regenerated humanity, let us not lose sight of the internal, the spiritual, the personal experience of enlightenment. St. Peter's hope was that "in your hearts" this day should dawn, and this day-star arise. We have to look not only without, but *within*. If the heart be dark as a cavern secluded in forest depths from every ray of the sun in heaven, of what avail for us is it that the world is bathed in spiritual lustre?

APPLICATION. 1. Take heed to the lamp of prophecy, which does not cease to shine, and which is needed by every traveller through the night of time, to direct his feet into the paths of safety, wisdom, and peace. 2. Hail the promise of the morning, and look forward to the spiritual and perfect day. Of times and seasons we know but little; but this we know—"The Lord is at hand;" "The morning cometh." "Lift up, then, your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."—J. R. T.

Ver. 21.—*God's voice in the Bible*. The reference here is, of course, to Old Testament Scripture; but there is no reason for confining this assertion to any portion of Holy Writ. The Bible, as a whole, is a Divine utterance—Divine in its purpose, and Divine in its authority. A spiritual impulse moved the writers, and their speech accordingly was in reality the voice of God. This Divinity of meaning is discernible in the aim of the Scriptures.

I. THE BIBLE TEACHES MAN WHAT HE IS. 1. Everywhere in Scripture man is represented as a *moral, spiritual, and accountable being*. Other literature, properly enough, deals with man under other aspects of his nature—represents him as susceptible of emotions incidental to human relationships, as grief and joy, fear and hope; as capable of exertion, of self-denial, with a view to obtaining earthly objects. But every careful and discerning reader of Scripture feels that in every book of the volume human nature is depicted as *moral*, as affected, on the one hand, by temptation to a lower life, and, on the other hand, by stimulus and encouragement to a higher life; as capable of obedience and holiness, or of transgression and ungovernableness. Never is man represented by the inspired writers as a mere animal, as a sentient nature moved, like the brutes, only by instinct and appetite. On the contrary, he is represented as akin to God, as dependent upon God, as responsible to God. 2. Everywhere in Scripture man is convicted of being *sinful and guilty* in character and habit. Such a state is, indeed, a violation of his original and proper nature; but the fact of human sinfulness cannot be concealed or palliated without injustice and flattery. It is this fact which accounts for very much of the contents of the sacred volume. This is the explanation of the Law, which is not for the righteous, but for sinners; and of the ceremonies and sacrifices of the old covenant, which symbolically set forth the impurity and depravity of man's heart and life. In this light we must read the history of the Hebrew nation, which occupies so large a part of the Old Testament. It is a record of Israel's faults, defections, and apostasy; and it is a record also of God's displeasure with sin, embodied in acts of chastisement, and especially in the afflictions which repeatedly befell the nation as a whole. Here, too, is the explanation of the fact that Scripture contains so many biographies of bad men, and of good men who have been tempted and have fallen into sin. The intention is to exhibit human frailties and errors, and to impress upon the mind of every reader the undeniable power and curse of sin. It would appear that the same purpose is subserved by the descriptions of the diseased and the demoniacs, which abound in the narratives of the evangelists.

II. THE BIBLE TEACHES MAN WHO GOD IS. The profound need and the pressing urgency and importance of such knowledge must be admitted by all, and are felt by those whose spiritual instincts are aroused to activity. And in nothing is the Bible more manifestly its own witness and evidence than in its incomparable and sublime revelation of God. 1. In Scripture the *Personality* of the living God pervades every book. Not only is there no pantheism and no polytheism; there is a pure and impressive theism throughout the sacred volume. Even those who deny to the Bible the character of a

supernatural revelation, acknowledge the debt of humanity to the representation of monotheism given by the Hebrew prophets and apostles. 2. *The righteous government and the holy character* of the Eternal are set forth in the Bible, not only by means of statements, but by means of lessons conveyed in the form of history. His hatred of sin, in both private and public life, is effectively declared in his righteous judgments. His moral government is a great reality. In the Scriptures, the Divine Ruler is never exhibited as either indifferent to moral distinctions or capricious in his treatment of moral agents. None who acknowledges the authority of the Bible can expect to escape the eye or to evade the judgment of the righteous Governor. 3. *God's interest in man*, and his design for man's welfare, are portrayed in the Bible, as in no other professedly sacred and inspired book, and indeed as nowhere else in literature. From the opening pages of Genesis, where God is represented as walking and as speaking with men in the garden, down to the epoch of redemption, when "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," the Scriptures are full of evidence of the Divine interest in man's welfare. Whilst exhibiting the majestic dignity of the Eternal, in such a way as to call forth our reverence, the sacred volume beyond anything else makes God near to us, and leads us to feel that he is round about us in all our ways. 4. Especially does the Bible impress upon the mind of the reader the *redemptive purposes* of the Supreme; it shows him to be man's *Saviour*. His character is set forth as compassionate and merciful, and he is represented as using the means to give effect to his gracious intentions towards sinful man. (1) In the Old Testament history we have proofs of this, especially in the deliverance of Israel from the bondage in Egypt, and in the restoration of Israel from the captivity in the East. These great events were both manifestations of God's mercy towards a nation, and prophetic anticipations of the greater deliverance in the future. (2) For the New Testament is undoubtedly the fulfilment of the Old. What was done politically for a people was in Christ done morally and actually for the race. The Gospels and Epistles set forth before us Jesus as the Son of God and as the Saviour of mankind. "He that hath seen me," said Christ, "hath seen the Father;" and this has respect, not simply to his peerless character, but also to the mighty power and to the gracious purposes to which the world is indebted for the temporal deliverance and for the eternal hope.—J. R. T.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Increase of spiritual life dependent on the knowledge of God.* Our text strikes the key-note of the Epistle—the need of watchfulness against error. Scripture demands a clear knowledge of revealed truth. On this the maintenance of spiritual life depends; to swerve from Divine truth is to suffer spiritual loss.

I. A GREAT INCREASE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSING IS POSSIBLE TO THE BELIEVER. "Grace and peace" we may take as including all spiritual good. Grace is God's part therein; peace is man's. God's attitude towards us is grace; our attitude towards him, for that is the end of righteousness, is to be peace. Between these two lies all that pertains to life and godliness. And the apostle says this may be multiplied to the Christian. 1. *Because of the great capacity of his nature.* The life imparted in regeneration has almost unlimited possibilities; it is Heaven's germ, from which will be developed the pure and perfect spirit which will gaze on the face of God, and reflect his glory. The believer is joint-heir with Christ; where Christ is, he is to be. Heaven will be a constant advance into the character of God; that is the capacity of spiritual life in the soul, "filled with all the fulness of God." 2. *Because God has already given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* The power which God is prepared to manifest towards his people is equal to that which raised Christ from the helplessness of the grave to the supreme dominion of the universe. And in what way, but in giving us all things that pertain to life and godliness? Who can enumerate what is included in that "all things"? We do not always realize that with Christ God has already "freely given us all things." True, he holds them still, but it is on our behalf. 3. *Because what we receive is through the Divine glory and virtue.* In the Revised Version the third verse reads thus: "He hath called us by his own glory and virtue;" and that is the ground of our hopes, and triumphs over our sense of ill desert. God's glory is his mercy, and it is set free to exercise itself by Christ in the atonement; and he finds there the reason why he should enrich us.

II. THIS INCREASE OF BLESSING DEPENDS ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. God does

not give us mature spiritual blessings, but rather supplies us with the means of acquiring them. When we can do anything to secure the answer to our prayers, God gives the answer by blessing our own efforts, and, apart from the effort, the answer does not come. He will not give spiritual enrichment to spiritual inaction. In answer to our prayers for grace and peace to be multiplied, God shows us how we may have it. 1. *The means of spiritual increase is the knowledge of himself.* Scripture invariably makes spiritual good to rest on the knowledge of God. For instance: Security—"They have escaped the corruptions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Peace—"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." Strength—"The people that do know their God shall be strong." Obedience—"Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Love—"He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love." Our Lord Jesus Christ sums it up in one sentence, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." But there is a difference between knowing about God, and knowing God, and the difference is vital; the one knowledge is fruitful, the other barren. There is a natural connection between the increase of knowledge and the increase of grace. 2. *Knowledge quickens desire.* We cannot know God without longing to possess more of him and of what he has to give; and that longing means prayer for more, which will be answered, and effort for more, which will be successful. 3. *Knowledge increases faith.* Faith being the hand by which we appropriate and so possess. Why do we not take God as our own, with a confidence nothing can shake? To a great extent because we do not know him—how real he is, how vast his love, how infinitely trustworthy his nature. If we only knew more of him, we should hold him in the embrace of a strong, restful assurance. 4. *Knowledge tends to participation.* Personal acquaintance with God must have incalculable results. We should have a new power constraining us to righteousness. The grace and peace of his own nature would reflect themselves in us.

III. THIS INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE THE BELIEVER'S AIM. The difference in spiritual stature comes from different degrees of spiritual knowledge: then how can we know God better? 1. *Greater knowledge is granted as the result of obedience.* Unless God reveal himself, we cannot know him; and he reveals himself to him who lives in his fear. Sin blinds and deafens us; to do wrong is to put ourselves further from the knowledge of God; to do right is to thin the veil that hides him from us. If you would know him, obey him. 2. *Greater knowledge is granted as the fruit of study and fellowship.* It is only in face-to-face communion with God, such as is possible through the teaching of his Word, that we can really know him; therein he speaks to us, and in prayer we speak to him. 3. *Greater knowledge is granted as the end of Divine discipline.* That we may know him is the object of many of our sorrows. Sickness is often God shutting the busy soul up to himself. Trouble is often God showing us how tender a Father he is. Darkness is often God compelling us to look up—

"Darkness revealing worlds of light
We never saw by day."

Presently the need of discipline will be ended, and from knowing God in part, we shall enter into his presence.—C. N.

Ver. 4.—*The sanctifying power of the promises.* The text is a continuation of the two previous verses; indeed, from the second verse to the eleventh is one paragraph. God has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, whereby grace and peace may be multiplied to us, and we may be made partakers of the Divine nature, and have an abundant entrance ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I. THE GREATNESS AND PRECIOUSNESS OF THE WORD OF PROMISE. Three facts determine the worth of promises—the value of the thing promised; the character of the promiser; and the conditions attached to it. And when we apply these to Scripture, and find that its assurances are of wonderful blessing, given by One who cannot fail, and that they require on our part only what the feeblest can fulfil, we understand well why the apostle calls them "exceeding great and precious promises." 1. *The gift promised.*

Scripture does not so much contain promises; it is rather one great promise, God's Word of promise, Christ being the Gift promised. We shall never understand the promises by taking a text here and a text there, but only by pondering the whole volume as the revelation of Jesus; only thus can we have a true idea of the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of what God assures us of in his beloved Son. Look at him in any aspect, and, like the glittering facets of a precious stone, promises gleam on us from him at every point. (1) *Think, for instance, of the glory of his Person.* The goodness, the grace, the majesty, the tenderness, the truth, embodied in him; and if he is ours (as he is), this alone is full of promise. (2) *The revelation of God which he is.* He shows us God, so holy that he cannot pass by sin without atonement, though that atonement involved the sacrifice of himself. He shows us too the heart of God, telling us, when we pray, to say, "Our Father." Why, that one sentence involves the promise of all we need, all that God can give. (3) *The greatness of his work.* He undertakes to be our Saviour in the threefold capacity of Prophet, Priest, and King; and his undertaking these functions is the assurance that he will fulfil them. (4) *The declaration of his will.* Every purpose of Christ is a promise; it is Christ saying, "I will." And so also every command carries a promise of all grace needed for obedience to it. (5) *The closeness of his relationship with his people.* He, their Life and Head, and so having nothing which they shall not share. 2. *The character of the Promiser.* Each of God's promises is the expression of his loving-kindness to sinful men, and if his mercy could not rest till he had given them, it cannot rest till he has fulfilled them; going on giving, and giving, and giving, till his beloved can receive no more. (1) *He is unchanging.* "I, the Lord, change not." (2) *He is able to fulfil his will.* Omnipotence is behind each promise. "What he hath promised he is able also to perform." (3) *In every promise his honour is pledged.* "It is impossible for God to lie." "He is faithful that hath promised." Read the promises, then, and scatter doubt by asking, "Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it?" 3. *The conditions attached to the promise.* The only conditions are—conscious need of the thing promised, and trust that for the Promiser's own sake it will be given. Need and trust are our capacity for receiving.

II. THE SANCTIFYING POWER OF THE PROMISES. The promises deliver us from the world's corruption, and work in us the image of God. Sanctification is something "put off" and something "put on." The "old man" is "put off," and the "new man" is "put on;" and this is said here to be effected by the promises, or by the Word of promise. 1. *The Word of promise conveys the knowledge of what we may have.* From the heights of this sacred book all things lie beneath us, stretching away like a vast landscape into the dim horizon beyond which human sight cannot follow; and as we hear a voice saying, "All things are yours," surely nothing can deliver us from the bondage of the world as that can. One affection is only destroyed by another. Let the soul consciously possess better, and, depend upon it, it will turn away from the best that this world can give. 2. *The Word of promise imparts the faith by which we receive from God.* "Partakers of the Divine nature." Of how much of it? Of so much as exhausts the promise. "That ye might be filled unto all the fulness of God." Why, then, do we not receive it in that measure? Because God can only give according to the measure of our faith. Now, faith depends on the promises, it feeds on them, and thereby the soul's capacity to receive increases. 3. *The Word of promise inspires the strength by which we conquer Satan.* His effort is to make us doubt; that was his aim with Christ. He would take us back to the old bondage, and weaken the faith which holds us to God. Have we not often felt how doubt closes the heart to the incoming of the Divine nature? we can fight no more, but are led easy captives. Satan can deprive us of all, if he can only get us to doubt. Now, against that assault the promises are our refuge. God is in them; they are the utterances of his lips, the purpose of his heart; his resources and perfections are pledged to their fulfilment; there is perfect safety in trusting them; by them we can defy Satan and the powers of darkness. Between the bondage of corruption and the liberty of participation in the Divine nature is the Divine promise. Trust it, tread it without a fear; it will not give way beneath you, the adversary cannot follow you there, and on the other side is the beginning of heaven.—C. N.

Vers. 5-11.—*Personal diligence needed for sanctification.* The former verses say that God gives the knowledge of himself in the Word of promise, as the means by which

grace and peace are to be multiplied; these verses say, to that must be added by you "all diligence."

I. WE HAVE HERE AN ENUMERATION OF CERTAIN GRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. It begins with "faith" and ends with "love," and between these are two or three words which need attention. Next to "faith," "virtue" is mentioned; but "virtue" includes the whole group of graces, whereas Peter is thinking of something distinct. The classical meaning of the word is "manliness"—courage; so if we paraphrase it thus, we shall probably have the right idea. So with "knowledge," which is a different word to that rendered "knowledge" in the eighth verse, and here refers to "practical knowledge" or "prudence." "Temperance" is literally "self-control," and "godly reverence" is the idea in the word "godliness." "Faith, courage, prudence, self-control, patience, godly reverence, love of the brethren, love,"—that is the list. 1. *These are all subsequent to faith.* Faith is supposed. The Epistle is addressed to those who "have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour;" and these excellences come after faith, and in the Christian have a character of their own, which nature cannot produce, and are, indeed, as much above nature as Jesus was above the sons of men. Many try to be holy without saving faith; it is a useless effort; only from faith can those spiritual graces spring whose crown is love to all. 2. *Every grace needs to be supplemented by another.* No grace can stand alone; the text seems to urge that. The word "add" is the same as in the eleventh verse, where it is translated "minister." Each grace needs to be ministered to by another. There is not one which, if it be alone, will not speedily become an evil. One grace is to wait on, to supplement, to protect, to perfect another. For instance, to faith ministers courage—courage to confess the Christ believed in; to courage ministers prudence, for if courage be not discreet, it is destructive. Beware of being men of one grace. 3. *The believer is not to be contented till he has acquired all the graces.* What a list this is! The leading features of a perfect character; and Scripture gives a plain command to the Christian to acquire these. And nothing can be more assuring than this command, for God does not call us to impossibilities; and he is prepared to supply what is needed for its attainment.

II. WE HAVE HERE A DEMAND FOR DILIGENCE TO POSSESS THESE GRACES. Diligence is the burden of the passage: "Giving all diligence, add;" and in the tenth verse, "Give diligence." 1. *Diligence implies that spiritual increase requires personal effort.* Speedy and spontaneous sanctification is what we should prefer, but that idea is not encouraged in Scripture. It is true growth is the law of life—life naturally increases to maturity, as Peter says, "Grow in grace;" but he also says, "Giving all diligence, add." If we cherish the idea that sanctification is given immediately, as pardon is given, by one surrender of the will, as it is said, this passage ought to disabuse us; it clearly affirms that sanctification is progressive, and demands constant endeavour. 2. *Diligence is encouraged by the fact that God hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* The previous verses are, "His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . . whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises," etc.; when the next clause reads, "And for this very cause" (as the Revised Version has it), "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," and so on, we see what lies behind the diligence, what spurs it on, what sustains it. Sanctification is not human work, as it is sometimes supposed to be, when the need of effort is enforced, as though, redeemed by Christ, we have to sanctify ourselves—it is of God; yet it is through us, into our effort he will inspire his own Divine and victorious energy. 3. *Diligence also involves that the increase of Christian graces comes from the personal culture of each.* If the text were not in Scripture, but simply part of a sermon, it would be said to be mechanical and formal. It is to be feared the prominent features of our Christian character are often merely the result of natural disposition, or early training, or of circumstances beyond our control. Now, this passage claims that we do not leave it to accident what graces we shall have; it lays down a list of what is required of us, and bids us give all diligence to culture each. This is a discriminating, hourly, life-long work.

III. WE HAVE HERE STRONG REASONS FOR THE PUTTING FORTH OF THIS DILIGENCE. Three reasons urged from the eighth verse to the eleventh, and they refer to past, present, and future. 1. *The graces (which are the result of diligence) are the necessary means to*

spiritual wealth. The particular meaning in the eighth verse of the word "in"—"in the knowledge"—is shown in the Revised Version, where it reads, "unto the knowledge," and thus throws great light on the expression. The graces which come from a knowledge of Christ lead to a still greater knowledge of him—that is it. All the care we give to the culture of Christian graces leads, not only to the wealth of possessing them, but to the greater wealth of knowing Christ better. 2. *The graces (which are the result of diligence) are the least that can be expected from one who is purged from his old sins.* "He that lacketh these things is blind, . . . having forgotten that he hath been delivered from his old sins." That takes us back to the cross. It pleads our obligation to Christ, who laid down his life that we might be holy. The assurance of pardoned sin is the strongest stimulus to piety. 3. *These graces are the only ground of assurance of entrance into heaven.* Without them we may well doubt our election of God. Where calling and election are sure, ye shall never fall; but how can we be sure that we are among the called? Only by the fact that that to which they are called is being wrought in us. If we have a title to heaven, the spirit of heaven is already begun. —C. N.

Vers. 12—15.—*The saint's earnest endeavour to enforce spiritual truth.* At the close of Peter's life the corrupt heresies of the second and third centuries were threatened, and against these he would fortify the Church by making them "mindful" of the Word of God. The Church would be strong—strong to resist the encroachments of heresy, if established in the knowledge of God through Scripture. The apostle's work was nearly done, the end of his pilgrimage was in sight, but he could not rest till he had again urged the old theme; and he writes this second letter, which they might keep and read, and thus remember what he had said when he had passed away. The touching earnestness in these words is not so much that of Christ's servant (speaking by the Holy Ghost) as of his Lord, and the lessons it involves come to us with the authority of the throne.

I. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF BEING ESTABLISHED IN DIVINE TRUTH. There are certain fundamental facts which are essential to salvation, and essential to the understanding of the rest; certain great doors, so to speak, without passing through which it is not possible to thread the winding corridors within, and gaze upon the glory of the inner shrine. I understand it to be these whose constant remembrance is here enforced. Earnest research after truth is part of the honour due to the God of truth. It were an error to confine ourselves to one set of truths, and still more to any one aspect of them; yet there are some which are the key-note to the others, and the main channels through which life flows to the believer, and we must be established in them, and we must endeavour to "have these things always in remembrance." "These things are written that we may know;" and not to know them intelligently were fatal, if not to salvation, at least to spiritual peace and strength and hope.

II. THE SAINT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS WITH REGARD TO THOSE HE LOVES. 1. *The apostle recognizes that human teaching is a Divine agency.* God can dispense with human teaching. His Spirit accompanies his Word; though there may be no instrumentality, that Word may be "the power of God unto salvation." But none the less has he made it incumbent on those who know the truth to teach it. Think of this in connection with parental teaching. On parents the primary obligation of teaching their children rests; let them do it day by day, patiently, systematically, prayerfully instructing them in those things which it most concerns them to know. 2: *The apostle recognizes that this must be continued so long as opportunity lasts.* "Ye know these things, and are established in the truth," he says, and yet he will not be negligent to put them always in remembrance; he knows that it is not so much the knowledge as the recollection of truth that is operative. We think that because we know the truth we can dispense with the study of it. That is a great error, and full of evil. It is not the truths that are stored away in the memory which serve us in the battle of life, but those which can be grasped in a moment; they are they which operate on our spirituality and become ceaseless means of grace. That is why we need to study Scripture day by day, if not that we may know it, at least that we may remember it. And if this be true of us, how much more is it true of those we teach—the children! We must sow the same ground again and again if we would reap a harvest. 3. *The apostle recognizes that the*

teaching may abide when the teacher has gone. For the Word is "incorruptible;" the seed we sow has life in itself; and, so far from being dismayed when it springs not up at once, we should remember it is said, "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die;" that "the harvest is the end of the world;" and that, though when we pass hence there is still no life in the hard soil, there is time for us to witness, from another shore, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Life's work continues after life, to many generations; we never know for whom or for what we work. Temptations are resisted to-day, and crises passed, and sorrows borne, through the power of principles enforced long years before by those who are now employed in higher spheres. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Many of us can say, "Amen." May those who come when we are gone, as they hear these words, think of us, and say, "Amen." And that they may, let us say with Peter—We will endeavour that they may be able after our decease to have these things always in remembrance. "We will endeavour," yes, we can only endeavour. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God must give the increase.

III. THIS RESPONSIBILITY INTENSIFIED BY THE SHORTNESS OF ITS OPPORTUNITY. "I will not be negligent . . . knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." 1. *We cannot look calmly at death unless we have a sense of fidelity with regard to this.* Calmness in the prospect of death can only be enjoyed by those who (like Peter, faithful to the end) are conscious that to their utmost they have been faithful to the opportunities of life. The evening of our days will be distressing (Christians though we be) unless we can look up and say (though the work seems poor indeed, and perhaps a failure), "O Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." But we may not even reckon on an evening to our days; our sun may go down while it is yet noon. 2. *Immediate fidelity is demanded, in that death-bed exhortations may be impossible.* "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle," should rather read, "knowing that swiftly—by a sharp, quick stroke." Then what he does he will do quickly. If some of us knew what Christ might tell us, we should find that we also are to die thus swiftly. Have we done our work? Have we pleaded with those we love? Have we taught the children the great things of God's Word? Have we lived remembering that "there is no work, nor device, in the grave whither" we are going? —C. N.

Vers. 16—18.—*Certainty concerning Christ the secret of spiritual earnestness.* The apostle gives the reason for his earnestness in the passage before us, and *certainty* is the key-note of his utterance. He declares he knows what he enforces, that error has not been palmed on him for truth, that his eyes have seen and his ears have heard what he tells. Then our subject is—*Certainty concerning Christ the secret of spiritual earnestness.* Doubt and deadness go together, certainty and vigour; and in an age when doubt is so freely suggested, that it is almost in the air we breathe, and is sometimes thought to be a sign of wisdom, it ought to be useful to us to consider the need and possibility of certainty. It does not follow that certainty can be attained at once, nor that all doubt is to be condemned. Much doubt is temperamental, like that of Thomas (and Thomas was a disciple second to none in fidelity to Jesus), and much, again, means spiritual progress, leading to higher faith and deeper repose; but we need not remain in doubt. There is a reasonable basis for belief, some eternal rock at least, on which we can weather the storm, though mystery lies around us on every side. In this present state of limited vision we may expect this mystery.

I. CHRIST IS THE SUM OF APOSTOLIC TRUTH. About what was the apostle certain? About Christ. He is here enforcing the need of spiritual truth; he is determined to live and die urging this truth, and in our text he sums up what this truth is. It is Christ. And that is equally the testimony of the Old Testament as of the New: what have they to say to us, but Christ? How that simplifies this book! how it shows what we are to come here to learn! One of the stumbling-blocks to the understanding of Scripture is that men come to it to learn what it is not intended to teach. 1. *As Christ is the embodiment of Divine truth, the Bible is the revelation of*

Christ. That is what Peter in effect says here, the sum of the truth he urges—"the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, his Deity and Incarnation, the God-Man. In making Christ known Scripture necessarily touches on other subjects, for he is connected with every part of the Father's will, and he cannot be separated from them; there must be some reference to them, and this may be indistinct, leaving much to be known hereafter. But we may be sure there will be nothing indistinct in the great central theme of the revelation. It would be regeneration to some if they would be content to leave these minor matters unsolved, and, remembering that the object of this record is to make Christ known, would lend their powers to discover the certainty about him, and rest in that. 2. *He is the revelation of the Father.* "Who by searching can find out God?" but in Jesus we have God manifested. "The Word was God," and "the Word was made flesh." The revelation of Christ is the manifestation of the Godhead. 3. *He is the filling up of every human need.* For man's condemnation there is acquittal in him; for his sin there is the possibility of holiness; for his perplexity there is light; for his difficulties there is help; for his sorrows there is infinite love; for his fear of the future there are life and immortality. So perfectly can Christ raise us to the perfection of which our nature is capable, that it is said, "Ye are complete in him." The revelation of Christ is the satisfaction of men. 4. *He is the end we are called to reach.* For what were we made? Apart from him we know not. Do we fulfil our end in the toil and tears, the change and weariness, the fleeting pleasures and the lasting pains of three score years and ten? Is there nothing beyond this—nothing to which this may be but the development, nothing beneath it, whose blessedness shall justify our existence? God replies by revealing Jesus. His life and death and rising again, the work of his ascended life,—they are to raise us to likeness to himself: "We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son." The revelation of Christ is the guide and hope of our being.

II. PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE IS THE GROUND OF CERTAINTY ABOUT CHRIST. Eye-witnesses, ear-witnesses, of what he is, therefore we know;—that is the ground of the apostle's assurance. *There is here the suggestion of doubt concerning what was said of Christ.* If we have sincere doubt about what is essential, it is better to face it and settle it, not to leave it to work its quiet mischief within us, or cast its shadow on our belief, but to look at it steadily, to turn on it the light of reason and truth, and satisfy ourselves that there is nothing in it. Some things it is not essential to know, and from their nature they are unknowable here; but of the mystery in what is essential, there is a solution somewhere, and to it God will not fail to guide the childlike spirit. There are three simple arguments which show it to be incredible that the doctrine of Jesus is a "cunningly devised fable." How could these unlearned men invent a fable surpassingly beyond what the world had ever heard, and so cunningly that for eighteen centuries it has deceived those who have tested it with the eagerness of settling life and death? Then how came this fable they had invented to change their own characters, and enable them to seal their testimony with their blood? Then how is it this fable has proved the regeneration of mankind, has become the world's hope, and is cleaved to with unwavering assurance by growing millions of the race? But notice how Peter meets the suggestion. He does not argue—he rests on what he himself had seen and heard. There was one season he ever remembered, when he was with his Lord in the "holy mount," and there came "such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Our certainty about Christ may have the same ground. At first we must depend on outside testimony for our knowledge of Christ; but when that has done most for us, there is a better assurance possible, personal fellowship with himself, that is the antidote to doubt about him. Let him work his work upon you, and you will smile at the suggestion that the "power and coming of the Lord Jesus" is a "cunningly devised fable."

III. CERTAINTY ABOUT CHRIST THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL EARNESTNESS. Let us have no rest till we come to certainty about our Lord. We may be as certain that he is, and that he is the Saviour of sinners, and the Satisfaction of human needs, as we are of our existence. Then we shall be animated with earnestness in cleaving to him, in living for him; duty no more cold and hard, but joyous service for the Living One we love; the very sorrows that draw us to him tinged with joy; yea, death itself no longer dreaded because we see him waiting for us on the further shore.—C. N.

Vers. 19—21.—*Certainty about Christ the result of giving heed to the Divine Word.* Some to whom the apostle writes might object, that, if personal intercourse be the ground of certainty concerning Christ, Peter may well be certain; but what of them who have had no such personal intercourse? The apostle deals with that in the passage before us. Earnestness about spiritual things due to certainty about Christ is followed here by *certainly about Christ the result of giving heed to the Divine Word.*

I. PERSONAL POSSESSION OF CHRIST IS THE GREAT PROOF OF SPIRITUAL REALITIES. How are we to know that Christ is, that he is the Saviour, the Way to the Father? We have testimony, the testimony of this book, the testimony of those who have come under his saving power, the testimony of what we have seen of the effect of his religion on the world. And we should deem that sufficient in any other matter. But so great are the issues of this, that the soul suggests to itself that in this evidence there may be a flaw; that in spite of it, Jesus and what he can do may be a figment, and it craves evidence which never can be questioned, that it may cast itself on him without a fear. That seems an impossible thing to ask, but it is not—it can be granted. There is a witness to Jesus which no reasoning can shake. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1. *To possess Christ is to know that he is.* I have him, therefore I know he is; he has wrought his work on me, therefore I know what he can do. 2. *To possess Christ is to possess the Revealer.* If he dwells within us, the soul becomes a temple where he unveils his face and reveals his glory. 3. *To possess Christ is to have that which throws light on spiritual things.* We never see Divine love clearly till then, nor the sinfulness of sin, nor the beauty of holiness, nor the sweetness of the will of God, nor the meaning of redemption. Let us not wonder if we are dark till then; it must be dark "until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in our hearts."

II. THE WAY TO POSSESS CHRIST IS BY GIVING HEED TO THE DIVINE WORD. The Day-star had arisen in the hearts of many to whom the apostle wrote. But what of those who would read this letter of whom that was not true—what could they do? For them the morning had not yet come; but they have a Lamp—"the Word of prophecy made more sure . . . as a lamp that shineth in a dark place." Let them take heed to that, and it will bring them to the dawn. "More sure:" more sure than what? The Revised Version shows how it ought to read. The Word of prophecy made "more sure" because it had been fulfilled. Many of the predictions in the Old Testament about Christ were vague and mysterious, but now that they had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, their meaning and truth were apparent; they could now be read and pondered with a confidence not possible before. 1. *Scripture is the revelation of Christ.* He is not to be found in nature, though he is there, and gleams of his glory appear therein on every side; but they are only gleams, not himself. He is not to be known by imagination; he is far beyond man's thought, and to fashion a Christ for ourselves, according to what we think ought to be, is to bow before a god of our own creation. Nor is he to be known by our highest spiritual experiences apart from Scripture. For though it is in communion he makes himself known to us, even that is through the medium of Scripture, and in harmony with what Scripture teaches. We cannot know Christ till we come to Scripture. 2. *To "give heed" to Scripture is to obey and trust him who is revealed therein.* But before we can trust ourselves to Scripture, we must have reasonable evidence that it is trustworthy. We must know on what intelligible ground these books, written by so many writers, are rightly regarded as the Word of God. Well, the Old Testament is as it was in the time of our Lord. He recognized it as the Divine Word, made it the ground of his teaching, declared it the final authority, that "the Scripture cannot be broken." The principle which determines the New Testament is equally simple. Christ said that he had more to say than he said whilst he was with his servants, and that the Spirit of truth should come to guide them into all truth; that Spirit came, and under his instructions the apostles wrote many things. Those books, then, which can be proved to have been written by them, or to have had their sanction,—all such books (but only those) are brought together to form the New Testament, the apostles being the duly authenticated messengers of Christ, of whom he said, "He that heareth you heareth me." The sacred writers impressed their peculiarities on their several productions, but behind them all there was the Divine Mind directing. Sometimes it was only

necessary that they should be guarded from error in relating facts with which they were familiar; sometimes they were instructed to write what they could not fully understand—things far above them, demanding direct illumination; but in any case they were subject to the control and teaching of the Holy Ghost. There is a marvellous unity in the Bible, which shows it to be the product of one Mind; and a marvellous power by which it carries regeneration with it, which shows it to be the work of him who only can re-create. 3. *To obey and trust Christ as here revealed is to come to know him perfectly.* Christ has promised to make himself known to the obedient. He says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: . . . and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

III. THE DIVINE WORD ONLY YIELDS ITS SECRETS TO DIVINE INSPIRATION. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private [literally, 'one's own'] interpretation." Do not go to Scripture attempting to understand it by your own power; make use of it if you are in the dark, but remember beforehand that, as the Holy Ghost inspired men to write it, he must inspire you to understand it. 1. *That explains why human learning and an unteachable spirit cannot understand Scripture.* "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . they are spiritually discerned." 2. *And this suggests the kind of inspiration possible to us now.* God inspires his people still, not indeed to write Scripture, but to understand and obey it. Had he intended to inspire all as he inspired the writers of Scripture, why should he have inspired them to write? Clearly that inspiration was to cease. 3. *But then this just casts us in prayer for spiritual knowledge on the Holy Ghost.* This book is the instrument of the Spirit of God; apart from him it can teach us nothing. Then before we search it, let us bow our heads reverently and say, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law."—C. N.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Divine blessing by human channels.* I. THE TYPE OF MAN BY WHOM BLESSING COMES TO MAN. No one can take any thoughtful view of the book we call the Bible without learning how largely man is the channel of the Divine thought, the Divine emotion, the Divine grace. "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." And their individual manhood colours and tones their teaching. So that not alone by the *writings* of men, but by their *lives*—biographies that cluster round the Great Biography, either in resemblance or in contrast to it—men are taught, warned, comforted, stimulated, and, in a sense in which St. Paul uses the word, "saved" by man. In this passage is a type of the man by whom God blesses men. 1. In his manhood. "Simon Peter"—a name that recalls the story of his life, and discovers his temperament and unveils his ideal. The pearl is formed by some irritating substance causing discomfort, pain. So biography has its moral pearls. And St. Peter's is notable. There is pathos in the appeals of this letter, as we remember how "Peter went out and wept bitterly." 2. In his office. "A servant and an apostle." This is the right order: first a bondman; then a herald, eager and brave.

II. THE COMMON CONDITION ON WHICH MEN MUST RECEIVE THE CHIEF BLESSINGS OF GOD. Peter writes to those who "have obtained like precious faith." Their possession of that qualifies them to receive the blessings this salutation desires for them. "Like precious faith." "Like," not necessarily equal, but similar. "Precious"—a favourite word of Peter's, used about "stone," "promises," "blood," "faith;" having a double thought—costly and cherished. "In the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Righteousness:" what is that? Well does Charock say, "Without it his patience would be indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtlety." But this righteousness gives glory to all. As we know it in Christ (1) it reveals itself; (2) it vindicates itself; (3) it communicates itself. We cannot attain it or maintain it without Christ.

III. THE SUPREME BLESSING MAN CAN DESIRE FOR MAN. "Grace and peace" (already noted in the first Epistle). Peace, the growth of grace. "Be multiplied." These in large degree. "In the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;" better translated, "full knowledge." Peter would recall his Lord's words in the upper room: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." From that knowledge, and that alone, will flow grace and peace.—U. R. T.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The beginning of soul-salvation.* These words, read in connection with what immediately follows (specially if we, following Ellicott and Farrar, place a period at the end of the second verse), distinctly predicate certain things about the beginning of soul-salvation.

I. GOD HAS GIVEN ALL THINGS NECESSARY for soul-salvation. Note: 1. The *idea* of soul-salvation. "Life and godliness." Observe the order. Vitality, then external piety. 2. The *means* of soul-salvation. (1) Many: "all things." So that first there is no room for excuse; second, the "all" of God challenges the "all" of man. (2) Divinely bestowed. "By his Divine power." What a use of infinite power—to save!

II. God calls the soul TO A KNOWLEDGE OF HIMSELF as the beginning of soul-salvation. The "all things" come to us: 1. Through the call of God. God is the great Caller. Whence? To what? How? 2. Through knowing him who calls us. Not knowing about him, but directly knowing him. Probably Peter again has a reminiscence of the Last Supper: "This is life eternal, to know thee."

III. God's call comes to souls BY THE REVELATION OF HIMSELF. "Called by his own glory and virtue." "Glory," majesty: what he is. "Virtue," energy: what he does. Both combined give the full revelation of God.

IV. God's call comes to souls WITH INSPIRING PROMISES. "Precious." Note Peter's frequent word, meaning rare, prized. "Exceeding great." 1. In their *origin*.

"The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

2. In their *substance*. 3. In the multitudes to whom they are *addressed*.

V. God's purpose in soul-salvation is the HIGHEST we can conceive of. There is a twofold end. 1. "Escape the corruption that is in the world." (1) "Corruption," deadly evil; (2) "in the world," near, mighty; (3) "through lust." No evil can harm except through our own evil desires. 2. The other and higher end, nobler than the negative one just mentioned, is "become partakers of the Divine nature;" *i.e.* share in the very righteousness of God. Not mere forgiveness of sins, not mere remission of penalty, not safety from external perils, but the blessed and holy purpose of God's love accomplished in our restoration to the Divine image.—U. R. T.

Vers. 5—7.—*True Christian character.* This notable passage, growing very evidently out of what precedes and into what follows, has a wealth of instruction.

I. True Christian character CONSISTS OF MANIFOLD ELEMENTS. Here is a chain no link of which may be omitted, a structure no stone in which may be lacking, a body no member of which may be wanting. 1. Whether the general order is to be insisted on or not, it is certain that *faith is the primary essential of the whole character*. It is the root out of which all grows, the foundation on which all rests. To aim at the rest first, and this afterwards, is to stand a pyramid on its apex instead of its base. Belief is great, is life-giving. 2. *Each of the other elements of character demands careful contemplation*. "Virtue,"—manly vigour, making it impossible for the charge to be sustained that the devotional man is not necessarily a virtuous man. It is an element of character that will save a man from being a chameleon, catching the hue of every surrounding, or a moral mollusc with no backbone. "Knowledge,"—discernment, intelligence. "Thou shalt love . . . with thy . . . mind." "Temperance,"—all self-restraint; as Jeremy Taylor says, "reason's girdle as well as passion's bridle." "Patience,"—the silver side of the shield whose iron side is temperance,—endurance, meekness, continuance in well-doing. "Godliness,"—not the whole of piety, but fellowship with God, walking with God, being the "friend of God." "Brotherly kindness,"—the duty of equals to equals—simple, constant kindness. "Charity,"—better the great king-word, the dear home-word, "love;" the sunshine on the whole landscape of character, the Shechinah in the temple of character.

II. THE CULTIVATION of these manifold elements of character is AN URGENT CHRISTIAN DUTY. "Giving all diligence . . . add," etc. 1. They will not come as a matter of course. 2. They may be attained. 3. The methods of attaining them. (1) Study of models. (2) Exercise. (3) Fellowship with those that possess them, especially with the Christ.—U. R. T.

Vers. 8-11.—*The goal of Christian character.* If such a character as the preceding verses described is attained, three glorious results will follow.

I. SPIRITUAL VISION. Such a character leads "unto the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." They that do the will shall know the doctrine. For what is promised here is: 1. "Full knowledge." That is the key-word of the apostle. 2. And full knowledge of the Supreme Object, the Lord Jesus Christ. Often we think if we knew more we should do better; here the teaching is, if we did better we should know more. Obedience is the organ of spiritual vision. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." All else are "blind."

II. MORAL FOOthOLD. "Give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." Two aspects of the same fact—choice, and the result of choice. "Make sure,"—warrant, prove. "Never stumble." Peter had stumbled. Hence the pathos of his counsel. The near-sighted stumble. The moral vision depends on moral character.

III. SATISFACTION OF SOUL. This is the culmination and crown of Christian character. A life of Christian earnestness tends to, and ends in, this. "Entrance into the eternal kingdom." We are encompassed completely with its order, its beauty, its safety. "Richly supplied unto you"—a word that throws us back on the earlier word of exhortation. "Richly supply" Christian graces in your character, and God will "richly supply" Christian glories in your destiny. Your virtues must go out in a kind of festal procession, then your true glories will come to you in a kind of festal procession also.—U. R. T.

Vers. 12-14.—*An old man's aim.* I. AN AIM FOR THE HIGHEST GOOD OF OTHERS. Peter is desiring that "these things" should be remembered by others for their benefit and blessing. "These things" probably comprehend not only all the exhortations and promises the letter had already contained, but the great facts in the great biography to which ever and again, with the vividness of an eye-witness, Peter had referred.

II. An aim for the highest good of others AFTER HIS OWN DEATH. He would not simply be of service to those among whom he lived, whilst he was with them, but to them after he had left this world, and to the generations afterward. All must exert posthumous influence; the true disciple of Christ cares intensely that that posthumous influence shall tell for good, and for good only.

III. An aim PURSUED WITH ALL THE MORE INTENSITY BECAUSE OF APPROACHING DEATH. 1. Peter felt death was near. The cords and skins of "the tabernacle" were loosening and shaking. 2. He had had a prediction from his Master about his death: "Another shall gird thee," etc. All this stimulated his eager zeal to do the most he could while he lived.—U. R. T.

Vers. 16-21.—*Threefold testimony to the truth of Christianity.* In laying out the grounds of his own faith, and the grounds, too, on which he would have his readers build their faith, St. Peter indicates the lines of a threefold evidence.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES. 1. They were "*eye-witnesses*"—a rare word, describing spectators who were admitted into the highest grade of initiation into mysteries. How true of Peter and James and John, with regard to the life of our Lord! 2. They were eye-witnesses of a *wondrous revelation*. "His majesty;" no one event only, though chiefly the Transfiguration. 3. They had heard a *Divine voice*. "The voice we ourselves heard." No hallucination: we all heard, we all saw. 4. The recollection of such vision and voice was *for ever sacred*. "The holy mount." We know not its name, but it was to them for ever a consecrated height. Any spot becomes "holy" to the soul that has had there a deep sense of God's presence; has been awed by his greatness, touched by his love.

II. The testimony of THE EARLIER PROPHETIC WORD. "The word of prophecy." Does this mean "prediction" only? We think not. 1. That can scarcely be said to be *more sure* than the testimony of "eye-witnesses." 2. The usual scriptural use of the words "prophet" and "prophecy" is wider than that. "Take my brethren, the prophets." Are not Paul, John, Peter himself, New Testament prophets? 3. The significance of the words point to a wider meaning: "speak forth," or "speak for another." It tells of insight as much as of foresight. 4. The last verse covers the whole Scripture, not merely prediction. If the whole of Holy Scripture be thus meant, why is it called

"more sure" than the oral testimony of witnesses? (1) Because it is a more *comprehensive* record. (2) More *manifest* authority. (3) More able to be *tested*. "Thy Word is tried." Concerning this "sure word of prophecy," this passage teaches: (1) It is of wide application. "Not of private," that is, single "interpretation." Deals with principles, not merely with events. (2) It is not a discovery, but a revelation: "No prophecy ever came by will of man," etc. (3) It has a Divine Source: "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." "Borne along"—a strong word, denoting a ship before the wind. (4) Is of great practical use. "A lamp shining in a dark [or, 'squalid and gloomy'] place;" a camp-fire in the desert. (5) Must be observed. Christianity, as Dean Mansel says, is regulative rather than speculative. "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed."

III. THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIOUSNESS. This is the strongest of all. 1. In the best region: "In your hearts." 2. The outcome and end of all the rest: "Day-star arise." Better even than lamp is the Day-star. So much better is the knowledge of Christ as a power and presence on the soul than any other testimony. (1) One is without, the other is within. (2) One is passing, the other is perpetual. (3) One is stationary, the other harbinger of eternal day. Notice the signs of this dawn. (1) What are they? (2) Seek for them. (3) Rejoice in them. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."—U. R. T.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Address and salutation*. I. ADDRESS. "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Peter seems to class himself with Jewish Christians in the personal designation "Simon," or, more probably, "Simeon Peter." His official designation is first (generally) a servant of Jesus Christ, and then (particularly) an apostle of Jesus Christ. The readers are designated, not with reference to locality (as in the First Epistle), but simply with reference to their Christian position. Peter writes on this occasion "to them that have obtained"—by lot, the idea is, i.e. not in their own power or of their own right (thus corresponding to "the elect" of the First Epistle). What they have obtained is *faith*, by which we should understand, not "the things believed," but the "subjective disposition of faith;" for it is faith in this sense that is the gracious possession proceeded upon in ver. 5. It is a *precious* faith, both in the mysteries which are the object of it (centring in the Incarnation), and in the blessings which are appropriated by it (beginning with forgiveness of sins). It is "a like precious faith with us" that they have obtained. If Peter classes himself with Jewish Christians (as he seems to do in taking the designation Simeon), then it is the Gentile Christians who have a like precious faith with the Jewish, and it is they who are directly addressed in the Epistle, though Jewish Christians are included among the readers. This equal dealing is ascribed to "the righteousness of our God." This is in keeping with 1 Pet. i. 17, and also with the sentiment uttered by Peter in connection with the admission of the Gentiles, as given in Acts x. 34 and xv. 9. The equal dealing is also ascribed to the righteousness of "our Saviour Jesus Christ" (who could not in this and in other places be so closely associated with God without being himself God). Jesus Christ is here regarded as the manifestation and demonstration of the *impartiality* of God: inasmuch as Saviour, he is Saviour for Gentiles and Jews, without any difference.

II. SALUTATION. "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." By grace we are not to understand the attribute of graciousness, but rather the *outgoing* of graciousness as experienced by us. Peace is the result of the consciousness that we are not dealt with according to our own merit, but according to the merit of Another. Grace and peace are already enjoyed: what Peter wishes is their multiplication, for which there is room in the best. He looks for this multiplication in a particular way, viz. that of *knowledge*. It is the word which means *appreciative*, *mature* knowledge. It is a characteristic word of the Epistle. In view of the place that was afterward to be claimed for a false *gnosis* (insight into transcendental mysteries), it was well that Paul and Peter taught beforehand the place that was to be given to *epignosis* (with regard to which there is no mystification). Peter teaches here that grace and peace are only to be multiplied as an advance in Divine knowledge—the knowledge of *God* and of *Jesus* (thus again closely associated) as the manifestation of

God. When we get to know how gracious God is in Jesus, our peace is doubled, trebled, quadrupled. Peter thinks specially of a peace resulting from the fact that God has made Jesus *our Lord*, thus able to control all circumstances and influences that affect us. The thought of this *Lordship* is carried forward into the next verse, from which this is not properly dissociated.—R. F.

Vers. 3—11.—*The Christian virtues in their completeness.* I. FOUNDATION OF EXHORTATION. 1. *Grant.* "Seeing that his Divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." The grant has reference to *life and godliness*. The first of these words is to be understood of *healthful condition*; the other is to be understood of that *supreme regard to God*, on which healthful condition depends. The grant is not of life and godliness, but of *all things that pertain unto life and godliness*, by which we are to understand the gracious influences that have been liberated by Christ—the Holy Spirit in his manifold gifts, the benefit of Christian institutions. Who is to be thought of as the Granter here? The nearer reference is to *Jesus our Lord*, and it is not superfluous to say of him, as it would be to say of *God*, that it was his *Divine power* that made the grant. It was the Divine power of him who afterward became man that was exercised when man was created and was then granted all that was necessary for securing life by godly conduct. The requirements were greater when man fell. Jesus bore what man as involved in sin deserved, so as to be constituted our Lord with Divine power to grant unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. When he has such power to grant, nothing can be wanting of what is needed for our spiritual prosperity and the production of a godly type of character. 2. *Communication of the grant.* (1) *Knowledge.* "Through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue." This is the second introduction of *knowledge* in the intensive sense. It is here regarded as the channel through which are communicated to us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." Thus it is that *knowledge is power*. To know God is to have a way of being supplied with all that we need. It is to have an inexhaustible fountain of blessing. It is to feel the quickening and transforming power of his perfections. But it will be noticed that it is the knowledge of God under a particular aspect, *viz. of him that called us*. Weiss says, "appointed us to the consummation of salvation;" but this is brought into view afterwards. Here it is *what in God causes our calling*. For "called us to glory and virtue" is a great blunder; it is "called us *by* glory and virtue," *i.e.* these in God. It was a desire to manifest himself, or a regard for his own glory, that led him to call us. That is the first declaration of the cause; the second declaration is that it was his *virtue* or moral excellence, on which his glory in calling us rests. It is the same word which is used in the plural in 1 Pet. ii. 9, translated "excellences." The singular here points us to the *sum* of all that is excellent in God, of which there comes to be glorious manifestation. "Praise him," says the writer of the hundred and fiftieth psalm, "according to his excellent greatness." It was the transcendent character of his excellence, for which it becomes us to praise him, that led to his calling such as we were. Archangelic excellence would have passed us by; but there was an excellence in God far above all created excellence that led to his making use of the vilest materials. (2) *The reflection of God in the promises.* "Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises." It is through knowledge that the grant is communicated to us; it is well to have the grant also in definite written form, which we have in *the promises*. These promises are characterized as *precious*, which characterization more naturally comes first, as in the Revised Version. They contain all that we need of light for our minds, of solace for our hearts, of strength for our wills, of stimulus for our desires. They are not only precious, but *exceeding great*, *i.e.* precious in the superlative degree. It is in Ephesians that we are directed to God as "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." God has promised to open the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. But let it be noticed that there is given an explanation of the promises being exceeding great in their preciousness. It is because they are granted by God's glory and virtue. They are, therefore, to be regarded as the reflection of what he is. They express all that he would bestow upon us—how, with his fulness, he would fill our emptiness, with his riches our poverty. (3) *Aim of the promises.* (a) *Positively.* "That through these ye may become partakers of the Divine nature." The

teaching here is not with regard to our God-like constitution ("For we are also his offspring"), but with regard to what with our God-like constitution we may become. The language employed is strong and peculiarly attractive to some minds. We are not to think of deification, or absorption into God. But let us form no mean conception of what, encouraged by the promises, we may become. By the nature of God we understand those qualities which exist in him in an infinite degree. We are to become, in the last result, *partakers* of the Divine nature; i.e. we are to have the same qualities up to our measure. Even now we can think the same thoughts, be thrilled with the same joy. "God becomes a real Being to us in proportion as his own nature is unfolded within us. True religion desires and seeks supremely the assimilation of the mind to God, or the perpetual unfolding and enlarging of those powers and virtues by which it is constituted his glorious image. The mind, in proportion as it is enlightened and penetrated by true religion, thirsts and labours for a God-like elevation. Let it not be inferred that we place religion in unnatural effort, in straining after excitements which do not belong to the present state, or in anything separate from the clear and simple duties of life" (Channing). (b) *Negatively*. "Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." In the world we do not find that healthful action, those attractive forms, which God intended for society; we have instead diseased action, forms from which we are repelled. This *corruption* is in the world *by lust*, i.e. the prevalence of the lower over the higher principles of our nature. Where there is the inversion of the Divine order, society must go to corruption. From this corruption we have not entirely escaped, inasmuch as lust is not entirely subdued in us; but with our becoming in the last result partakers of the Divine nature, it will be our privilege to have escaped for ever from the blighting, putrefying influences that prevail in the world.

II. EXHORTATION TO CULTIVATION OF THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. 1. *Condition of development*. "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence." There is a great improvement in the translation here. One idea which is brought out is that what we are to do is to be in answer to the Divine doing. Christ does his part in granting all things that pertain unto life and godliness, and through the knowledge of God, who promises all that is needful for our being partakers of the Divine nature; we are to *bring in by the side of*, i.e. contribute our part. It is also distinctly brought out that the Divine doing is no reason for our doing nothing, but the very opposite—a reason for our doing. What we have to contribute on our side is *diligence*, i.e. in connection with opportunities for the exercise of the Christian virtues which are to be named. This is only in accordance with analogy. God supplies the qualities of the soil and the heavenly influences; and the farmer supplies *diligence*. Because God sends the sunshine and the rain, man is to be up and doing, not allowing his opportunity to slip by; so because Christ is so liberal in granting, because the promises are precious in the superlative degree, for that very reason we are to bestir ourselves. 2. *Order of development from faith*. (1) *Virtue*. "In your faith supply virtue." The faith is here regarded as already present. If we have not yet believed, what we have got to do is to co-operate with God in believing. "This is the work of God [required by God], that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Faith is here specially to be thought of as the laying hold on the Divine power in Christ that grants, or the laying hold on the Divine promises. "Be not afraid, *only believe*," Christ said; that saying, however, is not to be pressed to mean that faith, *undeveloped*, is everything. We are here taught that faith is only the *root*, and it must be carried out into its proper development. There are seven virtues needed to make it complete; and there is a certain order in which they follow each other. The connection is closer than is brought out by the "add to" of the old translation. The proper connecting words are "supply in," the idea being, in each case, of that which goes before being incomplete, unless there is supplied in it as its complement that which follows after. Beginning with faith, we have to supply in our faith *virtue*, which is to be understood in the special sense of *moral energy*, or "a strenuous tone and vigour of mind." Faith is leaning on God, or allowing God to work. When there is only that side of things, there is the *quietism* to which Madame Guyon gives expression, "I can no longer will anything." To quiet leaning on God, passivity under the working of God, there is necessary, as its complement, *personal force*. (2) *Knowledge*. "And in your virtue knowledge." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our faith personal force: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *zealotism*, the

expression of which is, "Let us be on fire: let us only be forcible." But in forcibleness there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *knowledge*. There is a different word here from what was formerly used. The idea is that there must be *enlightened judgment*—an apprehension in every moment of what is the right application of the force. (3) *Temperance*. "And in your knowledge temperance." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our force knowledge: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is *scientism*, the expression of which is, "Let us have abundance of light; let us not be imposed on; let us know the right way of things." But in this knowledge there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *temperance*, i.e. the subjection of our appetites, desires, affections, tempers, to knowledge, which is very difficult, seeing that we are strongly tempted from within to be guided, not by what we know, but by what is pleasing to us. (4) *Patience*. "And in your temperance patience." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our knowledge self-restraint: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *rigorism*, of which the expression is, "Let us abstain; let us mortify self." But in this self-restraint there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *patience*, which is a sustaining by self, or putting one's shoulder under the burdens, and especially the hardships of life. (5) *Godliness*. "And in your patience godliness." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our self-restraint patience: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *stoicism*, of which the expression is, "Let us be insensible to pain; let us be heedless of difficulties." But in this patience there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *godliness*, or a God-regarding, especially God-fearing, disposition, without which there cannot be subduedness, sweetness, or stay, in patience. (6) *Love of the brethren*. "And in your godliness love of the brethren." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our patience godliness: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a one-sided *religiousness*, of which the expression is, "Let us pray; let us attend conscientiously on the public means of grace." But in this godliness there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *love of the brethren*, i.e. of those who are our brethren in Christ. "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20); "And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John v. 1). (7) *Love*. "And in your love of the brethren love." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our godliness love of the brethren: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *narrow-heartedness*, of which the expression is, "Let us make the Christian circle our home; let us choose the society of those who have the same thoughts and the same hopes." But in this love of the brethren there must be supplied *love or philanthropy*—love for all that bear the Divine image and for whom Christ died. 3. *Importance of development with reference to knowledge*. (1) *Positively*. "For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." By "these things" we are to understand the seven virtues which are to be supplied in faith. These are regarded as actually *subsisting in us* or belonging to us. There is a difference between their thus being in us and their *abounding* in us. There is a difference between an infant's finding of strength and the consciousness of a giant's strength. There is a difference between a rudimentary knowledge and a knowledge that can be effectually applied to every question of duty that comes up. There is a difference between the mastery of a single appetite and the full mastery of all our appetencies and tempers. There is a difference between a patience that is untried and a patience that can stand the severest test. There is a difference between a sense of the Being of God and the deepest awe in the realization of his perfections. There is a difference between a sense of brotherhood in Christ and the full flood of Christian brotherliness. There is a difference between an interest in a single case of reclamation and a large-hearted philanthropy. Given, then, that these virtues are not merely in us, but abound, they *make us*, literally, put us in a position, to be *not idle nor unfruitful*. If there are certain elements in a tree, they make it to be not idle; i.e. it discharges its functions, it puts forth fresh shoots and leaves and blossoms. And making it not idle, they also make it not unfruitful; i.e. in due season it is laden with fruit. So if these virtues are in us, and in abundant measure, they make us to be not idle; i.e. we do in the right manner. And making us not idle, they also make us not unfruitful; i.e. there are good results. The goal toward which we are to be fruitful is *the knowledge of our Lord*

Jesus Christ. This is not the knowledge that is mentioned as one of the seven virtues, but the mature knowledge that has been twice mentioned. It has been regarded as the means; now it is regarded as the end. Showing diligence in the practice of the seven virtues, we are to come to a rich appreciative knowledge of Jesus Christ (who interprets God to us). Paul takes our aim to be the being able "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Peter brings into view the knowledge of Jesus Christ as *our Lord*, i.e. able in his surpassing power to accomplish all things for us. (2) *Negatively.* "For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins." We are to practise the virtues; *for* there is a great disadvantage in lacking them. The lacking here is not merely the not having them in abundance, but the not having them at all. James says that "faith without works is dead." Peter says here that "he who has not supplied the seven virtues in his faith, instead of appreciating Christ, he is blind," i.e. to his real worth. His idea of blindness he brings to this focus—that he is *shortsighted*. The word is taken from a certain contracting of the eyelids in order to see. He sees what is near, but does not see what is far off. The things of this world bulk largely in his eyes; the distant realities of the eternal world do not come within his vision. The explanation of this kind of blindness is his having *lapsed*. There was a time when he was baptized. Then he was regarded as *cleansed from his old sins*; and did not that seem to indicate a certain appreciation of Christ? But having forgotten his cleansing, Christ has not worth in his eyes.

III. RESUMPTION OF EXHORTATION. 1. *Condition restituted.* "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." This is the only use of the address "brethren" in the Epistles of Peter. It indicates greater closeness and urgency in his exhortation. He proceeds in "wherefore the more" on the advantage of having the seven virtues in abundance, and the disadvantage of lacking them. What he exhorts them to is increased diligence. The tense used points to their making this diligence a lifelong thing. They were to give diligence with regard to their *calling and election*, i.e. by God into his kingdom, the latter word referring to the actual separation of the called from the world. This calling and election, looked at from the lower side, was a matter of uncertainty; they are exhorted to make it a matter of certainty—to allow no doubt to rest on their interest in Christ and title to the kingdom. It is not said how they are to make their calling and election sure; but the very want of specification points to what was formerly specified, viz. the practise of the seven virtues; and this is confirmed by what follows. 2. *Importance.* (1) *Negatively.* "For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble." In "for" there is a falling back on the condition. "Doing these things" may refer to making their calling and election sure; but it is to it as a multiform act, viz. as covering the practice of the seven virtues. If they did these things with due diligence, they would never make such a stumble as would prevent their entrance into the kingdom. (2) *Positively.* "For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is here that there comes into view the full scope of the condition laid down. It is a condition upon which their interest in a kingdom depends. It is no mean kingdom; for it is the kingdom presided over by their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The kingdom of Christ is essentially the same in the present and in the future; but in its present outward conditions it is to come to an end, in its future conditions it is to be *eternal*. It is the entrance into the eternal kingdom that is here promised. Coming to a kingdom is usually celebrated; so the entrance here must be regarded as a glorious event. This entrance is a gift; and yet it corresponds to previous diligence. This is strikingly brought out in the form of the language. To those who have *supplied* the seven virtues in their faith it is promised that there shall be *supplied* unto them this glorious entrance. But stress is laid upon the *kind* of entrance. There is a difference between reaping sparingly and reaping bountifully. There is a difference between a righteous man's reward and a prophet's reward. There is a difference between being saved as by fire, and being saved with a golden reward or a silver reward or a reward to be compared to precious stones. So there is a difference between a bare entrance and an entrance that is *richly* supplied. The richly supplied entrance is only for those who have in the highest degree been diligent in the practice of the seven virtues. Let this highest prize be the object of

our ambition. Let us not be content with a bare entrance; let us, by increased diligence, enrich the entrance that we are to have.—R. F.

Vers. 12—21.—*Putting in mind.* I. THE TIME OF PUTTING IN MIND. 1. *Putting in mind as long as he was in this tabernacle.* "Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you. And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me." Because of the importance of the things dealt with in the previous verses, Peter declares that he would be ready always, *i.e.* would take every opportunity, to put them in mind of them. "In matters of such importance reminders can never be superfluous; wherefore they should never be troublesome" (Calvin). In one way there was not need for putting them in mind; for he bears testimony courteously to their knowing these things, and being established, *i.e.* having a firm standing, in the truth that was with them (not the present-day truth, as is suggested by the old translation). Feeling their importance himself, he thought it right to tell them the same things again and again, thereby to *stir them up*, *i.e.*, to a due sense of their meaning. It is important to enlarge the circle of human knowledge—to get new thoughts, new facts, new combinations of facts; but it is a thousand times more important to have the complete realization of one or two things that we know. Even with those who knew and were established Peter laboured, by reiteration, to stir them up—to give them a deeper impression of a few simple gospel truths. He was resolved to stir them up by putting them in mind, *as long as he was in this tabernacle*. This is a familiar designation of the body in relation to the soul (in 2 Cor. v. 1 it is "tabernacle-house"). The body is a covering to the soul; it keeps it from being exposed to the glare of the world. "Tabernacle" also suggests that which can be quickly taken down (in Isa. xxxviii. 12 there is the association of death with the removal of a shepherd's tent); the connection of the body with the soul is not so close but that it can be quickly removed as a shepherd's tent. Peter was incited to action by the knowledge of what our Lord Jesus Christ had signified unto him. There is unmistakable reference to John xxi. 18, 19. Our Lord, according to what is recorded there, signified to Peter that he was to die a martyr's death. Let Peter's language here be observed. There was to be not the striking of his tent, but still, not out of keeping with the idea of a tent as a temporary soul-covering, the *putting of it off*. And swift or sudden was the manner in which it was to be put off. We are not to think of the swiftness of death's approach (unless in the use of the present tense), but of death's swift work when it did come. He was to end his life by a violent death. Our Lord had signified to him that he was not to die soon; it was only when he became old that he was to stretch forth his hands, and another was to gird him, and carry him whither he would not. He was now old, without the assurance he had once had of living long; and as our Lord had signified to him that not much time was to be occupied in the putting off of his tabernacle, so long as he was in it he would let slip no opportunity of putting them in mind. "Teachers who are long sick can still feed others. The cross was not to permit that to Peter. So he sees to doing beforehand what required to be done" (Bengel). 2. *Putting in mind as affected by his decease.* "Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance." "Decease" is literally "departure," which, from the context, we may take to be departure out of the tabernacle of the body. In view of what follows, it is to be remarked that both "tabernacle" and "decease" are words associated with the Transfiguration-scene. How were they to be provided for after his decease? He was to use diligence, that they would then be able, as occasion arose, to call these things to mind. We can think of Peter here reflecting the Divine thoughtfulness. The apostles were not to live away; so God saw to the important things being put down in a permanent form in the New Testament. Peter, now an old man, was to die swiftly; so, as the servant of God, he was to see to the important things being put down in writing, that, as occasion arose, they might be able to call them clearly to mind.

II. PUTTING IN MIND WITH REFERENCE TO THE SUBJECT OF THE SECOND COMING.

1. *The certainty of the coming.* "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when

we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There are two important points to be noticed here. In the first place, Peter, writing in the name of the other apostles, declares that they were careful in what they admitted into the historical basis of their religion. They saw the putting forward of *cunningly devised fables*—stories without foundation in reality, cleverly concocted, so as to impose on the ignorant, and to keep up the influence of the priesthood or the false teachers. They did not *follow* this lead; but were careful to exclude all mythical elements, and to admit only well-established fact. In the second place, Peter and the other apostles made known unto the persons addressed the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first exhibition of power was when Christ rose from the dead; its full exhibition was to be at the coming. It is true that in this Epistle there is no direct reference to the weakness and death of Christ; this is to be explained by the circumstances in which Peter wrote. There are times when we need to pass on from the humiliation, and to allow our minds to be occupied with the exaltation. 2. *The attesting power of the Transfiguration to the coming.* (1) *Eye-testimony.* "But we were eye-witnesses of his majesty." The reference, as is seen from what follows, is to the Transfiguration. The three who were admitted as witnesses were Peter and James and John: they were admitted, while others were excluded. What they saw was not his ordinary earthly form, but that form transfigured—what is here called his *majesty*. "His garments," according to the graphic account of Mark, "became glistening, exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." This remarkable manifestation, which was out of the ordinary course in Christ's earthly life, which was not for the common gaze, testified to the coming, inasmuch as it was to be regarded as the glorifying of Christ beforehand. It was Christ seen as he was to be after his ascension. It was Christ as he was afterwards seen by the prisoner of Patmos in his actually glorified condition. (2) *Ear-testimony.* (a) *What was heard.* "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In the original the verse begins, "for having received," and is interrupted before its close. The honour and glory from God the Father are to be associated with the voice, but with the voice as expressive of the majesty that was seen by the eye. The voice is represented as borne to him, not from, but *by*, the *excellent glory*, which is putting for God the excellent glory in which he dwells, so as to raise an impression of the magnificence of the scene. The voice was *such* as this, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There is only a slight variation from the words given in Matthew, the effect of which is to present the good pleasure of the Father as on his beloved Son, so as to abide and not to leave him. This was fitted to encourage Christ in prospect of the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. As testimony to the coming, it is to be taken along with the change presented to sight. In that anticipation of glory was to be read how the good pleasure of God was to find manifestation. (b) *The hearing.* "And this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount." This helps to emphasize the reality of the voice. There was no possibility of deception; the voice was heard borne in upon them, borne in from heaven. There was present the condition of three witnesses, by which it is established as a fact. This also helps to connect the thought distinctly with the Transfiguration. The voice was heard when they, the three, were with him in the holy mount—the mount rendered holy by the association. 3. *The attesting power of the prophetic Word to the coming.* (1) *The greater attesting power of the prophetic Word.* "And we have the Word of prophecy made more sure." The literal translation is preferable, "And we have more sure the prophetic Word." By "the prophetic Word" we are to understand the Bible, with special reference to what it has to say about the future in its connection with Christ. It must be recognized that a comparison is instituted. The comparison is not between the voice from heaven and the prophetic Word, but rather between the Transfiguration (with the accompaniment of the voice) and the prophetic Word *in their attesting power to the second coming*. The fact was significant; but there is greater satisfaction in having definite statements as to Christ's coming. It is the *old* prophetic Word that Peter seems to have in his mind; but we may regard it as elucidated and filled up by New Testament statements. From these statements we can have some conception of the scene. The Lord descends from his heavenly throne in majesty. The moment

that the Lord descends, the archangel marshals his innumerable host, giving the shout of command with the living voice. Having marshalled his hosts to move in harmony with the descending Lord, he at a subsequent stage gives another shout of command, this time not with the living voice, but with the trump of God. At the trumpet-call the dead arise. The Christian dead, raised with reconstituted bodies, join the Christian living, whose bodies are transformed, making one company, and, caught up in the enveloping, upbearing clouds, they meet their descending Lord with the marshalled army of angels in the air. The Lord descends to earth; before him are gathered all nations, and, as Judge, he separates them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. The wicked receive their desert; the righteous ascend in the triumphant retinue to heaven, to be for ever with the Lord. (2) *On account of its certainty we are to take heed to it.* "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." We do well to take heed to what the Bible says about the issues of life as connected with the coming of Christ. The prophetic Word is here compared to a lamp, on account of the clear light it sheds. It is true of the Bible as a whole that it is as a lamp. "This lamp from off the everlasting throne mercy took down." The dark place in which it shines is the world. How dark would the world be but for the light it casts upon God and upon the future! It is to continue to shine until the *day dawn, and the day-star arise*. This bringing in of the full day is to be regarded as Christ's coming. Then the Bible, in its earthly form, will have served its purpose; it will give place to the great Teacher himself. The relation of all to that coming is not to be joyful; to some it will only be the time of exposure, the time of discomfiture and of consignment to darkness. But it is to come with a blessed certainty in the *hearts* of Christ's people. It is the beginning of a long bright day to them in the presence of their Lord. (3) *The ground of the certainty on account of which we are to take heed to it.* "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." The statement, declared to be of prime importance, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation, was long obscure; and Roman Catholic theologians took advantage of the obscurity to assert that its meaning is that Scripture can only be interpreted by the Church, and not by private Christians. There is now clearness as to its meaning, which is that the prophet *did not proceed on his own private interpretation of things*. For, it is added, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, *i.e.* originated in mere human determination. Men indeed spoke (and not always holy men, as in the case of Balaam); there was thus the exercise of the human mind to a certain extent, there was the human form in what they spoke, there were even individual characteristics brought out; but the higher causal account of it was that they spoke from God, and because they were borne along unresistingly by the Holy Ghost. There was thus, which is the point here, secured certainty, infallibility in what they spoke. We do well, then, to take heed to what they say to us. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith."—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—But there were false prophets also among the people; rather, as in the Revised Version, *but there arose false prophets also among the people*. The transition is simple and natural. Besides the true prophets mentioned in the last chapter, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, there arose false prophets, men who wore "a rough garment to deceive" (Zech. xiii. 4), and assumed without warrant the prophetic character. Such pretenders would commonly prophecy false things; but the

word *ψευδοπροφήται* seems principally to imply the absence of a Divine mission. By "the people" (*λαός*) is meant the people of Israel, as in Rom. xv. 11; Jude 5, etc. It is plain from these words that St. Peter, at the end of the last chapter, was speaking of the prophets of the Old Testament. Even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies. By the false teachers, again (the word *ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι* is peculiar to St. Peter), may be meant men whose teaching was false, or men who falsely claimed the teacher's office. St. Peter describes them as such as (*οἵτινες*)

shall bring in damnable heresies. The verb (*παρεισδύουσιν*) is found only here in the New Testament; the adjective derived from it is used by St. Paul in Gal. ii. 4, "false brethren unawares brought in." It means, "to bring in by the side of," as if these false teachers brought in their errors by the side of the true doctrine; it implies also the secondary notion of secrecy. Compare St. Jude's use of the verb *παρεισδύσαν*, compounded with the same prepositions (ver. 4); and notice the difference of tenses—St. Jude using the past where St. Peter looks forward to the future; but St. Peter passes to the present tense in ver. 10, and maintains it for the rest of the chapter. We may, perhaps, infer that the false teaching referred to was already beginning to affect the Churches of Asia Minor; but the errors were not so much developed there, the false teachers had not gained so much influence as it seems they had in the Churches which St. Jude had principally in his thoughts. The literal translation of the words rendered "damnable heresies" is "heresies of destruction," the last word being the same which occurs again at the end of the verse. These heresies destroy the soul; they bring ruin both to those who are led astray and to the false teachers themselves. The word for "heresy" (*αἵρεσις*), meaning originally "choice," became the name for a party, sect, or school, as in Acts v. 17, "the sect of the Sadducees;" Acts xv. 5, "the sect of the Pharisees;" Acts xxiv. 5 (in the mouth of Tertullus), "the sect of the Nazarenes;" then, by a natural transition, it came to be used of the opinions held by a sect. The notion of self-will, deliberate separation, led to its being employed generally in a bad sense (see especially Titus iii. 10, "A man that is a heretic, (*αἱρετικός*)"). Even denying the Lord that bought them; literally, as in the Revised Version, *denying even the Master that bought them*. The word for "Master" (*δεσπότης*) implies that the deniers stand to the Lord in the relation of slaves, bondservants. The Lord had bought them; they were not their own, but his, bought with a price, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18; see also the parallel passage Jude 4). These words plainly assert the universality of the Lord's redemption. He "tasted death for every man" (Heb. ii. 9), even for those false teachers who denied him. The denial referred to may have been doctrinal or practical; most of the ancient forms of heresy involved some grave error as to the Person of Christ; and the germs of those errors appeared very early in the Church (see 1 John ii. 22, 23), denying sometimes the Godhead of our Lord, sometimes the

truth of his humanity. But St. Peter may mean the practical denial of Christ evinced in an ungodly and licentious life. The latter form of denial appears most prominent in this chapter; probably the apostle intended to warn his readers against both. It is touching to remember that he had himself denied the Lord, though indeed the price with which our souls were bought had not then been paid; but his denial was at once followed by a deep and true repentance. The Lord's loving look recalled him to himself; his bitter tears proved the sincerity of his contrition. **And bring upon themselves swift destruction;** literally, *bringing*. The participial construction unites the two clauses closely; the latter expresses the consequence of the former: they bring heresies of destruction into the Church, and by so doing bring upon themselves swift destruction. The word for "swift" (*ταχύως*) is used by no other New Testament writer. There is an apparent allusion to this verse in Justin Martyr ('Cum Tryph.,' lxxxi.), and the first clause of it is quoted in a homily ascribed to Hippolytus of Portus. Notice St. Peter's habit of repetition. He repeats the word *ἀλώχεια* three times in vers. 1—3; *δικαίως* three times in vers. 7, 8; the verb *προσδοκῶ* three times in ch. iii. 12—14, etc.

Ver. 2.—**And many shall follow their pernicious ways;** rather, as in the Revised Version, *their lascivious doings*; the reading represented by the Authorized Version has very little support (comp. Jude 4, 8). (For "shall follow" (*ἐγκακολουθήσουσιν*), see note on ch. i. 16.) **By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.** The heathen were accustomed to charge Christians with immorality; the conduct of these false teachers gave them occasion; they did not distinguish between these licentious heretics and true Christians. The expression, "way of truth," occurs in the 'Epistle of Barnabas,' ch. v. Christianity is called "the way" several times in the Acts (ix. 2; xix. 9, 23, etc.). It is the way of truth, because Christ, who is the Centre of his religion, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; because it is the way of life which is founded on the truth.

Ver. 3.—**And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you;** rather, *in covetousness*. Covetousness was their besetting sin, the sphere in which they lived. St. Paul warned Titus against false teachers who taught "things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus i. 11; see also 1 Tim. vi. 6 and Jude 16). Simon Magus, the first heresiarch, sought to trade in holy things; the like sin seems to have been characteristic of the false teachers of apostolic times. The word translated "feigned" (*πλαστοίς*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; the

words of these men were not the expression of their real thoughts and feelings; they were invented, craftily contrived to deceive men, and that for the sake of money. The last words of the clause will admit another sense: "shall gain you," i.e. "shall gain you over to their party;" and this view derives some support from the use of the verb *ἐμποιεῖν* in the Septuagint Version of Prov. iii. 14. But the verb is often used in classical writers in the sense of making a profit out of people or things, and this meaning seems most suitable here. The false teachers will work hard, as the Pharisees did, to make proselytes; but their real motive is, not the salvation of souls, but their own selfish gain. Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not; literally, *for whom the sentence of a long time ideth not*. The sentence of judgment is for them, for their condemnation; in the foreknowledge of God it has been pronounced long ago, and ever since it has been drawing near; it doth not tarry (comp. Jude 4 and 1 Pet. iv. 17). The word rendered "of a long time" (*ἐκράτα*) occurs only here and ch. iii. 5. And their damnation slumbereth not; *destruction*: it is the word which has been used already twice in ver. 1. The verb means literally "to nod," then "to slumber;" it is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in the parable of the virgins (Matt. xxv. 5).

Ver. 4.—For if God spared not the angels that sinned; rather, *angels when they sinned*; there is no article. St. Peter is giving proofs of his assertion that the punishment of the ungodly lingereth not. The first is the punishment of angels that sinned. He does not specify the sin, whether rebellion, as in Rev. xii. 7; or uncleanness, as apparently in Jude 6, 7, and Gen. vi. 4. Formally, there is an anacoluthon here, but in thought we have the apodosis in ver. 9. But cast them down to hell. The Greek word, which is found nowhere else in the Greek Scriptures, is *ταρταρώσας*, "having cast into Tartarus." This use of a word belonging to heathen mythology is very remarkable, and without parallel in the New Testament. (The word *τάρταρος* occurs in the Septuagint, Job xl. 15. Compare also the Septuagint rendering of the name of Job's daughter Keren-Happuch, Ἀμαθάλιας κέρας, the horn of Amalthæa; and the word *σερῖφες* in Isa. xliii. 20.) Apparently, St. Peter regards Tartarus not as equivalent to Gehenna, for the sinful angels are "reserved unto judgment," but as a place of preliminary detention. Josephus, quoted by Professor Lumby in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' speaks of the oldest heathen gods as fettered in Tartarus, ἐν Τάρτῳ δεδεμένους ('Contra Apion,' ii. 33). And delivered them into

chains of darkness. The Revised Version "pits" represents the reading of the four oldest manuscripts; but the variations in two of them (the Sinaitic and Alexandrine have *σεισῆς* *ζόφοις*), and the fact that *σεισῆς* seems properly to mean a pit for the storage of corn, throw some doubt upon this reading. The other reading *σεισῆς*, cords, may possibly have arisen from the parallel passage in Jude 6, though the Greek word for "chains" is different there. The chains consist in darkness; the pits are in darkness. Παρέδωκε, delivered, is often used, as Luther remarks, with the implied idea of punishment. It is simpler to connect the chains or pits of darkness with this verb than (as Frommüller and others) with *ταρταρώσας*, "having cast them in bonds of darkness into Tartarus" (comp. Wisd. xvii. 2, 16, 17). To be reserved unto judgment; literally, *being reserved*; but the readings here are very confused. St. Jude says (ver. 6) that the sinful angels are reserved "unto the judgment of the great day." Bengel says, "Possunt autem in terra quoque versari mancipia Tartari (Luke viii. 31; Eph. ii. 2; etc.) sic ut bello captus etiam extra locum captivitatis potest ambulare." But in the case of a mystery of which so little has been revealed, we are scarcely justified in assuming the identity of the angels cast into Tartarus with the evil spirits who tempt and harass us on earth.

Ver. 5.—And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others*. "The eighth" is a common classical idiom (generally with the pronoun *αὐτός*) for "with seven others." Mark the close parallelism with 1 Pet. iii. 20, where, as here, the apostle impresses upon his readers the fewness of the saved. A preacher of righteousness. The Old Testament narrative does not directly assert this; but "a just man and perfect," who "walked with God" (Gen. vi. 9), must have been a preacher (literally, "herald") of righteousness to the ungodly among whom he lived. Josephus, in a well-known passage ('Ant.,' i. 3. 1), says that Noah tried to persuade his neighbours to change their mind and their actions for the better. Bringing in the Flood upon the world of the ungodly. The Revised Version renders, *when he brought a Flood upon the world*. In the Greek there is no article throughout this verse. In ver. 1 the ungodly are represented as bringing upon themselves swift destruction; here God brings the punishment upon them. The same Greek verb is used in both places. In one place St. Peter gives the human, in the other the Divine, aspect of the same events (comp. Clement I. vii. and ix.).

Ver. 6.—And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow. The striking word *τεφρώσας*, turning into ashes, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and the word for “overthrow” (*καταστροφή*) only in 2 Tim. ii. 14. It is used in the Septuagint Version of Gen. xix. 29 of this same judgment. Perhaps “to an overthrow” is a better translation (comp. Luke xvii. 28—29; Jude 7). Making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; rather, *having made*. The example is to be a lasting warning; literally, *an example of those that should live ungodly*; i.e. an example of their punishment, their end. In this verse the Vatican Manuscript omits “with an overthrow,” and reads “an example of things to come unto the ungodly.”

Ver. 7.—And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; literally, *and delivered righteous Lot, who was being worn out* (*καταπονούμενον*; comp. Acts vii. 24, the only other place of the New Testament where the word occurs) *with the behaviour of the lawless in licentiousness*. The word translated “lawless” (*ἀθέσμων*) is found only in one other place of the New Testament (ch. iii. 17); but it is near akin to the *ἀθεμύτοις* (“abominable”) of 1 Pet. iv. 3.

Ver. 8.—For that righteous man dwelling among them; literally, *for the righteous man*. It was through his own choice that he dwelt among the people of Sodom. The recollection of this grave mistake must have added bitterness to the daily distress caused by the sins of his neighbours (Gen. xiii. 11). In seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. The words, “in seeing and hearing,” are best connected with the verb that follows, not with “righteous” according to the Vulgate (though this would be the natural connection, if with the Vatican Manuscript we omit the article), nor with “dwelling among them.” The literal translation is, “was tormenting his righteous soul.” The sight of lawless deeds and the sound of wicked words were a daily grief to Lot. He distressed himself; he felt the guilt and danger of his neighbours, the dishonour done to God, and his own unhappy choice. St. Peter cannot mean (as Ecumenius and Theophylact suppose) that Lot’s affliction was caused by the sustained effort to resist the temptation of falling into the like vices himself. The Greek words for “seeing” and “dwelling among” occur only here in the New Testament.

Ver. 9.—The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment

to be punished. We have here the apodosis corresponding with the conditional sentence beginning at ver. 4. The three examples cited by St. Peter show that the Lord knows (and with the Lord knowledge involves power) how to deliver the righteous and to punish the wicked. The Greek words for “godly” and “unjust” are both without the article. The word rendered “to be punished” (*κολαζομένους*) is a present participle, not future, and is better rendered, as in the Revised Version, “under punishment.” The wicked are already under punishment while awaiting the judgment: the Lord had taught this in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (comp. also Jude 6, 7, and ver. 4 of this chapter). Aristotle makes a distinction between *κόλασις* and *τιμωρία*, the first being “chastisement inflicted for the good of those chastised;” the second, “punishment inflicted on the incorrigible for the satisfaction of justice” (see ‘Rhet.’ i. 10); but it is doubtful whether this distinction exists in the New Testament (comp. Matt. xxv. 46). Therefore it seems dangerous to lay much stress on the use of the word *κολαζομένους* here (comp. Clement, I. xi.).

Ver. 10.—But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness; literally, *in the lust of pollution*. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but the corresponding verb is found in several places (Titus i. 15; Heb. xii. 15; Jude 8). We observe that in this verse St. Peter passes from the future tense to the present. And despise government; rather, *lordship* (*κυριότητος*). St. Jude has the same word in ver. 8. In Eph. i. 21 and Col. i. 16 it is used of angelic dignities. Here it seems to stand for all forms of authority. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; literally, *daring, self-willed, they tremble not when speaking evil of glories*; or, *they fear not glories, blaspheming*. The word rendered “during” (*τολαιπῶται*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. These daring, self-willed men despise all lordship, all glories, whether the glory of Christ (“the excellent glory,” ch. i. 17), or the glory of the angels, or the glory of holiness, or the glory of earthly sovereignty. The next verse, however, makes it probable that the glory of the angels was the thought present to St. Peter’s mind. It may be that, as some false teachers had inculcated the worship of angels (Col. ii. 18), others had gone to the opposite extreme (comp. Jude 8). The Vulgate strangely translates *δόξας* by *sectas*.

Ver. 11.—Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the

Lord. The conjunction is *δπου*, literally, "where"—they speak evil of glories, "where," i.e. "in which case." The literal rendering of the following words, "angels being greater," makes it probable that the comparison is with the false teachers of the previous verse rather than with the "glories." The false teachers rail at glories, where angels, though greater than they, bring not a railing judgment against those glories. It seems certain that the words "against them" (*κατ' αὐτῶν*) must refer to the "glories," and cannot mean, according to the Vulgate, *adversum se*. Men rail at these glories; but the elect angels, when they are commissioned to proclaim or inflict the just judgment (for *κρίσις* is "judgment," not "accusation") of God upon the angels that sinned, the fallen glories, do not rail; they remember what those lost spirits once were, and speak solemnly and sorrowfully, not in coarse, violent language. The apostle may be alluding to Zech. iii. 1, 2, but the resemblance to Jude 8, 9 is so close that this last passage must have been in his thoughts, even if he is not directly referring to the dispute between Michael the archangel and the devil. Luther's interpretation (adopted by Frommüller and others), that the *wicked* angels are not able to bear the judgment of God upon their blasphemy, cannot be extracted from the words. The Alexandrine Manuscript omits "before the Lord;" but these words are well supported. The angels of judgment remember that they are in the presence of God, and perform their solemn duty with godly fear.

Ver. 12.—But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed. The order of the words in the best manuscripts favours the translation of the Revised Version, *But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed*. The word rendered "mere animals" is literally "natural" (*φυσικά*); comp. Jude 10, "what they know naturally (*φυσικῶς*) as brute beasts." Speak evil of the things that they understand not; literally, as in the Revised Version, *railing in matters whereof they are ignorant*. (For the construction, see Winer, iii. 66. 5, at the end.) The context and the parallel passage in St. Jude show that the *δόξα*, the glories, are the things which the false teachers understand not and at which they rail. Good angels do not pronounce a railing judgment against angels that sinned. These men, knowing nothing of the angelic sphere of existence, rail at the elect and the fallen angels alike. Men should speak with awe of the sin of the angels; jesting on such subjects is unbecoming and dangerous. And shall utterly perish in their own corruption. The best manuscripts read here *καὶ φθορή-*

σονται, "shall also be destroyed in their own corruption." It seems better to take *φθορά* in the sense of "corruption" here, as in ch. i. 4, and to suppose that St. Peter is intentionally playing on the double sense of the noun and its cognate verb than, with Huther, to refer the pronoun *αὐτῶν*, "their own," to the *ἄλογα ζῶα*, and to understand St. Peter as meaning that the false teachers, who act like irrational animals, shall be destroyed with the destruction of irrational animals.

Ver. 13.—And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness. The two most ancient manuscripts read here, instead of *κομισόμενοι*, *ἀδικούντες*. This reading is adopted by the Revised Version in the translation, "suffering wrong as the hire of wrongdoing." But the other reading is well supported, and gives a better sense, "receiving, as they shall, the reward of unrighteousness." Balaam loved the reward of unrighteousness in this world (ver. 15); the false teachers shall receive its final reward in the world to come. Whichever reading is preferred, this clause is best taken with the preceding verse. As they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime; literally, *counting the revel in daytime a pleasure*. St. Peter has hitherto spoken of the insubordination and irreverence of the false teachers; he now goes on to condemn their sensuality. The words *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ* cannot, with some ancient interpreters, be taken as equivalent to *καθ' ἡμέραν*, daily (Luke xvi. 19). Many commentators, as Huther and Alford, translate "delicate living for a day"—enjoyment which is temporal and short-lived. But when we compare 1 Thess. v. 7, "They that are drunken are drunken in the night," and St. Peter's own words in Acts ii. 15, it seems more probable that the apostle means to describe these false teachers as worse than ordinary men of pleasure. They reserve the night for their feasting; these men spend the day in luxury. The word *τρυφή* means "luxurious or delicate living" rather than "riot." Spots they are and blemishes. (For *σπίλοι*, spots, St. Jude has *σπιλίδες*, sunken rocks.) The word for "blemishes" (*μῶμοι*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. But comp. 1 Pet. i. 19, where the Lord Jesus is described as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot (*ἀμώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου*)." The Church should be like her Lord, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27); but these men are spots and blemishes on her beauty. Sporting themselves with their own deceivings; literally, *reveling in their deceivings*. The word for "reveling" (*ἐν-τρυφῶντες*) corresponds with *τρυφή*, used just above. The manuscripts vary between *ἀπάταις*, deceivings, and *ἀγάταις*, loves, love-feasts. The former reading seems the best.

supported here, and the latter in the parallel passage of St. Jude (ver. 12). It is possible that the paronomasia may be intentional (compare the *σπίλοι* of St. Peter and the *σπιλάδες* of St. Jude). St. Peter will not use the honourable name for the banquets which these men disgrace by their excesses. He calls them *ἀπάτας*, not *ἀγάτας*—deceits, not love-feasts. There is no love in the hearts of these men. Their love-feasts are hypocrisies, deceits; they try to deceive men, but they deceive not God. **While they feast with you.** The Greek word *συνευχαριζόμενοι* occurs elsewhere only in Jude 12. The false teachers joined in the love-feasts, but made them the occasion of self-indulgence. Compare the similar conduct of the Corinthians (1 Cor. xi. 20—22).

Ver. 14.—**Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; literally, of an adulteress.** Compare our Lord's words in the sermon on the mount (Matt. v. 28), which may have been in St. Peter's thoughts. For the second clause, comp. 1 Pet. iv. 1, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." **Beguiling unstable souls; rather, enticing.** The word *δεδάσκοντες*, from *δίδασκω*, a bait, belongs to the art of the fowler or fisherman, and would naturally occur to St. Peter's mind. He uses it again in ver. 18 of this chapter (comp. also Jas. i. 14). The word for "unstable" (*ἀστηρίκτους*) occurs only here and in ch. iii. 16. It is a word of peculiar significance in the mouth of St. Peter, conscious, as he must have been, of his own want of stability in times past. He would remember also the charge once given to him, "When thou art converted, strengthen (*στήριξον*) thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). **An heart they have exercised with covetous practices; rather, trained in covetousness,** according to the reading of the best manuscripts, *πλεονεξίας*. This is the third vice laid to the charge of the false teachers. They had practised it so long that their very heart was trained in the habitual pursuit of gain by all unrighteous means. **Cursed children; rather, children of curse.** Like "the son of perdition," "children of wrath," "children of disobedience," "son of Belial," etc.

Ver. 15.—**Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray; literally, forsaking (or having forsaken);** there are two slightly differing readings, both well supported) *the right way, they went astray*. The false teachers in St. Peter's time were like Elymas the sorcerer, whom St. Paul accused of perverting "the right ways of the Lord" (Acts xiii. 10; comp. also ver. 2 of this chapter). In the 'Shepherd of Hermas' occurs what may be an echo of this verse: "Who . . . have forsaken their true way" (Vis. iii. 7. 1). **Following the way of Balaam**

the son of Bosor. The word rendered "following" (*ἐξακολουθήσαντες*) is found also in ch. i. 16 and ii. 2 of this Epistle, but nowhere else in the New Testament; it means "to follow out to the end." Comp. Numb. xxii. 32, where the angel of the Lord says of Balaam, "Thy way is perverse before me." The form "Bosor," instead of "Beor," arose probably from a peculiar (perhaps Galilaean) pronunciation of the guttural *β* in *βηρ*. Thus we, perhaps, have here an undesigned coincidence, a slight confirmation of St. Peter's authorship: he was a Galilaean, and his speech betrayed him (Matt. xxvi. 73); one characteristic of the Galilaean dialect was a mispronunciation of the gutturals. But some commentators see in the resemblance of the form "Bosor" to the Hebrew *בשר*, flesh, an allusion to those sins of the flesh into which Balaam allured the Israelites. Compare the Jewish use of such names as *Ishbosheth* in derision for *Eshbaal* ("the man of shame" for "the man of Baal"), and *Jerubbesheth* (2 Sam. xi. 21) for *Jerubbaal*. The references to Balaam here, in St. Jude, the Book of the Revelation, and 1 Cor. x. 8, show that his history had made a great impression on the mind of thoughtful Christians. St. John connects his name with the Nicolaitanes in Rev. ii. 15, much as St. Peter here connects it with the false teachers of his time. Some, again, see in the etymology of the word "Nicolaitane" an allusion to that of "Balaam," as if the Nicolaitanes were followers of Balaam. There is another explanation in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' that the word "Bosor" is an Aramaic form, and that "the form possibly became familiar to St. Peter during his residence at Babylon, and suggests the probability that Aramaic traditions were still current respecting Balaam at the Christian era, and on the banks of the Euphrates" (additional note on Numb. xxii. 5). But the two oldest manuscripts read "Beor" here. **Who loved the wages of unrighteousness** (comp. ver. 13, and also St. Peter's words in Acts i. 18). Balaam is not definitely accused of covetousness in the Old Testament narrative; but his conduct can be explained by no other motive.

Ver. 16.—**But was rebuked for his iniquity; literally, but had a rebuke for his own transgression.** The word for "rebuke" (*ἐλεγχοι*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The guilt of offering the wages of unrighteousness rested with Balak; Balaam's own transgression lay in his readiness to accept them—in his willingness to break the law of God by coursing, for filthy lucre's sake, those whom God had not cursed. **The dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet.** The word for "ass" is literally "beast of burden" (*ὄνον*), as

in Matt. xxi. 5). "Dumb" is literally "without voice;" naturally without voice, it spake with the voice of man. The word *ἐκάλυπεν*, rendered "forbade," is rather "checked," or "stayed." The word for "madness" (*παρεφρονία*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The ass checked the prophet's folly by her shrinking from the angel, and by the miracle that followed; the angel, while permitting Balaam to expose himself to the danger into which he had fallen by tempting the Lord, forbade any deviation from the word to be put into his mouth by God. Balaam obeyed in the letter; but afterwards the madness which had been checked for the moment led him into deadly sin (Numb. xxxi. 16). We observe that St. Peter assumes the truthfulness of the narrative in the Book of Numbers (see Mr. Clark's note in the 'Speaker's Commentary' on Numb. xxii. 28).

Ver. 17.—*These are wells without water.* St. Peter has spoken of the vices of the false teachers; he goes on to describe the unprofitableness of their teaching. They are like wells without water; they deceive men with a promise which they do not fulfil. In Jude 12 there is a slight difference—"clouds without water" (comp. Jer. ii. 13). Clouds that are carried with a tempest; better, *mists driven by a tempest*. The best manuscripts have *ὁμίχλαι*, mists, instead of *νεφέλαι*, clouds; they are driven along by the tempest; they give no water to the thirsty land, but only bring darkness and obscurity. The Greek word for "tempest" (*λαίλαψ*) is used by St. Mark and St. Luke in their account of the tempest on the Sea of Galilee. To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the blackness of darkness*. The words are the same as those of Jude 13 (comp. ver. 4 of this chapter; also ch. iii. 7; and 1 Pet. i. 4, where the same verb is used of the inheritance reserved in heaven for the saints). The words "for ever" are omitted in the Vatican and Sinaitic Manuscripts; it is possible that they may have been inserted from the parallel passage in St. Jude; but they are well supported here.

Ver. 18.—*For when they speak great swelling words of vanity; literally, for speaking.* "Great swelling words" is expressed by one word in the Greek, *ὕπερηγκα*. St. Jude has the same word in ver. 16; it is used in the classical writers of great bulk of any kind, literal or figurative. The genitive is descriptive—the words are swelling, high-sounding; but they are only words, vain and meaningless; they have nothing but emptiness behind them. They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness; rather, as in the Revised Version, *they*

entice (as in ver. 14) *in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness*. The preposition "in" denotes the sphere in which these men live, their condition, habits of life. The dative *ἀσελγείαις*, literally "by lasciviousnesses," that is, by acts of lasciviousness, is the dative of the instrument; it states the means by which they entice men. Those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. The Authorized Version follows the T.R., *τοὺς ὄντως ἀποφυγόντας*; but most of the best manuscripts have *τοὺς ὁλῶς ἀποφεύγοντας*. This last reading gives a better sense, "Those who are just escaping." The adverb *ὁλῶς* may be understood of time, or, perhaps better, of measure—"escaping by a little, a little way." Those who were "clean escaped" would not be so easily enticed by the false teachers. These are only beginning to escape; they have heard the word with joy, but have no root in themselves; they put their hand to the plough, but they look back. They "that live in error" are the heathen; the unhappy men who are led astray by the false teachers are just escaping from the heathen and from their mode of life. It is possible to understand these last words as a co-ordinate clause, a further description of those who are just escaping. The false teachers entice "those who are just escaping, those who live in error." But the common rendering seems better. The verb translated "live" (*ἀναστρεφόμενοι*) is a favourite word with St. Peter (see 1 Pet. i. 15, 18; ii. 12; iii. 1, 2, 16).

Ver. 19.—*While they promise them liberty; literally, promising.* The words cohere closely with the preceding clause. Liberty was the subject of their great swelling words of vanity; they talked loudly, made a great boast, about liberty. Perhaps they were wrestling to their own destruction (comp. ch. iii. 15, 16) the teaching of St. Paul concerning Christian liberty. St. Paul had spoken of the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21); he had again and again asserted the liberty of Christians in things indifferent (see 2 Cor. iii. 17; 1 Cor. viii. 9; x. 23, etc.). But he had insisted on the paramount duty of giving no offence (1 Cor. viii. 13, etc.), and had earnestly cautioned his converts to "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." There were false teachers who maintained that the true Gnostic was free from moral restraints, in fact, that liberty meant libertinism, liberty to sin (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 16). *They themselves are the servants of corruption.* The construction is still participial, "being" (*ἐπάρχοντες*)—being from the beginning servants of corruption. Those who talked about liberty were themselves all the time the bond-servants, the slaves, of corruption. The

word rendered "corruption" (*φθορά*) includes the sense of "destruction," as in ver. 12 and ch. i. 4 (comp. Rom. viii. 21). For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. "Of whom," or "by whatever;" by Satan, the personal tempter, or by sin, the innate tendency; the Greek word will bear either meaning. Some good manuscripts add "also," which strengthens the assertion; "is he also brought in bondage." St. Peter's teaching corresponds exactly with that of St. Paul in Rom. vi. 16. There is a very close parallel to this clause in the 'Clementine Recognitions' (v. 12; quoted by Dr. Salmon, in his 'Historical Introduction to the Books of the New Testament'): "unusquisque illius fit servus cui se ipse subjecerit."

Ver. 20.—For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world; literally, *for if, having escaped* (*ἀποφυγόντες*). Is St. Peter in this verse still speaking of the false teachers, or of those whom they had enticed (ver. 18)? Bengel, Fronmüller, and others take the latter view, thinking that the *ἀποφυγόντες* ("those having escaped") of this verse must be the same with the *ἀποφεύγοντας* or *ἀποφυγόντας* ("those who are escaping," or "those having escaped") of ver. 18. But it is far more natural to understand St. Peter as continuing his description of the false teachers. The conjunction "for" connects the clause closely with that immediately preceding, and suggests that St. Peter is explaining the term "bondservants or slaves" applied to the false teachers in ver. 19; the repetition of the word "overcome" also seems to imply that the subjects of vers. 20 and 19 are the same. The word for "pollutions" (*μυσμάτια*) occurs only here. In 'Hermas' (Vis., iv. 3. 2) there occurs what may be a reminiscence of this verse: "Ye who have escaped this world." Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Several of the most ancient manuscripts read, "our Lord and Saviour." The word rendered "knowledge" is *ἐπίγνωσις*, full knowledge (comp. ch. i. 2, 3, 8; also Eph. iv. 13; Col. ii. 2; iii. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 4; Rom. i. 28; iii. 20). The preposition is *ἐν*. The full, personal knowledge of the Saviour is the sphere in which the Christian lives; while he abides in that knowledge grace and peace are multiplied unto him, and he is enabled to escape the pollutions of the world. The apostle warns us here that some of those who once enjoyed the blessedness of that sacred knowledge have been entangled in sin and have fallen from grace. They are again entangled therein, and overcome. The first clause is participial; the connection seems to be, "If, having escaped . . . but being again entangled they are overcome." The word

"entangled" (*ἐμπαλίνυτες*) suggests the figure of fishes entangled in the meshes of a net, and seems to point back to the *δεδεδούσιν* ("entice") of vers. 18 and 14; they entice others, but they are entangled themselves (comp. 2 Tim. ii. 4), and become captives and slaves to the pollutions of the world from which they had once escaped. The latter end is worse with them than the beginning; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the last state is become worse with them than the first*. This is a distinct quotation of our Lord's words in Matt. xii. 45 and Luke xi. 26. The evil spirit had been cast out from these men; for a time they had lived in the full knowledge of Christ; but now the evil spirit had returned, and had brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. This spontaneous adoption of our Lord's words without marks of quotation is not like the work of a forger.

Ver. 21.—For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness; better, as in the Revised Version, *for it were better*. (For this use of the imperfect indicative, see Winer, iii. 41. 2, a.) The verb *ἐπεγνώκαί, "to have known,"* here, and the participle *ἐπιγνοῦσιν, "after they have known,"* in the next clause, correspond with the noun *ἐπίγνωσις* of the preceding, and, like that, imply that these unhappy men once had the full knowledge of Christ. (For "the way of righteousness," compare "the way of truth" in ver. 2, and note there.) Then, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. The manuscripts exhibit some slight variations here: the Sinaitic and Alexandrine give "to turn back." By "the holy commandment" St. Peter means the whole moral Law, which the Lord enforced and widened in his sermon on the mount; from this the false teachers turned away. For the word "delivered" (*παράδοθεις*), comp. Jude 3. Like the corresponding word *παράδοσις*, tradition (2 Thess. iii. 6), it implies the oral transmission of Christian teaching in the first ages (comp. also 1 Pet. i. 18).

Ver. 22.—But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The conjunction "but" is omitted in the best manuscripts. The literal translation is, "There hath happened unto them that of the true proverb (*τὸ τῆς παροιμίας*):" comp. Matt. xxi. 21, *τὸ τῆς συκῆς*. The dog is turned to his own vomit again! The construction is participial; literally, *a dog having turned*. See Winer (iii. 45. 6, b), who says that in such proverbial expressions there is no reason for changing the participle into a finite verb: "They are spoken *δεικτικῶς*, as it were, with reference to a case actually observed." St. Peter may be quoting Prov. xxvi. 11; but his words are

very different from the Septuagint Version of that passage; perhaps it is more probable that the expression had become proverbial, and that the apostle is referring to a form of it in common use with his readers; like that which follows, which is not in the Book of Proverbs. And the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire; literally, the sow that had washed to her wallowing; or, according to some ancient

manuscripts, "her wallowing-place." St. Peter compares the lives of the false teachers to the habits of those animals which were regarded as unclean, and were most despised by the Jews (compare our Lord's words in Matt. vii. 6). The words *ἐξέπραμα*, vomit; *κυλισμός*, wallowing; and *βόρβορος*, mire, are not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Warning against false teachers.* I. THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS. 1. *There must be false teachers.* There had been false prophets in Israel, like Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, who flattered Ahab and lured him to his death. There was a traitor among the chosen twelve. "In the visible Church the evil are ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and sacraments." The Lord himself had said that it would be so. "Beware of false prophets," he had said in his sermon on the mount; the apostle echoes the Master's words. It seems very sad that there should be the taint of evil even in the chief places of the Church, that ungodly men should assume the character of teachers, and abuse the form of religion for their selfish and wicked ends. The divisions of the Church, the strange diversities of opinion among Christians, seem a great hindrance to the progress of the gospel, and furnish to some an excuse for unbelief. But when we remember Judas Iscariot, we feel that the Church must be always liable to this great misfortune; if in its very infancy, in the very presence of the incarnate Saviour, one whom he had chosen could betray his Lord for money, it is not to be expected that all those who serve in the ministry of the Church should be pure and holy. False teaching, too, made its appearance very early in the history of the Church. We soon meet with the name of the first heresiarch, Simon Magus; he was one of the converts of Philip the deacon at Samaria, one of the first candidates for confirmation. The existence of false teaching is a great trial of our faith; but, like other trials, it is overruled for good to those who in sincerity seek to know the truth. 2. *The character of their teaching.* All false doctrine is pernicious. The ancient forms of heresy stood in direct opposition to the great truths of Christianity: they denied the distinction of Persons in the one God, or the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the truth of his manhood, or the reality of his precious death; they separated Jesus from the Christ, and the God of Christians from the God of the Old Testament; while others, as apparently the Nicolaitanes of the Revelation, indulged in licentious practices, and maintained that the mind might be pure, though the body was defiled. These and such-like heresies were heresies of destruction; they led to the spiritual destruction both of the teachers and the taught; they were privily brought in, set alongside of the truths of the gospel, and so corrupted the gospel of Christ, and deprived it of its saving power. For these false teachers denied the Master that bought them, some by rejecting either his Divinity or his humanity, or the truth of his atonement, some by the practical denial of a licentious life. He had bought them to be his own: they were redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; and they denied the Master that bought them with that stupendous price. Alas! we have all at some time and in some sense denied him by spiritual sloth and actual sin; we knew that he died that we should die unto sin, and rose again that we should rise to newness of life; and knowing this, we have sinned again and again, yielding ourselves to be servants of sin rather than of Christ. St. Peter himself had thrice denied the Lord; confident in his own steadfastness, he had maintained that he at least would be faithful even unto death; but his courage failed him in the hour of temptation. He must have remembered his own great sin when he wrote these words. He repented; the bitter tears, the holy life that followed, proved the sincerity of his repentance. May we feel the power of the Lord's loving look fixed on us, and be led, like Peter, to repentance.

These false teachers were persisting in their wilfulness, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 3. *The sad results of it.* They will not be without followers; many will be drawn away from the truth, and will follow these false teachers this way and that, to strange heresies or to licentiousness of life. Men banker after novelty; they dislike strictness of life; they are easily led to embrace systems which offer some new phase of error, or permit laxity of morals. And thus the way of truth is evil spoken of. Men rail at Christianity because Christians are split up into so many sects and schools; they speak against religion because so many of its professors live unworthy lives. It was so in the early days of the Church; it is so still. The evil lives of professing Christians give occasion to much scoffing and blasphemy at home; while abroad the progress of the gospel in heathen countries is sadly checked by the same unhappy cause. 4. *The motive of the false teachers.* They do not care for the souls of men; they want their money. Their words are fair, but they do not spring out of strong conviction; they are carefully thought out, cunningly devised to attract attention and to ensnare men. And so they make a gain of their followers, reversing St. Paul's practice, "I seek not yours, but you." For they care nothing for the flock, but only for their own sordid gain. Very terrible is the guilt of those unhappy men who seek the ministry with such miserable objects. Their teaching is but hollow hypocrisy, their whole life is a falsehood. Thus to deal with sacred things is awful exceedingly. 5. *Their danger.* God's sentence of condemnation is already gone out against them; it idly not; it is active and energetic. They have brought in heresies of destruction, doing what they could to destroy the souls of men. But the Lord most holy gave himself to die for those precious souls. These false teachers are doing what they can to frustrate the grace of God, to slay the souls for whom the Lord endured the cross. His wrath, except they repent, must come upon them to the uttermost; that utter destruction which they are bringing upon themselves, slumbereth not; it will fall upon them suddenly and consume them in a moment. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

II. GOD'S WRATH AGAINST THE FALSE TEACHERS: EXAMPLES OF HIS AWFUL JUDGMENTS. 1. *The judgment of the angels that sinned.* Even angels sinned; so strange and awful is the mystery of evil. We must not be surprised that there are sinful men in the visible Church, sometimes, alas! in its highest offices, when we read that there was sin in heaven, that angels of God sinned against their King. The power of evil must be very terrible, wide-reaching, and alluring, if it could draw angels from their allegiance to the Creator. What need have we men to watch and pray, if even angels fell from the grace of God! St. Peter bids us remember their punishment. God spared them not; he is of purer eyes than to behold evil; the sinful cannot abide in his presence. He cast out even angels when they sinned; Tartarus, not heaven, was henceforth their fitting abode; he delivered them to chains of darkness. Holy Scripture gives us no details concerning the sin of the angels or its punishment. We do not know the measure of restraint under which they are now kept; we do not know whether this description applies to all angels who sinned, or only to some. Those evil angels of whom St. Peter is here speaking are under some restraint and suffering some punishment; and they are reserved for the judgment of the great day. Their fall is cited for our warning; if God spared not evil angels, he will not spare evil men. 2. *The judgment of the antediluvians.* Satan, the prince of the devils, brought sin into the world; it spread with fearful rapidity, all flesh corrupted his way upon the earth. God had created man after his own image; but now the wickedness of man was great, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually—an awful picture of the corrupting power of sin. The fixed immutable laws of the Divine government require the punishment of sin. God brought the Flood upon the world of the ungodly. But in wrath he remembered mercy; he guarded Noah, the just man who walked with God, the preacher of righteousness. Noah had proclaimed the blessings of righteousness, the misery of sin; the ark itself had been a silent preacher during the many years which elapsed while it was being built; the long labour showed the faith of Noah, and proved that his preaching came from deep conviction. His neighbours would not listen; but his preaching, though it saved not them, returned into his own bosom: God knoweth how to deliver the godly. Only eight souls were saved in that tremendous visitation. Let us take warning and fear.

3. *The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.* "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." That tremendous overthrow is a solemn warning to the ungodly of all time. God will by no means spare the guilty; if men will pollute God's earth and their own bodies by sin and uncleanness, the heavy wrath of God must sooner or later sweep them into utter ruin. But even that frightful catastrophe showed how precious the souls of the righteous are in the sight of God. Had there been ten such in that wicked city, he would have spared it for the ten's sake. How little the rulers of the earth think that the course of this world is ordered for the sake of the faithful; that empires are saved from ruin, and wars averted, for the salvation of the few chosen souls! Two angels were sent to save the one righteous man in the cities of the plain; they laid hold upon his hand while he lingered, and brought him out with wife and daughters almost against his will. As now there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, so then two holy angels rescued the one servant of God. The Lord knoweth them that are his; he knows them all and each—each individual soul that believes and repents. Lot was not wholly blameless; he had tempted God by exposing himself to temptation; God had not led him there. He saw that the plain of Jordan was well watered everywhere, "even as the garden of the Lord;" he did not consider that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." The children of light ought to be wiser than this; they ought to regard their spiritual interest as far more momentous than their temporal; but alas! the error of Lot is common still. He soon found how grievous his mistake had been. He preserved his integrity; he was saved, yet so as by fire. He passed through a fiery trial of distress and persecution; he lived in the midst of licentiousness and uncleanness; day by day evil sights were present to his eyes, evil sounds polluted his ears; he saw nothing but sin, he heard nothing but filthiness and blasphemy. He tortured his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds; he saw the dishonour done to God; he knew something of the tremendous condemnation that must engulf those ungodly men; his whole soul revolted from the vice and filth among which he lived. He knew that his own act had brought him to Sodom, and he tortured his soul day by day in repentance, we may be sure, for his thoughtless and worldly choice, in anxious dread of coming retribution, in bitter sorrow for the awful danger of those wilful sinners, and for their outrages against the holy Law of God; he was crushed down, worn out with their wicked behaviour and abominable licentiousness. He had greatly erred; but this sorrow of heart, this self-torture, showed that he was sincerely penitent, that he was not corrupted by the fearful wickedness which surrounded him. And the Lord delivered him. 4. *What these examples prove.* God's love and God's justice. (1) He careth for the righteous. He knows them; he knows how to deliver them. He delivered Lot first from the temptations which surrounded him, then from the ruin which overwhelmed the wicked. So now he bids us pray, "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." He can save us from being exposed to temptation, if he knows that the temptation is too great for us; he can deliver us out of the midst of temptation, however strong and overwhelming that temptation may be. We may be set amongst ungodly men, we may have nothing but evil examples all around us; we may seem left alone, like Elijah of old, in a tumult of corruption and rebellion. But "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers;" he can keep his people safe; he can deliver them. Only let them keep themselves pure, and try by his grace to lead a godly life in an ungodly world. (2) He will punish the unrighteous. The day of judgment must come; then shall the King say to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels." Even now the angels that sinned are in Tartarus, in chains of darkness; the men of Sodom and Gomorrah suffer the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7). Whether that punishment is in some cases corrective (as the word *κόλασις* would imply in the language of the Greek philosophers (see note on ver. 9); whether there is a place for repentance in "that prison" where those who once were disobedient are now confined;—this is one of those secret things which belong unto the Lord our God. Holy Scripture seems here and there to give us some gleams of a possible restoration. We may be very thankful for those gracious hints, and cherish for others the hope which they suggest. But we must not be presumptuous; the danger is tremendous. That æonian fire, even if it be corrective, has a very fearful

meaning; and beyond that fire lies the awful day of judgment, for which the souls of the ungodly are now kept in that mysterious "prison" of which so little is revealed.

LESSONS. 1. The Lord bought us; we are his. It is awful guilt to deny him who ransomed us with his most precious blood. 2. It is a fearful sacrifice for an ungodly man to intrude himself into the sacred ministry for the sake of gain. 3. There must be false teachers in the Church. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." 4. God's justice will surely overtake all who sin, whether angels or men. 5. But God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked; he cares for every righteous soul. 6. Learn from the case of Lot that worldliness must lead to suffering in this world, if not in the world to come.

Vers. 10—22.—*Description of the false teachers.* I. THEIR PRESUMPTION. 1. *They despise government.* Living an evil life, they will not endure restraint of any kind. Self-willed and daring, they despise every form of authority, and speak evil of those who are better, or nobler, or loftier than themselves. Reverence is an important element in personal religion. Reverence for God inclines men to obey those who by God's providence are set over them; especially it leads them to respect the beauty of holiness which comes from God, to speak with due reverence of that holiness wherever it is manifested—whether in saints living or departed, or in the angels of God in heaven. 2. *Contrast between their conduct and that of the elect angels.* God's holy angels are very high in power and might, but they do not rail even at the evil. It is their appointed duty to pronounce the sentence of God against the angels that sinned; they do it solemnly and sadly. These presumptuous men rail at the things which they understand not—both at the holy angels and at the fallen angels. It is not good to rail even at these last. Fools make a mock at sin; and the sin of the angels, as it is most mysterious, so it is also most awful. Men often talk lightly and idly about the devil and his wiles. Holy Scripture teaches us a very different lesson. We are engaged in a lifelong struggle against him. The conflict is deadly, awful; its issues are most momentous—life or death, heaven or hell. The soldiers of the cross must be in earnest, for they "wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness." To talk lightly of the enemy, to jest about matters so tremendous, is not only unseemly; it is dangerous. It puts men off their guard, and exposes them to the insidious assaults of the tempter. Thus these wicked men, of whom St. Peter writes, talked wildly and presumptuously about things above their comprehension. They behaved like irrational creatures in the presence of great peril, and their end must be destruction. This is the due reward of their unrighteousness, and this they shall receive. They had counted on far other rewards; but the master to whom they had sold themselves is a liar. He cheats his wretched slaves; he lures them to the forbidden fruit. It seems pleasant to the eye and good for food, but it proves to be a deadly poison (see reading adopted by the Revised Version).

II. THEIR SENSUALITY. 1. *Their gluttony and drunkenness.* These men loved luxurious living. They were worse than their heathen neighbours. The heathen could wait for the night, the usual time for banquetings. They began their revelry early; they gave the business hours of the day (comp. Horace, 'Odes,' l. i. 20, "*Partem solido demere de die*") to self-indulgence. They joined, it seems, in the love-feasts of the Christians, but their love was only a pretence. As far as they were concerned, the love-feasts were but hollow hypocrisies, occasions for excess. They were spots and blemishes on the assemblies of the godly. Christians must imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb without blemish and without spot. They must be strictly temperate in all things; for temperance is one of the blessed fruits of the Spirit, while drunkenness is one of those works of the flesh which destroy the soul. 2. *Their impurity.* The Lord Jesus Christ teaches his followers to be pure in heart. These men indulged openly in vice. Some of their successors even taught that, as the sea is not polluted by the impurities which it receives, so the true Gnostic might take his fill of sensual pleasure and yet not be defiled. It was no great thing, some of them said, to abstain from lust if it had not been tasted; the triumph was to live in sensual enjoyments, and yet to keep the mind untainted by the defilement of the body. The holy apostle sternly condemns this horrible heresy. These men, he says, are enticing souls to ruin. They are

fishers of men, but not with the gospel net; they hide their deadly hook with an alluring bait. But the end of these things is death; for impurity is deadly sin in the sight of God. The body of the Christian is a temple of God the Holy Ghost; and "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

III. THEIR COVETOUSNESS. 1. *Their example.* Not Christ the Lord, not his holy apostles, who could say, as St. Peter once said, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee;" but Balaam the son of Beor—that unhappy man who "heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High," and yet loved the wages of unrighteousness; who was a prophet, and yet mad and foolish; who could pray, "May I die the death of the righteous," and yet tried, and in some measure succeeded, to entice the people of God to deadly sin, and himself perished miserably among the enemies of the Lord. His guilt was awful exceedingly. He sought to destroy souls for the sake of his own wretched gain. So it was with these false teachers. The love of money, the root of all evil, had taken possession of their heart; they shrank from no sin, if only they might gratify that tyrant passion. 2. *The result.* They became trained in covetousness. They were like athletes, practised wrestlers; but the prize which was always before their eyes was, not the crown of glory that fadeth not away, but those poor earthly treasures which fall away from the dying man, and leave the unhappy soul desolate in the hour of its utmost need. For this prize, the reward of unrighteousness, they sought, like Balaam, to lure souls to ruin. Therefore were they children of curse; for the souls of men are very precious in the sight of God, and his awful curse must light upon the heads of those wicked men—all the more intensely wicked if, like Balaam, they hold sacred offices—who cause Christ's little ones to stumble and fall, and destroy the souls for whom the Lord Jesus died.

IV. THEIR TEACHING. 1. *It is vain.* They are wells without water. God is the Fountain of living waters. True believers become, in a secondary sense, fountains also. The water that he giveth is in them a well of water springing up unto eternal life. These men exhibit the appearance of wells; they profess to be teachers, but there is no living water in them. They have none themselves; they cannot give it to others. They are like clouds that promise rain, but are driven away by the wind, and fail to satisfy the thirsty land. They speak great swelling words, but they are words of vanity, empty and profitless, not like the words of eternal life which the Lord Jesus hath; not like the word of reconciliation which he hath committed to his faithful disciples. 2. *It is dangerous.* For those high-sounding phrases cover an evil life. They gather followers round them by means of their specious eloquence, and then entice them to destruction by wicked example. They bait their hook with their own licentious practices, and sometimes, alas! succeed in destroying souls that were just escaping from evil influences. They promise them liberty, but the liberty of which they boast is not that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free—the liberty which recognizes the freedom of the Christian within the sphere of things indifferent, but even within that sphere carefully avoids giving offence to the consciences of others, and sensitively shrinks even from the appearance of evil. Their liberty is libertinism. It is freedom from moral restraints; it is a revolt against the holy Law of God; it is a lie, for it contradicts both the moral instincts of human nature and the truth of God. It is not liberty; for those only are free indeed whom the Son of God makes free in that service which is perfect freedom. This false liberty is really slavery, bondage to sin.

V. THEIR MISERABLE CONDITION. 1. *They are slaves.* They talk loudly about liberty, but they are slaves themselves. They have yielded themselves up to the evil one; he has corrupted their whole nature, and uses them to corrupt others. They are slaves of corruption, overcome by it, and brought into bondage to it. Vice allures men at first. It offers a deceitful pleasure; it makes the restraints of virtue seem irksome; it presents a show of freedom. It entices men; then it ensnares them. Now and then they offer a feeble resistance: it draws its net tighter and closer; their struggles become continually fainter; it holds them secure; they are captive. They find out, when it is too late, the deceitfulness of sin. The false pleasure becomes real misery. They feel it, but their strength is gone. They are overcome; they are in bondage from which they cannot escape. Such is the pretended freedom of vicious men. Only those whom the truth makes free are free indeed. 2. *Perhaps some of them were once free.* Christians have escaped from the bondage of sin. Once, it may be, they loved

the world and the things that are in the world; once the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life filled their heart. The moral miasma of the corruption that is in the world was defiling their soul; but they escaped, drawn by the powerful attraction of the cross. They rose into a purer atmosphere; they lived in the knowledge of Christ. The full knowledge (*ἐπίγνωσις*) of Christ is the very sphere in which the true Christian dwells. Within the range of that knowledge grace and peace are multiplied unto him (ch. i. 2). That knowledge is eternal life (John xvii. 3); it more than compensates for the loss of all that the world can give (Phil. iii. 8); it is sweet, precious, holy, beyond the power of language to express. Those who have that blessed knowledge escape from the pollutions of the world. Sensual pleasures have no hold upon those who realize the holy joy of communion with the Lord. But they must watch and pray, and keep themselves in the love of God. It seems, indeed, almost impossible that any who have known the Lord should fall away into sin; but "the heart of man is deceitful above all things." Satan is ever on the watch with his insidious temptations, and sometimes, when all seems safe, the danger comes. Some of those who had escaped from the snare of the evil one are again entangled in it, and, alas! so entangled that escape becomes almost impossible. They are overcome; they are captives, brought back into utter bondage. Judas, like St. Peter, had forsaken all and followed Christ; and yet, oh strange and awful mystery of the deceitfulness of sin! he was covetous, like these false teachers; he sold his Lord for money. And if one of the chosen twelve who lived in familiar intercourse with Christ, who saw every day that gracious face, and heard those words such as never man spake, and witnessed his many works of power and love,—if one of those could fall completely under the dominion of Satan, how jealously ought we to watch against the first suggestions of the tempter! how carefully should we take heed lest we fall when we most seem to stand! It is impossible, we may whisper to ourselves. We who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can have no taste for the pollutions of the world. But Scripture tells us it is not impossible; experience tells us it is not impossible. "What I say unto you"—such is the emphatic warning of the Lord—"I say unto all, Watch." All need that warning. The holiest saints of God do not count themselves to have already apprehended, to be already perfect: they watch. 3. *Now their case is more hopeless than ever.* The last state is worse than the first. Satan had them once; now he has them again; he will not let them go. They once knew the way of righteousness, but, alas! that knowledge, now lost, only serves to deepen their guilt and to harden their heart all the more. For sin against light is more deadly far than the sin of ignorance; and, the greater the light, the deeper is the sin of those who love darkness rather than light. For all knowledge involves responsibility; and, as the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is blessed exceedingly, so to sin against that knowledge must imply an intense blackness of guilt. It is like the sin of Judas, who was one of the twelve. The man who thus sins against light "hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace." He was once unclean, but he was washed, but he was sanctified (1 Cor. vi. 11), and now, alas! he has returned to wallow in the mire of uncleanness. Holy Scripture says of such men, in words of most awful but most just severity, "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

LESSONS. 1. Christians must avoid the sins of the false teachers; they must not despise dominion, they must not rail. 2. Christians must be strictly temperate; they must hate uncleanness. 3. Covetousness is deadly sin, especially in teachers of religion. 4. Christians must be on their guard against false teachers; high-sounding words and loud talk about liberty often lead men astray. 5. To sin against light, to fall from grace, involves most awful danger. "Be not high-minded, but fear."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Denying the Master.* Neither our Lord Jesus nor his apostles indulged in sanguine expectations and glowing predictions concerning the immediate results of the proclamation of the gospel. It was well understood in the early Church, by all but

fanatics, that the difficulties with which Christianity had to contend were very formidable, and that, added to those encountered from without, were others—more insidious and dangerous—arising from within. Of these, false teachers, corrupters of doctrine, and preachers of licentiousness in the name of the holy Saviour, are denounced as proofs of the power of sin, and as signs of a coming judgment.

I. THE WAYS IN WHICH PROFESSING CHRISTIANS DENY THEIR MASTER. 1. Some take an unscriptural and dishonouring view of his nature, and deny him by denying his claims to Divine dignity and authority. From the early Gnostics onwards there were those who assailed Christ's account of himself, and his inspired apostles' account of him. It is well known that many of the early heresies related to the Person of Christ, and that early Councils were occupied with defining dogmatically the Divine and human natures. By way of opposition and correction, it may be said that to errors of the kind referred to we are indebted for our precious heritage, the Nicene Creed, in which orthodox doctrine was finally and sufficiently fixed. Still, the general determination of truth is no bar to the continuance of sin and error; and there has been, perhaps, no age in which there have not arisen either individuals or communities who have denied their Master. 2. Some repudiate Christ's rightful authority. There are many who have not the theological interest which would lead them to discuss Christ's nature, who nevertheless resent the claim advanced on his behalf to be the Legislator and Judge of human society. The Church, on the one hand, the individual reason on the other, may be put into competition with the Lord Christ. 3. Some deny Christ by practically disobeying his precepts. To such as these Jesus referred when he asked, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Profession of allegiance only renders real rebellion the more hateful to our Lord.

II. THE UNREASONABLENESS AND GUILT OF THOSE WHO THUS DENY THEIR MASTER. 1. In view of the claim established by redemption, such are guilty of base ingratitude. The introduction of the clause, "the Master *that bought them*," gives point to the condemnation. They who deny Christ deny One who lived, suffered, and died for them, and whom accordingly they ought to regard and treat with a tender and reverential gratitude. They are like enfranchised slaves turning round upon their liberator, speaking of him with scorn and derision, treating him with neglect and indifference, if not with hatred and hostility. 2. In view of their own profession of subjection and indebtedness to him, there is gross inconsistency. 3. In view of the doom declared against deniers of Christ, their conduct is the uttermost degree of infatuation. They bring upon themselves swift destruction. The time shall come when they who deny him shall be denied by him.—J. R. T.

Ver. 5.—"A preacher of righteousness." In the Book of Genesis we read that Noah was a righteous and blameless man, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and walked with God. Josephus, who preserves, it would seem, an old Hebrew tradition, witnesses not only to Noah's just and pious character, but to his ministry to the sinful generation among whom his lot was cast. After describing the sinfulness of the people, Josephus proceeds, "But Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and, being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and acts for the better; but, seeing that they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures, he was afraid they would kill him." The office and ministry ascribed to Noah are required in every generation, and God ever raises up faithful men whom he empowers to discharge amongst their contemporaries the duties devolving upon the preachers of righteousness.

I. THE NECESSITY FOR PREACHERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. This appears from a consideration of man's nature. Human beings are constituted with moral capabilities and with faculties to be employed in a moral life. Intelligence, conscience, and will are the prerogative of men among the inhabitants of this earth. And even the most degraded, those most nearly allied in habits to the brutes, are susceptible of elevation in the scale of moral life. He who examines, fairly and completely, the nature of man must admit that he is made for righteousness. 2. And the requirement of God corresponds with the nature of man. God calls men to righteousness, holds them responsible to himself, as the righteous Governor and Judge, for obedience or disobedience to his commands. 3. Yet it is not to be questioned that the ideal of human character and conduct has not

been reached, that unrighteousness has prevailed amongst men, that in the highest sense "there is none that doeth righteousness"—none who has no failings to acknowledge, none who has a perfect obedience to present.

II. THE IMPORT OF THE PREACHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. The standard of righteousness has to be maintained. It would be base indeed on the part of the preacher were he to substitute an inferior standard for the Law of God, were he to accommodate his teaching to the corrupt nature and the ungodly life of the sinful. The Law, which is holy, just, and good, must be upheld in all its purity and in all its rigidity. And this may be done with the assurance that the conscience, even of the iniquitous, will in all likelihood acknowledge that the right is a higher and better standard than the agreeable or the customary, however human infirmity may have practically adopted and followed the latter. Every minister of religion is bound to insist upon a scriptural rule of right, to apply the laws of morality to all parts of human nature, to all relations of human society. 2. The violators of the Law of righteousness have to be rebuked. Probably the reference in the text is especially to this aspect of the preacher's service. It is not enough to say, "This is what men should be and do!" It is necessary to address to the disobedient the remonstrances, the rebukes, the warnings, which are authorized by the Word of God. Expostulation, reproach, and admonition are not the most agreeable or the most easy parts of a preacher's work; yet they are indispensable, and are often most valuable in their effects. Many faithful preachers have, like Noah, to lament that their rebukes and warnings seem to have been in vain; yet they have the satisfaction of having done their duty and delivered their soul. 3. The restoration of righteousness by means of the Divine Mediator has to be proclaimed. There is a righteousness which is by the Law; but there is also a higher righteousness which is by faith in Christ unto those who believe, and this is exactly adapted to the needs of sinful men, who upon repentance and faith may become "just with God." It is the privilege and the delight of the Christian preacher to exhibit the beauty and appropriateness of this spiritual righteousness, and to invite men to use those means by which they may secure this for themselves.

III. THE METHODS OF THE PREACHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. The most natural and obvious method is by the utterances of the living voice, the organ by which, according to the constitution imposed upon man, truth is communicated and impression produced by the rousing of deep and divinely implanted emotion. 2. Yet there are other means of preaching righteousness, for which some may be qualified who are not gifted with effective speech. The press affords in these days an outlet for much consecrated Christian energy, and most important is it, when gifted authors are found endeavouring to lower by their writings the standard of human morality, that Christian thinkers and writers should wield their pen, in all departments of literature, in the service of righteousness and of God. 3. In any case righteousness may be, and should be, preached in the impressive and effective language of the life.

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE PREACHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. Such preaching must be witness of condemnation against those who refuse it. 2. But to those who accept and obey the Divine message it is the means of salvation and of life eternal.—J. R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Deliverance and condemnation.* No human government is perfect. The knowledge of earthly rulers is limited, and they are utterly incapable of discriminating among individual cases; and it often happens that they have not the power to do all that is desirable and expedient. In contradistinction from the necessary imperfections of human governments is the perfect adaptation and sufficiency of that which is Divine. "The Lord knoweth" how to rule and to judge, for his wisdom and his equity are alike faultless; and his power is as irresistible as his knowledge is all-embracing.

I. THE DISTINCTION IN HUMAN CHARACTER DRAWN BY THE LORD AND JUDGE OF MANKIND. Men discriminate often upon unsound principles, always with insufficient data. They are guided very much in their estimate of their fellow-men by such considerations as social position and social acceptableness. They cannot take into their deliberation the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hence the inadequacy of all human attempts to create a moral distinction among men. Now, according to St. Peter, our Divine Ruler distinguishes men into (1) the godly, or those animated by true piety, by a reverence for God's Law, and a responsive appreciation of God's love;

and (2) the unjust, or those who have no respect for the law of rectitude, human or Divine.

II. THE CORRESPONDING DISTINCTION OF TREATMENT ON THE PART OF THE LORD AND JUDGE OF MANKIND. 1. The godly are not exempted from temptation, but are delivered out of it. In illustration of this principle of the Divine government St. Peter refers to Noah, whose lot was cast in a generation of sinners and scoffers, but who was preserved from yielding to the evil solicitations to which he was exposed; and to Lot, who, though vexed with the lascivious life and lawless deeds of his wicked neighbours, was yet delivered from participation in their guilt and their doom. Certain it is that Divine providence allows the purest and the best to come into constant contact with the bond-slaves of sin, doubtless in order that their virtue may be tested and their character strengthened. But never does God abandon those who confide in his care, and who comply with his conditions of safety. The means by which he protects and delivers his own are known to himself, and he makes use of them in his own time. Thus, however formidable may be the temptations to which the godly are exposed, a way of escape is made for them, and they are delivered from the hand of the enemy. 2. The unrighteous cannot escape just retribution. It does not matter how high is their station, in what esteem they are held by their fellow-creatures, what is their power and their skill. All who defy and all who forget God must surely learn that they are subject to the control of infinite justice, administered by omnipotence. The apostle, in the context, adduces illustrations of retributive righteousness, and reminds his readers that the rebel angels were cast into Tartarus, that a flood was brought upon the ancient world of the ungodly, and that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were turned into ashes. For all impenitent sinners there is punishment, even here and now; and the Scriptures reveal the approach of a day of judgment in which God shall render to every man according to his works, and in which those who have exalted themselves against the holy Supreme shall awake to "shame and everlasting contempt."—J. R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The sinner's hire.* In the course of his denunciation of abandoned sinners St. Peter makes use in two places of this remarkable expression, "the wages of unrighteousness," or "the hire of wrong-doing"—in the fifteenth verse as something loved and sought by Balaam, and in the twelfth verse as that which shall be the portion of the impenitent transgressor. The idea was one which evidently took very forcible possession of the apostle's mind, and, however little it may be in harmony with the sentimental and purblind type of religion too prevalent in our time, it is an idea in perfect harmony with the stern and righteous government of God. Upon the suggestion of the twofold application of the thoughts in this chapter, it may be well to treat this serious and awful subject under two aspects.

I. THE SINNER'S ILLUSION AS TO HIS WORK AND HIS WAGES. Life is represented as a bondman's service, and in any case the representation is appropriate and just. But experience of human character and history leads to the conclusion, which coincides with the teaching of revelation, that men constantly engage and continue in the service of sin under a double illusion. 1. They imagine the work which they undertake to be easy and agreeable. By many devices the tyrant sin disguises the evils of his service, and induces his victims to continue in it to their souls' injury and ruin. The pleasures of sin are for a season, and they who indulge in them are like those who eat of the fair apples of the Dead Sea, which turn to ashes in the mouth. 2. They imagine the reward of the service to be liberal and satisfactory. As Balaam lusted for the gold which was to be his hire, as Judas clutched the thirty pieces of silver which were the price of his Master's blood, so the bondmen of ungodliness deceive themselves with the imagination that the reward they will partake will enrich and satisfy their nature. Whether it be wealth or pleasure, power or praise, they set their hearts upon it, and it becomes to them as the supreme good. In such an illusion years of sin and folly may be passed.

II. THE SINNER'S AWAKENING TO A SENSE OF THE REALITY AS TO BOTH THE WORK AND THE WAGES OF SIN. 1. The service is, sooner or later, found to be mere slavery. The chains may be gilded, but they are chains for all that. The dwelling may have the semblance of a palace, but it is in fact a prison. The master's speech may be honeyed, but it is the speech of a tyrant, cruel and relentless. 2. The hire of wrong-

doing is not payment, but punishment. "The way of transgressors" is found to be "hard." "The wages of sin is death."

APPLICATION. Let these considerations lead the sinner to forsake the tyrant's service, repudiate the tyrant's claims, and fling back the tyrant's hire.—J. R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Slaves promise liberty!* 1. In denouncing the delusions promoted by false teachers, St. Peter passes from invective to irony. He exhibits in this verse, not merely the impiety, but the very absurdity, of sinners, who, themselves enslaved to sin, are so unreasonable as to offer freedom to their dupes and victims! The language which he uses gives an insight into religious truths of the highest practical importance.

I. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN IS FREE FROM SIN, AND IS IN BONDAGE TO CHRIST. There was a time when he was the captive, the thrall of error, perhaps of vice or of crime. From that bondage Divine grace delivered him. But, in renouncing the serfdom to sin, he became the Lord's freedman. Yet the highest use the Christian makes of his freedom is to submit himself to the holiest and the kindest of Masters. Even apostles felt it an honour to subscribe themselves bondservants of the Lord Christ. The will of the Saviour is the law of the saved.

II. THE FALSE CHRISTIAN IS FREE FROM CHRIST, AND IN BONDAGE TO SIN. He whose religion is only a name may call himself Christ's, but in fact he has renounced the yoke that is easy and the burden that is light; he has given himself over to work the will of the tyrant who has usurped the throne which is by right Divine the proper inheritance of the Son of God. He may boast his liberty, but the boast is empty and vain.

III. THE PROMISE OF LIBERTY ON THE PART OF SIN'S SLAVES IS FALLACIOUS AND VAIN. In politics it has always been common for those bound by their own lusts and vanity to make loud professions of liberty, and to invite men to partake of its delights. These were the men of whom Milton said they

"Bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry, 'Liberty!'
For who loves *that* must first be wise and good."

These were the men who led Dr. Johnson to denounce "patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel." These were the men whose conduct during the French Revolution led to the famous exclamation, "O Liberty, what crimes have been wrought in thy name!" It has been, and is, the fashion with socialists and communists, anarchists and nihilists, to sing the praises of freedom; but the "mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty," will have no homage from such professed admirers as these. What they want is licence for their own sins and scope for their own vanity. So has it ever been, and so is it still, in religion. In the early ages of the Church the Gnostics professed to be wise, to have found the secret of spiritual freedom; but in too many cases these professions were a cloak for licentiousness. Again and again in the history of Christendom have there occurred outbursts of fanaticism, of which the text supplies explanation. The antinomian is a "bondservant of corruption;" but who so loud as he in the proclamation of liberty, in the promise to all men of a life of spiritual freedom? But freedom is worthless unless it be freedom from sin's vile, debasing chains, unless it be the practical repudiation of the tyranny of the prince of darkness. There is a servitude which it is an honour for a free man to accept; it is the service of Christ, which is "perfect liberty."—J. R. T.

Ver. 21.—"The way of righteousness." By this expression the Apostle Peter denotes the same course of moral life as he designates in previous verses "the way of truth" and "the right way." The epithet "righteous" here employed to define and describe what in the New Testament is sometimes called "the way," is peculiarly suggestive and instructive.

I. IT IS THE WAY DESIGNED BY A RIGHTEOUS GOD. There is nothing that more signally distinguishes the true God from the deities of the heathen than his inflexible righteousness. His character is righteous; his works and the administration of his moral government are righteous; the laws which he promulgates for the direction of

his subjects are righteous. "Righteous and true are thy ways, O thou King of the ages!"

II. IT IS A WAY CONSTRUCTED BY A RIGHTEOUS SAVIOUR. The execution of God's righteous plans for man's salvation was by him entrusted to his own Son. In Christ God appears before men as "a just God and a Saviour." The mediatorial dispensation in all its provisions is distinguished by righteousness; it is a revelation of righteousness as much as of love.

III. IT IS A WAY WHICH AVOIDS THE PATHS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. This, it may be objected, is tautological. But it is well to insist upon the fact that there can be no fellowship between light and darkness; that however professed travellers in the narrow way may disgrace their profession by unrighteous conduct, the religion of Christ can tolerate no such practices. Other religions may require only verbal assent or ceremonial conformity, but Christianity demands righteousness of life and, what is more, righteousness of heart. "Except your righteousness," says the Founder of our faith, "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

IV. IT IS THE WAY TRODDEN BY RIGHTEOUS MEN. The interest and attractiveness of a road depend in no small measure upon those who are its habitual frequenters. Judged by this test, the way of righteousness has attractions far beyond any other. It is the path which has for centuries been trodden by the great and good. The stimulus and encouragement afforded by the noblest and the best society are there enjoyed.

V. IT IS THE WAY WHICH LEADS TO THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH WHEREIN DWELLETH RIGHTEOUSNESS. As is the road, so is its termination, its destination. If righteousness has a hard battle to fight for existence here on earth, it is comforting and inspiring to be assured that the state to which we are advancing is one where unrighteousness is altogether and for ever unknown.

APPLICATION. 1. Seek and find this way. 2. Having entered upon it, turn not back, but persevere even unto the end.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1—22.—*False teachers.* Archdeacon Farrar here finds "the burning lava of the apostle's indignation." The chapter is indeed in a style that well suits its theme. It is strong, not to say rough and rugged; wild, not to say weird and ghastly. It might be interesting to deal with the many metaphors he here employs, but probably an analysis of the whole chapter will better convey its teaching.

I. THE DOCTRINES OF FALSE TEACHERS. They are not definitely denoted, but one word probably indicates them all: "heresies" (ver. 1)—self-chosen doctrines, developing into endless varieties. 1. Self-indulgence of intellect. 2. Self-indulgence of passion. They are similar to the corresponding sins with which Paul and Jude deal in their Epistles.

II. THE CONDUCT OF FALSE TEACHERS. More is said here, much more, of their conduct than of their error. Their conduct is described: 1. In its relation to their teaching. That conduct is (1) cunning (ver. 1); (2) treacherous (ver. 3); (3) daringly insolent (ver. 11); (4) covetous (vers. 14—16); (5) deluding (ver. 19), promising liberty: "O Liberty, what crimes have been wrought in thy name!" 2. In its relation to their own life. It is (1) bitterly disappointing (ver. 17); (2) enslaved and enslaving (ver. 19); (3) degraded and yet ever degrading (ver. 22).

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF FALSE TEACHERS. 1. It is sure (ver. 3). Lingereth not, is not idle, slumbereth not; justice is sleepless. 2. It is in *harmony* with God's past dealings. The apostle cites other ages and other worlds. Their punishment is in harmony with God's dealings (1) with angels; (2) with the ancient world—Noah, Sodom, Gomorrah.

IV. THE CHIEF SIN OF FALSE TEACHERS. Its central evil is "denying even the Master that bought them." 1. In itself most guilty. Peter's memory burnt that lesson into him. 2. Leads to terrible woe (vers. 1—21). "The man who turns his back on well-known ways of righteousness, and leads others from those ways, is of all men in the most pitiable and terrible condition.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—22.—*False teachers.* I. OBJECTS OF PUNISHMENT. 1. *On account of their anti-Christian character.* "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among

you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." The connection of thought seems to be the following: There were prophets that "spoke from God;" but there arose false prophets also among the people, i.e. in ancient Israel; as in that which was typified by ancient Israel, viz. in the New Testament Church, there were to be false teachers. Where, then, those teachers are, there is generally an imperfect condition of religious society which gives rise to them. Under similar conditions, similar manifestations may be expected. The false teachers rising up *among* them ("of your own selves shall men arise," Acts xx. 30), these would have the opportunity of (literally) *bringing in by the side of*, i.e. by the side of the authoritative teachings, their heresies. The authoritative teachings they would not openly seek to combat; for that might lead to their being silenced, even in their speedy ejection from the Christian communities. Their policy would rather be to keep up connection with the Christian circle, and to bring in a *spurious Christianity*, having resemblance in form, but denial in substance. The authoritative teachings were of a saving nature; what these would seek to bring in would be *heresies of destruction*, i.e. not put forward with the professed intent to destroy, but from their nature fitted to conduct men to destruction. Their heresies would be soul-destroying; for they would "deny even the Master that bought them." The language is altogether remarkable. Christ is regarded as having paid the purchase money, which is not here mentioned, but is to be understood, according to 1 Pet. i. 19, of his precious blood. By that buying he has become Possessor and *Master*, i.e. with the right to command. The startling thing is that he is represented as the Master, through purchase or redemption, of the heretical workers of destruction. Nothing could more signally set forth the world-wide character of the atonement. The Master that bought them they, having once acknowledged, were to deny, to put away from them, to supplant by a counterfeit Christ. But it is dangerous to deny Christ; by doing so, in the counter-working of providence, they would only "bring upon themselves swift destruction." It is true that Christ represents the Divine slowness to wrath. Peter knew that every denial does not bring instantaneous destruction. It is only when it has been made abundantly clear that the denial is the settled habit of the mind, that swift, or rather *sudden*, destruction descends. 2. *On account of their sensuality followed to the prejudice of Christianity.* "And many shall follow their lascivious doings: by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of." It was to be an aggravating element in their punishment, that they were to be successful in spreading immorality. *Sensuality* is the charge which Peter brings up again and again. They were to allow themselves illicit gratification; and their example would be followed by many. This would be greatly to the prejudice of Christianity; for it would lead to its being misrepresented as pointing out the *way of truth*, i.e. the way of life, corresponding to the truth. Men outside, unable to distinguish between what properly belonged to it and what did not properly belong to it, would very naturally say of it, from what they saw in its professed representatives, that it encouraged licentiousness. 3. *On account of their mercenary character.* "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." Money is needed for the purchase of illicit pleasure. Covetousness was to surround the false teachers as an atmosphere. Continually breathing it, they were as teachers to use *feigned words*—not bound fast to the truth, but artfully adapted to man's prejudices. The end of teaching is to do good; it was to be to the disgrace of the false teachers that they were to have as their end to make merchandise of those over whom they obtained influence. But these teachers, who were to add to their other faults their being mercenary, would not go unpunished. Peter, in impassioned language, represents punishment as already on the way to them. "Their sentence now from of old lingereth not," i.e. the sentence against such has gone forth from of old, and, not delaying, it will in its course overtake them; and "their destruction slumbereth not," i.e. not delayed by sleep, as it were, it will follow hard on the sentence. Let them not think, then, that they will escape.

II. ANCIENT EXAMPLES OF PUNISHMENT. 1. *Stated conditionally.* (1) *The fallen angels.* "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." This was the most ancient example that there was to go back upon. Peter does not say what

the sin of the angels was. Jude is more informing, and suggests that they did not place the right value on their own principality, on their proper habitation. There was something else that they placed before what they had, and, reaching after it, they fell from their high estate. God, it is said here, *spared* them not *when they sinned*, near though they were to him, but cast them down to Tartarus. This is, strangely, a word connected with heathen mythology, and is to be understood of that division of Hades which is the place of preliminary punishment, as distinguished from Gehenna, which is the place of final punishments. In Tartarus God "committed them to pits of darkness." There was an irony in the appointment. They loved not the brightness in which there was no feeling of being walled in; and so they were cast down to be walled in on every side by gloom. In Tartarus they are waiting judgment; and if they are imprisoned in gloom before judgment, what must their state after judgment be! There is no relieving of the picture here as in the other two examples that follow. (2) *The Flood. The dark background.* "And spared not the ancient world." This ancient example comes home to us, as relating to our own flesh and blood. It is the most disastrous thing that has happened in the history of the race; it was so extensive and overwhelming in its sweep. God spared not the ancient world. Men multiplied on the earth for sixteen or seventeen centuries, and then the Flood swept them away as though they had never been. *The darkness relieved.* "But preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly." The antediluvians were *ungodly*, i.e. had lost a salutary impression even of the existence of God, and had cast off Divine restraints. They did eat and drink; they lived a life within the world of sense. There was one notable exception. This was Noah, who is here styled "a preacher of righteousness," i.e. in the midst of the prevailing ungodliness he had so much of the fear of God on his mind as to credit and proclaim, by word and act, that, if they did not repent of their ungodliness, the righteousness of God would be manifested against them in their destruction by water. And so God preserved Noah, and seven others on account of their connection with him, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. (3) *The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. The dark background.* "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly." The description in Genesis is, "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities." Peter marks punitiveness in the completeness of the work of destruction. God turned the cities into *ashes*, and thus punitively *overthrew* them, i.e. so that they were obliterated as cities. Nor was this an exceptional procedure. God dealt thus with the cities because of their ungodliness, and he dealt thus with them that the ungodly of after-times might know what to expect from ungodliness. *The darkness relieved.* "And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)." There is not brought into view the fact that Lot made choice of Sodom from considerations of worldly advantage, and without considering religious privileges. He was to blame for being in Sodom, and yet, though he should never have been there, he is called *righteous Lot*, i.e. one who strived to live according to Divine rule. He was righteous in the midst of those who had no regard for law either human or Divine, as seen especially in their sensual behaviour. This had a wearing-down or wearing-out effect on righteous Lot. That righteous man, dwelling among them, was forced to see and hear things which tormented his righteous soul, and so he was worn out. When one has put himself in a wrong position, it is often difficult to get out of it. But because Lot did not allow his godly sensibilities to be blunted, God, with a certain sharpness, effected for him a deliverance. 2. *Conclusion drawn.* (1) *The bright side.* "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." Peter has been dwelling on the bright side, so as to throw the thought out of form; he now puts the bright side into the conclusion. Noah and Lot were godly; their temptation lay in their being in the neighbourhood of the ungodly. But the Lord found ways and means of delivering them; the one deliverance involving the preservation of the human family, and the other deliverance signifying rectification of position. The Lord that delivered Noah and Lot out of their temptation will deliver all that, like

them, are godly out of their temptation, whatever it is, when he sees it to be for his glory. (2) *The dark side.* "And to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." Three classes have been instanced of the unrighteous, *i.e.* those not right toward God. The Lord found ways and means of checking them; so all like them will be checked. The time will come when God will place them under punishment, to be kept under it unto the day of judgment. Let us, then, be warned off the rocks on which men long ago perished and are perishing still.

III. OBJECTS OF PUNISHMENT. 1. *On account of sensuality.* "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement." This is connected with the thought of punishment. The teachers are now thought of as already present. The evil had already commenced, though it had not reached its height. They are singled out for punishment on account of their walking after the flesh in the lust whose object is that which defiles. 2. *On account of lawlessness.* (1) *The lawlessness described.* "And despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they tremble not to rail at dignities." They are next singled out for punishment on account of their lawlessness. There is the same association in Jude. They "despise" (Jude's word means "set at nought") dominion or lordship (especially in Christ). In their objection to be ruled they go great lengths ("daring"), making self their rule ("self-willed"). In their presumption and self-assertion they tremble not—though it should make them tremble—to rail at dignities (adopting Jude's expression). The reference seems to be to dignities belonging to the heavenly world. They pay no regard, in what they say, to rank bestowed by God. (2) *The lawlessness condemned.* "Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, bring not a railing judgment against them before the Lord." Here Peter seems to assume acquaintance with what Jude says. Michael the archangel, with all self-restraint, and having regard to the original dignity of Satan, in contending with him simply said, "The Lord rebuke thee." Peter brings forward the angels (good) generally as greater in might and power than men are, and asserts that they do not retaliate upon the railers in what they bring up before the Lord. (3) *The lawlessness punished.* "But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals, to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing." Here Peter flashes out against the false teachers. He thinks of irrational brutes, born with nothing higher than an animal nature, to be taken and destroyed. They are also irrational in railing in matters beyond them, and shall have a similar fate. In their destruction as responsible beings they shall surely be destroyed, getting their reward in wrong inflicted on them for wrong done by them (in railing). 3. *On account of luxurious living.* "Men that count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, spots and blemishes, revelling in their love-feasts while they feast with you." The reference is to luxurious living. Such living shows itself chiefly in banquets whose natural time is the night. To regard banquetting in the daytime with peculiar zest was the sign of a very diseased state of mind. It was a more serious thing to connect luxurious living with the love-feasts. That made the false teachers spots of dirt, blemishes, at those holy gatherings at which they were present, while they feasted with Christ's people. 4. *On account of sensuality.* "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unsteadfast souls." There was the *sensual look*, apparently, even at the love-feasts. This was accompanied by *restlessness in sin*, reflected also in the eye. Those to whom the bait was held out, and who became their prey, were souls not yet established in faith and the pursuit of pure pleasure—men, according to the after-representation, only a few paces from heathenism. 5. *On account of covetousness.* (1) *How their covetousness is regarded.* "Having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing." Here, again, greed follows on sensuality. Spiritual gymnastic is needed to counteract the greed of the heart; gymnastic was employed by these teachers to the increase of the greed of the heart. As greed increased, the blight came down on their spiritual nature. The ripe result was that, in the ravenousness of greed, they became "children of the curse." That is the Hebrew way of saying that the curse found its way deep into their nature. (2) *Comparison with Balaam.* "Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing; but he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet." Balaam, for-

saking the right way, went astray. It was wrong for him ever to think of going to Barak, who wished him to curse Israel. "Thy way," he was told, "is perverse before me." He was swayed from the right way by loving the hire of wrong-doing. "And God's anger was kindled because he went." He was rebuked for what was not forced upon him, but was *his own* transgression. It was a telling rebuke to be stayed in his mad journey by the dumb animal speaking with man's voice. Like Balaam, these men were prostituting their powers in the service of gain, and would not fare better in the end. 6. *On account of false promises.* (1) *Comparisons.* "These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved." Under strong feeling, Peter seizes on natural imagery to describe the false teachers. To a traveller in a desert nothing can be more grateful than the appearance of a well; but, when he comes up to it, and finds it without water, he receives a bitter disappointment. In a protracted drought the farmer keenly scans the face of the sky; a misty cloud is hailed by him, and he watches its changes and course, but it is driven past by the storm-wind, and not a drop of rain descends. So those false teachers held out promises which they did not fulfil; and in another natural appearance he sees their end foreshadowed—a meteor seen for a little, and then passing into the blackness of darkness. (2) *Sensual promises.* "For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error." Their words are regarded as swollen out beyond the ordinary size, while they are filled with emptiness. It is in a sensual condition of mind that they use their swollen words. The bait they hold out is sensual gratification. "Their guilt is exhibited as aggravated by the fact that the persons whom they plied with the vile bait of sensual indulgence were those least fit to resist it; not men who were established in the new faith, but men who had but *recently* broken off from the ranks of heathenism, or who had as yet got but a few paces, as it were, in the process of separating themselves from their old pagan life" (Salmond). (3) *Promising liberty, while themselves bound.* "Promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage." In swollen language they promised liberty: but were they themselves free? No; they were the bondservants of destructive lusts. When their lusts were destroying them, and they could not cease gratifying them, what was that but bondage? 7. *On account of their apostasy.* (1) *Last state worse than the first.* "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first." Peter thinks of them, in conclusion, as punished in their moral degradation. They were once the prey of the *miasmata*—the defilements—of the world. There supervened a blessed time of *escape*. This was when they had knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (the name being appreciatively dwelt upon). The word is used which means "appreciative knowledge;" and it would seem to be implied that there was *reality* in their spiritual experience. But the time came when they were again entangled in the *miasmata* of the world, and overcome by them. In that case they were the worse for the experience through which they had come. We cannot have conviction of sin and appreciation of Christ, and put away from us that experience, without our bringing evil into our nature far beyond what we were capable of in our former state. Judas was a worse man that he had come into such nearness to Christ, than he would otherwise have been. Therefore let us be careful how we treat visitations of the Spirit, solemn experience. (2) *Preferable evil state.* "For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The false teachers again are represented as having known the new life of Christianity, as having turned to the holy commandment delivered to them. Better that they had remained in heathenism than, after knowing the new life, to turn back from the holy commandment upon which it depends. Therefore let us be careful how we treat Christian rules of conduct. There is a sacredness about them which is not to be trifled with. (3) *Proverb explanatory of relapse.* "It has happened unto them, according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire." This double proverb is not explanatory of the last state being worse than the first, but simply of

the being again entangled and overcome. Though they knew the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they were not beyond temptation to sensuality. Their relapse took place in their giving the old nature the ascendancy. The comparisons employed are not complimentary. The false teachers are compared to the dog and the sow—animals abhorred in the East. They have returned to the filth of heathenism as the dog to its vomit, as the sow that had washed to its wallowing in the mire. Therefore let us be careful not to give in to the old nature.—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1.—This Second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; literally, *this Epistle already a second one I write unto you*. The ἤδη ("already") implies that the interval between the two Epistles was not long. The expression "beloved," four times repeated in this chapter, shows the apostle's affectionate interest in his readers; and the word "second" forces us to make our choice between the Petrine authorship of the Epistle or the hypothesis of a direct forgery. In both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; literally, *in which*, i.e. "Epistles;" the word "second" implied an allusion to a First Epistle. St. Peter repeats the words which he had used in ch. i. 13, "I think it meet . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." Mind (διδασκαλία) is the reflective faculty (see 1 Pet. i. 13); that faculty should be exercised in holy things. The thoughts that pass through the Christian's mind should be holy thoughts; his mind should be pure. The word rendered "pure" (εὐκρινής) occurs in Phil. i. 10 (where see note); the corresponding substantive is found in 1 Cor. v. 8; 2 Cor. i. 12; ii. 17. It is said of things which can bear to be judged in the sunlight, and so means "pure, clear," or (according to another possible etymology) "unmixed," and so "genuine, sincere."

Ver. 2.—That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets. "That ye may be mindful" is represented by one word in the Greek (μνησθήναι); compare the exact parallel in Luke i. 72. Great stress is laid on the word of prophecy in both Epistles (see 1 Pet. i. 10—12 and ch. i. 19). And of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour; rather, as in the Revised Version, *and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles*. All the best manuscripts read ὑμῶν here. It is a remarkable expression; but Christ's apostles can be rightly called the apostles of those to whom they are sent, as being their teachers, sent to them for their benefit; just as the angels of God are called also the angels of Christ's little ones (Matt. xviii.

10). Compare also "the angels of the seven Churches" in the Revelation. St. Peter shows an intimate knowledge of several of St. Paul's Epistles, and of that of St. James; he is writing to the Churches addressed in his First Epistle, most of which were founded by St. Paul or his companions. We must therefore understand this passage, as well as ver. 15 of this chapter, as a distinct recognition of the apostleship of St. Paul. The translation of the Authorized Version, "the apostles of the Lord and Saviour," involves a violent disturbance of the order; it seems best to make both genitives depend on "commandment:" "your apostles' commandment of the Lord;" the first genitive being that of announcement, the second of origin. The commandment was announced by the apostles, but it was the Lord's commandment. (For the double genitive, comp. Jas. ii. 1 and Acts v. 32. For the whole verse, see the parallel passage in Jude 17.)

Ver. 3.—Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers. (For the irregular construction of γινώσκοντες, see Winer, iii. 63. 2, a.) St. Peter has the words, "knowing this first," in ch. i. 20, where he is speaking of the interpretation of prophecy; he repeats them now when referring to the scoffers who mocked at the long delay of the Lord's coming foretold by the prophets. (For "the last days," see note on 1 Pet. i. 20.) The Revised Version has, "Mockers shall come with mockery." This represents the words ἐν ἐμπαιγμοῖς, found in nearly all the best manuscripts, which give emphasis to the expression after the Hebrew manner. The word ἐμπαιγμοῖς occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and ἐμπαικται, scoffers, only in the parallel passage, Jude 18. Walking after their own lusts. Self-indulgence often leads to scepticism. This verse is quoted in a homily ascribed to Hippolytus.

Ver. 4.—And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? (comp. Mal. ii. 17, "Where is the God of judgment?"). The Lord had prophesied of his coming; St. Paul had spoken more than once as if that coming were very near at hand (1 Cor. xv. 51; 2 Cor. v. 4; 1 Thess. iv. 15). Yet he came not. Already men were beginning to mock, and to question whether the long-delayed pro-

mise would ever be fulfilled. **For since the fathers fell asleep**; better, *from the day that*. By "the fathers" must be meant here the fathers of the Christian Church. St. Peter was writing more than thirty years after the Ascension. The first generation of Christians was rapidly passing away. Stephen "fell asleep" first, then James the son of Zebedee, the other James the Lord's brother, and many others who had looked, it may be, to see the coming of the Lord among those "which are alive and remain" (1 Thess. iv. 17). But they had died, and he came not; and from the day of their death things went on as they were. Should men look for him still, the mockers asked, when the fathers looked in vain? The mockers adopted, in mockery, doubtless, the Christian phrase for death. The Lord first had said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;" then the holy Stephen "fell asleep;" and so "they which are asleep" became the recognized name for the dead in Christ. Death is like sleep; the holy dead rest from their labours. They "sleep not idly," for they are at home with the Lord, and they are blessed; but yet the quiet rest of Paradise, though "far better" than this earthly life, is sleep compared with the perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, which the redeemed of the Lord shall enjoy at last in his eternal glory. **All things continue** as they were from the beginning of the creation; literally, *all things continue thus*, as they are, and as they have been from the beginning. There has been no sudden catastrophe; the world has gone on as it was; the laws of nature are still working with their changeless uniformity" (see a remarkable parallel in Clement, I. xxiii., which is important also as an independent proof that this argument of the scoffers is as old as the end of the first century).

Ver. 5.—**For this they willingly are ignorant of**; literally, *for this escapes them of their own will*. All things have not always been as they are; there have been great changes; there was once a great catastrophe; but this they wilfully forget. Huther translates differently, "For, whilst they assert this, it is hidden from them that," etc. But this rendering seems forced and unsatisfactory, and gives a meaning to *θέλω* which it has nowhere in the New Testament. That by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. The Revised Version translates, *That there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the Word of God*. The mockers say that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. That creation itself was a great, a stupendous change, a mighty effort of the power of God.

St. Peter refers to it in words evidently derived from the Book of Genesis, not from any other sources, whether Greek, Egyptian, or Indian. There were heavens from of old (the word *ἐκπαλαι* occurs elsewhere only in ch. ii. 3). There was an earth formed or standing out of the water. The Greek participle here used is *συνεστῶσα*, literally, "standing together or consisting" (comp. Col. i. 17); it may be taken closely with both prepositional clauses, "earth consisting of water and by means of water." Thales had taught that water was the beginning of things, the original element (*πάντα ἐξ ὕδατος συνεστάναι*); the narrative in Genesis represents water as originally overspreading all things: "The earth was without form [*ἀόρατος*, Septuagint], and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." We may therefore understand St. Peter as meaning that the earth was formed or compacted out of water, or out of those substances which the water at first held in solution; and that it is kept together in coherence and solidity by means of water. If, on the other hand, we regard the participle as closely connected with the second preposition only, the meaning will be that the earth, held together and compacted by means of water, rose up out of the water, and appeared above it, when God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." It is possible, again, to understand the preposition *ἐν* locally, and to translate "amidst water." Comp. Ps. cxxvi. 6, "He stretched out the earth above the waters;" and Ps. xxiv. 2, "He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Of course, neither St. Peter nor Moses is speaking in the language of science; their object was, not to teach scientific truth, but to present the great fact of creation in an aspect suitable to our poor capacities. For the clause, "by the Word of God (*τῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγῳ*)," comp. Heb. xi. 3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God (*ῥήματι Θεοῦ*)." St. Peter may be referring to the formula, "And God said," so constantly repeated in the account of the creation, or (what is really the same truth) to the fact that "all things were made by him [by God the Word], and without him was not anything made that was made."

Ver. 6.—**Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished**. The Greek for "whereby" is *δι' ὧν*, literally, "through which things." The plural here presents some difficulty. The most obvious antecedents are "the heavens and the earth" of the last verse; but many commentators refer the relative to the twice-repeated

"water." The meaning will be the same whichever view we take. "The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened;" that is, the Deluge was brought to pass by means of the heavens, *i.e.* the waters that were above the firmament, and the earth, *i.e.* the waters that were below the firmament, which came from the earth as the waters first mentioned came from the heavens. Another possible view is that of Huther, who refers $\delta\epsilon\ \tau\omega$ to the water and the Word of God. By the world here must be meant the world of living creatures. This is St. Peter's answer to the mockers: there had been one great catastrophe; there will be another.

Ver. 7.—But the heavens and the earth, which are now; rather, *the heavens which are now, and the earth.* The "now" does not refer, as some think, to any change wrought by the Flood, but distinguishes the present heavens and earth from the new heavens and new earth, which Christians are to look for (ver. 13). By the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire. Several of the better manuscripts have "by his Word," which, on the whole, seems to give the best meaning. The reading in the text may, indeed, be understood in a similar sense, "by the same Word of God;" otherwise it would mean that the original word of creation determined also the duration of the world and the means of its destruction. The words rendered, "are kept in store," are, literally, "have been treasured ($\tauεθησαυρισμένοι\ εἰσιν$)" (comp. Rom. ii. 5). It seems better to take the dative $\nuπλ$ ("with fire," or "for fire") with this verb rather than with the following, as in the Authorized Version. If we take the first meaning of the dative, the sense will be that the world has been stored *with* fire, *i.e.* that it contains, stored up in its inner depths, the fire which is destined ultimately to destroy it. But the other view seems on the whole more probable; the heavens and the earth are stored up *for* fire or unto fire, *i.e.* with the purpose in the counsels of God of their ultimate destruction by fire. This is the clearest prophecy in Holy Scripture of the final conflagration of the universe; but comp. Isa. lxvi. 15; Dan. vii. 10; Mal. iv. 1; 2 Thess. i. 8. Such a doctrine formed part of the physical theories of the Stoics; it is also found in the 'Book of Enoch.' Against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The participle "reserved" ($\tauηρούμενοι$) is best taken with this clause: "Reserved against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Ver. 8.—But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing; literally, *let not this one thing escape you*, as especially important. That one day is with the Lord as a thousand

years, and a thousand years as one day. "With the Lord" means in his sight, in his estimate of things (comp. Ps. xc. 4, "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday"). Bengel finely says, "Dei æoniologium (sic appellare liceat) differt ab horologio mortalium. Illius gnomon omnes horas simul indicat in summa actione et in summa quiete. Ei nec tardius nec celerius labuntur tempora quam ipsi et œconomia ejus aptum sit. Nulla causa est cur finem rerum aut protelare aut accelerare necessum habeat. Qui hoc comprehendemus? Si comprehendere possemus, non opus foret a Mose et Petro addi, apud Dominum." God is eternal: his thought is not, like ours, subject to the law of time; and even we can understand that one day, as the day of the Saviour's death, may have far more of intense action compressed into it, and far more influence upon the spiritual destiny of mankind, than any period of a thousand years. This passage seems to be quoted by Justin Martyr, the 'Epistle of Barnabas,' Irenæus, and Hippolytus; but they may be referring to Ps. xc., though the quotations resemble the words of St. Peter more closely than those of the psalm.

Ver. 9.—The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. The Lord here, as frequently in these Epistles, is God the Father; it is he only who knoweth that day and that hour (Mark xiii. 32). Some take the genitive $\tau\eta\varsigma\ \epsilon\pi\alphaγγελια\varsigma$ with "the Lord," and translate, "The Lord of the promise is not slack." This is a possible connection, but not so satisfactory as the ordinary rendering. (For the genitive with the verb $\beta\rhoαδύνει$, see Winer, iii. 30. 6, b.) The latter clause may be understood, "as some think it, *i.e.* the delay of the judgment, to be slackness;" or better, perhaps, "as some understand the meaning of slackness." Men are slow in fulfilling their promises from various, often selfish, motives; the Lord's delay comes from love and long-suffering. But is long-suffering to us-ward; rather, to you-ward, which seems to be the best-supported reading; two ancient manuscripts give "for your sake." St. Peter has the same thought in the First Epistle (iv. 20); there he reminds us how the long-suffering of God waited while the ark was a-preparing; here he tells us that the delay of the judgment, at which unbelievers scoff, is due to the same cause. We note here an item of evidence for the common authorship of the two Epistles (comp. Hab. ii. 3, quoted in Heb. x. 37, and Eccles. xxxiii. 22, in the Septuagint; also Augustine's well-known words, "Patens quia æternus"). Not willing that any should perish; rather, *not wishing or desiring* ($\mu\eta\ \betaουλόμενος$). The participle gives the reason of the Lord's

delay; he hath no pleasure that the wicked should die (Ezek. xviii. 23, 32, and xxxiii. 11). But that all should come to repentance. The Greek word for "come" (*χωρῆσαι*), occurs in the same sense in Matt. xv. 17 (see also the remarkable parallel from Plutarch, 'De Flum.,' p. 19 (quoted by Alford), *εἰς μετάνοιαν . . . χωρῆσαι*). Calvin takes it transitively, "willing to receive all to repentance." But the common translation is plainly right (comp. 1 Tim. ii. 4 combined with 2 Tim. ii. 25).

Ver. 10.—But the day of the Lord will come. The word *ἔτι*, will come, stands emphatically at the beginning of the clause; whatever the mockers may say, whatever may happen, come certainly will the day of the Lord. "The day of the Lord" meets us often in the prophets; it is usually associated with the thought of judgment (see Isa. ii. 12; Ezek. xiii. 5; Joel i. 15; Mal. iii. 2). In the New Testament it signifies the second advent of Christ (1 Thess. v. 2; 1 Cor. i. 8; Phil. i. 6; 2 Thess. ii. 2). As a thief in the night. The best manuscripts omit here "in the night." St. Peter is evidently echoing the Lord's words in that great prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, which must have made such a deep impression upon the apostles. This illustration of the sudden coming of the thief is repeated not only by St. Peter here, but also by St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 2), and twice by St. John (Rev. iii. 3 and xvi. 15). In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. The Greek for "with a great noise (*βοῇ ᾗδόν*)" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is one of those remarkable poetic forms which are not unfrequent in this Epistle: the noun *βοῆ* is used of the whizzing of arrows, of the rush of wings, of the sound of mighty winds or roaring waters. It may be understood here of the crash of a falling world or of the roar of the destroying flames. The word rendered "pass away" is that used by our Lord in the prophecy just referred to (Matt. xxiv. 35; also in Matt. v. 18 and in Luke xvi. 17). And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. It is uncertain whether by "the elements" (*στοιχεῖα*) St. Peter means the four elements (in the old and popular use of the word), or the great constituent parts of the universe, the heavenly bodies. Against the first view is the assertion that one of those elements is to be the agent of destruction. But the word rendered "melt" means "shall be dissolved" or "loosed;" and it may be, as Bishop Wordworth says, that "St. Peter's meaning seems to be that the *στοιχεῖα*, elements or rudiments, of which the universe is composed and compacted, will be loosed; that is, the framework of the world will be

disorganized; and this is the sense of *στοιχεῖα* in the LXX. (Wisd. vii. 17; xix. 17) and in Hippolytus, 'Philos.,' pp. 219, 318. The dissolution is contrasted with the consistency described by the word *συνεστῶσα* in ver. 5. The heavens are reserved for fire, and will pass away with a rushing noise, and, being set on fire, will be dissolved; the elements will be on fire and melt, and be reduced to a state of confusion; the earth and the works therein will be burnt up. There does not seem, therefore, to be any cause for abandoning the common meaning of *στοιχεῖα*, the elemental principles of which the universe is made." On the other hand, the word *στοιχεῖα* is certainly used of the heavenly bodies by Justin Martyr ('Apolog.,' ii. c. 5, and 'Dial. cum Tryphon,' c. 23); and the heavenly bodies are constantly mentioned in the descriptions of the awful convulsions of the great day (Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24; Luke xxi. 25; Acts ii. 20; Rev. vi. 12, etc.). The objection that the word does not bear this meaning elsewhere in Holy Scripture is of little weight, as this is the only place in which it has a physical sense. The literal translation of the clause is, "The elements, being scorched, shall be dissolved." The word for "being scorched" (*καυσούμενα*) occurs in the New Testament only here and in ver. 12; it is used by the Greek physicians of the burning heat of fever. The verb *λυθῆσεται* means "shall be dissolved or loosened." The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. By "the works that are therein" St. Peter seems to mean all the works both of God and of man, "opera naturæ et artis" (Bengel). There is a very remarkable reading here (supported by the Sinaitic and Vatican and another uncial manuscript), *εὐρεθήσεται*, "shall be discovered," instead of *κατακαήσεται*, "shall be burned up." If we understand "the works that are therein" of man's works and actions, this reading will give a good sense (comp. 1 Cor. iii. 13, "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is"). Or the clause may be regarded as interrogative, "Shall the earth and the works that are therein be found?" But the reading, "shall be burned up" is well supported, and suits the context best.

Ver. 11.—Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved; rather, *seeing that all these things are being dissolved*. The participle is present, and implies the certainty of the event foretold, and, perhaps, also that the germs of that coming dissolution are already in being, that the forces which are ultimately to bring about the final catastrophe are even now at work. Some of the

better manuscripts read, instead of *οὖν*, then, *οὕτως*, thus: "seeing that all these things are thus being dissolved." What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? The Greek word for "what manner of persons" means literally, "of what country;" it seems to point to the great truth that God's people are fellow-citizens of the saints, that the commonwealth of which they are citizens is in heaven. The word for "to be" is the emphatic *ὑπάρχειν*, which denotes original, essential, continuous being. (On the word for "conversation" (*ἀναστροφῆς*, behaviour, conduct), see note on 1 Pet. i. 15.) Both this noun and the following are plural in the Greek, and therefore mean "in all aspects and forms of holy conduct and godliness." Some commentators connect these last words, "in all holy conversation and godliness," with the next verse: "looking in all holy conversation," etc. Some, again, understand this verse as asking a question, which is answered in the next; but the Greek word for "what manner of persons" (*ποταπός*) seems to be used in the New Testament as an exclamation only, not interrogatively.

Ver. 12.—Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. The preposition "unto" is inserted without authority. The second participle *σπεύδοντας* is followed directly by the accusative, and is evidently transitive. In the Septuagint Version of Isa. xvi. 5, *σπεύδων δικαιοσύνην* represents the "hasting righteousness" of our translation (comp. Pindar, 'Isthm.,' v. 22, where *σπεύδειν ἀρετῶν* means "to pursue virtue"). Here the translation "hastening" is most appropriate. The Father hath put the times and seasons in his own power; but as the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, so now he is "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish;" and in his gracious mercy waits for the repentance of his chosen. St. Peter seems to represent Christians as "hastening the coming [literally, 'presence'] of the day of God" by working out their own salvation, and helping to spread the knowledge of the gospel (Matt. xxiv. 14), and so rendering the long-suffering patience of God no longer necessary. The words imply also the duty of praying for that coming, as we do in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, and in the Funeral Service, "Beseeching thee, that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom." Compare St. Peter's speech in Act iii., where he says, "Repent ye therefore . . . that so (*ὅπως ἂν*) there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ" (vers. 19, 20, Revised Version). This remarkable coincidence of

thought furnishes an argument of considerable weight in favour of the genuineness of this Epistle. Another possible rendering of the word is "earnestly desiring," which is adopted in the text of the Revised Version, and is preferred by some commentators. *Wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved.* The Greek for "wherein" is *ἐν ᾧ*, on account of which, *i.e.* on account of the day of God, or, what comes to much the same meaning, on account of the coming, the presence, of that day. Old things must pass away because of the coming of the day of God; the old order must give place to new. And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The apostle repeats the striking words which he had already used in ver. 10, with a different verb. The Greek word for "shall melt" here is not *λυθήσεται*, as in ver. 10, but a stronger word *τήκεται*, are being melted, or wasted away. The tense is the prophetic present, implying a certain fulfilment. There is probably a reference to Isa. xxxiv. 4, where the Septuagint rendering is *καὶ τακθήσονται πάντα αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν*.

Ver. 13.—Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth; rather, *but, according to his promise, we look for*. The promise is that in Isa. lxi. 17, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (see also Isa. lxvi. 22 and Rev. xxi. 1). St. John saw in vision the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah and St. Peter: "The first heaven and the first earth were passed away." It may be that, as the water of the Deluge was the baptism of the ancient world into a new life, so the fire of the great day will be the means of purifying and refining the universe, transforming it into new heavens and a new earth, making all things new. Our Lord's use of the word "regeneration," in Matt. xix. 28, seems to favour this view. In the regeneration of the individual soul the personality remains, the thoughts, desires, affections, are changed; so, it may be, in the regeneration of the world the substance will remain, the fashion (*σχῆμα*) of the old world will pass away (1 Cor. vii. 31). But it is impossible to pronounce dogmatically whether the new heavens and earth will be a reproduction of the old in a far more glorious form, through the agency of the refining fire, or an absolutely new creation, as the words of Isaiah seem to imply. St. John, like St. Peter, speaks of a new earth, and tells us that that new earth will be the dwelling-place of the blessed. He saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven: the throne of God and of the Lamb (he tells us) shall be in it: "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." The holy city, Jerusalem, which is above, is

in heaven now; the commonwealth of which the saints are citizens is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20). But heaven will come down to earth; the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be there; there his servants shall serve him. The distinction between earth and heaven will be abolished; for where God is, there is heaven. **Wherein dwelleth righteousness** (comp. Isa. lx. 21, "Thy people shall be all righteous;" also Isa. lxxv. 25; Rev. xxi. 27; Rom. viii. 21).

Ver. 14.—**Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things; rather, these things, the coming of the Lord, the restitution of all things, the new heavens and the new earth. Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless; literally, give diligence** (or, *be earnest*)—the same word which is used in ch. i. 10) **to be found without spot and blameless in his sight in peace.** Christians who look for the coming of Christ must earnestly strive to imitate their Lord, the "Lamb without blemish and without spot." In the word *καθαροί*, "without spot," we have a link with 1 Pet. i. 19. The word for "blameless" (*ἀμώμητοι*) is found elsewhere only in Phil. ii. 15. The dative *αὐτῷ* should be rendered, not "of him" or "by him," but "in his sight" or "before him." Peace is used in its fullest sense—peace with God and with man; the peace which Christ giveth; "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." "In peace" was a common inscription on Christian graves.

Ver. 15.—**And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.** The apostle is referring to ver. 9. Scoffers count the delay of the judgment slackness; the Christian should count it salvation; it is for the salvation of the elect that the judgment tarrieth. It is almost certain that by "our Lord" here St. Peter means the Lord Jesus, whom he describes by the same title in ver. 18. **Even as our beloved brother Paul also.** The plural pronoun may be intended to imply that St. Paul was known to the Churches to which St. Peter was writing, and was beloved there. St. Peter addresses his readers as "beloved" four times in this Epistle; he here uses the same epithet of St. Paul. It comes naturally from his lips; but a writer of the second century would probably have used much stronger words of praise in speaking of one so much revered. **According to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; rather, wrote to you** (comp. 'Polycarp, 'Ad Philipp.,' i. 3, "One like me cannot equal the wisdom of the blessed Paul"). That wisdom was given unto him, as he himself says (1 Cor. iii. 10). If we ask to what Epistles of St. Paul is St. Peter referring, the passage which at once occurs to us is 1 Thess. iv. and v. This

Epistle was probably known to St. Peter; there may be a reference to 1 Thess. v. 2 in ver. 10 of this chapter; and Silvanus, whose name St. Paul associates with his own in both Epistles to the Thessalonians, was with St. Peter when he wrote his First Epistle (1 Pet. v. 12). But St. Peter's Second Epistle is addressed (primarily at least) to the same Churches to which the first was written (ch. iii. 1). We must therefore either say, with Dean Alford, that "our Epistle belongs to a date when the Pauline Epistles were no longer the property only of the Churches to which they were written, but were dispersed through, and considered to belong to, the whole Christian Church;" or we must suppose that the passages in St. Peter's thoughts were not in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, but in some of the Epistles addressed to the Churches of Asia Minor; as, for instance, Eph. i. 4; ii. 8; iii. 9—11; Col. i. 22; iii. 4, 24; or, possibly Rom. ii. 4 and ix. 22, as there seem to be some reasons for believing that this last Epistle was addressed to the Church at Ephesus among others.

Ver. 16.—**As also in all his Epistles.** The true reading is probably *ἐν πάσαις ἐπιστολαῖς* without the article. The words, therefore, do not imply the existence of a complete collection of St. Paul's Epistles, but mean only "in all Epistles which he writes." **Speaking in them of these things; that is, of the day of God, the end of the world, etc.** St. Peter was acquainted with other Epistles of St. Paul besides those addressed to the Asiatic Churches. There are evident indications of his knowledge of the Epistles to the Thessalonians and Corinthians, as well as of that to the Romans. **In which are some things hard to be understood.** The manuscripts vary between *ἐν οἷς* and *ἐν αἷς*. The first reading would refer to the words immediately preceding—"these things;" "among the subjects on which St. Paul wrote there are some things," etc. The second would refer to "all his Epistles," and would mean that there are certain difficulties in St. Paul's Epistles generally. St. Peter does not tell us what difficulties were in his thoughts—whether St. Paul's teaching about "the man of sin," and "the day of the Lord," or his doctrine of justification by faith, and his assertion of Christian liberty, which might be perverted into antinomianism by such men as the false teachers censured in ch. ii. The word *δυσνόητος*, "hard to be understood," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. **Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest; rather, the ignorant and unsteadfast.** Both words are peculiar to this Epistle; the last occurs also in ch. ii. 14, the first here only in the New Testament. The verb also translated "wrest" (*στρεβλοῦσιν*) is found only

here; it means "to twist with a windlass," and so "to strain, to torture, to distort." As they do also the other Scriptures. This passage is of the greatest interest, as showing that some of St. Paul's Epistles had by this time taken their place in the estimate of Christians by the side of the sacred books of the Old Testament, and were regarded as Holy Scripture. By "the other Scriptures" St. Peter means the Old Testament, and also, perhaps, some of the earlier writings of the New, as the first three Gospels and the Epistle of St. James. St. Paul, in 1 Tim. v. 18, quotes a passage which seems to come from Luke x. 7 as Scripture (comp. 1 Pet. i. 12). *Unto their own destruction; literally, their own destruction of themselves.* The use of both adjective and pronoun intensifies the meaning (comp. ch. ii. 1, 12).

Ver. 17.—*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before.* The pronoun "ye" is emphatic; others have gone astray; "continue ye faithful." The construction is participial, and there is no expressed object; literally, "knowing before," i.e. that false teachers will arise. Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; rather, as in the Revised Version, *lest, being carried away . . . ye fall.* It is interesting to notice that the word rendered "led or carried away" is used by St. Paul, in Gal. ii. 13, of St. Barnabas, who, along with St. Peter himself, was then "carried away" with the dissimulation of the Judaizers. The word rendered "wicked," rather "lawless," is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in ch. ii. 7. The word for "steadfastness" (*στηριχυμός*) occurs only here.

Ver. 18.—*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Growth is necessary for steadfastness; we cannot persevere unless we continually advance in faith (comp. 1 Pet. i. 5—7; ii. 2). Some, as Alford, take the genitive with "grace" as well as with "knowledge;" but this connection forces us to regard it first as subjective, then as objective—the grace which Christ gives, and the knowledge of which he is the Object—and so seems somewhat forced. St. Peter insists on the knowledge of Christ as essential for growth in grace, at the beginning, as at the end, of this Epistle. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. We notice the doxology addressed to Christ; it reminds us of the hymn which Pliny, in his famous letter to Trajan, says the Christians of Bithynia (one of the provinces mentioned in 1 Pet. i. 1) were wont to address to Christ as to God. To him be (or is) the glory—all the glory which belongs to God, which we ascribe to him. "For ever" is, literally, "for the day of the age or of eternity (*εἰς ἡμερὰν αἰῶνος*)."

This remarkable expression is found only here, and is variously interpreted. Bengel explains it as, "dies sine nocte, merus et perpetuus;" Huther as, "the day on which eternity begins as contrasted with time, but which day is likewise all eternity itself." Frommüller quotes St. Augustine: "It is only one day, but an everlasting day, without yesterday to precede it, and without to-morrow to follow it; not brought forth by the natural sun, which shall exist no more, but by Christ, the Sun of Righteousness."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The certainty of the Lord's coming.* I. CONFUTATION OF SCOFFERS.

1. *St. Peter's purpose in writing.* He took a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the Christians of Asia Minor; he felt a great affection for them; he calls them "beloved" four times in this chapter. We do not know whether he had ever seen them face to face. It may be that Silvanus had made known to him their circumstances, their dangers, their temptations. So he writes to them. In the First Epistle he comforts them in the presence of great persecution; in the second he warns them against the seductions of false teachers. He is an example to Christian ministers of diligence, of affectionate care for souls. He writes: (1) To stir up his readers. Their minds, he says, were pure. They were single-hearted Christians; their religion was genuine, sincere. Nevertheless, it was well to stir them up. We all need to be aroused from time to time. We live on in the same way day after day; the daily prayers, the daily life, are ordered according to rule; there is danger of becoming lukewarm, formal, of acting from habit rather than from the conscious desire of pleasing God. Hence the need of exhortation. We ask God to "stir up the wills of his faithful people." It is he only who, by the power of his Spirit, can really arouse us; but he uses men as his instruments. He used the agency of St. Peter to stir up the minds of the Asiatic Christians. (2) To remind them of the words of the prophets and apostles. He had urged the study of prophecy in the first chapter of this Epistle;

he had dwelt upon the subject of prophetic inspiration in both Epistles; he was constantly referring to the prophets both in his speeches and letters. Christians ought to study the writings of the prophets; they ought to give heed to the Word of prophecy. So also they should be always mindful of the Lord's commandment given through the apostles. "God who in times past spoke by the prophets, hath in the latter days spoken unto us by his Son." The writings of prophets and apostles come from the same source—the inspiration of God; both have a message for us. It becomes us to be mindful of that message; to forget it is to be wanting in reverence and gratitude to him from whom the message comes. The commandment, delivered to us by the apostles, is in truth the commandment of our Lord and Saviour, who, as our Lord, has a right to our obedience, and, as our Saviour, has a claim upon our tenderest feelings of love and gratitude. 2. *Scoffers will come.* It has always been so; there have always been men who mocked at those who trusted in God. It was so with Lot in Sodom, with Isaac the heir of the promise, with the psalmist, with the Lord Jesus himself. Those of whom St. Peter speaks were men of sensual habits, walking after their own lusts. There is such a thing as honest doubt, like that of St. Thomas; there are men who would give the world to believe, if they could; their temperament, their education, their habits of thought, throw immense difficulties in their way; such men, we hope and trust, will be guided, sooner or later, to the truth. But in all ages a very large proportion of the prevalent scepticism has issued out of an ungodly life. Men have rejected the faith because they were unwilling to believe. The pure morality of the gospel offends the self-indulgent; it is a constant reproach to them; the teaching of Scripture concerning the judgment is repulsive to them; they try to keep such thoughts out of their minds. And, besides this, sin hardens the heart; a sensual life blinds the eye of the soul, and makes men incapable of appreciating spiritual truth. "The natural man [the ψυχικός, in whom the animal soul is predominant] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1. Cor. ii. 14). Such men come with their mockery, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? The fathers have fallen asleep; generation after generation has passed away. Christians have lived in expectation of the Lord's coming according to his promise; they have waited for him, but he came not; they are in their graves. Are men still to pass their lives in waiting for an advent which seems to be continually receding? All things continue thus, as they are, and as they have been; the laws of nature work on in their changeless uniformity. Where is the promise?" These men took the Epicurean view of the Deity. God might have created the world; he might have called into being the forces which are working in the universe. But now, they thought, he leaves those forces to their mutual action and reaction upon one another; he does not interpose either in the natural world or in the affairs of men; he leaves all to the silent rule of law. The teaching of Holy Scripture is directly opposed to this form of agnosticism. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the Lord Jesus to the Jews. "In him we live, and move, and have our being," said St. Paul to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, as well as to the men of Athens generally. God sustains the universe from day to day, from hour to hour, with his continued agency. Without his support the world would fall into ruin; without his providence the order of society would collapse. The laws of nature are but observed uniformities, sequences of cause and effect; they are not forces; they have no life, no power; they are the expression of the Divine will. God changeth not; and those laws which he has impressed upon the material universe exhibit the hand of the Creator, they too are changeless within the sphere of the all-controlling will of God. He can suspend their operation, for he is the Lord God omnipotent; but as a rule his working is uniform, continuous. If it were not so, the world would be a scene of disorder—all its rare beauty would be lost, life in its present conditions could not be sustained, society would be impossible. That uniformity which is the result of the wisdom of God must not be made an argument against the providence of God. He works in the uniformities of the laws of nature as certainly as in disturbances of those uniformities. There have been such disturbances; the uniform course of nature has been broken by Divine interpositions on a great scale. 3. *The answer to the scoffers.* All things have not always continued as they are. For: (1) Creation itself was the introduction of a

vast change; it was a mighty interposition of Divine power. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." We are not concerned here with the scientific interpretation of phenomena. The Bible was not intended to teach us that knowledge which men may by patient labour obtain for themselves, but to reveal to us the relations between man and God, so far as those relations are within our comprehension, and to show us the duties which arise out of those relations. We are not told how many ages, or what processes of evolution, may have their place between the second and the third verses of the first chapter of Genesis. It is the great fact of creation which is forcibly declared in those emphatic words with which the first of the sacred books begins. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." This is the great truth: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." It was he who said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." The scoffers wilfully forget this; even if they do not formally deny the possibility of creation, they shut their eyes to it, and forget that he who made the world can also destroy it, that the great change of creation may be preparatory for other changes as great in the future. (2) One such catastrophe was the Deluge. The earth, which God had once pronounced to be "very good," had become corrupt, and was filled with violence. Then God brought in the Flood upon the world of the ungodly. By his Word "were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth." That awful visitation was a warning of coming judgments. All things did not go on in the same unvarying course as the scoffers said. When all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth, then God interposed in his awful justice, and the earth was, by a baptism of water, restored and purified, prepared for a new beginning. (3) All things will not always continue as they are. By God's Word the heavens and the earth were made at the first; by his Word they are now maintained in being. But as the old world contained in itself the element which swept away the ungodly race of men, so the world that now is contains in itself the agent of its own destruction. It is stored with fire; there are stores of fire hidden within it, which are to work the last most awful change, which are to destroy the present order of things, and by their purifying and refining power to work, as by a baptism of fire, the regeneration of the universe into a new life. And it is stored up for fire, reserved unto the day of judgment, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. That great day is presented to us in Holy Scripture as a day of terror with surroundings most awful and overwhelming. It will be a day of destruction to the ungodly; it will sweep them into utter death—that death of the soul which is so much more dreadful than the death of the body, for it is death eternal, a state of separation from the life of God, separation from light and joy and love, felt in all its blank and utter misery. Then all things will not continue as they are; he who made the world at the first, he who interposed when that world had become corrupt, and swept away the wicked with the waters of the Flood,—he will come again, but this time "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The mockers may mock; but the Word of God abideth; it must be fulfilled—he will surely come.

II. EXPLANATION OF THE DELAY OF THE JUDGMENT. 1. *With the Eternal time is not.* We think under the laws of time; time is an essential element in our thought—we cannot think without recognizing it. It is not so with God; the thought of God is not subject to the law of time. He is eternal; past, present, and future are all within the sphere of his immediate knowledge. To him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. To him that inhabiteth eternity the longest time that human thought can conceive is but as a speck. Even we can understand that real life is measured not by mere time, but by action. How much of life was there concentrated in the three years of our Lord's ministry, those years filled full with works of love and holy teaching! while, on the other hand, the seventy years or more of many men pass by in careless living, in listless idleness, without energy either of thought or action, without any good results either for themselves or for others. It is thought, love, action, that measures life, not the hand of the clock, not the mere lapse of hours and years. "He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time"

(Wisd. iv. 13). 2. *The Lord is long-suffering.* The delay does not mean indifference; it does not mean that the Lord heedeth not the conduct of men. The ungodly say, "Tush, God hath forgotten: he hideth away his face; he will never see it." But it is not so. The delay of the judgment comes from a far different reason. God is not willing that any should perish. Alas! men do perish in their sins; the day of judgment is the day of perdition of ungodly men. But it is not of God; it is of their own wilfulness and obstinacy; they bring upon themselves swift perdition. God has bestowed on man the awful gift of power to choose good or evil; without that power there could be no moral action, no responsibility, no obedience, no holiness, no love; life without that power would be the working of a machine, not the energy of a creature made after the likeness of God. Man, alas! has too often abused that great and perilous gift, and has turned that which should have led to holiness into an occasion of sin; and "the wages of sin is death." But God hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" his desire is that "all should come to repentance." Therefore he gives them time. "The goodness of God leadeth them to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4). We cannot enter into life without repentance, without a deep and real change of heart. "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the first sermon of John the Baptist, the first sermon of our Lord. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you . . . for the remission of sins," was the exhortation of St. Peter in his first great sermon. And God willeth that all should come to repentance; for "the Lord is loving unto every man;" and Jesus Christ our Lord "tasted death for every man." And "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Therefore he gives us time. The delay comes from the long-suffering love of God. How sad that men should scoff at that which should be the ground of adoring gratitude! 3. *But the day of the Lord will come.* It must be so, for so it is decreed in the counsels of God. The mockers may mock in their mockery; they may ask in bitter sarcasm, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The Christian knows the answer; it is hidden in the secret purpose of God, in the mystic book sealed with seven seals, which none can open save the Lion of the tribe of Judah. But the day of the Lord will come—that we know, though we know not the time. (1) Its coming is certain, sure as the Word of God; the Bible tells us it will come; our consciences bear witness also; the warning voice of conscience points forward to the coming of the awful day. And it will come suddenly, as the thief cometh—when men are not looking for it. Men will be living, as, alas! so many men are living now, heedlessly; eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, without a thought of God and the solemn future. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall the sign of the Son of man be seen in heaven, and the archangel's trump shall sound. "Therefore take ye heed," saith the Lord, "lest that day come upon you unawares." (2) And its coming is terrible. St. Peter's words bring vividly before our thoughts the awful scene—the crash of falling worlds, the roar of the destroying flames, the dissolution of the elements into chaos, the conflagration which shall burn up the earth and all that is therein. All the works that are therein, the palaces of kings, the fortifications of cities, the cathedrals and churches built for the worship of God,—all shall be involved in that one tremendous ruin. This is the apostle's answer to the scoffers.

LESSONS. 1. Scoffers will scoff; men of science will point to the unchanging laws of nature. Neither sarcasms nor the hypotheses of scientific men can shake the Christian from his faith. 2. Therefore we must stir up one another and ourselves; we must keep the solemn words of Holy Scripture in our memories. 3. God has intervened in his judgments; he will intervene again. 4. God is long-suffering; but there must be a limit even to that long-suffering patience. The day of judgment must come; therefore repent while there is time.

Vers. 11—18.—*Exhortations.* I. THE DUTY OF PREPARATION. 1. *Christians should look for the city that hath foundations.* The cities of this world have no sure foundation, for the earth on which they are built must pass away; it has within itself the element which is to cause its dissolution; the germs of that dissolution are working even now. Then wise men must not lay up for themselves treasures upon earth; they must not live as if this changeable, dying world was to be their home for ever; they must set their affections on things above; they must remember that Christian men

are citizens of the heavenly country, fellow-citizens with the saints. Therefore they must adopt the modes of life which are characteristic of that heavenly country; their conduct as they move about among men must be holy in all the relations of life; they must live in the habitual pursuit of godliness in all its aspects. These things are of true, lasting moment. The prizes of this world, even those which seem to us the greatest and most to be desired, are but vanity, vanity of vanities, compared with the great realities of the spiritual life. 2. *They must live in the expectation of the Lord's coming.* They must daily look for the presence of the great day, and by thus looking for it, and making ready for it, they must (St. Peter says, in the condescending language which Holy Scripture sometimes uses) hasten its coming. For that day cometh not till the chosen of God are safe. "Haste thee, escape thither," said the destroying angel to Lot; "for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." So now "the lightnings of the judgment-day pause yet a while," stored in the armoury of God ('Christian Year: All Saints' Day'), till God's elect are numbered, till they are ready, not one of them lost, for their eternal home. Then there is a sense in which, very strange and awful though it may seem, Christians may hasten the coming of the day of God. When the bride hath made herself ready, when the work of repentance is wrought out in the hearts of God's people, when they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,—then the day of God shall come. Now the long-suffering of God waiteth, as it waited in the days of Noah. It is a holy and a blessed truth—he waits for us in his tender mercy; he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; his wrath does not strike at once the sinner in his sin. He is waiting now, giving us time; but that gracious waiting cannot be protracted for ever; the day of the Lord will come. It is our duty to do what lieth in us to hasten its coming, by the preparation of our own hearts, by stirring up others to repentance, and by our prayers. "Thy kingdom come," is our daily prayer, the prayer which the Lord himself puts into our mouths. "The kingdom of God" has more senses than one in Holy Scripture; but certainly one thing to which the Lord directs our prayers in those words is the coming of the day of God, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. This is to be our daily prayer; if we use it in thoughtful faith, it will fix our hearts upon our eternal home. The Church on earth prays, "Thy kingdom come;" in Paradise the souls under the altar cry with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" (Rev. vi. 9, 10). He will hear the prayer that goeth up to him day and night; he will avenge his own elect; the great day must come. 3. *That day will be a day of terrors.* Because of its presence the visible heavens will be on fire; they shall be dissolved. The earth and the heaven, in the vision of judgment that was revealed to St. John, fled away from the face of him who sat on the great white throne, and there was found no place for them. St. Peter, too, saw the awful scene presented to the eye of his mind—he uses the prophetic present—the elements are melting, wasting away, with fervent heat. Those startling words suggest thoughts of exceeding awe and terror: "Take ye heed; watch and pray." 4. *But there will be a new home for the righteous.* St. John heard the voice of him that sat on the throne saying, "Behold, I make all things new." God had promised this long ago by the mouth of his prophet Isaiah. He will surely fulfil his word. He will not leave his people desolate and homeless. He provided a city of refuge for Lot, when his old abode was destroyed by the fire of the wrath of God. So, out of the appalling conflagration of the dreadful day there will arise a new and blessed home for his elect. We look for new heavens and a new earth; and they shall abide for ever. As once the promise came to Noah that there should not be any more a flood to destroy the earth, so God hath promised that "the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord." Heaven and earth shall then be very near, the one to the other; for the holy city, new Jerusalem, shall come down from God out of heaven; and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them. The commonwealth that is in heaven shall be established (so Holy Scripture seems to teach us) upon the new earth. It shall come down from heaven, having the glory of God; the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; there his servants shall serve him. Heaven will come down to earth; and so the new earth will become a part of heaven, very closely joined with heaven. God will dwell there with men, and they shall see

him face to face, and live in that new earth the life of heaven; for it is the unveiled presence of God which makes heaven what it is, the abode of joy, and love, and holiness, and entranced contemplation of the Divine beauty. Into that city entereth nothing that defileth; righteousness dwelleth there. The earth that now is hath been defiled with many sins; it has been stained with blood, devastated by war and cruelty, polluted with sensuality and uncleanness. But the new earth shall be all holy. The refining fires of judgment will work a complete and everlasting change. The Deluge cleansed the old world, but only for a time; sin soon began to reassert itself. The fires of the great day will purely purge away all the dross, and leave only the refined gold. Righteousness shall dwell for ever in that new earth. The people of the holy city shall be all righteous; for they shall abide in the presence of him who is the Sun of Righteousness, and shall be made like unto him, for they shall see him as he is.

5. *The need of earnest diligence.* St. Peter has been warning us of the solemn future which lies before us—the most tremendous judgment, the destruction of the present order of things in the fires of the last day, the new heavens and the new earth which will be the eternal home of the blessed. These thoughts, he says, enforce upon us the necessity of diligence in the religious life. Men who really believe that after death cometh the judgment cannot live listlessly and idly. Many professing Christians, alas! live careless lives; but that carelessness evinces a practical unbelief. The momentous issues of the great day must stir the believer to earnest effort. St. Peter had urged the necessity of diligence in the first chapter; he urges it again in the last. Then he appealed to the grace of God, his gifts, his promises; the love of God, the blessed hope set before us, ought to arouse us to love and zeal. Now he appeals to the awful future, the judgment that is coming. Carelessness in the prospect of the judgment is nothing short of madness. Those whose faith is real must be diligent. “That day cometh as a thief:” how will it find us? What will be the state of those who are surprised in sin? Our hearts sicken in shuddering dread at the fearful thought. Then let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure. God’s elect must be conformed to the image of his Son. His Son, the holy Lamb of God, was without blemish and without spot; so must his servants be. They must wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;” but it cleanseth only those who “walk in the light.” Therefore let us be diligent to walk always in the consciousness of God’s presence, in the light that streams from the cross. That light will show each spot and blemish that rests upon the soul; it will bring us to repentance and confession; and then God “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Those who “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” are without fault before the throne of God (Rev. xiv. 5), for every fault has been washed away in the precious blood. Their sins once were like crimson, but now they are whiter than snow; they are clothed with the wedding garment, the white robe of righteousness; therefore they are found in peace. Christ is their Peace; he hath made peace through the blood of his cross. Those who abide in Christ have peace with God now, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. Such men account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. They know that life is a sacred trust, that the time of probation is precious; and they will strive by God’s gracious help to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that the night cometh, in which no man can work.

II. THE DUTY OF LISTENING TO THE WARNINGS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. 1. *St. Paul had warned them.* St. Paul had, by himself or by his companions, founded most of the Churches of Asia Minor. He had written Epistles to the Galatians, Colossians, and Ephesians, the last being probably a circular letter intended to be read in several Churches. At the date of St. Peter’s Second Epistle many of St. Paul’s writings must have become the common property of the whole Church, and thus the Christians of Asia Minor probably knew and read some of the Epistles which had been addressed to European Churches. St. Peter calls St. Paul his beloved brother; he recognizes the wisdom which had been given unto him. The two holy apostles had once differed from one another; now they were united in one faith and one love. St. Peter had overcome his old impetuosity, his old desire to be first; he had learned that precious grace of humility, which in his First Epistle he so earnestly inculcates. He does not remember that he had once been reproved by St. Paul; he thinks only of St. Paul’s

holiness and inspired wisdom; he is wholly above petty jealousies and resentments. Christians ought never to take offence, especially at well-intentioned rebukes; they ought to be thankful for them. Christians ought to rejoice at the graces vouchsafed to others—at their zeal, energy, love, at the success of their religious efforts. Envy, especially among Christians, is a hateful vice, a deadly sin. St. Peter, the first of the apostles, appeals to St. Paul, who was called last of all; he is an example of Christian humility. The two holy apostles taught the same great truths. St. Paul and St. Peter both press earnestly upon us the great danger of spiritual sloth; both warn us that the day of the Lord cometh suddenly, like a thief; both urge us to be watchful. Let us listen to those two holy men as they echo the solemn teaching of the great Master. 2. *There are difficulties in St. Paul's writings.* Men misrepresented the great apostle even from the beginning; they represented him as teaching, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Rom. iii. 8). They distorted his doctrine of justification, and perverted it into antinomianism; though he himself had taught that the faith by which we are saved is "faith which worketh by love," and that faith which could remove mountains is nothing if it be alone, without charity. The false teachers, against whom St. Peter has been warning his readers, were probably among these perverters of the apostle's meaning. It is no wonder: "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." There will always be in the visible Church men unlearned and unstable, untaught by the Holy Spirit of God who alone can guide us to the truth, and therefore without steadfastness, carried away with every blast of vain doctrine. Such men wrest to their own destruction, not only the "things hard to be understood" in St. Paul's Epistles, but Holy Scripture generally. For it is not the written Word that in the fullest sense saves the soul, but the Word of life, the Word that is living and powerful, the Lord Jesus Christ himself manifested to the believer. We may find him in the thoughtful, devout study of God's holy Word; but to find Christ, to win Christ, we must count all else as loss; we must forsake selfish aims, self-exaltation, self-indulgence, and follow in humility and earnest prayer the leading of the blessed Spirit. The written Word is a most precious gift; but no outward privilege can save us. Nay, awful as it seems, men may wrest it, and do wrest it, to their own destruction. Receive it in simplicity and faith, and it will save the soul. God reveals its deep holy meaning to babes in Christ. But if men with perverse ingenuity will use it as the weapon of party strife, and twist its sacred words to suit their selfish purposes, then it may—alas! that it should be so—increase their condemnation. "The letter killeth." *Corruptio optimi pessima.* 3. *There is need of thoughtful watchfulness.* False teachers distort the meaning of Holy Scripture; they wander far from the truth; they are self-willed, lawless, disobedient to the Law of God written in the heart, revealed in his Word. Therefore Christians must be on their guard; they must "not believe every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This conflict of opinions sometimes produces painful doubts and uncertainties; it is one of the trials of the Christian life. 4. *And of growth in grace.* God will reveal the truth to the babes in Christ. He will not leave the humble, faithful soul in darkness and perplexity. Only let a man earnestly pray for the grace of God; only let him strive daily to draw nearer to Christ, and to gain that inner knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, in comparison with which all things else are dross;—and the light of the presence of Christ will surely dawn upon him, and in that light he will find a Guide to bring him to eternal life. For his is the glory now and to the day of eternity, and he is "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him."

LESSONS. 1. "The fashion of this world passeth away." What country shall we belong to?—this dying world, or the eternal city? 2. The great day is at hand; we must look forward to it. We must prepare the way of the Lord; we must pray, "Thy kingdom come." 3. In the new earth righteousness dwelleth. Let us follow after righteousness; let us be diligent, "that we may be found in peace, blameless in his sight." 4. Let us study the Scriptures in faith and prayer, that we may grow in *grace*.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—*The promise of his coming.* The principle which actuated these scoffers, leading them to irreligion and self-indulgence upon the ground that the promises and threats professing to emanate from Divine authority were unfulfilled, is the same principle which was embodied in the ancient proverb, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." It must be remembered that what is a promise to the loyal subject is a threat to the rebel. The second coming of Christ will be for the salvation of the righteous, but for the confusion of the impenitent offender.

I. THE MEANING OF THE PROMISE. 1. This is definite enough in itself, and has been and is firmly held by the whole Church. A sincere belief in the first advent of the Son of God leads to a belief in his second advent, as plainly foretold both by our Lord and by his apostles. 2. But, though definite in itself, the promise of Christ's second coming is by no means definite in circumstances or in time. This is apparent from the diversity of view prevailing upon these points in many periods of the Church's history. How and when Christ shall come are matters of secondary interest as compared with the fact that he shall come.

II. THE GIVER OF THE PROMISE. The value of any promise depends upon the character of him by whom it is given, and not upon his character only, but also upon his ability and resources. Now, the promise in question has been given by a Promiser who is in the highest degree faithful and powerful, even by him who is eternal and unfailing Truth. The voice has been that of the Son, of the inspired prophets and apostles; but the counsel declared has been the counsel of the all-wise God.

III. THE DELAY IN THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE. No doubt there has been a constant coming of the Lord Christ by his Spirit, both in judgment and rebuke, and also in mercy and deliverance. Yet *the* coming is still in the future. If the primitive Christians were in some instances impatient because their glowing hopes were not fulfilled, what wonder if, now and again—as for example in times of depression and in times of persecution—the hearts of the faithful have called for the appearance of the Redeemer, in fervent prayer, in ardent song! Can we be surprised if it has sometimes been lost sight of, that "with God one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"?

IV. THE ABUSE OF THIS DELAY BY MOCKERS AND SCOFFERS. From the first such persons have asked, "Where is the promise?" Unbelief has taken the form of ridicule. And, even worse, the fear of judgment has been to some extent cast off. Like the servants who, finding that their lord delayed his coming, began to eat, drink, and be drunken, and to abuse their fellow-servants, so the scoffers have flung aside every restraint, have spurned every check, and have abandoned themselves to the indulgence of their carnal lusts.

V. THE POWER AND INSPIRATION OF THE PROMISE. That which to one is the occasion of scoffing is to another the inducement to every Christian virtue. Faith rests upon the first advent; Hope stretches forth her hands towards the second advent. There may be mentioned among the fruits of this blessed promise: 1. Patient endurance of privations and sufferings which are known to be temporary. 2. Faithful fulfilment of the appointed stewardship, in preparation for the approaching account. 3. Quiet disregard of all the scoffs and mockeries of unbelievers.—J. R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The Eternal's independence of time.* In all likelihood this sublime statement was suggested by the language of the ninetyeth psalm, "A thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday when it is past." It is a glorious conception of the Divine greatness which is in this passage brought before our minds; whilst at the same time it has a practical bearing of a most valuable character upon the conduct of human life.

I. THE GREAT TRUTH ASSERTED. Time is for man, not for God. We human beings have but a few years allotted to us as the period of earthly work; within the scant limits of those years we must do what we have power to do, or we must leave it for ever undone. This is not so with the Eternal. He has the vast range of all human

history in which to carry out his designs. The dispensations follow one another with no haste. The ages are the province within which God works.

II. THE APPLICATION OF THIS TRUTH TO IMPENITENT SINNERS. It cannot be otherwise than that those who defy God's authority should be affected by the deliberation with which the Almighty Ruler conducts his government. 1. Judgment deferred is made an excuse for perseverance in sin. If the Divine King were under the same restrictions as to time by which an earthly ruler is governed, the case would be otherwise. As it is, the withholding of retribution is misconceived. Yet judgment deferred is, in truth, not judgment reversed, but judgment delayed. 2. If the matter be regarded from the Divine side, another lesson comes to light. Judgment delayed is an opportunity for repentance. Long-suffering on God's part has this merciful significance. Time may teach when other instructors are disregarded; forbearance may be fruitful even when threatening is barren.

III. THE APPLICATION OF THIS TRUTH TO THE TRIED AND TEMPTED PEOPLE OF GOD. Sometimes deliverance deferred is made a ground for fear that deliverance may never come. But the Christian is appointed to learn that deliverance deferred is only deliverance delayed. The day of disappointment, of persecution, of seeming desertion, may appear to the afflicted like a year; the year may appear to be an age. But if the matter be regarded from the Divine side—as our text invites us to regard it—what a change comes over it! The distinction between a longer and a shorter period now almost vanishes. "What of the night? The morning cometh; and also the night." The rescue is near; the daybreak has already begun. Interposition is to be measured, not by years or by centuries, but by Divine purposes and promises.

APPLICATION. These considerations should check the arrogance of scoffers and unbelievers; and should sustain the faith, the courage, and the hope of the Church militant.—J. R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The abode of righteousness.* If the catastrophe which the apostle describes in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth verses stood alone, it might well fill the mind of the believing reader with foreboding and with awe, and paralyze all his energies. But the inspired writer looks beyond the scenes of dissolution and destruction to the fair and beautiful visions which become clear to the eye of faith when enlightened with a heavenly ray.

I. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATIONS. Science sometimes foretells with some definiteness the future of the material universe, that is, so far as dissolution is concerned. According to a universal law of rhythm—so we are told—this earth shall be dissipated into atoms. But little is said upon scientific grounds of any process of reconstruction. Now, it is admitted that Scripture goes into no details with regard to the future. But, at the same time, whilst admitting the perishableness of all created things, revelation passes beyond the epoch of destruction, and assures us that what seems the end is not the end of all things. The old will certainly decay, but only to give place to the new. How this reconstitution is to be effected, we know not; yet that it shall be brought to pass is assured in the promise of "new heavens and a new earth."

II. THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATION. If there is vagueness as to what is material, nothing could be more explicit than so much of the revelation as relates to the spiritual. It matters very little what are the visible and tangible accompaniments of a future state, if only its ethical character be satisfactorily determined. And this is done in the language, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." In such a revelation as this the judgment and conscience can peacefully rest. The contrast between the prevalence of unrighteousness on this earth, and the reign of righteousness in the reconstructed world, is striking in itself, and it furnishes a true satisfaction to the mind which by reason alone cannot confidently anticipate a change so blessed.

III. THE DIVINE BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATION. This is no surmise of sagacity; it is no poetic dream. Our anticipation is "according to God's promise." Here is the all-sufficient justification. Building upon the assurances of him who cannot lie, we secure a firm foundation for our faith and hope. We know that what he has promised he is able to perform. In the region in question all created might

is powerless; if the result is to be brought to pass, it must be by the exercise of omnipotence itself.

IV. THE PREPARATION FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATION. If we "look for" such a glorious future as these words suggest, our attitude must be other than mere hope. We shall cherish fortitude amidst ills that must soon pass away; we shall cultivate that habit of righteousness which shall be congenial to the state which we anticipate; and we shall seek that harmony with the Divine will that shall make us truly and for ever at home in every world of God.—J. R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Diligence*. Where our versions say, "Be diligent!" or "Give diligence!" the original says, "Hasten!" Yet our word, implying choice, value, love, seems appropriate as a rendering of the Greek. Let the traveller speed him with diligence on his journey; let the ploughman hasten to furrow all the acres of his field; let the sailor diligently take advantage of every favourable wind, and beat to windward when need be, that he may reach the haven where he fain would be. And let the Christian, in like manner, be diligent in his Christian calling, ministry, and life.

I. THE SPHERE OF CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE. 1. Properly considered, this includes the whole life. There is no department of our lawful activity where negligence, remissness, indolence, are allowable. The boy in his school-work, the woman in her household, the man in his profession,—all are called to diligence. 2. Diligence is especially important in the achievement of Christian character. *E.g.* in the study of God's Word, in meditation upon Christ's gospel, in imitating Christ's example, in the use of all the means of grace. It is thus that we hope to realize the noble aim before us, to reach the stature of the perfect man in Christ. Such an aim can only be achieved by assiduity and perseverance. 3. Diligence should distinguish the efforts put forth to promote the welfare of our fellow-men. In all walks of Christian philanthropy and usefulness there is a loud call for something better than a languid interest or a fitful zeal.

II. THE METHODS OF CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE. Good things are worth seeking, and for the most part are not to be had without seeking. The following may be acted upon as rules justified by practical experience. 1. Study the biographies of zealous, successful, useful servants of God. 2. Ponder the searching and stirring maxims of the wise—especially those recorded in the Book of Proverbs. 3. Form seriously and deliberately, good resolutions for the conduct of life. 4. Pray, especially against the besetting sin (if such it be) of sloth. 5. And with prayer conjoin watchfulness, lest constantly recurring temptation to indolence prevail.

III. THE MOTIVES TO CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE. 1. Foremost among these must be placed the influence of Christ's love. What can be a stronger impulse in the mind of a true friend of Jesus than a clear understanding of the Saviour's sacrifice, and a warm response of affection and gratitude evoked by the love, pity, and self-denial of Immanuel? How can a friend of Jesus stand beneath his Master's cross, listen to his Master's dying groan, and then be indifferent and remiss in doing that Master's will? 2. The wish to resemble Christ will lead to diligence in the service of God. When we remember those words which revealed our Saviour's consecration, "I must work the works of him that sent me;" "How am I straitened until it [the baptism] be accomplished?" when we remember that it is recorded of him that he "had no leisure so much as to eat;"—how can we remain or become supine in the fulfilment of our life-mission?

"Our Master all the work hath done
He asks of us to-day;
Sharing his service, every one
Share too his Sonship may."

3. Be diligent in preparation for Christ's return. He will require an account from every one of his servants—the trustees of his precious gifts. Then shall the diligent, the faithful, be rewarded, and have praise of God. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."—J. R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Divine long-suffering*. When the religion of Christ was first promulgated, there was on the part of many who embraced it an impatience with the state of things in the world, and an expectation of the end of the age and of the speedy return of the

Saviour, for the deliverance of his people and the destruction of his foes. Both Paul and Peter found it necessary to restrain the impatience and to check the enthusiastic anticipations of their converts, and to impress upon them the marvellous forbearance of God. They aimed at showing that it was benevolence which chiefly prompted the manifestation of Divine long-suffering.

I. THE NATURE OF DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. We know something of human patience and forbearance, and we have all been again and again indebted to these qualities for our opportunities of happiness and usefulness. But Divine long-suffering transcends all that has been displayed by men. 1. Long-suffering is different from mere goodness and bounty, *i.e.* the disposition to bestow benefits upon the needy and dependent. 2. And from pity or compassion, which is a sentiment of commiseration towards the wretched and helpless. 3. And at the same time it is, on the other hand, different from indifference to the evil conduct which is observed in men. 4. It is a kind of *mercy*. It involves a holy Superior and an offending subject. It is an emotion of the heart which prompts to the restraint of indignation; a principle of action which averts and withholds wrath and penalty, although these be abundantly deserved. God, in the exercise of long-suffering, bears with the sinners whom he might justly doom, gives further opportunity for repentance, and waits for its signs.

II. THE OCCASION FOR DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. 1. The sins of mankind have given occasion for the exercise of this grace upon the vastest scale. Scripture history abounds with instances of God's forbearance; *e.g.* in the time of Noah; when Israel rebelled in the wilderness; and when Israel afterwards so largely apostatized, etc. So has it been in the history of every nation, and in the history of the human race. 2. The sins of individual unbelievers and transgressors call for the forbearance of a gracious God. The young who live viciously and irreligiously, those in after-life who forget God and give themselves to the pursuit of worldly aims, continue to live and to enjoy privileges only through the forbearance of Heaven. 3. The unfaithfulness of Christians is only tolerated by a long-suffering Lord. How otherwise could the frailties and infirmities which disfigure the religious life of multitudes be endured? If our God had not again and again borne with our imperfections, should we be still in the possession of opportunities and advantages so many and valuable?

III. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. 1. God refrains from judgment and condemnation. 2. God addresses faithful warnings, and summons to repentance—as the clouds gather before the thunderstorm breaks. Expostulations are repeated: "How shall I give thee up?" 3. Promises and invitations are renewed. 4. Probation is extended, in order that further opportunity may be given for repentance. The mandate goes forth concerning the barren tree, "Let it alone this year also!"

IV. THE GRACIOUS INTENTION OF DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. When the apostle writes, "is salvation," he means, "is intended to work salvation." God does not prolong our proving with a view to the increase of our guilt and chastisement, but for a purpose exactly opposed to this—in order, that is, that hardness may be melted down, that rebellion may cease and be followed by loyalty, that neglect and disregard of religion may give place to interest and to prayer, that the sinner may repent, the wanderer return, the careless be revived. The gift of Christ to man is the most glorious evidence of Divine long-suffering. This is a dispensation of mercy. To forbearance we owe our privileges, and to forbearance we shall be indebted for our final and everlasting salvation.

Great, indeed, is the guilt of those who despise and abuse the long-suffering of the Lord. Such there have ever been. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." But it is better that delay in judgment should be used as the opportunity of repentance, rather than that it should be abused as an excuse and an inducement for perseverance in sin.—J. R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Growth*. The Apostle Paul is recorded to have enjoined his converts to "continue in the grace of God." And this is necessary to the Christian life, but it is not all that is necessary. To abide is not to be stationary. The Apostle Peter here instructs us that it is required of Christians that they not only continue in grace, but *grow* in grace.

I. THE DIVINE LAW OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH. It is well that the tree be planted in a rich and suitable soil; that there be room for its roots to strike forth as far as the most spreading of its goodly boughs; that it be by rivers of water, through whose moisture it may be green; that the winds of heaven may freely rustle through its leafage, and may swing its lithe young branches to and fro. But to what end does the tree possess these advantages? Not that it may remain a tender sapling, not that having grown for a while it may be pollarded, or its growth so checked that it may remain a stunted deformity; but rather that, through all the rough yet kindly forces of nature, the tree may wax greater and stronger year by year; that its heart may be sound, its sap full flowing every spring; that it may "hang all its leafy banners out;" that its branches may give homes to the birds of the air, and shade to the beasts of the field; that its outline may be beautiful to the eye, and its fruit grateful to the taste. So is it the intention of God, and the duty of the Christian, that there should be spiritual growth. It is for those who dwell in the land of privilege, who enjoy the care of the heavenly Husbandman, upon whom are shed the soft influences of heaven, to profit by this fostering culture and these genial powers, to make constant and unmistakable progress in those graces which are the strength and beauty of the Christian life.

II. THE RESPECTS IN WHICH GROWTH IS TO TAKE PLACE. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon." "Israel shall grow as the lilies." In such declarations the reference is evidently to spiritual progress. 1. In the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ. By this expression we are to understand the grace of Christ as revealed, bestowed, and experienced. The grace in us is to be over against, in correspondence with, the grace which is in him. Christian character and excellences are the sign and the effect of spiritual participation in the favour of our Lord. (1) In the number of Christian graces. These are enumerated in the first chapter of this Epistle. Let every reader ask himself—Am I possessed of the graces thus catalogued? or am I not painfully lacking in some one or more? Now, the possession of one does not compensate the lack of another. There is room for supplying many deficiencies. (2) In the strength of Christian graces. In degree every virtue is capable of development; and it is by exercise that the desired increase is to be attained. He who gives play and scope to his holy emotions shall find that they become purer and quicker. If righteous purposes and endeavours have room to act, they will gain in vigour and effectiveness. (3) In the harmony of Christian graces. Symmetry of character is essential to moral perfection, as is physical symmetry to the perfection of bodily figure and features. Harmonious as well as vigorous development of the renewed nature should be the aim of all whose desire is to please God. Instances abound in which the possession of one excellence is presumed to compensate the absence of others. But to be bluntly honest and uncourteous, or to be discreet and untender; to be amiable but unable to resist evil influence,—is spiritual deformity. Whilst perfection is to be found in God alone, each follower of Christ aspires to grow up in all things unto him who is the Head. "Ye are complete in him." The tree which has been hindered from growing on one side fails in symmetry; it is the same with the disciple of Christ who has evidently failed in learning some of the Master's most essential lessons. 2. In the *knowledge* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul prayed, on behalf of the Colossians, that they might increase in the knowledge of God. And our Lord himself deemed this knowledge so important that he made it a petition of his great intercessory prayer that his disciples might "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent." Now, all human knowledge is susceptible of increase; and the Lord and Saviour in whom we trust is a theme, an object of knowledge, so vast as to be inexhaustible.

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH GROWTH IN GRACE IS ACHIEVED. As the plant needs soil, air, light, culture, in order that it may grow, as the body needs food and many and varied necessities in order that the child may develop into the man, so are there conditions indispensable to spiritual progress. There it is for all who desire to advance in the Divine life, to discover and to use. The study of God's Word, the diligent attendance upon Church ordinances, constancy in prayer, faithfulness in work,—these are acknowledged "means of grace." The reading of biographies of great, good, and useful men may be mentioned as a subsidiary but valuable means to spiritual progress.

And at the same time, it is important to observe and to avoid and strive against those *hindrances* to growth which in great variety beset us on every side, and by which very many have been injured, if not ruined.

IV. THE EXTENT AND LIMIT OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH. With regard to this world, such progress is intended to be lifelong. If growth be constant, it cannot matter to us at what precise stage of advance the earthly development comes to a close. Let death come when it may to the Christian who is making progress in Divine grace and knowledge, it cannot come inopportunately.

"It is not growing, like a tree,
In bulk, doth make man better be,
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere;
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night—
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be."

Beyond this life, who can set a limit to such growth as is here inculcated? The scope is boundless and the opportunity is infinite.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1-9.—*The Divine commandment.* A careful study of this passage is necessary to a clear understanding of the apostle's meaning, and of the place of this urgent exhortation in his argument. For such a study it may be well to gather up his teaching here round three points.

I. THE "WORD" OR "COMMANDMENT" HERE INTENDED. Concerning such we ask: 1. By whom is it proclaimed? (1) "Spoken before by the holy prophets;" i.e. perhaps chiefly, though not solely, of the Old Testament. Forth-tellers as well as fore-tellers. (2) "Your apostles;" i.e. those that brought you the gospel. (3) "The Lord and Saviour." He is the Source; the prophets and apostles are but the channel. 2. How is it to be received? (1) "Stir up your mind;" active intelligence. (2) "Sincere" mind; unprejudiced intelligence. (3) By way of "remembrance;" intelligence that recalls what has been revealed. Not a novelty, not a discovery. 3. What is it? The theme of both Epistles—Christ's coming.

II. THE OBJECTION OF MEN TO THIS "WORD" AND "COMMANDMENT." 1. What are the *men* who object? "Mockers with mockery." Not the troubled truth-seeker. 2. What is the *spirit* in which they object? "Walking after their own lusts." Strong unbridled desire is the explanation of their scornful unbelief. 3. What is the *argument* of this objection? "Where is the promise of his coming?" Not, where written? but, what has come of it? Since the fathers fell asleep it seems to lie like a dead letter.

III. THE THREEFOLD ANSWER TO THIS OBJECTION. 1. It arises from wilful ignorance of history. There is the "Flood"—probably one among many, but the chief—of which tradition, science, the Bible, have much to say. And that Flood, and all coming destruction, is to be traced, not to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, but to "the Word of God." 2. It arises from fixing time as a condition of God's ways, as it is of man's. "One day," etc. Look at "the dial of the ages, not the horologe of time." 3. It arises from misreading the apparent tardiness of God. He is slow, but never late. What seems to us delay is not an interval of Divine neglect, but a period of Divine mercy, granting an opportunity for human "repentance."—U. R. T.

Vers. 10-13.—*Destiny and duty.* This passage is woven to the preceding by a link so clear and close that there is no need for indicating it. But we proceed to notice—

I. THE CERTAINTY AND YET THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE PASSING AWAY OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF THINGS. 1. *What* will "pass away"? "Heavens;" i.e. firmament. "Elements;" not the forces we usually so name, because they include "fire," which is here the revolutionary force; but, according to Farrar and others, "the orbs of heaven." 2. *How* shall they "pass away"? "Dissolved," not destroyed. Fresh forms. Whether this be literal, as with the Flood, or wider and figurative, so as to

include institutions, empires, and all that "the world" is to us, is an open question. 3. The *certainty* of all passing away. The *fact* is certain. 4. The *uncertainty*. The *date* is uncertain. "As a thief;" not as to wrongfulness, but unexpectedness. "At such an hour as ye think not" is the true answer to all chronological theories about "the end."

II. THE GLORY OF THE FUTURE AFTER THAT STUPENDOUS EVENT HAS HAPPENED. It is not the catastrophe, or climax, but the prologue and dawn. It leads not to annihilation, but restoration and purification. 1. A *new system* of things. "New heavens and new earth." Fresh, in contrast to worn out. Scars and wounds all gone. 2. The true *principle* dominant in the new system—"righteousness." Probably not more material grandeur or loveliness than now, but pervaded with rectitude—man right with God, man right with man, man right with himself. 3. The *permanence* of this pervasive righteousness. Wherein "dwelleth." Not, as now and here, often an alien, frequently a stranger, at best a visitor; but the new system of things will be its *home*. That is (1) its *fitting*, (2) its *happy*, (3) its *permanent* abode. 4. All this rests on a *Divine promise*. This indicates (1) God's pity; (2) God's prescience; (3) God's power. The tones of this promise are manifold and harmonious, from Jonah down to Peter.—U. R. T.

Vers. 14—18.—*A tender concluding appeal*. In these words the apostle gets near, as a shepherd of souls tending the flock, to those whom he would bless.

I. HE MAKES THEIR DISCIPLINE A PLEA FOR REACHING A BLESSED IDEAL. 1. Their discipline. How much is involved in "these things"! 2. Their ideal. "Be found in peace, without spot, and blameless." 3. Their struggle. "Give diligence."

II. HE INDICATES THAT THE MYSTERY OF DELAYED JUDGMENT IS A MYSTERY OF DIVINE MERCY GIVING OPPORTUNITY FOR SALVATION. 1. This is taught by Paul. 2. This is affirmed again by Peter. 3. This is the clear teaching of Scripture, even though it has its things "hard to be understood."

III. HE WARNS THAT EVEN THE BEST MEANS OF BLESSING MAY BE PERVERTED TO HARM. The ignorant and unsteadfast wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.

IV. HE SHOWS THE PERIL THAT COMES TO THE GOOD FROM EVIL MEN. "Carried away with the error of the wicked," etc. 1. Strong influence—"carried." 2. Great calamity—"fall."

V. HE PROCLAIMS THE METHOD AND HOPE OF TRUE SAFETY. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." This is in harmony with his emphatic teaching: "Add to your faith virtue," etc.

VI. HE ASCRIBES PRAISE TO HIM WHO IS ITS RIGHTFUL OBJECT. 1. *The glory is Christ's*. "On his head are many crowns." Peter vies with Paul in passionate homage for his Lord. 2. *The glory is Christ's now*. Our obedience, our actual service, our praise, to-day. 3. *The glory is Christ's for ever*. There may be new systems of things, and these systems of surpassing grandeur; but his glory shall ever be the diadem on the very brow of the universe, the central sun amid all its constellations. For the moral evermore transcends the material. And he is for ever "the Lord our Righteousness."—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—10.—*Fact of second coming, especially in its accompaniments*. I. AIM OF THE EPISTLE. 1. *To stir them up by reminding them*. "This is now, beloved, the second Epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance." There is here the first of four designations of them as *beloved* in this chapter. It was *already* a second Epistle that he was writing to the same circle; not much time had elapsed since the writing of the First Epistle, which in all probability is that which has come down to us under that title. The aim of both Epistles was the same. It is expressed in accordance with language used in the first chapter of this Epistle. He did not profess to be revealing to them new truths, but only to put them in remembrance of old truths. They had a sincere mind, i.e. open to the light. They would not therefore object to truths because they were old, or to their being re-stated, but would rather welcome being reminded of them, that they might be stirred up to a deeper sense of their importance. 2. *To stir them up by reminding them of certain holy words*. "That ye should remember the words which were spoken

before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles." He first refers them to the words of the *holy* prophets, *i.e.* who wrote on holy themes, and under holy inspiration. He has specially in view the holy theme of the second coming. Their words spoken before had received striking, yet partial, fulfilment in the first coming; they would receive their complete fulfilment in the second coming. He also refers them to the commandment of the Lord and Saviour, than which surely nothing could be more binding. Christ first saves, and then commands: where is the teacher who is in that commanding position? He first teaches the fact of his second coming, and then he commands the corresponding life. "Watch therefore," says Christ: "for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." This commandment, having the highest authority, was delivered to them through *their* apostles, *i.e.* the apostles that had laboured among them. The chief of these thus echoed his Lord. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night: . . . so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 2—7).

II. THE MOCKERS. 1. *The time of their appearance.* "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery." Peter refers to the advent of the mockers as of primary importance in its bearings. They were to come in the last of the days, by which we cannot understand simply the time immediately preceding the second advent. The last period is to be regarded as extending from the first advent to the second advent. During this period, as time went on, they were to come, and to come in character. In Hebrew style, it is said that the mockers were to come "with mockery"—with their mocking at holy things. 2. *What they were to mock at.* "Walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" What they were to say was to be determined, not by truth, nor by fact, but by prejudice, and by prejudice founded on their walking after their own lusts, *i.e.* their loose mode of life. In the first psalm those that "walk in the counsel of the ungodly" are next represented as "standing in the way of sinners," and then as "sitting in the seat of the scornful." So here those whose life cannot bear looking into, disliking the coming because it meant a check to them, are represented as saying, with an air of mocking triumph, "Where is the promise of his coming?" *i.e.* it has turned out to be vain and mendacious. 3. *How they were to argue.* (1) *Fact on which they were to base their argument.* "For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep." By "the fathers" we are probably to understand the men of the first Christian generation. The promise was made to them, and they lived in hope of its being fulfilled in their day. But the day came when, without its being fulfilled, they fell asleep. There is an example here of the use of language from which there has been receding. Christians speak of their friends in Christ as *falling asleep*. The sentiment comes out in the word *cemetery*, which means "sleeping-place," with which we associate an awaking. The mockers, no longer in accord with Christianity, use Christian language. The fact on which they base their argument is not to be denied: the use which they made of it is taken up at ver. 8. (2) *Argument drawn from uniformity.* "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We are warranted in proceeding on the uniformity of nature—on the sun rising to-morrow as it has done to-day, and in days past. Nor is it surprising that scientific men should be more than ordinarily impressed with the fact of uniformity, by their researches into nature. Peter here prophesies that in the last days mockers would seek to turn the fact of uniformity against Christianity, and it has remarkably turned out as he prophesied. This is really the line that has been followed by many sceptics. They have said, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." On this ground Hume argued against miracles. "A miracle," he said, "is a violation of a law of nature: but the universal experience of ourselves, and of the whole human family, proves that the laws of nature are *uniform*, without exception." Strauss and his school have sought to establish, not merely the incredibility, but the impossibility, of miracles. Their argument bears against such a subversion of the present order of things as is connected with the second coming. They have thus unconsciously fulfilled prophecy.

III. CATASTROPHISM IN THE PAST. "For this they wilfully forget, that there were

heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the Word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Peter, in putting his finger on catastrophism, refers to it as what they wilfully forgot. It required an effort of their will to shut it out. The impression of the event, though it had taken place centuries before, had not died out. His reference to the Flood is introduced by a statement bearing on the way in which it was brought about. This is founded on the Mosaic account of creation. The first part of the statement refers to the bringing of the heavens into existence. There were heavens from of old, by the Word of God. This is the first thought of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven." It did not exist from eternity, but was brought into existence by the creative word of God. The second part of the statement refers, not to the bringing of the earth into existence, but to its receiving its present form. An earth was compacted out of water, *i.e.* as material. The reference seems to be to the waters of chaos in the Mosaic record (Gen. i. 2). It was also compacted, not "amidst water," as it is unwarrantably in the Revised Version, but "by means of water," *i.e.* as the instrumental element. The reference seems to be to the gathering together of the waters into one place. Behind the water as material and instrumental element was the directing and potent Word of God. Having made this statement, Peter introduces the Flood as his answer to the mockers. The connecting words are, "by which means." The use of the plural creates a difficulty. The most probable solution is that the reference is to the water and the Word of God. This is favoured by the latter being carried forward in the next verse. Water, let loose by God, flooded *the then world*, *i.e.* not the earth simply, but the earth as supporting its then inhabitants. There was catastrophism of the most impressive nature. There was (let the mockers note it) a mighty disturbance of uniformity. The world that then was perished.

IV. CATASTROPHISM IN THE FUTURE. "But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." There is suggestion, not of their ceasing to be heavens and earth, but rather of there being still heavens and earth, only not such as we now see them. The Word of God has fixed the destiny of the new heavens and earth. There is catastrophism in store for them. They are here represented as stored up for fire. The agency is not far to seek, being in the heart of the earth. There is suggestion of the fire being needed for the new heavens and earth on account of the ungodly men that have defiled them. For their God-forgetting, God-defying life, they—when the appointed day comes—are to be adjudged to destruction. The heavens and earth that they have defiled are to be subjected, not to water (which is forbidden by promise), but to an agency more penetrative and subduing. The same Word that carried out the catastrophism of water is to carry out the catastrophism of fire.

V. THE DIVINE MODE OF RECKONING. "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." This is Peter's answer to the suggestion in the argument of the mockers, "From the day that the fathers fell asleep." By addressing his readers as "beloved," he bespeaks their attention. He bespeaks their attention to a thing which they were in danger of forgetting. He bespeaks their attention to a thing which was principally to be considered. "Forget not this *one* thing." The language in which this one thing is expressed is an extension of what is found in Ps. xc. 4, both sides being presented here. Peter teaches that our ideas of short and long in time are not to be applied to God's mode of reckoning. A day is what is short with us. We think of there being many, many days of life. But a day may be long with God. If we think of the days of creation, how much was crowded into each of them! If we think of the day on which the Flood came, how much characterized it! If we think of the last day of our Lord's Passion, how much affecting human history, and affecting angelic history, and affecting even God himself, was crowded into it! We are taught to think of a nation being born in a day. So we do not need to think of more than a day as required for the events that are to be included in the second coming. On the other hand, a thousand years is what is long with us. Men used to think of that as the limit of human life. But we cannot now think of our living a hundred years. But a thousand years may be a short time with God. "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." There was a waiting for thousands of years before the arrival of man on

the earth; and if thousands of years have to elapse before the winding up of human history, in the sure and effectual evolving of his purpose that may not be long to God.

VI. EXPLANATION OF SEEMING DELAY. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." When a promise is made for a specified time, and is not fulfilled at that time, there is real delay there, the explanation of which may be found to be slackness. Such slackness cannot be attributed to God. There is apparent delay, and some, in the disappointment of their expectation, and in the working of unbelief, may say it is slackness; but that cannot be justified. It is said that "the Judge is before the door," which may be construed as an immediate coming. But the real meaning is that Christ is ready for judgment. Why, then, does he not come? The answer is that things are not ready for his coming. Christ's people are charged with making things ready for his coming, so far as they themselves are concerned, and so far as others are concerned; and they have not things in sufficient readiness. It is not, then, that God is slack concerning his promise, as though he were not sufficiently interested; it is, says Peter, that he is long-suffering to you-ward. He is bearing with Christian people in their dereliction of duty, in their slackness in performing their part. And not merely they, but others, are thought of by God. He does not wish that any should perish. It is not according to his heart that even one whom he has created, and for whom Christ has died, should remain in misery. This is a thought which comes out strongly in the prophecy of Ezekiel. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God?" "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." "Say unto them [that pine away in their sins], As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The positive side of the Divine wish is that all should come to repentance. He has not an interest merely in some, but in all. None can be happy in sin; it can only be pining away, as the prophet puts it. None can be happy without repentance, *i.e.* change of mind; but this change of mind he wishes for all. And it is not a mere wish, but it is a wish that has been manifested in the cross of Christ; and, in the operations of the Spirit, and in the workings of Providence, this is the end which is sought. Let us all respond, then, to the Divine wish which accompanies the Divine long-suffering.

VII. THE COMING CHARACTERIZED. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." By "the day of the Lord" we are to understand the day of Christ's glorious manifestation. The interest of that day will all centre round his appearance and judicial action. The coming of the day is regarded with certainty. In the original "will come" has the emphatic position: "Will come the day of the Lord." Whether our thoughts are contrary to it, or whether we have not thoughts about it at all, it will come. Peter touches on the suddenness of the coming, in this echoing the Master, as Paul also did: "Will come the day of the Lord as a thief." He more than touches on an awe-inspiring association of the coming. There will be a general conflagration. It was said in prophecy that the heavens shall vanish away like smoke. Here it is said that they shall pass away with a great noise. This is to be explained by the clause which follows, which is to be taken with it. The elements, *i.e.* of which the heavens are composed, shall be dissolved with fire. The noise, then, is the rushing sound of the destroying fire, or the consequent crash. The conflagration is to embrace the earth: "The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The works must be understood as including man's works. Some works long outlive the workers. It is hoped that some works of art may survive for centuries. But, however long they survive, they will at last be burnt up. That teaches us that there is what is higher than art. And we need not wonder at this being the destiny of man's works on earth, when it is to be the destiny of even God's works on earth. Lift up your eyes to the heavens in the stillness of night, or look upon the earth beneath bathed in the sun-light of a summer day: can it be that catastrophism shall reign wherever your eyes rest? can it be that the wild, all-devouring element of fire shall lay hold on all this material fabric? So prophecy tells us that it will be. It will come, the day of general conflagration.—R. F.

Vers. 11—18.—*Duty in view of second coming.* I. REFERENCE TO GOD IN OUR CONDUCT. "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" The catastrophe that is to accompany the second coming is here put down in time present in the original, to raise an impression of its certainty: "Seeing that these things are thus all dissolved." If the conclusions of some scientific men are to be accepted, this is literally true, inasmuch as they say that there are processes going on which must end in the material fabric being worn out. It is in the condition of a clock that, if not wound up, must run out. The catastrophe thus vividly presented is here made a reason for our attending to ourselves. "What manner of persons," Peter exclaims, "ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" Holy living is the living of those who are set apart to the service of a holy God. Godliness points to this living as based on our relation to God. By the use of the plural in the original there is brought out the manifold workings and forms of a godly life. There is the feeling of dependence on God and of fear toward him, desire for the blessing from God and trust in him for the blessing, the feeling of love toward God for what he is and of gratitude toward him for his mercies, knowledge of God's will and the resolution to do his will,—all this finding expression in worship, self-command, and sacrifice for others.

II. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SECOND COMING. "Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God." This is the only instance of the day being called "*the day of God*." We must think of the Father ordering the day and its events, that the Son after his mysterious Passion may be magnified. "As the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Our attitude to the day of God is to be that of *expectancy*. We are to *look* for its coming or presence. We are to allow it to dwell in our minds, so as to call forth our earnest desire after it. The first Christians looked for it to come in their day. They were nearer the Divine intention than those who, because it may not be for thousands of years, do not think of it at all. But our attitude is also to be that of *active preparation*. The proper translation is neither "*haste unto*" nor "*earnestly desire*," but "*hasten on*." The idea of hastening on the coming is unusual; but it is remarkable that it is elsewhere expressed by Peter. "Repent ye therefore," he said to the assembly in Solomon's porch, "and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, *that so* there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and *that* he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things." It is thus Petrine and scriptural to think of the coming as an event which may be accelerated by our repentance and prayers and efforts for the diffusion of the gospel.

III. WHAT IS NECESSITATED BY THE SECOND COMING OUTWARDLY. "By reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." It is said that the heavens are not clean in God's sight. The idea here is that even the heavens have been defiled, by reason of those who have lived under them, and upon the earth. Once Christ did not shrink from dwelling on this earth, being on his saving mission; but when he is to come in his judicial character, he is to be a consuming fire, at his approach, even to material things. It is said in Rev. xx. 11, that from the face of him that sat upon the great white throne the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. So here it is taught that even the heavenly world is to be subjected to fire, not merely to the breaking up of its order, but even to the melting of its elements.

IV. WHAT IS LOOKED FOR AT THE SECOND COMING OUTWARDLY. "But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is in accordance with Rev. xxi. 1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." The most striking promise is in Isa. lxxv. 17, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered." The newness does not necessarily refer to the materials of which the present heavens and earth are composed; these may be transformed so as to constitute new heavens and earth, just as our bodies are to be transformed so as to constitute new bodies. The new heavens and new earth are to correspond to newness of

character—a correspondence of the outward to the inward never to be disturbed. It is said in Isa. lvi. 22, “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I shall make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” The expression of the idea here is, “wherein dwelleth righteousness”—has its permanent abode, from which it will never take flight. It will be a world where there is no superstition or infidelity, where there is a correct, bright conception of what God is, and a due appreciation of the work of Christ. It will be a world where there is nothing to interfere with social well-being, where jealousies and antipathies are unknown. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord!” Is not, then, the institution of this order of things to be much thought of by us, and to be earnestly desired? We may regret that much that is beautiful in the present order of things is to vanish. Shall we never again look upon that beautiful sky, those beautiful landscapes, the beautiful flowers? But there is ample compensation in the higher beauty to which the present is to give place. When we have got the glorious resurrection-body, there will be no regret that we have left the present body behind. So when we see the new heavens and the new earth, there will be no regret that the former things have passed away. In their higher forms they will have a greater power of lifting the soul to God. The teaching of Peter regarding the heavens and earth agrees with what Paul teaches in the eighth of Romans, “For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.” Peter emphasizes fire as the liberating element; Paul simply notes the liberation. Peter, again, thinks of a fit abode for righteousness; Paul thinks of an abode that shadows forth the liberty of the glory of the children of God. There is use in looking forward to new heavens and a new earth. We feel that the present arrangement is not independent of God. He made it, and he can alter it. He can make a world suitable to a probationary state, and a world suitable to a state of attained righteousness. He can make a world suitable for his people in their present imperfect state, and a world suitable to them when he puts glory on them.

V. PERSONAL CONCERN AT THE SECOND COMING. “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.” We look for a great *catastrophe* at the end of time as that which has been certainly foretold. We do not look for that alone, but for that as introducing a great *reconstruction* in the production of new heavens and earth. This is connected with our seeing God on the day formerly referred to. Our personal anxiety must be to be found in peace on that occasion—to have God as our Friend, so that the catastrophe shall not reach us, and so that the new heavens and new earth shall be for our blessed and eternal abode. We can only expect this consummation by our being without spot and blameless. Spots and blemishes attract the fire of Divine judgment. This very earth and even the heavens have to be subjected to fire because they have been connected with man’s sin. Let us not think, then, that we can stand in God’s sight with hearts defiled. We must give diligence to have all spots and blemishes removed from us, in the use of the means of grace, in a constant recourse to the blood of Christ, in a constant endeavour to conform our life to the Divine will.

VI. INTERPRETATION OF PRESENT DELAY. “And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.” In explanation of the delay of the second coming, it was said formerly that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering.” Here long-suffering is asserted of our Lord, apparently the Lord Jesus Christ, as the absolute Manifestation of the disposition of the Father. Here also there is connected with long-suffering its end, viz. salvation. Christ makes to us the offer of salvation; but he does not reject us so soon as we refuse his offer. He would teach us even from our experience of the bitterness of sin, he would disabuse our minds of false ideas of life, he would make us tired of a life of sin, he would make us turn in desire to a life of holiness. He has no quarter for sin; but he has patience for the sinner, he heaps mercies upon him; there is the continual mercy that he is not treated according to his desert. Thus by his continual goodness would he lead us to repentance, by his long-suffering he would compass our salvation, by his gentleness he would make us great.

But for patience extended over years, Paul would never have lived to be a preacher of righteousness, and John Bunyan would never have lived to write the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' And so it is with the race as a whole. The offer of salvation has yet to be made to all. And even when the offer has been made, means have to be used to secure the acceptance of salvation. Therefore it is that the coming is delayed. Let us not, then, misinterpret the delay; let us not mistake what is long-suffering for slackness in promising, or indifference to sin.

VII. REFERENCE TO THE WRITINGS OF PAUL. "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." Peter refers to Paul by whom, on one occasion, he had been withstood, as his *beloved brother*, i.e. not ministerial associate, but brother to the readers and to himself alike, and alike dear to them. He also recognizes him as possessing a *wisdom* which was not his own. Paul had written to the same circle on the subject of the coming. If we think of the Asiatic circle, we turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians. In it the nearest approach to what Peter has been saying is to be found in ch. v. 27, "That he might present the Church to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." When Peter passes to other Epistles, we at once think of the Epistles to the Thessalonians. In these Paul expressly treats of delay in the second coming, and points out the attitude to be taken up. And this naturally suggests "some things hard to be understood." What he had in his mind was probably the revelation of the man of sin. Of other things hard to be understood in Paul's Epistles we may particularize the gathering up of all things in Christ, the doctrine of election especially as set forth in the ninth chapter of Romans, and the filling up of that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ in Colossians. Peter notes the bad use made of these things hard to be understood, in common with other Scriptures, by the ignorant and unsteadfast, i.e. those who had not the essentials of Christian instruction, and did not hold to the Christian position once taken up by them. They "wrested them" as by a hand-screw, i.e. from their natural meaning to their own destruction. There is no support here to the Roman Catholic idea of withholding the Bible from the people. Because Scriptures, especially difficult Scriptures, are abused by the ignorant and unsteadfast, that is no argument against the good use of them by those who are exhorted in this same chapter to "remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through the apostles." Let us, even when we (in company with Peter) do not thoroughly understand, humbly seek to get profit.

VIII. CAUTION. "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness." What they knew beforehand was what Paul and Peter said about the second coming. The conclusion of the verse points especially to the foretold appearance of errorists before the coming. These were condemned by their lawless conduct. Let them not, then, as they valued his love in the gospel, be carried away with their error. They had firm footing; let them not be carried off their feet. Let them not be like Barnabas, the companion of Paul, who, when at the coming of some from James to Antioch, the Jews dissembled with Peter, he also was carried off his feet with their dissimulation (Gal. ii. 13).

IX. PARTING COUNSEL. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." A tree is not a complete reality at once; but from a beginning there is progress toward an end. So we are not complete beings at once; but from a beginning there is a progress intended for us toward the end of our being. There may be growth in a wrong direction: what we are here exhorted to grow in is what of Divine assistance as sinners we need in order to come to the goal of our being. "Grow in grace," which is to be taken as an independent conception. If we are not growing under gracious influence, then we have only a name to live. Our faith grows as it becomes more ample and conquering. Our love grows as it becomes more fervent and diffusive. Our hope grows as it becomes more calm and bright. We are to grow in self-abasement, in power of work, in power of concentrating the mind on the truth, in power to bear hardships and injuries. We are to grow especially in that in which we

find ourselves to be deficient. We are further exhorted to grow in "the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is in keeping with the great importance which is attached to knowledge in this Epistle. It is that by which we grow. The knowledge which is thus nutritive is knowledge of Christ as opening up and dispensing the treasures of Divine grace, and as showing in his own life what grace would bring out in ours. Let us, then, have a worthy conception of Christ in our minds; it is upon this that our growth in grace depends.

X. DOXOLOGY. "To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen." It is to Christ that the adoration is offered. To him be glory *now*; for it is to the knowledge of him that we owe all of grace that we have. To him be glory *for ever*, literally, "to the day of the age"—the day on which eternity, as contrasted with time, begins, and which is never to be broken up, but is to be one long day. To him we are indebted, as for all that we have now, so for all that we hope to have hereafter. Thus does the Epistle end without the customary salutations, simply with the carrying forward of Christ into our eternal life. It becomes every one who has followed out the thought of the Epistle to add his devout "*Amen.*"—R. F.

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