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OUTLINE STUDIES

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

CATHOLIC EPISTLES—JAMES, I AND II
PETER, I, II, III JOHN, AND JUDE

BY

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"Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."



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Ms. C. W. Moore, 18-1910

This book completes the Studies in the New Testament by the undersigned. If his work has contributed in any degree to a clearer and fuller understanding of these wonderful Scriptures, no one will rejoice more heartily than the writer.

WILLIAM G. MOOREHEAD.

Xenia Theological Seminary.

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EPISTLE OF JAMES

The seven epistles, commonly called Catholic or General, are the subjects of the present study. With the epistle of James we are first to deal.

Can the James whose name is attached to this epistle be identified? Several persons bearing the name are mentioned in the New Testament, *e. g.*, James the son of Zebedee John's brother, James the son of Alphaeus, James the Less, and James the Lord's brother. There is good reason to regard James the son of Alphaeus and James the Less as one and the same person (cf. Mark xv: 40; xvi: 1; John xix: 25). Three of the name appear to be distinguished from each other, viz.: James the son of Zebedee, James the son of Alphaeus, and James the Lord's brother.

Which of these three was the writer of the epistle? James the son of Zebedee is excluded by the fact that it was written probably after his martyrdom by Herod, A. D. 44. James the son of Alphaeus seems also to be excluded because there is no evidence that he was specially prominent as a teacher in Jerusalem, whereas the contents of the epistle and the Acts attest the pres-

ence of a James in the holy city who held a conspicuous and influential place. Besides, the writer of the epistle does not call himself an apostle; he speaks of himself simply as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (i: 1). Ordinarily, when a writer of an epistle gives his name he affixes also his title. Now James son of Alphaeus was an apostle, but James the Lord's brother was not. In Gal. i: 19 he seems to be included in the number, but the construction of the sentence in that place does not warrant such a conclusion: "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." The margin of the Revised Version reads, "but only James the Lord's brother," which sets him apart from the apostle Peter whom Paul visited on this occasion. (Cf. Rom. xiv: 14; Luke iv: 26, 27, for a like construction.) In 1 Cor. xv: 7—"then he appeared to James"—the order of the words seems to imply that James is rather to be distinguished from than included among the apostles. Had James son of Alphaeus written this letter he would in all probability have inserted his title of apostle. Since this is absent, the inference seems legitimate that the writer was not an apostle. Besides, Jude describes himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (ver. 1)—language which denotes that Jude anticipates a respectful hearing of his message because of his relationship to the influential James. In the family of Joseph and Mary there were both a James and a Jude (Mark vi: 3), and it is altogether likely that the two named in Jude's epistle were precisely these two sons, and

hence the "Lord's brothers." But neither of them was an apostle, though bound to the Lord Jesus by the closest ties, as we shall presently see.

On the whole, the evidence points unmistakably to James "the Lord's brother" (Gal. i: 19) as the author of our epistle. He was one of the most conspicuous members of the apostolic church. He was the chief pastor and principal teacher of the church of Jerusalem. It was he who with Peter and John gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas (Gal. ii: 9), to whom Peter sent the tidings of his deliverance from prison (Acts xii: 17), and who, together with the elders, received Paul and his companions on their arrival in Jerusalem with the gifts of Gentile churches for the needy saints (Acts xxi: 18). It was this James who took so prominent a part in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv), and who offered the resolution, as we moderns would say, which was unanimously adopted by that assembly. Peter at Antioch for a time held fellowship with Gentile Christians, but when certain came from James he drew back and refused longer to eat with them, so great was James' influence (Gal. ii: 11, 12).

But now what relationship is meant by the expression, "the Lord's brother?" Frequent mention is made of the Lord's brethren (Matt. xii: 46; Mark vi: 3; John vii: 3, 5; 1 Cor. ix: 5; Gal. i: 19). In Mark vi: 3 we read, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" This was said by the people of Nazareth who were well acquainted

with the family and with Jesus' relation to it. They speak of His brothers, naming them, and of His sisters, and of His mother. In Acts i: 14 "his brethren" are distinguished from the apostles, from the disciples, and from the mother Mary. What kinship did He sustain to these "brothers" and "sisters?" Cousins of Jesus they could hardly be, for the term "brother" is never used in this sense in the New Testament. If they were the children of Cleopas (Alphaeus), whose wife was Mary (John xix: 25), who was sister to Mary the mother of Jesus, as Jerome and many after him believe, then we have two sisters of the same name, a most unlikely thing. But the text in John xix: 25 does not necessarily mean that the mother's sister was the wife of Cleopas; rather, we understand John to say this—"His mother and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene." Four women are here mentioned, not three. Mark xv: 40 informs us that one of the women who beheld the crucifixion was Salome, and John does not name her because she was his own mother, and she was sister to Jesus' mother.

The natural inference from the biblical statements as to our Lord's brethren is this: His brothers and sisters were the children of Joseph and Mary born to them after the birth of Jesus. The intelligent reader of the Bible, uninfluenced by preconceptions, would certainly infer so much. It was superstitious reverence for the mother of Jesus and for the dogma of her perpetual virginity that led men to affix other meanings to the terms "brother," "brethren" and "sisters" than

the natural one. Accordingly, the conjecture is that Joseph was a widower when he and Mary were married, and that he had sons and daughters by a former wife, and these were His "brethren." There is no hint in Scripture of this: it is pure conjecture. He who holds that Psalm lxix is Messianic, and that it in point of fact expresses the feelings and experiences of the Messiah, that in it Messiah does actually speak, as the writer unhesitatingly does, has a scriptural definition of the Lord's "brethren:" "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien to my mother's children," Psalms lxix: 8; cf. Luke ii: 7—"her firstborn son."

The Lord's brethren did not receive Him as Messiah. John says, "Even his brethren did not believe on him" (John vii: 3-5). Mark informs us that at one time they entertained serious doubts as to His sanity; they thought He was "beside himself," and with the mother Mary they sought to arrest Him and to take Him home with them (Mark iii: 21, 31). It is noteworthy that it was but a few months before His crucifixion when John affirms the disbelief of Jesus' brethren. Indeed, it seems that it was not until He was risen from the dead these "brethren" cordially received Him as Messiah and were identified with the apostles and disciples (Acts i: 13-15). It is thought by some, Lightfoot among the number, that James, the Lord's brother, was converted when the risen Saviour appeared to him (1 Cor. xv: 7). If, therefore, James the son of Alphaeus and James the Lord's brother are identical and that it was he who wrote our epistle, it

follows that he was both a disciple and apostle before he was a believer in Christ during the whole period of the public ministry, and even up to and beyond the crucifixion—which appears to us quite an untenable position.

Legends and traditions have gathered about the name of James, most of which are fanciful and un-historical. Some things have been preserved of him that may have some foundation of truth. It is related that he was called by the people The Just, a tribute to his uprightness and integrity. He was a thorough Israelite, a strict observer of the Law, but not a mere formalist. His course in the Jerusalem Council proves he was tolerant and had a large and wise view of Christian liberty. In all essentials he was in complete accord with Paul (Acts xxi: 18-26).

There is a story connected with the Lord's appearing to James after the resurrection which, however doubtful, is worth relating: At Jesus' death James vowed he would eat no bread until he saw Him risen from the dead. When the Saviour appeared to him He said, "My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep." He died as a martyr.

James addresses the Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion (i: 1). The term Dispersion is very comprehensive. Jews were found everywhere throughout the vast Roman Empire, and even beyond its limits. We know from Acts ii: 9-11 that devout Hebrews came from Elam in the far east and from Rome in the west to be present at the annual feast of the Passover held

in Jerusalem. Christians were found among these dispersed tribes, and these James addresses in much of the spirit and temper of an Old Testament prophet.

At first sight the epistle appears to be entirely legal. It reminds us of portions of Deuteronomy and of Proverbs. As is well known, Luther objected to it mainly on this score, calling it "a right strawy epistle." So did Erasmus, Cardinal Cajetan and others. It must be remembered that James wrote to believing Jews who still held fast to Moses and the Law. They needed just such exhortations and warnings as he so frequently and powerfully employs. Faith, obedience, humility, patience and love were graces they lacked and needed, and these he urges on them with the authority and force of a teacher in Israel.

Furthermore, the epistle is an echo of the Saviour's teaching. It is closely connected with the Sermon on the Mount. "There is scarcely a thought in it which cannot be traced to Christ's personal teaching. If John has lain on the Saviour's bosom, James has sat at His feet" (Scott). There are more than fifteen unmistakable references in it to the truths taught in the Sermon, and in some instances the correspondence is almost verbally exact.

It was written at Jerusalem. The date is not so easily fixed. Some things, however, may help to locate the time with proximate certainty. It is quite probable that James the Lord's brother was martyred about A. D. 62. The apostle Peter, in his first epistle,

quotes largely from James (cf. 1 Peter i: 6, 7; James i: 2; 1 Peter i: 24; James i: 10, 11; 1 Peter iv: 8; James v: 20; 1 Peter v: 5, 6, 8; James iv: 6, 7). At the time Peter wrote James' letter must have been well known, and accredited as both genuine and authoritative. Accordingly, it must have been written some years before First Peter.

The epistle moves within the circle of Judaic Christianity, and it belongs to its first stage. Certain expressions in it could be used with great effect by the Judaizers to impose their legalistic dogmas on Gentile believers, *e. g.* (ii: 10), "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This statement could be easily perverted into the support of a rigorous observance of the Mosaic rites. That the Judaizers did thus employ such passages appears evident from Acts xv: 24. It is there asserted that some had gone from Jerusalem to Antioch and other places whose chief aim it was to impose Judaism on Gentile Christians, and they claimed that James and other influential disciples sanctioned their teaching. But the claim is denied—"To whom we gave no commandment." The inference seems legitimate that the epistle was written before the meeting of the Council held in Jerusalem, *i. e.*, before A. D. 51. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that James never once alludes to the controversy at Antioch; never once does he mention circumcision, the heart of that bitter contention. What he vigorously insists on are moral precepts and Christian duties common to all believers, Jew and Gentile alike, and not

at all on ceremonial ordinances or Hebrew rites. Hence the date probably precedes A. D. 51. Somewhere between A. D. 45-51 it probably lies:—(Mayor, Huther, Neander, Plumtre, Purves).

The epistle of James is very likely the oldest document in the New Testament canon. It is noteworthy that within sixteen years of our Lord's resurrection the Gospel had penetrated the widely scattered people of Israel. James himself told Paul that there were "many thousands" who believed, and he spoke only of Jerusalem. How many more there must have been within the Roman Empire we may readily infer. The Lord's brother had good reason to address his letter to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.

Another thing worthy of note is, that James does not controvert Paul's doctrine as to justification by faith apart from works. The controversy between Paul and the Judaizers is of later date than this epistle. Both Romans and Galatians were written some years after James. Hence the one did not write against the other, nor is there antagonism in their views of truth, as later on in this study we shall see.

The language of the epistle is strong and beautiful. It abounds in vivid imagery, in short, sententious utterances. With a single stroke of his pen James commends a duty, scourges a fault, denounces wrong, exalts virtue, and crowns patience and faith with transcendent glory. James differs widely from Paul both in style and thought. The imagery of Paul is drawn almost exclusively from the employments of men, as, *e. g.*, military life, agriculture, architecture, and the

contests of the stadium and of the gymnasium, while the metaphors of James are taken almost entirely from the phenomena of nature. There are more images of this sort in this short epistle than in all the writings of Paul put together. Note how graphic these are: the waves of the sea driven by the wind and tossed; the stately ship and the fierce winds; the flower of the grass; the sun risen with a burning heat; the bit and bridle of the horse; the small fire and the raging conflagration; beasts, birds, serpents; the fig, olive, vine; the salt and fresh water; the early and latter rain, the vanishing vapor, rust, and moth-eaten garments. Paul was a keen observer of the habits and ways of men: James was an eager student of nature, and saw in its varied phenomena a picture of humanity. Both spoke by the Spirit of God, but their inspiration did not annul the characteristic features of their minds.

ANALYSIS.

I. Contentment with our lot, chap. i.

1. Greeting, i: 1.
2. Victory over temptation, i: 2-8.
3. The lowly and the lofty, i: 9-11.
4. Sin's genesis and issue—God's gift, i: 12-18.
5. Receiving the word, i: 19-21.
6. Hearers and doers of the word, i: 22-27.

II. Instructions and admonitions, ii-iv: 12.

1. As to respect of persons, ii: 1-13.
2. As to a barren orthodoxy, ii: 14-26.
3. As to the control of the tongue, iii: 1-12.
4. As to jealousy and faction, iii: 13-18.
5. As to pride, greed and censoriousness, iv: 1-12.

III. Denunciations, chaps. iv: 13-v: 6.

1. Against overweening confidence, iv: 13-17.
2. Against rich and oppressive sinners, v: 1-6.

IV. Concluding exhortations, chap. v: 7-20.

1. Patience, v: 7-11.
2. Rash assertions, v: 12.
3. Health and sickness, v: 13-20.

This analysis serves to show how practical and even personal the epistle is. It is ethical, not doctrinal. Yet doctrine, even the profoundest, underlies the personal appeals and the stern denunciations. It deals with actual conditions. It pours light into the professions and the practices of Christian Jews, and Gentiles as well. Living in the center of Judaism James saw the vices to which his countrymen were addicted, and he saw likewise that his flock was infected by the same hurtful evils, and so he must rescue them. Accordingly, he lifts up his voice, like one of Israel's prophets, to exhort, to rebuke, and to warn. He sometimes speaks with indignation, sometimes with sorrow, almost with tears, always with the deepest earnestness. He pours out what is uppermost in his thoughts and closest to his heart without waiting to connect his matter or to throw bridges across from one subject to another.

Beneath the abrupt style and sententious form of the epistle there is a paramount aim, a single purpose. James' design is to vindicate the genuineness of the Christian faith and life. He seeks to make Christians sincere and true. He protests against the semblance

of religion, against the profession of godliness without its possession. What he insists on is reality. He has no patience with a mere show of piety, with a **form** of godliness. He has a horror of cant. He heartily repudiates what is not real and vital. This, it is conceived, is the essence of James' teaching. He expresses it thus: "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain" (i: 26). The key of the epistle is found in this sentence: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (i: 22). "What doth it profit if a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can that faith save him?" All this talk about faith—what is it worth? Words, words—nay, let us have realities.

With this clue in our hands let us study some of the prominent features of this Scripture.

I. Temptations and their uses, i: 2-4, 12-16. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations." What singular advice this is! Most people count trials a calamity; they are commonly dreaded, and always to be shunned. James thought otherwise. He looked on them as a means of Christian culture, as a positive blessing; and hence they should be welcomed with joy. Of course, suffering in itself brings no joy, but the reverse. It is of what the trials may through grace work out for the believer that they are to be counted a joy when they come. "Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience." A metal is tested in order to know its worth. But the trial of a dead thing is only

a test, whereas the trial of faith is the test of a living principle, and it issues in spiritual strength and energy. James calls it "patience," *i. e.*, endurance or steadfastness, the development of genuine character. So Paul also conceives of it (Rom. v: 3-5), a passage we may venture to paraphrase thus: We rejoice in our tribulations, because tribulation works out patient endurance, and patient endurance becomes a cause and works out an approved experience, and this next becomes a cause and works out hope, a hope that cannot shame nor disappoint us, for it is the fruit of grace and of the Spirit's action. The aim of Christian discipline is perfection, "that ye may be perfect and entire, in nothing lacking." Faith is the supreme condition of spiritual life and growth, and faith grows by use, by exercise, hence it is tried, put often to the test that it may become strong and vigorous. It is only thus it becomes fruitful. Because of what temptations mean and what they do and why they are sent the intelligent Christian ought to regard their approach with joy (cf. 1 Peter iv: 12, 13). It is a singular school we are sent to, and they are strange lessons which we are sometimes made to learn. But it is the best of all schools and the most profitable of all lessons. Jacob in his anguish said, "All these things are against me" (Gen. xlii: 36), but he was totally mistaken. What seemed to him to be unmixed evil turned out to be altogether good (cf. Rom. viii: 28; Heb. xii: 5-12). But often our distrust of God and our unworthy suspicions of Him rob His dealings with us of much of their value. Pain, loss, suffering, are not joyous

things, but grievous, "nevertheless afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." How many men and women bless God for the loving but firm discipline of the old home! It then seemed hard to them, almost cruel, but it bore its precious fruit in the after-life. What they now are and all they are they owe in large measure to the faithful home training. It is not otherwise in God's household. A psalmist writes, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." And he gladly adds, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psalms cxix: 67, 71). Through eternity the saints will rejoice that God loved them too well to let them have their own way. He does not spare the rod, and His rod, like Aaron's, buds and blossoms. So James bids us count our divers temptations as "all joy," their multiplicity may be made to yield "every joy," every sort of glad experience.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

"Temptation" is used in two opposite senses in Scripture. In one it means trial, testing, as we have just seen. In the other it denotes enticement to sin, solicitation to evil. God never tempts in this sense. The basest slander uttered against Him is, to charge Him with being the author of the sin by which one is overcome. Yet men do this. They seek to exculpate

themselves for their evil doing by laying the blame on circumstances, on temperament, on bad companions, on the devil, or on the Creator who, they allege, have made them with these fierce passions and desires. Not thus does a true child of God blaspheme the holy Lord. His language is that of the psalmist, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalms li: 2-4). His confession is, "my sin," "mine iniquity," "my transgressions." The wrongdoing is one's own, all one's own. God tempts no man to evil; "but each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." It is a sign of grace, a token of reality, when one honestly confesses his sin, repents of it, and comes to God with humble, trustful confidence. It is a mark of total depravity when one blasphemously charges God with his sin.

II. Prayer for wisdom and guidance, i: 5-7; v: 13-18. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Wisdom is more than knowledge and is better. A man may have extensive and accurate knowledge, and at the same time be anything but wise. The wisdom so often and so highly commended in the Bible is a spiritual perception, a right understanding of what is right and best, and the application of it to the life. Its beginning is the fear of the Lord, and its possession brings contentment and happiness. For wisdom discerns the will of God concerning us, perceives His aim, acquiesces

in His dealings, and draws thence comfort and strength. Wisdom is the best knowledge used for the highest ends. It comes from God, and is to be had for the asking. When serious troubles arise, when exigencies and perplexities beset us, when we know not what to do or how to behave, when no way of escape appears, God is more than equal to the emergency, and may have a hundred ways to lead us out into liberty and to set our feet in a large place. We have only to ask; He gives "liberally," absolutely, disinterestedly. Selfishness gives, but grudges, rebukes; He gives with perfect love, nor reproaches our ignorance nor mocks our fears.

Prayer is not real unless it is in faith. God honors trust in Himself, never doubt or unbelief. Therefore, "let him ask in faith nothing wavering." "Waver" is fine, for while it does not positively deny, it hesitates and trembles between belief and unbelief, as if it met the question, Will God keep His promise?—now with *yes*, and now with *no*. "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord," for he is a "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." "Double-minded" is most expressive, as if the man had two souls, one trusting the other doubting, one for, the other against, hence inconstant, unsettled like the surge of the sea. Stier well says, "A doubtful petitioner offers not to God a steady hand or heart so that God cannot deposit in it His gift." Twice only do the Gospels speak of Jesus marvelling; once at the faith of a Roman officer (Matt. viii: 10); and once at the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, "And he could do

no mighty work" there, for unbelief ties up the hand of God while faith moves the hand that moves the worlds (Mark vi: 5, 6).

True prayer is offered only by one who is at peace with God and a child in the heavenly household. James writes, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." The prayer of faith is always heard, so is that of the righteous man, for only the justified and saved man prays in absolute trust and confidence.

It is the righteous man who is the genuine intercessor; he can come with holy boldness to the throne of grace in behalf of others. So James directs that one sick call for the elders of the church who are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: "and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him" (v: 14, 15). On this passage mainly rests the "sacrament of extreme unction" held and practiced by the Roman church. The contrast between what Jesus teaches and Rome practices is as sharp as it can well be. In James it is the sick one who calls the elders; in Rome it is others, the sick being supposed to be *in extremis*. Here it is the elders who are called, there it is the priest; here united prayer is offered for recovery; there no prayer for healing is "said;" here the anointing is for healing; there for absolution; here all is done for healing; there for death. Extreme unction is only administered in cases where life is despaired of and death is believed to be certain. It is mildly hinted that the sickness may

be the product of sins committed; and the promise is that if so these shall be forgiven, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up to life and health again. A faithless man, a double-minded man, an unrighteous man, cannot offer true prayer. Prayer without faith is fruitless. James urges sincerity, honesty, genuineness on the part of Christians. He is intolerant of mere profession.

III. Control of the Tongue, i: 26; iii: 1-10. James' indictment against the censorious, malignant, slanderous and lying tongue is one of the most severe, yet the most just, to be found in the whole range of literature. Three very pointed illustrations are introduced to set forth adequately the fact of the smallness of the instrument and the greatness of its work. The tongue is compared to two familiar mechanical appliances, and then to one of the forces of nature, in all three very simple and insignificant means produce mighty results.

(1). The bit and bridle of the horse, iii: 3. "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us." The horse is a powerful animal, useful when domesticated, dangerous and useless when wild, but he must be controlled in any case if he is to serve man with his strength. And he is governed by the bit, the part he *bites*, and the thing which keeps him under command. How trivial the bit seems, yet how effective! So is the human tongue, small in itself, but so powerful as to arouse the wildest passions, defile the noblest mind and pollute the purest heart; or, it can stimulate to high endeavor, instil the loftiest aspirations, and fill the soul with the most steadfast courage

and patience. Curbed, its worth is beyond compare; unfettered, it is one of the deadliest enemies of God and man.

(2). The ship's rudder (iii: 4): "Behold also the ships, which though they are so great and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth." The merchantmen of Paul's time were large vessels, as those described in the Acts clearly indicate (chaps. xxvii, xxviii); but in our day naval architecture builds on a colossal scale. Yet both ancient and modern ships are controlled by a little tongue, or rudder, at the stern. The mammoth ships of the present are guided by a small steering apparatus, but it is powerful enough to counteract the "fierce winds" and the heaviest seas. "So the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." "Death and life are in its power" (Prov. xviii: 21). Speech is like a rudder; it can guide into right ways, escape dangers, battle successfully with storms, and conduct into restful harbors. But it can also wreck and shatter lives, and drown in bottomless floods.

(3). The little fire (iii: 5): "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" "Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!"—R. V.). The power of fire is terrific. A single spark may kindle a conflagration which will consume a whole city. The "Great Fire" of London in 1666 began in a little shop near London Bridge, and by it most of the city was laid in ashes. The fire which in 1871 burned over some 2,100 acres of Chicago, which in a few hours

left 100,000 people homeless, and which destroyed some \$200,000,000 of property, started in a cowshed by the overturning of a lamp. At first a child's foot might have extinguished the tiny spark, but "kindled," it became a raging sea of flame which no fire department could arrest. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity," which "defiles the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." These are fearful emblems of the tongue's malignant and deadly work. But the figure is used sometimes to denote the energy of the Spirit of God, as when the tongues of fire rested on the heads of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Those tongues of flame signified the power of speech, the irresistible words which the disciples should utter. And, indeed, their words were like glowing embers in their intense energy and force, as the record in Acts shows. James' use of the figure denotes the power of the tongue in evil. Speech is often diabolical; it scorches and consumes. The liar scatters firebrands, the slanderer kindles a raging conflagration, the backbiter sets afire the "wheel of nature," the whole circle of his neighborhood.

Furthermore, the unsanctified tongue is untamable (iii: 7, 8). Every form of animal life submits to human authority, and every brute yields to man's patient training. Even the wildest and most ferocious of quadrupeds, as the elephant, the lion, the tiger; the most solitary of birds, as the eagle, the ostrich, the falcon; the most poisonous and implacable of reptiles, as the cobra, the viper, the crocodile, may be tamed, and many of these have been tamed. But man's

tongue is as lawless, as unbridled now as in the days of Cain. Civilization refines and polishes the rough and savage forces, it subdues the brutal passions and curbs the wicked license of the tongue. So some exultantly tell us. As a matter of fact civilization seems only to add to the cruelty of speech by supplying a vocabulary of cultured terms and phrases that are practically inexhaustible. Culture has not drawn a single fang of this wild beast; it has not lessened by a single drop the poison-bag of this viper.

Besides, James notes its glaring inconsistencies (Vers. 9-12). At one time the tongue worships God, at another curses men. Now it sings a glad song of praise, anon it blackens a noble character and blasts a good name. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." They ought not, because contradictory and unnatural. The forces of nature never exhibit such flagrant inconsistencies. A spring never yields salt water and fresh; it obeys the law of its nature, so does a tree. So should the tongue; but alas, it does not. Every Christian needs to pray, "Deliver my soul, O Jehovah, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue" (Psalm cxx: 2).

IV. Denunciation of a barren orthodoxy (ii: 14-26). At first sight there appears to be real antagonism between the teaching of Paul and of James on the important subject of faith and works. Is there no discrepancy between these two men of God as to the doctrine of justification? Apparently there is. Paul writes (Rom. iii: 28), "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

James writes (ii: 24, 26), "Ye see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only;" "faith without works is dead." Paul teaches (Rom. iv) that Abraham was justified by faith; James, by works (ii: 21). But after all the antagonism disappears when we come to understand the aim and the design of each inspired writer. Paul treats exclusively of the ground of our justification, and he affirms that works form no part of it, that legal righteousness is absolutely and forever excluded as the ground and cause of our reconciliation and acceptance with God. James deals with the evidence of the reality and energy of our faith. Paul protests against human merit as being part of our justification before God. James protests against a barren orthodoxy which *says*, but never *does*; which pretends to be true and loyal, but which haughtily refuses to feed the hungry and clothe the naked; which recites weekly or daily even a perfectly sound creed, but which does not work itself out in devotion of life and whole-hearted service. Paul speaks of the cause, James of the effect of that cause. Paul's theme is the tree, James' its fruit. Suppose I say, using another's illustration, a tree cannot be struck by lightning without thunder, I state a fact familiar to all; there can be no destructive lightning unaccompanied by thunder. But I further say, the tree was struck by lightning without thunder, which is also true, for it is the electric bolt that strikes, not the report that accompanies it. So Paul says, "Faith justifies without works, *i. e.*, faith alone justifies us, not works." James says, "But not a faith which is with-

out works." Put it in a single sentence, thus: Faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone. Lightning alone strikes, but not the lightning which is alone, without thunder, for that is summer lightning and harmless. James teaches with equal truth as does Paul, that the faith which makes loud profession but which never manifests its energy and life in the activities of good works is dead, being alone, and it is worthless.

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Simon Peter was a native of Galilee and by occupation a fisherman. He was brought to the Saviour early in His ministry by his brother Andrew (John i: 40, 41). Andrew and his friend John heard the Baptist bear his very remarkable witness to Jesus as he saw Him approaching, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i: 29, 36). Their confidence in their teacher led the two young men to follow Jesus to whom the double testimony was borne, and at His invitation they spent the day with Him. Andrew was won by the interview, and he speedily acquainted his brother Simon with the great discovery, "We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus." Apparently this incident did not issue in a definite call to become a disciple. At a somewhat later period Peter received the call which made him a disciple and which predicted his future ministry for Christ, "a fisher of men" (Matt. iv: 18-20; Mark i: 16-18; Luke v: 10, 11). His call to become an apostle is recorded in Matt. x: 1-4; Mark iii: 13-16).

Peter occupies a distinguished place among the Lord's disciples. In the four lists of the Apostles recorded in the New Testament his name stands first (Matt. x: 2-4; Mark iii: 16-19; Luke vi: 14-16; Acts i: 13). Matthew opens his list with the significant

words, "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first Simon, who is called Peter." It is difficult to determine whether "first" denotes his call or his rank, or whether both ideas may be embraced in it. The fact, however, that his name heads all the lists invests his position with some distinction, if not priority. His position, however, was not so much the result of his appointment by the Saviour as it was that of his personal qualities, his intellectual gifts and endowments. His natural talents were of a high order, and these quickened by the Spirit fitted him to be a leader among men. John had gifts superior even to those of Peter, and they were more rare. But John was not a leader like Peter. Paul in many of his great qualities and talents surpassed both Peter and John. No doubt others of the apostolic band had elements of distinction peculiarly their own. But Peter held a place not shared by others. He, James, and John belonged to the inner circle of the apostleship. The three were present at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the magnificent scene of the Transfiguration, and at Gethsemane during the awful Agony.

He was a leader in a sense more distinct and prominent than the others. He is the chief figure in the first twelve chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. It is Peter that proposes a successor to the fallen Judas, he that preaches the first Christian sermon on the day of Pentecost and has the indescribable joy of seeing three thousand turned to the Lord by that one discourse; he that opens the door to the Gentile world in the house of the Roman soldier, Cornelius, and that

again has the exquisite delight of witnessing scenes that closely approach those of Pentecost at Jerusalem. Indeed, the supernatural gift of the Spirit to Cornelius and his friends was a second Pentecost. It was given him to pronounce sentence on the guilty pair, Ananias and Sapphira, and to rebuke in the power of the Spirit of God the profane and wicked Simon the sorcerer. In these and the like instances Peter exerted the authority given him by Christ Himself, viz.: to bind and to loose (Matt. xvi: 19)—an authority bestowed by the Head of the new Organization, the Church, upon all the disciples (John xx: 22, 23).

It was to him that Jesus said, "Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt. xvi: 18). This great promise was made Peter in consequence of his memorable confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was the Father who had revealed this mighty truth to him, as the Lord Jesus assures him. He had not discovered it for himself, he never could have done so, nor had it been disclosed to him by any creature whatever. The knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ was a matter of revelation, not of sense perception in any way. "Flesh and blood" did not reveal it to him, nor could. God alone could. In consequence of this deep insight into Jesus' true character, because of the divine revelation made him, and because of his noble confession, Jesus pronounced him blessed and gave him officially the new name which He had said should be his (John i: 42), viz.: *Peter*, the rock-man, the firm witness of the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is common for

the Lord to change the name of favored servants when some supreme crisis comes upon them, as Saul receives the name of Paul when in Cyprus he showed power such as he had never before displayed (Acts xiii: 8-12); Abram becomes Abraham when the Covenant of God is made with him (Gen. xvii: 5); and Jacob becomes Israel, the Prince with God, when the angel wrestled with him (Gen. xxxii: 27, 28). The words, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," most certainly do not mean that by them Peter was made the foundation of the Christian Church, for Christ alone is the foundation, as Peter himself affirms (1 Peter ii: 3-8). The apostle here declares that Christ is the "living Stone," that He is the "chief corner-stone, elect, precious," that believers are built up "a spiritual house," resting as they do on Him who is the Corner-stone. Peter himself is a stone in this heavenly structure, and he is nothing more. Paul likewise asserts that Christ alone is the foundation of the whole Christian building (1 Cor. iii: 11), "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Also in Eph. ii: 20-22 he teaches in exact accord with Peter that Christ is the chief corner-stone, that upon Him are built, first, the apostles and prophets, who are a foundation as resting on Him, and then all the saints rise into a holy temple upon the same foundation and corner-stone. Far less do these words denote that thereby Peter was constituted the head of the Christian Body, that universal supremacy was conferred upon him, and that he transmitted this stupendous

authority to his successors in office, the Bishops of the Roman See. That great colossal structure known as the Roman Hierarchy, with the infallible Pontiff at its head, rests, not on the Apostle Simon Peter, but mainly on the forged documents of the Isidorian Decretals,* and the Donation of Constantine.

In spite of his many noble qualities and traits, and notwithstanding the precious gifts bestowed upon him, Peter nevertheless was too feeble and fallible a man ever to become the rock on which Christ's Church should rest. He was too readily defeated by temptation, too easily swayed by prejudice, too often conquered by fear, to be such a Rock. A few hours after Jesus said, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," the awful words of rebuke fell on his startled ears, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou mindest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. xvi: 22, 23). The opening words of this reprimand are the same Christ used to repel the adversary in the Temptation (Matt. iv: 10). "Offence" is really a stumbling-block over which Satan by poor Peter was seeking to cast down the Son of God! How quickly and how unwittingly the Rock-man becomes a devil! Honored servant of Christ as he was, he was too weak

* "Upon these spurious decretals was built the great fabric of papal supremacy over the different national Churches: a fabric which has stood after its foundation had crumbled beneath it; for no one has pretended to deny, for the last two centuries, that the imposture is too palpable for any but the most ignorant ages to credit." Hallam's *Middle Ages*, p. 274.

a man to be the foundation upon which a soul might rest; he was too often at fault to be even the best pattern for any devout and earnest believer. One alone there is who is worthy of supreme confidence and imitation, Christ, who never was at fault, never made a mistake, who was absolutely without sin. He is our Example.

But let us turn to Peter's Epistles. Two are ascribed to him. Of the first the genuineness is without suspicion. The second has been in doubt for centuries. While the historical attestation of its integrity is less and weaker than that of any other book of the New Testament, yet it is retained in the canon, and is held to be Scripture by multitudes of Christians. But of its trustworthiness more will be said later on in this Study.

Peter addresses the elect sojourners of the Dispersion, *i. e.*, believing Jews who were scattered through various provinces of Asia Minor. These Christian Hebrews are mainly in the mind of the apostle as he writes, but not exclusively so, for he writes to Gentile believers as well, as i: 14; ii: 10; iv: 3, 4 clearly indicates. The Asiatic Provinces Peter mentions appear to have contained multitudes of Jews. Representatives from three of them were present at Pentecost when Peter preached the first Christian sermon. The three Provinces are Pontus, Cappadocia and Asia (Acts ii: 9; 1 Peter i: 1). Some, perhaps most of those, who came to Jerusalem on that memorable occasion from Asia Minor received the Gospel and returned home to spread the good news among their co-religionists. It

is these "elect sojourners of the Dispersion" he addresses, for Peter adhered rather strictly to the Jewish side of his apostolic mission, though he does not shut out the Gentiles from his instructions and his encouragements.

The First Epistle is dated from Babylon (v: 13). What place is meant? Two bearing the name existed in the apostolic age. There was a Babylon in Egypt where a military fortress was found, and where a small population was gathered. The persistent tradition of the Coptic Church dating from remote antiquity alleges that it was from this Babylon Peter wrote the epistle. The tradition further asserts that he with Mark labored in Egypt, that after Peter's death Mark continued the Christian testimony and founded the church of Alexandria. Few besides the Copts of Egypt entertain this view.

The other Babylon is the ancient capital of Chaldea on the Euphrates. Jews in large numbers lived in Babylon, and there is good reason to believe that the Hebrew colony there was not destitute of influence and importance. As the Apostle of the Circumcision it is very probable Peter would visit such a center as Babylon appears to have been in the apostolic age. The words, "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you," may point to a Christian woman and not to a church (see Amer. Rev.), as what follows seems to intimate—"and *so doth* Marcus my son." Both expressions denote an individual, the first probably Peter's wife who accompanied her husband on his missionary tours (cf. 1 Cor. ix: 5). The second was

John Mark, son of Mary (Acts xii: 12). The order in which Peter mentions the Asiatic Provinces (i: 1) favors the view that the Babylon of Chaldea is meant. He begins with the eastern part of Asia Minor, with Pontus, and then passes westward and southward to Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, then northward and westward to Bithynia. It is exactly the order one would mention if placed at Babylon on the Euphrates, and certainly not if he were stationed in the extreme west, say at Rome, or in the extreme south, as Egypt. The weight of evidence appears to incline to the Chaldean Babylon, though ancient tradition as to Peter's being there is silent.

From an early period a mystic interpretation was given the term—Babylon is Rome. Almost all of the Roman Catholic writers so understand it, and some Protestant interpreters as well. But this apocalyptic disguise accords badly, indeed most discordantly, with the plain matter of fact writing which the epistle displays. Such a symbolic meaning of the name is perfectly consistent with the book of Revelation; we expect such veiled, enigmatic use of terms in that book. It is altogether foreign to Peter. The wish to find biblical support for the tradition of Peter's sojourn in Rome may have led to this interpretation; it is the only apparent proof from Scripture that can be adduced; but it has no weight with those who are not ruled by uncertain tradition.

Peter's Epistles bear resemblance to other New Testament writings, particularly to those of Paul, of James, and to the words of our Lord in the Gospels.

But Peter was no copyist. He possessed much independence of thought and originality. His fervid spirit and vigorous thinking impress themselves deeply on his letters. And yet he has characteristics that are worthy of patient and earnest study. Let us point out some of these.

1. A notable feature is the wonderful adaptation to various classes, and to the manifold experiences of life. President Henry G. Weston in a special study of John xxi suggestively notes the connection between the Saviour's threefold charge to Peter (John xxi: 15-17) and Peter's epistles. The charge is thus represented in the Revision: "Feed my lambs; Tend my sheep; Feed my sheep." Two classes are here indicated, babes and the mature. And the two epistles certify how faithfully the apostle obeyed the charge. With loving and tender hand this under-shepherd feeds the lambs, tends the whole flock, feeds the strong, guards from danger, warns against foes, leads into green pastures and beside still waters. How mightily he ministers to those who suffer! He reminds them of the glorious inheritance they are to possess (i: 3-9). He bids them remember the uncomplaining Christ when He was unjustly afflicted by cruel men (ii: 20-25). He tells them of the noble vindication they shall have when the Lord shall take up their cause at His own judgment-seat (iv: 12-18). Much of the First Epistle is designed to comfort the suffering saints, to stimulate them to steadfastness, to encourage them amid their fierce trials, and to assure them of the glorious future that awaited them.

“Honor all men.” “Love the brotherhood.” “Fear God.” “Honor the king.” And this was written when persecution was raging, when that human monster, the world’s colossal criminal, Cæsar Nero, was on the imperial throne, and when Christians were regarded as the foes of humanity. The spirit of the world in the like cases says, Resist, arm for defence and fight for your rights and your lives. The Spirit of Christ says, Arm for martyrdom (iv: 1). “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye” (iii: 14). Keep before you the Master’s example, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (ii: 23). The apostle calls this matchless behavior of the Lord Jesus under unjust treatment a *copy* we are to imitate. His walk and His ways we are to transcribe into our own lives. “He wrote us a pure and perfect copy of obedience, in clear and great letters, in His own blood. He that aims high shoots the higher for it, though he shoot not so high as he aims” (Leighton).

Such is the main teaching of the first epistle. That of the second relates to the perils of false doctrine, false brethren, unscrupulous corruptors of the church and of the Gospel, and deniers of fundamental and vital truth. What must Christians do in the presence of these formidable adversaries? How shall they keep themselves in the love and the holiness of God? From the world they are patiently to suffer. But from these more dangerous enemies how are they to guard themselves? Second Peter answers these and

the like solemn queries. And thus Peter obeys the Lord's injunctions to "feed my lambs; tend my sheep; feed my sheep."

2. Hope. This is the epistle of Hope. How much it makes of this prime grace! Peter seems never to grow weary of defining hope, describing it, and in turning it from side to side to exhibit its manifoldness, its radiant beauty in every circumstance and condition of life. He calls it a "living hope" (i: 3). It is living because to hope is one of the supreme functions of the new nature; the believer is begotten "unto a living hope." No sooner do we receive the Spirit of adoption and cry, Abba, Father, than is hope born, and fills our whole horizon with its radiant splendors. It is a hope that will never put to shame, for it rests on the mighty fact and pledge of Christ's resurrection.

It is a hope that perfectly awaits the grace to be revealed at the advent of our Lord, a hope that will find its full fruition then and not till then (i: 13). It is a hope that is set on God, is in Him, therefore it is sure, imperishable (i: 21). Moreover, it is one that can give a reason for itself, that can assert itself and defend itself victoriously against all gainsayers, because it is living, confident, imperishable, for it is set on God (iii: 15). So, a Christian is one who can sing with the psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the help of my countenance and my God" (Psalms xiii: 11).

With sickly, dying hope and with dead hopes we are quite familiar. The best device a nobleman could

inscribe on his escutcheon was *dum spiro spero* (while I live I hope). Beyond that it seems he could not venture to go. "It is a fearful thing when a man and all his hopes die together" (Leighton). But a Christian can write joyfully and confidently, *dum expiro spero* (while I am dying I hope), for his hope is living, has life in itself, and fills and thrills the future with living reality. This is the hope Peter celebrates, this he urges on his readers, this he prizes above all else in the world.

3. A third characteristic of the epistle is this: Peter's conception of the Christian brotherhood, the Church of God. It is a very exalted one. He sets the new Israel in the loftiest place, he describes it in terms that were applied to the old Israel, but terms which with the Apostle mean more and include more than ancient Israel realized. It must not be forgotten that this conception is by one who was a strict Jew, who, after his call to discipleship and apostleship, still ministered to the circumcision (Gal. ii: 7, 8), and who held somewhat strictly to the laws and customs of Moses to the close of his life. All the more striking and significant on this account his remarkable testimony is:—ii: 9, 10, "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." This is his wondrous description of God's new Israel. What a cluster of

illustrious titles are here! A distinguished man, a general, or a nobleman, a statesman or an admiral, will sometimes have his breast covered with glittering decorations, which mark his rank, his service and his achievements. But such distinctions sink into insignificance alongside of this dazzling cluster. Each one of them belonged to ancient Israel, but they were lost through disobedience and forfeited by unfaithfulness and sin. They pertain now to the spiritual, the new Israel who are kept in God's power unto salvation. This is the heavenly nobility, the royal family, decorated with badges brighter than ever glittered on the breast of king or emperor!

4. A fourth characteristic is this: the epistle does not observe a close logical sequence in its structure, as those of Paul so prominently display. There is truth in Alford's statement, though perhaps he pushes it too far: "The link between one idea and another is found, not in any progress of unfolding thought or argument, but in the last word of the foregoing sentence which is taken up and followed out in the new one." (See i: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, etc.) This peculiarity, however, does not interfere with the unity of the epistle, it rather adds to it, and it gives it a vividness and fulness of exposition which it otherwise would not possess. All the chief doctrines of Christianity are found in it. The vicarious suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ (ii: 24); the new birth (i: 23); redemption by the blood of Christ (i: 18, 19); faith, hope, patient endurance under suffering and holiness of life are all taught and enforced with great earnest-

ness and force by the apostle. It is noteworthy that amid the trials coming on Christians at the time the main ground of encouragement and exhortation is the speedy coming of the Lord and the blessedness and glory they shall then uninterruptedly enjoy. But this is characteristic of the Bible. The Spirit uniformly keeps before the minds of the suffering saints in every book of Scripture the Blessed Hope of the Lord's return to the world and the glorious deliverance and exaltation of all who wait for Him. This is made their comfort and their strength in the day of their trouble and distress. May it be personally and consciously ours.

ANALYSIS.

(General.)

- I. Christian Privilege, chaps. i-ii: 10.
- II. Christian Duties, chaps. ii: 11-v.

(Particular.)

- 1. Salutation, i: 1, 2.
- 2. Blessedness of salvation, i: 3-12.
- 3. Exhortation, i: 13-16.
- 4. Redemption, i: 17-25.
- 5. Exhortation, ii: 1-3.
- 6. Calling and Standing of believers, ii: 4-10.
- 7. Exhortation, ii: 11-20.
- 8. Christ's Example—character and work ii: 21-25.
- 9. Various Exhortations, iii-v.
 - a. Behavior toward one another, iii: 1-12.
 - b. Fidelity under Trial, iii: 13-22.
 - c. Behavior under persecution, iv: 1-19.
 - d. Duties of Elders, v. 1-4.
 - e. Humility and Vigilance, v: 5-10.
 - f. Conclusion, v: 11-14.

The epistle is rich in the glorious doctrines that it unfolds, and powerful in its appeals to Christians. The inspired writer knows what these suffering saints need and all they need, and he speaks to their very heart. He views them as pilgrims and strangers walking across the earth toward their true home, their heavenly country. He urges them to do no harm to any, to do what good they can to all, to bear patiently the cruel wrongs they unjustly suffer, to copy their Lord who "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," to remember the noble name they bear, and the glory of the heritage which soon shall be theirs.

Some prominent things in First Peter may engage our attention briefly.

1. The Christian's glorious inheritance (i: 3-5). In this majestic sentence two things are made pre-eminent; first, the nature of the inheritance; second, the certainty of its attainment. The inheritance is described by four significant epithets (ver. 4). It is declared to be "incorruptible." This word points to its substance. It is imperishable. In it there is no element of decay. It holds in its heart no germ of death. Like its great Author, the living God, it is unchangeable and eternal in its being. Of no heritage of earth can this magnificent term "incorruptible" be used. Imperfection and corruption attach to all earthly possessions. Sooner or later they pass from their owners or the owners pass from them. But this is subject to no loss nor change nor surprise. In every way it is inviolable. Violence is not heard in that land, wasting nor destruction in her borders (Isa. lx: 18).

The inheritance is described as "undefiled." It is not stained by sin nor defiled by any crime, either in its acquisition or its possession. Human heritages are all marred by human wrongs. There is hardly an acre of soil on earth that is not polluted by iniquity; there is not an estate the world over that is not stained by fraud or violence. The very coin that passes from hand to hand is in most cases soiled by guilt. But this of Peter is free from every taint of evil. Into the heavenly inheritance shall in no wise enter whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie (Rev. xxi: 27).

It is one that "fadeth not away." That is, is unwithering. Ages on ages do not impair its beauty nor dim its lustre. Its bloom will remain fresh, its fragrance unimpaired, forever. The bliss of the saved will never diminish, the pleasures at God's right hand never cloy. After millions of years in heaven the saved will know no weariness nor satiety, for their inheritance is unfading and unfailing. Peter describes it also as a "crown of life that fadeth not away" (v: 4). "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalms xvi: 11). "So that our inheritance is glorious in these three respects: it is in *substance*, incorruptible: in *purity*, undefiled: in *beauty*, unfading" (Alford).

"Reserved in heaven." This is the last and the crowning feature. The saints' inheritance is heavenly, and it is reserved in heaven. This marks its worth and excellence, and likewise its security. It is surpassingly rich and lovely because it is heavenly. Jesus Christ is the central object of it, and His riches are unsearch-

able; His glory infinite and eternal; His love all-sufficient and satisfying. The heritage is kept therefore safe from all foes, from all changes, from all waste. It is free from all possibility of invasion from enemies and from decay in itself.

What guarantees have believers that they shall come into the enjoyment of this great heritage? The best possible. Many an inheritance is jeopardized and lost to the heirs through defective title or dishonest guardians. We know that our inheritance is secure, for it is in the keeping of the faithful Creator. But we live in a world that is hostile to us and to our King; we carry within ourselves a traitor heart. What certainty is there that we shall actually "possess our possessions? (1.) God's power is our pledge in this behalf. We are kept by it. The term for *kept* is a military one, meaning guarded, protected as in a fortress or citidal. How secure must they be who have God's power for their guard? We can triumphantly exclaim with the prophet, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (Isa. xxvi: 1). "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Prov. xviii: 10). The heritage is reserved in heaven for the saints: the sainted are guarded for it by the power of God.

(2.) "Through faith." This is the second element in the security of the saints. It is God's power that preserves them unto salvation; it is their faith that lays hold on the power and makes it effective in them to the final accomplishment of His grace in their be-

half. God's power is the efficient cause, faith the effective means. The two, power and faith, join hands for the believer's eternal safety. Let the force of the two prepositions *in* and *through*, in this place, be well marked: we are guarded *in* the power of God *through* faith. Faith brings us within the circle of the divine power, and the power keeps us within the circle of the saved. The efficient cause becomes inherent in the effective means. "For by grace have ye been saved through faith: and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii: 8, R. V.).

(3.) The Living Hope is still another pledge of our security. The order of the words as Peter wrote them is this—"Begotten us again unto a hope living through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." His resurrection is the very life of our hope. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv: 17). A darkness more terrible than that of the grave enshrouds eternity, if He is not risen. It is remarkable that hope, as a Christian grace and fruit of the Spirit, is not found in any of the four Gospels. It comes into prominence, it flowers out with magnificent exuberance, only after Christ's resurrection. It then becomes a living and mighty force in the believer's spirit; it then serves to strengthen his faith, keep him firm and steady amid trouble and gloom, and to fill his present with light and joy, his future with indescribable glory.

In this great passage we have four things: (1) God's mercy, the primary cause in our salvation; (2) Christ's death and resurrection, the procuring

cause; (3) regeneration, the formal cause; (4) bliss, the final cause.

II. The prophets and their study, i: 10, 11:—"Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that *should come* unto you: searching what *time* or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them" (R. V.).

(1) The testimony of the prophets. With Peter and his fellow apostles their testimony is authoritative and final. In his sermon at Pentecost he confirmed his inspired teaching by an appeal to two of the prophets, Joel and David. On a subsequent occasion (Acts iii: 24) he cited Moses to ratify what he was saying, and added that "all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." He was at no loss to discover the Messiah in the words of the prophets. He saw in them unmistakable predictions of His advent, His sufferings, and His glories.

(2) The burden of the prophetic communications was salvation. The prophets spoke on many subjects; they had to exhort, rebuke, and entreat their wayward contemporaries; to denounce sin, to announce judgment upon their own people Israel and upon the Gentile nations as well. But ever and anon their vision would be filled with the future and its blessedness, their voices would swell into rapture as they saw and foretold the great salvation to be brought to the world

and the grace that would then so copiously go out to men; for Messiah was to suffer the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God, that in His suffering, His triumph and His finished work, redemption full and free should be secured to all who trust in Him. In its most comprehensive sense salvation was the prophets' theme.

(3) The prophets' messages were in reality the message of the Spirit of Christ. It was He who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. The prophets always disclaim any part in the origination of their messages. They affirm in the most positive and solemn manner that their predictions are not their own, but God's, that even their words have been given them. Hence they are called God's "spokesmen" and God's "mouth" (Exodus iv: 15, 16; vii: 1, 2). Peter himself writes of the source and the authority of prophecy this majestic sentence: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter i: 21).

(4) The Prophets' Study. They "inquired and searched diligently." The terms are strong and emphatic. They pored over the predictions which the Spirit had revealed through themselves; they scrutinized these and bent their minds to the study of them with the most eager, prolonged and earnest purpose. Two points, it seems, engaged their attention more particularly, viz.: "What and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point to." The first "what" relates to the date when Messiah

would likely appear ; the second "what" to the events and circumstances which would attend His advent. It was a fruitful theme for investigation, one that not only enlisted the whole strength of their minds, but that engaged also the inquiry of nobler students, viz.: the angels, ver. 12—"Which things angels desire to look into."

It is obvious from this language that the prophets did not always understand their own communications ; they wrote down the messages they received from the Spirit, and afterwards they gave themselves to a diligent search into the contents of them. Daniel furnishes an example of such research. He studied deeply the prophecies of Jeremiah, and from them learned when the Babylonian exile should terminate (Dan. ix: 2). Accordingly, he gave himself to importunate prayer that Jehovah would forgive His people's transgressions and restore them to their land, even as He had promised. Moreover, it is quite clear from the words of Daniel that he did not uniformly understand the significance of the divine communications which he received, and that he sought earnestly to do so. In vii: 28, he says, "As for me, Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart." "And I wondered at the vision, but none understood it" (viii: 27). He tells us that one heavenly messenger said to another, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (viii: 16). After some of the mighty visions he remained without strength for some time, he even fainted, and was "sick certain days" (viii: 27). Now,

no more cogent argument for the verbal inspiration of the prophetic Scriptures could possibly be adduced than this fact. For it is beyond question that if the prophets did not grasp the meaning of their own messages, if after receiving them they searched them to know what they meant, then the words must have been given them, else they never could have accurately recorded what they saw and heard. It is utter folly, in the presence of this telling fact, to talk of the "thoughts," or the "concepts," alone being given them, and then they clothed these in such language as they could command. If this was the method by which God spoke through the prophets (Heb. i: 1), then we can have no certainty that the communications are unerringly true. Mistakes would inevitably occur in the recording of the messages. The prophets could no more have faithfully written the messages than could a child report a closely reasoned address by a competent man on an abstruse subject, of which the child knew nothing. The very words were also given the prophets. Besides, here is evidence of both revelation and inspiration. God revealed to the prophets the things concerning Christ which still lay in the distant future; He inspired them to write the predictions exactly as they had been revealed. The unaided prophet could no more have foretold the future nor truthfully described things to come than he could create a world.

III. Preaching to the spirits in prison.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the

Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water" (1 Peter iii: 18-20).

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (R. V.).

Some passages of Scripture are, as is well known, obscure and difficult. A few baffle elucidation. Gal. iii: 20 is one such text:—"Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one; but God is one." Winer says there are 250 explanations of this verse; Evans, between two and three hundred. The huge number serves to show how puzzling it is. "Baptism for the dead," 1 Cor. xv: 29 is another, and women to be veiled because of the angels (1 Cor. xi: 10) is a third. This of First Peter, as also the kindred text in iv: 6, belongs to this class. The interpretations and applications of it are multitudinous, perplexing and contradictory to the last degree. Some of these are ludicrous, and some are almost shocking in their temerity. Many interpreters, perhaps a majority of them, evangelical, sacramentarian and rationalistic, insist that our Lord in the in-

terval between His death and His resurrection in His human spirit actually visited the abode of imprisoned spirits in Hades and proclaimed to them in some fashion the Gospel of salvation. Some samples of this view are here appended. "If language has any meaning, this language means that Christ, when His spirit descended into the lower world, proclaimed the message of salvation to the once impenitent dead." "If the fate of those dead sinners was not irrevocably fixed by death, then it must be clear and obvious to the very meanest understanding that neither, of necessity, is ours" (Farrar). "The proof texts (1 Peter iii: 18-21; iv: 6) admit of no other interpretation than that the historic Christ Himself, made alive after His death for a higher spiritual existence, proclaimed the Gospel to the unhappy contemporaries of Noah, who perished in the flood" (Van Osterzee). "In 1 Peter iii: 19 St. Peter teaches that God's way of salvation does not end with life" (Lange). "To all who are dead at the time of the last judgment, the Gospel has been preached, be it before or after their death" (Huther in Meyer). "We cannot see in the words anything but an attestation of the truth which the Church Catholic has received in the Apostles' Creed, that Christ died and was buried and descended into Hell" (Plumtre). "I understand these words to say that our Lord, in His disembodied state, did go to the place of detention of departed spirits, and did there announce His work of redemption, preach salvation, in fact, to the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey the voice of God when the judgment of the

flood was hanging over them" (Alford). There is no mistaking the view of the passage held by these distinguished writers. The list of names on the same side might be greatly lengthened. But weighty as their authority is as interpreters of the word of God, we cannot accept the view. The objections to it are, we think, conclusive.

This is one of the very few texts commonly cited in support of the statement in the so-called Apostles' Creed of "our Lord's descent into Hell." Gloag is authority for the remark that "this article was added to the creed at a late period, about the beginning of the fifth century," which seems to prove that such a belief was no part of the church's primitive confession, but a notion received long after the decline of evangelical truth had set in. On it likewise is made to rest the unscriptural doctrine of the deliverance of Old Testament believers from Hades and their translation to heavenly bliss by the Saviour's power. Upon it also is founded the theory of a "second probation," that is, that there will be the offer of salvation to the impenitent after their death and before or at the time of the Final Judgment.

The aim of this study is to discover if possible the true meaning of this very obscure and difficult passage, and not to attempt an exhaustive examination of it. Two words seem to demand a brief definition. The term "preached" in connection with Christ and the Apostles denotes always the preaching of the gospel, the offer of salvation to those who are destitute of it. Rarely does it signify to publish or to proclaim, in

the general and indefinite sense; only some five times is the word thus translated in the sixty times it occurs in the New Testament. Here it must certainly be understood as meaning the preaching of the gospel, the offer of salvation to sinners.

"Spirits" are beyond peradventure disembodied human spirits; they are not fallen angels nor demons, as some have strangely conjectured.

Two grave questions at once confront him who seeks to understand Peter's language: 1. Who are the spirits in prison? 2. When did Christ preach to them? But these questions are not here discussed separately, but together. In fact, they are so intimately connected that the treatment of the one involves also that of the other. The real inquiry may be thus expressed: When and to whom did Christ preach? The answers to this inquiry by the commentators are various, conflicting, and in some cases unsatisfactory and misleading. The mere mention of some will suffice to secure their rejection. It has been conjectured that Christ's preaching was directed against the devil and his angels. The right understanding of the phrase "spirits in prison" rules out this conjecture. Or, it was a proclamation of judgment and condemnation to the lost in perdition, which seems to be forbidden by the true meaning of "preached," or, an offer of salvation to all the unholy dead, which is negated by Peter's statement that these "spirits in prison" were men who in the days of Noah were disobedient. The Apostle expressly says the preaching was limited to the antediluvians. Or, it was a proclamation to those

of Noah's time who repented after the rain began and the flood was set in, but too late for them to escape death. There is not the slightest hint that any of the scoffers did repent even after the rising deluge deprived them of all hope of deliverance. Peter elsewhere declares that God did not spare them, that He overwhelmed *the world of the ungodly* (2 Peter ii: 5). Scripture furnishes no evidence whatever that any of the apostate antediluvians who were drowned repented and were saved at the last moment. The whole description of them leads to the belief that Noah and his household alone of that entire generation were children of God and saved.

Some other interpretations of the passage deserve more extended notice, and to these we now turn.

(1) The preaching was addressed to the spirits of the Old Testament saints who, till the death of Christ, were held in some sort of detention in the unseen world. This was the general opinion of the Early Fathers; it is that of some modern interpreters likewise. Eph. iv: 8 is cited as proof: "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (cf. Psalm lxxviii: 18). The captives whom the triumphant Lord led were not imprisoned saints, but enemies of Him and of His people. Colossians ii: 15 explains who these were: "Having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." If "the spirits" mentioned were Old Testament saints they could not be prisoners. They had believed and obeyed God. But Peter declares these spirits afore-

time were disobedient, and that they lived on earth in Noah's day. They had scornfully rejected the divine testimony, were rebellious and apostate, and went to prison in consequence. They were not saints at all, but foes of God.

Moreover, the term *prison*, which occurs some forty times in the New Testament as denoting a place of forcible detention, is in every instance employed in a bad sense, *i. e.*, as denoting a place of punishment, as the place in which those are confined who are charged with felony or crime. God does not lock up as criminals the spirits of His own people who trust and obey Him when they pass out of this life into that beyond. We conclude, therefore, that "the spirits in prison" were not and could not be saints of former dispensations.

(2) The passage holds out no hope for a "second probation," that is, that after death there may be opportunity to be saved. There is not a hint in it that any of "the spirits" preached to were set free from prison, even allowing that the proclamation was made to them by the Lord in the interval between His death and resurrection. Some interpreters are sure that "the spirits" were still in prison when Peter wrote. It has even been proposed to insert the word *now* in the text and to read thus: "Unto the spirits *now* in prison." If this opinion be accepted, and there is much to commend it, then thirty years and more after Christ's death and resurrection these unhappy disbelievers were still confined in prison waiting the awful judgment which would pronounce their final

doom. They did not repent at the preaching of the Lord Jesus, even supposing that He did preach to them after His own death; they remained and still remain disobedient, incorrigible. This tremendous fact closes every door of hope for those who live and die in sin and impenitence. For, if the sinners of Noah's day rejected God's mercy and went into prison in Hades in consequence, and if after all the centuries ensuing down to the time of Christ's death and His alleged preaching to them in the prison did not lead to repentance and the release of so much as one of them, what possible ground of hope can there be for any others?

Besides, Scripture represents men's state, whether saved or lost, as irreversible after their death. If the narrative of the Rich Man and Lazarus of Luke xvi teaches anything it teaches this. There are the two states clearly defined—Abraham's bosom and torment. Between the two the "great gulf" lies which for both sides is forever impassable. The destiny of both Lazarus and Dives is unalterably fixed. From our passage a second offer of salvation to the lost in Hades cannot be legitimately inferred.

But 1 Peter iv: 6 is urged as evidence on the other side, for it is believed by some that Peter here teaches the Gospel was preached to those already dead and it was received by them: "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (R. V.). What dead? Not to the spiritually dead who were still in the flesh

when the Apostle write, for ver. 5 forbids this interpretation; nor yet to those who dwell in the unseen world, disembodied spirits, but those who heard and believed the Gospel when they were living but were dead when Peter wrote—these are to be judged at last in the same way as those living now. Peter evidently has in mind Christians who had suffered for the Name, perhaps had been even put to death because of their faith, judged by men as wicked, but who will be fully vindicated at Christ's bar. We return now to the main theme of the passage.

(3) Did Christ personally proclaim the Gospel to the "spirits in prison" in the interval between His death and resurrection? Unhesitatingly we reply *no*. The phrase, "put to death in the flesh," is co-ordinate with the parallel phrase, "quickenened by the spirit," "made alive in the spirit" (Ver. 18, R. V.). "Flesh" and "spirit" are antithetical, are in sharp contrast with each other. It is insisted by those who advocate the affirmative of the question above that "flesh" signifies Christ's body, and that "spirit" must mean His human spirit. The preposition *in* must be inserted before each term—"in flesh," "in spirit." It is hence inferred that the Lord in His human spirit which was made alive to a higher and more active state of existence after His death personally went and preached to the spirits in prison in Hades; therefore the preaching was in the interval between His death and His resurrection. Such is the argument urged in support of the theory that the Lord preached to the dead.

We cannot accept this exegesis; we do not believe

that on just principles of interpretation the passage teaches this. To begin with, the phrase "put to death in the flesh," is uncommon; it is a departure from the ordinary way of speaking of death. As Barnes says, "How singular it would be to say of Isaiah or of Paul or of Peter that they were put to death in the flesh!" The phrase seems to indicate that there was something extraordinary in His death, that it was His humanity that died, but that there was in Him a nature that did not die, nor could—His divine nature, His eternal Spirit as the Son of God. We must not limit the contrast to "flesh" and "spirit;" both clauses must be embraced in it, "put to death in the flesh," and "made alive in the Spirit." The Lord's human soul was sundered from His body by death just as these are sundered in all men when death overtakes them. But He did not remain under the power of death; it was "not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts ii: 24). Accordingly, Peter adds, "but was quickened in (by) the spirit" (Spirit).

The word *quickened* occurs in ten other places besides this, and there is no mistaking its meaning. In seven, viz.: John v: 21 (twice); Rom. iv: 17; viii: 11; 1 Cor. xv: 22, 36, 45, it refers to the resurrection of the dead. In three, viz.: John vi: 63; 2 Cor. iii: 6; Gal. iii: 21, it denotes the giving of spiritual life. In each case it signifies *to give life* where before it had ceased to be, or where it had never been. The same word is found in two other places, but with an affix, Eph. ii: 5; Col. ii: 13. But in these as everywhere else it denotes the impartation of life where it was not

found before. Graham (in Ephesians ii: 5) expresses its precise meaning: "This quickening is the spiritual resurrection of the soul from a state of sin and death as the prelude and pledge of the literal resurrection at the coming of Christ." Prof. Cremer defines it as the action by which the dead are raised to life whether as to the body or the soul, and he cites 1 Peter iii: 18 as proof.

Those who hold that it was Christ's human soul that was quickened must impose upon the word quickened a meaning which the New Testament forbids. So we are told that it means a more active life, a fuller life, an increase of life, a life fitting Him to preach to Hades sinners! But everywhere else it means giving life, bringing to life. This could not be said of His human spirit, for assuredly it did not die. What then was it which was made alive? Exactly that which had been put to death, His "flesh," His humanity. Quickened signifies resurrection. The very body which lay in Joseph's tomb was on the morning of the third day made alive by the mighty power of God. This interpretation balances exactly the antithetical clause, "put to death in the flesh." What had been put to death is made alive in resurrection.

Is it quite certain that "spirit" means Christ's human spirit? The Revisions, both English and American, print it with a small s instead of the capital S of King James, thus taking it to denote His human spirit. But if this be so, "quickened" must be given a meaning it does not bear wherever else it occurs. "Spirit" stands in sharp contrast with "flesh;" it is that which

did not die. Obviously, if it be taken as denoting the Agent by whom He was quickened, then it certainly denotes Christ's divine nature, His Godhead. Romans i: 3, 4 presents a similar contrast between His natures, human and divine. He was of the seed of David according to the flesh, He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. Here also there is a sharp contrast, the seed of David stands in contrast with the Son of God. Of course, His human spirit was holy, but it was an essential part of His humanity, and hence the expression, "Spirit of holiness" cannot mean His human spirit. It must be His divine nature that is meant. According to that nature He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. So in 1 Peter iii: 18 His being quickened into resurrection life is by the same divine nature, the Spirit of the living God. By His own infinite power, His Deity, He is raised from the dead (John ii: 19).

It was in this Spirit, or by this Spirit, He went and preached to the spirits in prison. It is contended that "went" implies a personal going by Him to the realm of the dead. Not necessarily. In Eph. ii: 17 we read, "And (Christ) came and preached peace to you which were afar off." The preaching was in this instance by the Lord Jesus Himself, and yet it was not done by Him in person, but by His Spirit in His servants, Paul and companions.

We understand, therefore, the preaching to the spirits in prison to have been done by the Spirit of

Christ through Noah, "the preacher of righteousness," as Peter calls him elsewhere (2 Peter ii: 5), to the antediluvians. But they refused the message, they gave no heed to the solemn warning, they hardened their hearts by their disobedience, and hence became prisoners in Hades. Gen. vi: 3 reads, "And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." That is to say, His Spirit should strive, in the testimony of Noah, during a hundred and twenty years and no longer. Now it would be an extraordinary thing that with those persons only (for Peter speaks only of them) the Lord should strive in testimony after their death. Is that at all likely? Is there so much as a hint in all the rest of Scripture that He offers salvation after their death to those who in their lifetime heard the message and rejected it? There is absolutely none.

It is not a description of all that died in unbelief, but of a generation favored with a special testimony and threatened with a particular stroke of judgment. They were those who despised the testimony of Christ through Noah. Just as His Spirit prophesied in the prophets, so the Spirit of Christ preached by Noah. Nor was the preaching to spirits when they were in prison, but to the disobedient before they became prisoners in Hades. Multitudes of the ungodly perished before the Flood; for ages after it greater multitudes died in their sins. Many of these, perhaps the majority of them, never had an offer of salvation made to them. Why should these countless multitudes be

ignored by the Saviour, and those alone of Noah's day have a second offer of mercy? For one hundred and twenty years they had the testimony of Noah by the Spirit of Christ warning, rebuking and entreating them, but all in vain. They kept right on in their rebellion and apostasy till the tremendous judgment so long impending broke down upon them in all its desolating fury. Now, should these imprisoned spirits have a second offer of pardon and of life in the unseen world, while all others there, who never had a chance at all, be passed by in merciless neglect and pitiless silence? Would such partiality be fair or equitable? Does God who is righteous and holy thus do?

On the contrary, there is proof that those who in this life refuse His message in unbelief are at length abandoned and left to their fate even in the present world. When the shadow of the Cross was already falling on the Lord's pathway, and when it was determined by the rulers and the people that He must die, Jesus uttered His lament over the guilty city—a mournful dirge it is and a sentence of woe indescribable—"If thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke xix: 41-44); "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii: 37-39). Ere long the awful verdict was executed; the city was destroyed, the temple burned, and Israel went into an exile which endures to this day, and will till the Lord shall come again. When scornful rejection of mercy is complete, when disobedience has culminated in rebellion and apostasy, and the sentence of doom has

been pronounced, judgment, appalling and overwhelming, falls and probation ends. If this takes place even in this life, how much more certainly does it in the world beyond where destiny is forever fixed?

Did Christ's human spirit at His death go into Hades, into the region of the lost? Did He "descend into hell?" Believed by many, doubted by some, denied by others. Christ's seventh and last saying on the Cross was His calm and trustful prayer, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii: 46). Was not that prayer heard and answered? Who would be so bold as to deny that it was? If, then, His human spirit at His death went to the Father, it did not go to the realm of the spirits in prison. The Father most certainly was not in that region. Moreover, to the penitent thief at His side he promised, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Where was Paradise? In 2 Cor. xii: 2-4 Paul identifies Paradise with the "third heaven," with the highest heaven, with God's own habitation. The promise to the overcomer in Ephesus (Rev. ii: 7) is, "to him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (cf. Rev. xxii: 1, 2). Prof. Swete is exactly right, Paradise is the "final joy of the saints in the presence of God and of Christ" (Com. *in loc.*). Taking His prayer and promise together the inference is indisputable that Jesus Christ in the most solemn hour of all time, in the awful hour of His death on the cross, confidently and assuredly expected to go into the Father's presence, into Paradise, God's heavenly abode. Is anyone so presump-

tuous as to affirm that He was disappointed? If heaven was the place of His sojourn in the interval between His death and resurrection, then it is manifest He did not go to the place in Hades where wicked spirits are confined. Therefore He did not at that time preach to the spirits in prison, for He was not there.

It may be asked, however, did He not go to Hades according to Psalm xvi: 10, and Peter's exposition of it in Acts ii: 25-32? Yes, but not necessarily to the abode of the lost. Sheol and Hades alike designate the unseen world, the world of departed spirits, not necessarily a place of torment and of misery unless expressly mentioned. Hades denotes the intermediate state, the abode of the disembodied human spirit till the resurrection at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself went thither at His death, and both the Psalm and Peter's explanation announce the glorious truth that our Lord's spirit should not tarry in the unseen world, nor should His body see corruption in the grave, for His resurrection should speedily follow His death and burial.

For us the passage in First Peter iii: 18-20, with all its difficulties of interpretation, teaches the following truths:

1. Jesus Christ was put to death as a substitute for sinners, the just for the unjust, that they might be brought unto God.

2. He was made alive again by the resurrection from the dead, and He now lives in the power of an endless life.

3. His resurrection was effected by the almighty power of God.

4. By the same power, His own eternal Spirit, He went by His servant Noah to the Antediluvians and proclaimed to them His truth—truth that invited, warned and threatened them with overwhelming judgment.

5. Noah's contemporaries refused the message, rejected the messenger and persisted in their disobedience and unbelief.

6. The flood "destroyed them all," and their spirits are now confined in the prison of the lost where they await the final judgment (2 Peter ii: 9; Jude 6).

7. The passage holds out no hope for the impenitent, it forbids the notion that those who during the earthly life refuse the Gospel of God's grace may have a second chance in the world beyond, and may be ultimately saved.

No preaching to the dead is its lesson.

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

The Second Epistle of Peter comes to us with less historical support of its genuineness than any other book of the New Testament. Origen (c. A. D. 230) is the first writer who mentions it by name, but he is careful to say that its authority was questioned. Eusebius and Jerome state the same general fact, though Jerome included it in his Vulgate Version, while Eusebius speaks of First Peter as generally accepted, but of the second as quite doubtful. It seems certain that it was not formally admitted into the Canon of Scripture until near the close of the fourth century by the Councils of Laodicea (A. D. 372) and Carthage (A. D. 397). The historical attestation to its canonicity is thus seen to be meagre indeed. Accordingly, many are even now in doubt as to its integrity.

It must be added that there was a strong tendency in sub-apostolic times to use Peter's name to give credit to apocryphal writings. There are such writings extant, as *e. g.*, *The Gospel of Peter*, *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Acts of Peter*, etc. These and the like spurious books belong to the second century of our era, or even later, and hence are of no authority touching the matters of which they treat. They exhibit, however, the tendency of the age in which they were produced, and the possibility that Second Peter might likewise

be spurious. But would they have come into existence had Peter never written anything? The fact of abundant forgery is at once an evidence that some genuine writings of the Apostle existed and were received generally as his.

The internal evidence in the support of the genuineness of Second Peter is clear and strong. It opens with the positive statement of Peter's authorship—"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ"—The insertion of Simon, the old Hebrew name, in the forefront of the document is significant. If a forger had been writing in Peter's name at the opening of his false letter he almost certainly would have followed the First Epistle and simply written, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Note also that "servant" is introduced in the Second Epistle, but is absent from the First. He calls himself a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. "Although several pseudonymous writings appear in early Christian literature, there is no Christian document *of value* written by a forger who uses the name of an Apostle" (Dods). If this important statement is accepted at its full worth, it goes far to settle the question of authorship, for the writer inserts the name Apostle at the opening of his epistle—"an Apostle of Jesus Christ."

Moreover, the writer is distinctively a Christian; he addresses those who "have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God" (i: 1). His is the same precious faith which all the saints enjoy; his also the exceeding great and precious promises of God, and he expects with all other believers to

be made a partaker of the divine nature (i: 3, 4). Is it at all probable or likely that one with such a faith and such expectations would deliberately falsify the name of Simon Peter and turn liar? The writer is unsparing in his denunciations of false teachers, corruptors of others, rebels against God, hypocrites and apostates (ii). He instances the fall of the angels, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the rebuke of Balaam, as examples of the doom of those who know the truth and yet live in shameful sin and crime. Would a Christian and servant of Jesus Christ be at all likely to commit in the most flagrant manner the things he so vehemently condemns? If the writer was not the Apostle Peter, he was a false teacher, a corruptor of others, and a hypocrite, which to us seems incredible.

He associates himself with the other Apostles, is in full sympathy with Paul, is acquainted with Paul's epistles, and he holds and teaches the same fundamental truth. An apostolic spirit breathes through this document such as is not found in a spurious writing, and such as a forger never exhibits. He is anxiously concerned for the purity of the faith, and for the steadfastness and holiness of the saints. He exhorts them to give "diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight," and that they "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." All this and very much more of like devout teaching is apostolic in tone and betokens genuineness and reality.

Furthermore, the writer appeals to certain facts in

the life of Peter which make his epistle almost autobiographical. For example, he speaks of "putting off of my tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me" (i: 13, 14). The reference undoubtedly is to John xiii: 36; xxi: 18, 19. In the latter passage Jesus distinctly announced to Peter that his death was to be one of violence, even crucifixion, and that it would occur when the Apostle was an old man. He claims to have been a witness of the Transfiguration (i: 16-18). We know from the record of the Gospels that Peter was one of the three who were present when the Lord's person glowed with an unearthly brightness. He indirectly claims the inspiration without which true prophecy is impossible (i: 19-21). He asserts that this is his "second epistle" (iii: 1). This testimony on the part of the writer is personal, emphatic and direct. It reads exactly like Peter's manner of speaking of himself at the Council of Jerusalem, "Ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe."

Jude appears to quote from Second Peter. The question as to the priority of these two epistles, viz.: Second Peter and Jude, is by no means settled. Writers are pretty evenly divided. Chase, Peake and Pluntre hold that Jude is the older, while Zahn, Lumby, and apparently Dods regard Second Peter as the older. In favor of the latter view, which the present writer accepts, it may be argued: 1. That Jude, who seems to quote from the Book of Enoch and to refer indirectly at least to the apocryphal Assumption of

Moses, would more probably quote from Peter than Peter from Jude. Indeed there is no evidence that Peter cites from any writer. 2. Peter's description of the false teachers and corruptors of truth points mainly to the future. His prominent verbs are in the future tense, *e. g.*, ii: 1, 2, 3, 12, etc. Certainly he uses the present tense in his description of the evil character and conduct of these hypocrites and apostates, but their presence among the saints he puts in the future. The deadly germs were already there, the rank growth would speedily follow. Jude, on the contrary, throughout his epistle speaks of them as already come; his objects are present, they are in the midst of the children of God, these "filthy dreamers," these "murmurers." It seems to us certain that while Paul in his address to the Ephesian Elders (Acts xx: 28-30), and in his epistle to Timothy (2 Tim. iii: 1-9), and Peter in his second letter, alike predict the coming of the antinomians and the heretics, Jude describes them as actually here, prosecuting their wicked work with shameless effrontery. He writes, "But, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they said unto you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts" (vers. 17, 18). One of the Apostles here mentioned seems certainly to have been Peter, Paul perhaps was another. Peter writes as follows: "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: knowing this first, that in the

last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter iii: 2-4). The close resemblance of these passages to each other extends to the words and phrases. Both urge their readers to "remember," both date the fulfilment of the prediction at the "last time," both use the term "mockers," and both say that the prediction came through "the apostles." But, note, that Peter affirms that the fulfilment was still future when he wrote, but Jude declares that it is already fulfilled in his day, for he goes on to say, "These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit" (v. 19). It appears to us that beyond question Jude quotes from both Peter and Paul, and that he has specially in mind the words of Peter. Therefore Second Peter is older than Jude, and hence beyond doubt canonical, if Jude is.

The keyword of First Peter is *Hope*; of Second Peter *Knowledge*.

1. It has often been observed that the Apostle uses the term knowledge with much frequency, and in such connections and with such fulness of significance as to disclose the great importance he attaches to it (i: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8; ii: 20, 21; iii: 18). The word he uses is generally in the intensified form, viz.: *full knowledge*. Christians should know the truth and the whole truth; they should be able to detect error, and recognize the times in which they live; they should know the dangerous world that surrounds them and that ever seeks to poison their minds, debase their affections, neutralize their testimony, and paralyze their faith. Hence

Peter's final appeal is, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (iii: 18).

2. The basis of true knowledge (i: 1-4). It springs from a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the "exceeding great and precious promises" which Divine Power has given us. This knowledge leads us into acquaintance with the righteousness of God, with our calling as believers, and with the glorious destiny that awaits them who know and trust God.

3. Growth in knowledge (i: 5-11). "And besides all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith," etc. The term "add" scarcely expresses the apostle's thought. It is a somewhat peculiar word originally used of one who supplied all the equipments and furnishings needed by the Greek Chorus. The idea of supply should certainly be retained: "In your faith supply virtue." He does not ask that faith be supplied; that these believers already had. But starting with faith as the foundation of all, let the other excellencies and virtues be richly and abundantly furnished. Let there be no lack of equipment here, for far more is it needed than was furnishing by the Chorus of the old Greek tragedy. What a magnificent cluster the apostle here gives! Each springs out of the other; each is strengthened by the other. "In your faith supply virtue," or fortitude, manliness; and let virtue supply "knowledge." Knowledge by itself alone tends to "puff up." But tempered by the others, by self-control, by patience, by godliness, by love, knowledge becomes one of the most essential and

powerful excellencies in the Christian character. Paul begins his list of the "fruits of the Spirit" with love (Gal. v: 22). Peter ends his with love. It is like a chain, each link holds fast to its fellow, and is a part of the whole. It matters little at which end of the chain we begin the count, for the links form a unity, and to touch one is to touch all. Each is strong by the strength derived from the other. The apostle urges diligence to furnish all these; "adding on your part all diligence." God freely gives what we need and all we need; let it be ours by conscious effort to add to the supply.

The motive to such diligence lies in this, (a) that no barrenness nor unfruitfulness in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ may blight our lives; (b) and that thereby may be richly supplied to us the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The inerrancy of the sources of saving knowledge (i: 16-21).

The apostle rests his truth on two trustworthy facts: (a) the fact and meaning of the Saviour's Transfiguration; (b) the fact of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Taken together these two great facts invest his teaching with infallible certainty and authority.

1. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." Pagan mythology, so widely prevailing at the time in Asia Minor, was composed largely of *myths* (Peter's word) which were skilfully

framed and poetically embellished. The cabalism of the Jews, heathen myths, and the wild vagaries that were springing up in the bosom of the Christian Church itself, had no place whatever in the message of the Gospel nor in the apostolic teaching and preaching. What Peter and his fellow-apostles taught was the very truth of God, and this, without admixture of human wisdom or speculation, had been made known to the "elect sojourners" for their instruction and comfort. The teaching was with absolute fidelity and certainty. For Peter and James and John were eye-witnesses of the majestic scene on the mount of Transfiguration. They saw with their own eyes the super-human brightness and splendor with which the Lord's person glowed, they saw the two heavenly visitants who appeared in glory and who conversed with Jesus, they heard the voice of God out of the cloud, and they beheld that cloud which is always the symbol of the Divine Presence. If any men ever were competent and credible in their testimony surely these were the men. This knowledge they had given out to their fellow-believers.

Peter intimates that the Transfiguration was at once the pledge and a specimen of the Lord's Advent and of the Kingdom of God. The Synoptic Gospels which record it (Matt. xvii: 1-8; Mark ix: 2-8; Luke ix: 28-36), leave little room for doubt that the Lord so intended it. He said, "There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see," etc. Lillie and others hold that this promise had its fulfilment in the spectacle of the Transfiguration. The

view is supported by the variously expressed objects they were to see before they died. In Matthew it is, "till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." In Mark, "till they see the Kingdom of God come with power." In Luke, "till they see the Kingdom of God." Two chief things they should see—the coming of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom. Peter appears to have both in view when he mentions the "power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Mark's words, "Kingdom come with power," answers to Peter's "power." And Matthew's "Son of Man coming" answers to Peter's "coming." It seems certain that in some deep sense the apostle saw in the Transfiguration a pledge and sample of the future advent of Christ and the establishment of God's Kingdom in power and glory over the whole earth.

The scene itself witnesses to the same general fact. (1) The Lord's person suddenly shone with a majesty and glory such as commonly was hid from mortal gaze. "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." In heaven He is encircled with the transcendant glories of the throne of God. But when He shall come again to our world it will be in His own glory, such as was displayed in its dazzling beauty before the overwhelmed gaze of His disciples. (2) Two men from the unseen world appeared also in glory, Moses and Elijah. They represented the Law and the Prophets. They represented much more. The one had died, and he of mortals alone had the distinguished honor, the matchless dignity, of being buried by the Lord Himself (Deut. xxxiv: 5, 6).

Moses stood for the sleeping saints who shall be raised up in glory when Christ comes. Elijah for living believers who shall be "changed" (1 Cor. xv: 51, 52), and who like Elijah shall not pass through death (1 Cor. xvi; 1 Thess. iv). (3) Three men were present, witnesses of the wondrous scene, who in some measure shared in it, who were in the flesh and who stand for mankind living when Christ shall return to the world for its redemption. (4) There was the Shekinah Cloud, symbol of the Divine Presence, and the voice of God speaking from the cloud. Here was nearness of the Father, two glorified saints from the unseen world, Jesus shining with dazzling splendor and beauty, and three mortal men participants of the majestic display.

Peter adds, "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure" (i: 19). This is the rendering of the Revision, and there can be little doubt of its correctness. The Transfiguration has confirmed what the prophets had said touching the future and God's purposes to make this earth once more a Paradise and thus restore it to the lost fellowship of heaven. Every word He has spoken is to be made good to men, to the globe, to the dead and to the living friends of God. For Christ has suffered, His glories must follow; the august proof of it is Christ's Transfiguration, the Cloud and Voice of God, the presence of Moses and Elijah, the presence also of the disciples, and the shining person of the Lord. All this, the apostle affirms, confirms in a most cogent fashion the prophetic Scripture, and pledges the fulfilment of every work spoken

through the prophets. The historical fact of the Transfiguration is a signal proof that Peter and his fellow-apostles did not follow "cunningly devised fables when they made known to Christians the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. The second fact is the inspiration of the men of God, i: 20, 21. "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 Spirit." "Knowing this first," *i. e.*, we recognize this as primary truth, we settle definitely in our minds when we sit down to the study of prophecy. "Private interpretation," *i. e.*, "private" in the sense of "one's own;" "interpretation," *i. e.*, origin, origination. Prophecy never comes by the exercise of the prophet's own gifts and talents, nor by his shrewd guessing, his wise calculation, his profound and prolonged thought. No; it is neither by man's unaided talent, nor by man's application, it is wholly of God. From Him it comes, by Him it is revealed. It was brought to the prophet, as it is brought to us. It is not to be tied up to the times of the prophet, nor is it to be explained and unfolded by man's device. "Holy men," Peter, John, Paul, and all the others, "spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."

5. Peter's Three Worlds, iii: 5-13. Of course three globes are not meant, but three vast epochs, three enormous periods in the history of the earth. The apostle divides its history into three clearly defined sections, and treats each of these with some fulness of detail; at least he mentions the characteristic features of each, and to these we are now to attend.

(1) "The world that then was" (iii: 6). This is Peter's first world. It was the antediluvian world, the world which the Flood destroyed (vs. 5, 6; Gen. vi, vii). The commonly received chronology makes the duration of that ancient world 1656 years. Its end was distinguished by colossal wickedness and apostasy from God, and the divine judgment which swept away the entire race with the exception of eight souls, Noah and his family.

Scoffers in Peter's time asked no doubt with a sneer, "Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." These mockers appeal to the continuity of natural processes, to the inviolability of nature's laws, and they assert that on these grounds there never will be an Advent of Christ and judgment of the world, as Christians believe and teach. Natural law goes on without interruption and without a break. Nature keeps her track with unwavering precision. There is no sign of any change; no catastrophe is likely, indeed is possible. The promise of His coming fails. These skeptics wilfully forget that a mighty cataclism did once overwhelm the world. The Flood drowned every living thing save those within the sheltering Ark. God had said, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. vi: 13). "And every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens" (Gen. vii:

23). It was a worldwide disaster that happened to that old antediluvian age, and its end was frightful indeed. Since, then, this is a historical fact the infidel question of the mockers is foolish and false. The world that then was perished under God's fearful judgment, and He has assured us that the Lord Jesus shall come again from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1: 7, 8).

The Flood must have profoundly affected the conditions of life on the earth. The physical changes introduced by it seem to have been very great, greater indeed than most students of the Bible ascribe to it. If the conclusions derived from personal examination by Prof. G. Frederick Wright be accepted as true, and no geologist of the age is more worthy of credence than he, that the Deluge prevailed over a very large portion of the earth's surface, and that a submergence of the land took place, then we can readily perceive how deeply affected were the conditions of life. The world appears to be different after the disaster; it was no longer fitted to be the home of men who before it lived for centuries. Longevity almost immediately began to change; life began to shorten, and in a comparatively brief time it sank to the term of years that now bounds it. Noah lived 950 years (Gen. ix: 29). Shem, his son born before the Flood, died at the age of 600, a reduction of 350 years in a single generation. With Noah's grandson, Arphaxad, there is further reduction: he died at the age of 438 years. In five gen-

erations life was shortened to but little more than 200 years. Is it not possible, is it not probable that the Deluge brought about such changes in climate, in soil, and in the atmosphere as to make the long life of the antediluvian age impossible? At any rate, we may well conjecture that the conditions so favorable to a prolonged period of existence in "the world that then was" passed away under the awful judgment of God. Floods of water are not purifiers, floods of fire are, as we shall presently see.

(2) Peter's second world is, "the heavens and the earth which are now" (iii: 7). It is the present order of things in sky and earth that is meant. The world that now is—it is a singular sort of expression, and seems to indicate that it is neither permanent nor final. Hence the apostle goes on to say that it is "stored up for fire" (R. V.), or, better, as the margin reads, "stored with fire," *i. e.*, it contains within itself the agency by which it may yet be consumed. The world that now is, is held in strict custody, reserved, not for a second deluge, but for fire. The advent of Christ and the judgment which shall ensue upon His coming are constantly associated in Scripture with fire, with a mighty conflagration. "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him" (Psalms 1: 3). "For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh" (Isa. lxvi: 15, 16). Thus likewise in

the vision of Daniel: "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him. . . . I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." Nor is the New Testament silent on this point: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire" (2 Thess. i: 7-9).

These passages of Scripture and others of like import indicate that *fire* will be one of the physical attendants on the Lord's coming. But fire is not the only one. Voices, lightnings, thunders and earthquakes will also accompany that transcendent event. Three times does the Apocalypse testify to this fact, Rev. viii: 5; xi: 19; xvi: 18. These tremendous forces of nature will be employed as agents for the punishment of the ungodly and the apostates of that Day. But the judgments at the Advent, dreadful as they assuredly will be, appear to be inflicted mainly on God's enemies, the Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet, and the vast multitudes that shall be deceived by these extraordinary foes. (See Rev. xii, xiii, xix). These are chief objects of the Divine wrath, and they appear at the time of the end. These passages, however, fall far short of Peter's language. They say nothing of the melting of the elements with fervent heat, and the burning of the earth and its works, as Peter does: "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" (2 Peter iii: 10). The

Day of the Lord is not one of four and twenty hours, but a prolonged period. The apostle intimates that it will cover a thousand years, *i. e.*, the whole time of the Millennium (Rev. xx). It is of the close of this period that Peter speaks, not of its beginning, as John mainly does in the Revelation.

Ample materials are stored up in the earth itself for its consumption by fire. The oils and the gases so inflammable and destructive in their energy can, when the time arrives, speedily reduce the order of things now existing to ashes. Peter's language does not signify the annihilation of the earth, nor the dissolution of the atmosphere, nor the end of time. Fire does not annihilate, it dissolves existing combinations which may be recombined under new and different forms. He speaks of the cosmical convulsions and physical revolutions of both earth and sky, such as shall far surpass those of the Flood. But at the close of the Day of the Lord, when God shall have wrought His whole work in the earth, something new and transcendently glorious and beautiful shall supervene.

(3) The third world is this: "But, according to his promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii: 13). It is the new world of righteousness and blessedness forever. It is Paradise restored. With the overthrow of the antediluvian world there began the new history of our race and the new order of things. With the destruction by fire of the present order there will follow the fulfilment of the majestic predictions and promises contained in the last two chapters of the

book of Revelation. This will be the eternal state, it will succeed the glories of the Millennial age, itself infinitely more glorious than that. The Spirit is careful not to say that in the new heavens and new earth righteousness shall *reign*, for that would mean the millennial reign; but He says righteousness shall *dwell* therein; it is the permanent, abiding state; it is eternity.

In Rev. xxi: 1-8 the New Testament seer, John the Apostle, reveals somewhat of the grandeur and the glory of that sorrowless state which is foretold. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." The fulfilment of this sublime prediction will involve a fundamental change in the constitution of the world that now is. Life would be impossible if the sea was no more. But He who made the world and all it contains can surely recreate it, clearing it of every vestige of sin and misery, of its imperfections and its limitations, fitting it for the dwelling of perfect beings and of God's supreme glory. Immanuel will dwell with the holy inhabitants of the new earth and in the new Jerusalem which is to descend into the glorified earth. Then will pass away forever death, mourning, crying and pain, and deathless life and painless bliss will never more be interrupted nor disturbed. John is bidden, Write, for these things are true and faithful; they shall not fail to come to pass.

"Earth, thou grain of sand on the shore of the Universe of God; thou Bethlehem, amongst the princely

cities of the heavens, thou art, and remainest, the Loved One amongst ten thousand suns and worlds, the Chosen of God! On thee has the Lord a great work to complete."

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Although no name is attached to this Scripture, it is very generally believed to be the production of the Apostle John. Witnesses to its authorship may be traced back almost to the end of the first century, and they had the best opportunity to know and to weigh the evidence. Its close connection with the Gospel according to John in thought and style must lead the reader to the conviction that both are the production of the same pen.

It, with the other six of this group of epistles, is well called Catholic, or General, for it is not addressed to any body of Christians in particular, as are James and Peter, but to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no age or people, no church, whether local or national, that may not claim it for its own and to which it may not unreservedly be applied. The two short epistles which follow this bear the names or designations to which they are addressed. But this has no inscription. It begins without salutation, and ends without benediction. The writer sometimes uses the first person when speaking of himself, but never mentions his own name.

The style is one of artless simplicity and of singular beauty and purity. The sentences considered separately are marvellously clear, concise and profound. Each is perfect in itself and contains a distinct and

lucid thought. The style is sententious, at times almost aphoristic. On this account it is often difficult to trace the connection between one sentence and another, one paragraph and another. Nevertheless, its unity is neither imperilled nor obscured by the style, its structure is flawless. It is built on a very distinct and noble plan, and the plan binds its parts into a harmonious whole.

It abounds in repetitions. The same thought in almost identical language is repeated; often the idea being put in the positive, then immediately in the negative form. A most extraordinary criticism has been founded on this characteristic of the epistle, viz.: that it indicates the writer's old age and the "rambling prattle of an old man," who pours out pious sentiments and reflections without method or aim. It is nothing of the sort. Instead of displaying weakness or garrulity, First John is the profoundest of all the Catholic epistles and the most difficult to expound. No one who has really studied it, who has gone down into its depths, or even tried to, could for a moment accept such a callow criticism as this. The repetitions spring from the nature of the writing and from the structure of John's mind, for he is of all the New Testament writers the most subtle, penetrating and analytic. He does not reason as does Paul, nor argue; he reveals; he sets his truth in the clearest light and lets it do its own work. For John is a Seer; piercing insight into things is his great gift. Two features specially mark the epistle—the majesty of the

thoughts and the simplicity of the language-features which indicate the highest quality of genius.

Antithesis is of frequent use in First John. Over against each thought is often placed its opposite in sharp contrast. Thus light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, life and death, children of God and children of the devil, follow one another in impressive alternation (cf. i: 8-10; iii: 8-10; iv: 4-6). Owing to this structure of sentences there is a sort of rythmical cadence sometimes observable, and one has arranged a portion of the first chapter as if it were verse:

If we say we have no sin,
We deceive ourselves,
And the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,
And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned,
We make Him a liar;
And His word is not in us.

"In this instance it will be observed that we pass from one opposite to another and back again: but that to which we return covers more ground than the original position, and is a distinct advance upon it."

Force and impressiveness lie in this method of instruction. Such sentences remain in one's memory. The distinction between Christians and unbelievers is more sharply brought out thus than perhaps it could otherwise be.

Its authority is another mark of the epistle. While throughout there is abundant evidence of John's tender affection for those whom he addresses, yet there is a tone of authority which is manifest everywhere. There is a dignity, a magisterial gravity, that makes the epistle both apostolic and commanding. There is no claim of authority set up, no assertion that he possesses it, but a quiet word is spoken, a resistless strength displayed, from which there is no appeal, and a judgment passed that is felt to be infallible and final. Thus, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Of him who claims to know the Lord and keeps not His commandments John says he is a liar (ii: 4); he that denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar (ii: 22): love of the brethren is the sure sign of being saved; hate of the brother the sign of being a murderer (iii: 14, 15). Like Paul in Corinthians and Galatians, like James and Peter, John writes with an authority that cannot be challenged, for we feel, we cannot but feel, that what he says and on what he passes sentence is the very truth of God.

Its finality is the last thing to be mentioned here. The Gospel by John is the final Gospel, not only in point of time, but also in contents and aim. It completes the other three. The First Epistle of John is likewise final. This is true in point of time. It was probably written near the close of the apostle's life, *i. e.*, the close of the first century. Perhaps somewhere between A. D. 90-95 it was written. John speaks of those who denied that Jesus Christ was come in the

flesh (iv: 3). He seems to refer to certain sects that began to flourish about that time that held the Son of God could not ally Himself with flesh, with matter, for this is essentially evil, and the Divine Being could not come into contact with it without being contaminated and degraded; hence Jesus was only a creature who received special endowment at His baptism for His great mission by the Spirit of God, but who died as a mere man, the Spirit having left Him at the time He cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

The epistle speaks of Antichrist and of the spirit of Antichrist, and of the many Antichrists, as if these were already in the world (ii: 18, 22; iv: 3). The uniform teaching of the apostles is that this adversary, Antichrist, is one of the very last foes of the cause and people of God, that his time will be but short, and that he will receive his doom at the hands of the Saviour Himself. Hence John writes, "Little children, it is the last hour." The final conflict is at hand, the last terrible battle is soon to be fought and won; therefore, be separate, vigilant, expectant.

ANALYSIS.

First John seems to fall into four parts, each of which will repay careful and earnest study.

Part I. Introduction, chap. i: 1-4.

Part II. Fellowship, i: 5—ii: 29.

Part III. Sonship, iii—v: 12.

Part IV. Conclusion, v: 13-21.

JOHN'S MESSAGE.

I. The Introduction, i: 1-4. Reading these four verses somewhat casually one might suppose that John's object is to tell what he and his fellow-apostles knew personally of the Saviour, of their intimacy with Him, and the blessed companionship they had with Him. But the apostle is not dealing here with the great fact of the "historical Christ," precious as that truth is, nor with the opportunities he had of knowing Him, of entering into close acquaintance with Him. All this may be hinted at in these verses, but this is not John's subject nor the aim of his writing. Rather, his purpose is to instruct Christians in the doctrine of Eternal Life—its source, nature, possession, maintenance and blessedness. Law promised life upon obedience; Eternal Life was brought by Jesus Christ. It was with the Father, it has been manifested in the person of the Lord Jesus, and by Him is given to all who are in Him, so that they and He have fellowship, actual partnership in the Life which is from God and which unites with God. Mark some of the main features of this Introduction: (1) The Eternal Life which was with the Father is now manifested in Jesus Christ, the Word of Life. He has brought it near to dying men, He gives it to all who receive Him. (2) John and his fellow-apostles were eyewitnesses of this manifestation of the Life. Their testimony is corroborated by three of the most trustworthy of our senses, viz.: hearing, sight, touch. John and his fellows heard Him, saw Him, gazed upon Him, handled Him. Note the climax; seeing is

more than hearing; prolonged looking is more than mere seeing; handling is more than all. (3) Participation in the Life brings into fellowship with the Father and the Son. (4) John writes that all believers may have the same fellowship, and so have a full and blessed joy.

GOD IS LIGHT.

II. Fellowship, i: 5—ii: 28. This is the first great theme John discusses, rather, that he opens to us. Understand by fellowship communion, partnership, and this with God and with one another. The passage treating of this theme embraces these points—its nature, its maintenance, its recovery when interrupted, and its fruits. He does not fail to tell us how we may know we have the fellowship, and what the signs are of its presence and of its absence.

I. Character of Him with Whom fellowship is enjoyed, i: 5. "God is light." The apostle John gives us three most remarkable statements about God; each of them may be regarded as a definition of what God is in Himself. These three declarations are, "God is a Spirit" (John iv: 24); "God is light" (1 John i: 5); "God is love" (1 John iv: 8). In all three the predicate has no article, "either definite or indefinite" (Plummer). "We are not told that God is the Spirit, or the Light, or the Love; nor (in all probability) that He is a Spirit, or a light." But God is Spirit, is Light, is Love: spirit, light, love are His very nature. "They are not mere attributes, like mercy and justice: they are Himself." They reveal to us in some measure what God is in Himself. The first relates to His

Being, His Essence: He is Spirit, therefore He is without form, invisible, yet personal, individual, unchangeable. The second, Light, relates to His spirituality, His infinite purity and holiness. The third, Love, to His disposition. United the three tell us what God is. No philosophy, no religion, ever rose to such a height as this. How infinitely removed is this majestic revelation of God from the Zeus of the Greeks, Jupiter of the Romans, and Odin of our Saxon and Celtic ancestors. As Light God unites in Himself purity and clearness, beauty and glory, holiness and knowledge, and these in their perfections. John adds, "And darkness in him there is none at all," the emphatic order of his words. This intensifies the preceding thought; as Light God is subject to no darkness whatever; no obscuring of Him, no clouding of His purity is possible. As Light He is without admixture, abridgement, or change. This is the pure and holy Being with whom fellowship is to be had.

2. How Fellowship with God is maintained, i: 6—ii: 2. In this section of the epistle the apostle exhibits how fellowship with God is sustained, and how it is recovered when it is interrupted or suspended. The teaching is exceedingly practical and searching.

(a) To have fellowship with God involves walking in the light, i: 6, 7. One must be in sympathy with His mind and will, must in some degree be like Him. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii: 3). Walking means the daily life. To walk in the light signifies living in the element where God dwells, for God is light. To dwell thus with Him

presupposes that one is at peace with Him, that he loves His presence, and delights in communion with Him. Harmony with Him in what He loves and what He hates is indispensable to companionship with Him. But one may claim fellowship, yet deceive himself (ver. 6). (Note, the word "if" is repeated in each verse of the chapter from the 6th to the end.) The false claim is easily detected. If the one making it lives in sin, walks according to his own will and not God's, walks as he pleases, his claim is false, he lies and does not speak the truth. John's language is most emphatic and uncompromising.

(b) Application of Christ's blood, ver. 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It alone keeps us in the fellowship, and restores it when interrupted. Note the force of the present tense, *cleanseth*: it makes us clean, it keeps us clean. Christ's atonement effects two great results: it justifies the sinner in God's presence, and it sanctifies his life. Note the force of the singular number here "all sin;" *i. e.*, every sin, every kind and sort of sin. The blood purifies completely and entirely; it includes the whole person, the heart, the mind, the will and affections, in short, the life.

(c) Confession of sin and its pardon, i: 8, 10. Let us not fail to see how radical the teaching is touching sin in believers and its forgiveness as the condition of fellowship. John does not blink matters; with all the authority of an inspired apostle he writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." One who walks

in the light—may he not become at length free from sin? “If we say we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” The sentence is definite and precise: “If we say we do not have sin.” No Christian, however upright in character and blameless in conduct, is freed from inherent sin. Sin is still in him, though he has the mastery over it. It dwells in him, though he does not dwell in it. One who says he does not have sin in him is self-deceived. He does not deceive God, nor those who live with him, he deceives only himself. *He leads himself astray.* He ought to know better than to say such a thing, and he might; but he shuts his eyes to his actual state, and so “the truth is not in him.”

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Unconfessed sin prevents fellowship. The holy Lord cannot hold communion with a self-righteous and self-satisfied sinner, nor can He with a saint who cherishes such a temper. The next best thing to not being a sinner at all is to confess one’s sins. God is faithful to His promise to forgive when we honestly and truly confess, and righteous in doing so. He is just when He justifies him who believes in Jesus (Rom. iii: 26); He is just when He forgives His child who confesses his wrongdoing and repents of it. This gracious provision restores to fellowship when sin has interrupted it, or suspended it altogether.

Fellowship with God is maintained by Christ’s advocacy of our cause before the Father, ii: 1, 2: “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous." "Advocate" is the same term which is used to designate the Holy Spirit as the Comforter (John xiv: 16, 26). It denotes the Saviour's intercession on the behalf of His people. He pleads their cause, He secures their pardon, peace and joy; He obtains for them the mercy and the grace they so constantly need. His plea always avails because He is "righteous." In Himself, in His ways and works here on earth, in His death and resurrection, He has fulfilled all righteousness, has obeyed perfectly the Father's will, has glorified Him; and therefore Him the Father heareth always. Moreover, He is the propitiation for our sins, and on the ground of His finished redemption God justifies, pardons and saves all who trust in Him. It is thus that fellowship with God is maintained and restored when once it has been forfeited by disobedience and trespass.

3. Requirements of Fellowship with God, ii: 3-17. How may we know that we are children of God? The inquiry is of vital moment to every Christian. All want assurance, indubitable evidence that we belong to the heavenly family, and hence are in the light and are walking with God. In this section are infallible marks given by the Spirit Himself by which we may determine our state and standing before Him.

(a) Obedience. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (ii: 3). As if John said, "I give you an infallible sign of salvation and of fellowship with the Lord, viz.: obedience to His will." Every word in this short sentence is significant and emphatic. Into "commandments" he pours a

wealth of meaning. He never uses the term *law* to express the rule of Christian obedience. In John's writings commandments generally denote the Saviour's injunctions (cf. ver. 5).

A Christian is one who obeys his Lord always, not to secure eternal life for this he already has, but because he is alive unto God, because he has come to know savingly the Lord Jesus. Christ is Lord. He has the right to command, we have the right only to obey. Disobedience is lawlessness (iii: 4). A child of God cannot be habitually disobedient to the Master's will. He cannot be lawless. We come to know that we do know Him when we habitually seek to keep His commandments. "Keep" is a favorite word with the apostle. More than a score of times he employs it touching the Lord's word and will. To *keep* is to guard and reguard, to observe and obey with steadfastness and zeal. Thus "we do know that we know him." Our consciousness attests it; in the central deeps of our being we know certain things; we cannot be argued, nor ridiculed, nor frightened out of our knowledge: "We know that we know him;" we have personal acquaintance with Him as our Deliverer and Friend, and we reach this sure knowledge by love and keeping His commandments.

What is implied in such obedience? First, a filial spirit. No formalist, no legalist, no self-righteous person can by any possibility love and obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus. A child of God alone can do so, and every child does it in greater or less degree; he *must*, it is the essence of his new nature. It

implies faith. And this is his commandment, "That we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (iii: 23). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (v: 1). It implies love. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (v: 2, 3). We know His love when we cherish His words (John xiv: 21; xv: 10, 12). These three principles, the filial spirit, faith, and love, distinguish Christians. They are not found in the ungodly, nor can they be simulated, counterfeited, or put on like a dress; they are of the heart and soul. By them we know that we know Him. Every one who loves His will, is responsive to His voice, and sensitive to His commands, may press the glad truth to his heart that he is saved.

(b) Love to God: "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby we know that we are in him" (ii: 5). "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv: 23). "His word" is more comprehensive than "his commandments;" it embraces all He has revealed in the Scriptures; it is the sum total of all He has been pleased to communicate to us. Our Lord kept the Father's word perfectly in all its parts, and in Him indeed was the Father's love perfected. Let any Christian perfectly keep it and his love to God will likewise be perfect. But in the degree that we love and obey Him we have the assurance that His love is in us and abides. Such love fellowship with Him requires.

(c) Abiding in Him: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (ii: 6). Abiding in Christ is another requirement of fellowship. Abiding in Him is somewhat additional to being in Him. It is possible to be in Him and yet not consciously to abide in Him. The one state differs from the other not in kind but in degree. Abiding in Him expresses the idea of continuing in Him, being actively alive to our nearness and the blessedness of our relations with Him. He who keeps up close and unbroken union with Christ is the most useful Christian. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John xv: 5). He that abides in Him has answers to his prayers. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv: 7). There is a suggestive balance of terms in the verses we have been considering. This diagram may serve to show the balance:

Fellowship=Knowing God;
Knowing God=Loving Him;
Loving Him=Being in Him;
Being in Him=Abiding in Him.

The parallel presents a well-defined example of biblical climax. If any one step in the parallel is absent, fellowship is not perfect, it is marred, perhaps suspended altogether. For fellowship with God rests on union with Christ and abiding in Him. This gracious relation secures obedience, love and walk. The same general doctrine is found in John xv: 1-18.

(d) Loving the Brotherhood: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him" (ii: 10). Love is an essential principle in fellowship; love to God, to men, to the household of faith particularly. The principle is both old and new; old as Moses (Lev. xix: 18; Deut. vi: 5): new, because taught and exemplified by the Saviour. Love marks the difference between a believer and an unbeliever: the one is in the light, the other in darkness; the one is a light-center, the other a stumbling-block. A lamppost lighted is a welcome help; without a light, a menace.

(e) Separation from the world: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him" (ii: 15-17). By the world John means the whole order of things which is estranged from God, which is hostile to Him and to His cause and His people. The world is God's enemy (Jas. iv: 4), and it is soon to pass away under His righteous judgment. The world consists of three things that are hateful to God:

"Lust of the flesh"—the strong, passionate craving of the unrenewed heart for things evil and forbidden; inordinate yearning for the gratification of one's own desires, the accomplishment of one's own plans and purpose, right or wrong: "Lust of the eyes"—the fierce passion to see and enjoy the things the flesh longs for, that restless, insatiable delight in what pleases the flesh, what pampers and satisfies it, for what feeds the basest appetites of our nature. The

lust of the flesh is fed by the lust of the eyes. These two "lusts" are acquisitive, they seize and hold all that the sinful nature craves. But there is a third: "the Pride of Life." The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes are at bottom selfish and lawless. "Pride of life" is the same spirit of utter selfishness expending itself in vain show and pomp. It will lavishly squander wealth in proud, ostentatious display. It will intrigue and fawn if thereby it may win the notice of the illustrious and the great, and strut with haughty arrogance among its equals and inferiors. The first two are egoism of the meanest sort; the third is egotism pretentious and shallow to the last degree. All belong to a life that is false, hollow and bitterly disappointing. A Christian is bidden stand aloof from this "world." He must heed these solemn words of John, the still more solemn words of James: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be the friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." A holy separation from this *world* must be maintained if fellowship with God is to be real and permanent.

(f) Anointing of the Spirit, ii: 20, 27. The anointing which believers receive is the Spirit Himself and not a gift or gifts from Him. It is affirmed that they who have this sacred chrism "know all things," that it teaches them so that they may be independent of mere human teachers, that by it they are able to detect false teaching. By this is not meant that any new faculty or organ of the soul is imparted so that believers may know universal truth; not this; rather,

it denotes divine truth as distinguished from error which breaks fellowship and tends to stifle it altogether. We may grieve the Spirit so as to hinder His work in us and thus interrupt our fellowship with God (Eph. iv: 30).

(g) Abiding in Christ, ii: 28: "And now, little children, abide in him." This with the next verse concludes the second main division of the epistle, and the last thing the apostle has to say to the children is, Abide in Christ. He has repeatedly urged them to do this; he does so again because Christ ere long is coming to the earth, and our relation to Him and our reward likewise will then be gloriously manifested. John is anxious that we should maintain uninterrupted fellowship that he and his fellow-workers should not be ashamed in His presence as unfaithful shepherds, as slothful servants.

GOD IS LOVE.

III. Sonship, iii-v: 12. This section of the epistle may be entitled, The Children of God and the Children of the Devil contrasted. The antithesis in Section II is Light and Darkness. The antithesis in Section III is a double one: Righteousness and Sin; or, Love and Hate.

Chap. ii: 29 is the connecting link between the two sections: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Here is evidence both of sonship and of fellowship. He whose daily life is one of obedience and

uprightness gives proof that he is born of God. The like nature is demonstrated by the like fruits. Note the use of the present tense, "doeth;" it is characteristic of First John. It denotes a habit of life, the prevailing principle of one's life, not a single act, but a succession of acts which make up the life. The apostle sharply contrasts "doing righteousness" and "doing sin" (iii: 7, 8, 9). The fundamental idea is the same in both expressions, viz.: that it is not one act alone that is meant, but habitual practice, the life-conduct of a man.

We may now add other items to the parallelism of the epistle:

Being in Him=Abiding in Him;
 Abiding in Him=Anointed of Him;
 Anointed of Him=Born of Him;
 Born of Him=Doing Righteousness.

1. The origin and the destiny of God's children, iii: 1-3. On this great passage only brief notes can be made, not an exposition. The authorized version has "sons of God;" the English and American revisions alike have "children;" and beyond question this is preferable. Paul generally speaks of the "sons," and of "adoption," for he has in mind the legal standing and the privileges of Christians. John scarcely ever uses the term sons, but always children. (Rev. xxi: 7 is perhaps an exception.) And this name which he gives them includes two ideas, their birth into the heavenly family, and the filial spirit by which they are animated. John does not dwell on the adoption of

sons into God's household—this is Paul's theme—but on their birth. His words (*tekna, teknia*) "little children" is exactly expressed by the Scotch *bairns*, born ones. According to Paul we receive the place and the rights of children in God's family; according to John, the nature and the name of children. The revisions add the precious and assuring words, "and we are." We are not only called the children of God, but we are.

The origin of our sonship is here traced to the Father's love: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and *such* we are." It is not so much the magnitude of the Father's love that is here extolled; it is its quality, its character. That He should love us, exiles and outcasts, ragged and starving prodigals as we are, and that He should bring us into His holy family as children, and give us not the name only, but also the nature and the character of children! What a wonder of love this is, "all love surpassing." And yet this is what He has done for every one who receives and believes His testimony about His Son Jesus Christ. "Beloved, now are we the children of God." Children we who trust in Christ are called, and children we are. No doubt is felt or expressed. The epistle is full of assurances. "For this cause the world knoweth us not because it knew him not." Natural men knew not Jesus Christ when He was here; no more do they know His children. Really to know a child of God is to be a child of God. I know a man because I have a man's nature; a brute

cannot know me, for it has not my nature. If one knows not God in Christ, how can he know them who belong to God's family? "Beloved, now are we children of God." We do not much look like it as to outward appearance. The resemblance between what we now are and what we shall be can hardly be traced. We are pilgrims traveling in disguise at present, weary often and travel-stained, but by and by the disguise shall drop off, and we shall appear in His likeness, clothed with robes of unsullied light and beauty, for "we shall be like him and see him as he is." That will be the glorious day of His espousals and of our crowning. The hope of seeing Him and of being like Him prompts to holiness of life and sanctity of spirit. Therefore it is added, "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

2. iii: 4-24. These verses furnish two main proofs of Sonship; rather, they point out the two main features in Sonship, viz.: righteousness and love.

(1) Righteousness is evidence of Sonship (iii: 4-10). Negatively, doing sin is doing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness (ver. 4). Doing, as already noted, means practice, habit, persistent conduct. Whoever thus sins, lives in sin, habitually practices sin, has neither seen Christ nor known Him. Positively, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous." That is, one who loves righteousness, who lives in that sphere, and who makes righteousness the chief end of his being, is of God and belongs to His household. Opposition to sin is the controlling principle of one born of God.

Love of sin and the persistent doing of sin is the controlling principle of one belonging to the devil, who is the habitual sinner from the beginning.

The child of God does not live in the practice of sin, he lives in the practice of righteousness. Sin is in him, but he does not live in it; holiness is the realm where he seeks to dwell. John's doctrine on this matter is summed up in iii: 9. It is a difficult verse, but its main idea is clear: "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God" (R. V.). Sinless perfection certainly is not meant, for that would contradict i: 8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Some hold that it is the new nature or life in the child of God that does not sin and that cannot sin; but that the old nature which is still in the saint does sin. But this view involves a sort of double consciousness and a divided responsibility, which contradicts our experience. It is our whole self that seeks to do righteousness, and it is our whole self that sins; otherwise, responsibility for evil conduct would largely disappear, and the worst type of antinomianism would ensue. The meaning of the verse appears to be chiefly this: he who is begotten of God does not love sin nor live in the practice of it; he hates it, and abhors himself when he commits it; he devoutly seeks total deliverance from it. He that is not born of God loves sin and is its slave. The Seed that abides in him probably is the new, the divine nature which he receives in regeneration, and which is not extirpated when even

gross sin is committed. "He cannot sin" signifies that it is impossible a believer should live in evil and make it the habit of his life. He cannot live in it, it is foreign to his new nature.

3. Love is evidence of Sonship, iii: 11-24. Love is the keyword of this portion of the chapter and much that follows. It runs through the rest of the epistle. It occurs 16 times as a substantive, 25 times as a verb, and 5 times as a verbal adjective. No wonder John makes so much of it when he opens the chapter with the note of supreme admiration and wonderment at the display of the Father's love. Behold! He names us children, and loves us as such.

Brotherly love is the chief content of the Gospel message: "Love one another." Jerome relates that when John was too old and feeble to preach he had one little exhortation which he did not cease to repeat when carried into the assembly, "Little children, love one another. It is the Lord's command, and it is enough."

Hate is love's opposite and its enemy; it is Cain-like and murderous. Hate, malignity is foreign to the real Christian spirit. Hatred is deadly. Love is the infallible mark of spiritual life. "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren." Life is not the cause of love but its fruit. If we have the fruit we may be sure we have the life.

Love gladly goes out in helpfulness of others. It is practical, generous and self-sacrificing. If not, it is not real. If we say we love God and yet refuse or neglect to help those who are destitute, how dwells

the love of God in us? (cf. James ii: 15, 16). The man who withholds aid from the needy may with his tongue say he loves God, but with his hand and his heart he denies it.

iii: 24 introduces for the first time in the epistle the Holy Spirit, and we come to know our sonship by the gift of the Spirit who bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.

4. Spiritual Discernment an evidence of Sonship, iv: 1-6. This passage treats of false spirits and of their detection and repulsion.

The right to judge teachers and to test doctrine belongs to all Christians. Our Lord Himself imposed this duty on His people (Matt. vii: 15-19). The necessity of such trial is recognized: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Christ foretold their advent (Matt. xxiv: 24). Paul encountered not a few of them. The world is filled with them at the present time. Some of them teach partial truth, that which is palatable, while that which is distasteful and repugnant to the natural heart is suppressed. Others teach error and nothing else. In our day as not for ages past Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and deceives even the most wary and the cautious. Never perhaps has there been more need of trying the spirits than now.

The apostle furnishes two infallible tests of both teachers and teaching (vers. 2-6). The first relates to Christ's person and work. What do they say of

Him? What is their doctrine concerning Him? Do they deny His mission? His Deity? His Virgin birth? His resurrection? If they do, then they are of the spirit of Antichrist, they are enemies of the blessed Lord Jesus, and therefore no believer in Him can hold fellowship with them. This is an infallible test indeed, for every false prophet, every heretical teacher invariably bears false witness against the Son of God.

The second is their following: "They are of the world; the world heareth them." God's children are not of this company nor can be. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." Whoever is born of God knows the voice of the Son of God that speaks to him through the ministry of the Gospel. That voice he hears and heeds. "He that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." These are sure tests both of profession and of character.

5. Love the supreme evidence of the new birth, iv: 7-21. This is the third time the apostle adduces love as the prime attestation of sonship and fellowship. The first mention (ii: 7-11) marks the governing principle of Christian behavior. The second (iii: 11-24) presents the proofs of sonship in God's family. The third (iv: 7-21) explains the origin, the energy and the steadfast confidence of this divine force. Its source is God Himself, "for God is love." This grace so highly commended by John is not of earth; it springs not from any merely human fountain, it is not native to the human heart. "We love him because he

first loved us." The parentage of our love to God is His love to us. He loves us into loving Himself and our fellowmen. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Love is the faculty by which we know Him. It leads into an acquaintance with Him, for it has eyes that see, ears that hear, a heart that feels and that answers to His love. The natural man is both blind and deaf as to the love of God; he knows nothing of it, it is foolishness to him. To the Lord's child it is a precious reality. Love casts out fear, and fills us with a blissful confidence (iv: 16-18). For the Lord Jesus and believers belong to the same family, have the same tender Father, and are heirs to the same glorious heritage. Therefore, they have no ground to dread even the awful Day of Judgment; for the children have the same standing with God as has the Elder Brother Himself.

Can this love of God be defined? Not wholly. Some things touching it, however, may be said. God's love, in general, is that mighty principle which leads Him to desire and seek the good of all His moral creatures; to impart benefits to them in every scale and degree of blessing; to recover and restore them when they have turned aside from their true end, and lost themselves through sin; to admit them to participation in His own holy, blessed life, in which He and they become one, as the Father and Son are one (Orr). Love alone explains God's marvellous dealings with

our rebellious race. When we remember the world's treatment of Him, its rejection of His authority, its idolatries, its profanities, its calumnies and its slanders against Him, we are amazed at His patience with it, His long-suffering. "The forbearance of God"—how wonderful it is! The secret of it is His love. "God is love:" not only loving, but love. We know He is righteous, but we are nowhere told He is righteousness. We know He is almighty, but we nowhere read God is power. Twice we are told, "God is love." It is His nature. This is the key to His gracious ways with the disobedient children of men. It should be noted also that Christian love is not a mere feeling, nor mood, nor sentiment, nor impulse. It is a vital principle which controls the whole life, which transforms one's habits, guides one's ways, shapes one's whole course, and leads one to rejoice in hope of the coming glory.

6. Faith the evidence of sonship, v: 1-12. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (cf. iv: 4). It is a faith that is obedient to the Lord's commands, and is victorious over the world (vers. 2-5). Love is a master-principle, is an all-conquering principle. It is one that is assured that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Deliverer; that is just as sure that He is also the Son of God. In the one case it receives the testimony that He fills the Messianic offices of Prophet, Priest and King. In the other it holds Him to be God manifest in the flesh, Himself the true God. The ground of this faith is the threefold testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood (v: 8).

The Holy Spirit is the supreme witness. "The water" probably signifies His baptism at the Jordan when the Father bare His emphatic testimony that He was well pleased in Him. "The blood" no doubt is that of the cross. He is thus declared to be both Messiah and Son of God on whom faith may confidently rest.

PRAYER AND THE CERTAINTY OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

IV. Conclusion, v: 13-21.

Intercessory prayer is most precious, but it is discriminative (v: 16). For one at least no prayer is to be offered, for one who has sinned "the sin unto death." To determine with any positiveness what the "sin unto death" is, is most difficult, if not impossible. It is not an ordinary transgression into which professing Christians may fall, and often do; it must be one that is extraordinary, heinous and *mortal* in the deepest sense. It seems to be a single act that cuts the sinner off from all intercession. Some regard it as identical with the sin against the Holy Spirit, the "unpardonable sin." Others think it is not this, but something akin to it, a sin that is peculiar and fatal. "Death," the punishment of it, appears to be eternal death. If it were physical death, as many believe, the passage would be readily understood, and instances of such transgression ending in the death of the transgressors are found in Scripture, *e. g.*, 1 Cor. v: 1; xi: 30; 1 Tim. i: 20. No doubt there are even now cases of fatal sickness brought on by sins for which no prayer is available

as respects recovery. But it is doubtful whether physical death is meant. "Life" all through the epistle means eternal life; death, likewise, seems to mean in each case eternal death.

Design of First John, Chap. v: 13. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (R. V.).

"These things" embraces the whole epistle. The verse states the object of this epistle, namely, that Christians may know they have eternal life. He writes the Gospel that "ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John xx: 31). He writes the epistle "that ye may know ye have eternal life." The Gospel is designed to put us in possession of eternal life: the epistle is intended to lead us to know we have it. The one aims to bring us to a saving faith; the other to make us know our faith is saving. To have a thing and to know we have it are not always the same. We may have a thing and yet be in doubt whether we possess it. One's name may be in a will as heir to a great inheritance, and he be ignorant of the fact. We may think we have eternal life, yet deceive ourselves, cherishing feeling for faith, mistaking a wish for ownership. Many sincere Christians go through life with little or no assurance that they are saved. There are those who think it is even a kind of virtue to doubt, who look on the full assurance of salvation as a sort of presumption which genuine humility forbids one to claim. Now this epistle fur-

nishes us with infallible evidences of our state before God. It provides marks and traits whereby the believer may know assuredly that he is passed from death into life, is now named and anointed for eternal bliss. We note some of these tokens and sings of the saved condition which John so plentifully gives us in this Scripture.

1. Believing on the name of the Son of God, v: 13 (cf. John i: 12; 1 John iii: 23; v: 1). His name stands for Himself, for all He is and for all He promises. His great title, Son of God, at once pledges to the believer His grace and love and power to do for him up to the full measure of his need. Faith lays hold on His pledges and comforts itself with the assurance that it will all be made good to him even as the Lord has said. There is an element in saving faith of persuasion that salvation is guaranteed to the believer. Here is the testimony of one of the evangelical churches on the subject that is worthy of all acceptance: "True and saving faith . . . is a cordial reception and appropriation of him (Christ) by the sinner as his Saviour, with an accompanying persuasion or assurance corresponding to the degree or strength of his faith, that he shall be saved by him." Heb. xi: 1 confirms this testimony: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (R. V.). Whoever savingly believes on the name of the Son of God has this witness in his personal consciousness. "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

The apostle gives us many marks whereby we may know that we are children of God. These have been already noticed in this study. There are mentioned again as distinct marks of the saved state—

2. Walking in the light is proof of our state, i: 7. He who walks with God must love the company of the godly; he cannot habitually dwell with them who are the Lord's foes. In what society do we delight? Our tastes, desires, affections—what sort of company attracts and holds them? When Peter and John were released from arrest "they went to their own company." They could go to no other. They must seek their own kind. This is characteristic of all the saints; they love His family; they do not the family of the ungodly. In our deepest and truest selves, where do we live?

3. Confession of sin and pardon, i: 8-10. What is our attitude toward sin? Do we dread it? confess it? forsake it? and seek after holiness? If so, we have that much of evidence that we belong to God.

4. Obedience is a signal mark of Sonship, ii: 3. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." An obedient child in a household knows that he has the love of his father and his mother when he gladly and habitually obeys. A disobedient son is always in fear; genuine fellowship with his parents he does not have nor can so long as he seeks his own will and walks in his own ways. It is an infallible sign this of obedience.

5. Separation from the world is another proof of our Sonship, ii: 15-17. It is a marvellous, great

world we live in, and it has stupendous attractions. Its riches, its splendors, its pleasures, its refinements and its gratifications—how do these and the like affect us? Do we love it or turn from it?

6. The hope of seeing Christ and being like Him is another token of Sonship, iii: 1-4. Whoever waits and longs for Christ's coming, whoever yearns to see Him and to be like Him, whoever lives soberly and righteously and godly in this evil world, looking for that Blessed Hope, has the proof in himself that he is a child of God.

7. A life of righteousness is another evidence of Sonship, iii: 7-10. Whoever does righteousness as a habit of his soul, whoever loves righteousness and makes it the aim and the effort of his whole self, may take comfort in the assurance that he is born of God, for he that "doeth righteousness is born of him."

8. Love of the brethren is still another proof of Sonship, iii: 14. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." Brotherly love is the supreme test of our standing before God.

9. Faith is yet another evidence of Sonship, v: 4, 5. It is a victorious faith, for it overcomes the world; it is a faith that receives Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of God, Deliverer and Divine, and therefore able to redeem us from all iniquity and from all enemies, even death itself.

10. Certainty of Christian knowledge, v: 18-20. In this passage the term *know* occurs four times. It is found three times in verses 13-15; seven times in this

short section of the epistle; and more than a score of times in the letter. The apostle attaches great value to the word; it is the hinge on which turns the certainty of our salvation. It expresses the utmost assurance. "O taste and see that the Lord is gracious," sang the Psalmist long ago. "Try for yourselves and you will know, you cannot help but know." So John seems to say to his readers.

V: 18, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." We know it from the Lord's own testimony, iii: 9. Does this mean that the Christian never sins? Certainly not, for "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He who is born of God does not practice sin, does not live in sin, he cannot. The new life he has received is holy and seeks holiness; the grace given him forbids his sinning. When he falls into sin he confesses the wrongdoing, repents of it, turns away from it, and seeks the Lord's pardon and is fully forgiven. The knowledge of this comforting truth rests on Christ's word, and on the believer's personal experience.

V: 19, "We know that we are of God." We know it by all the marks, signs, tokens and proofs so plentifully furnished in this epistle. Our state and standing, therefore, is totally different from that of the world, for "the world" lies in the wicked one. The figure is that of a child lying in the lap of its parent. In v: 18 the evil one toucheth him not who is born of God. That is, the devil cannot ever again seize hold of and rule him that is a child of God.

Here we are told that the unbelieving world lies in his embrace, rests in his lap! Nobody believes such a radical and frightful statement but a genuine Christian. This inspired apostle, however, most solemnly affirms it, and believe it we must if we are Christians.

V: 20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ." We know it by His Spirit, by His promise, and by the enlightened consciousness within us. "This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

In this brief letter there are several words and phrases that are identical with language found in John's First Epistle. Indeed, it has been pointed out that of the thirteen verses of Second John eight are found in First John. This fact goes far to prove that the author of the one writing is also the author of the other.

The writer styles himself "the Elder." The term is the same as *Presbyter*. This title describes age; no doubt he was far advanced in life when he wrote, for it is generally believed that John lived to be nearly if not quite one hundred years old, and he probably died about the close of the first Christian century. Toward the end of the century the epistle was written. It describes also a fatherly relation between him and those whom he so tenderly addresses, and his official position. He was "the Elder," as was Peter likewise (1 Peter v : 1). Hence John speaks both with paternal affection and apostolic authority.

The epistle is addressed "unto the elect lady and her children," which does not mean the whole church, nor any single congregation of Christians, but an individual woman in whose family were children. Who she was can not be determined with any certainty. It has been conjectured that her name was *Electa*, but

the use of the same word in ver. 13 seems to forbid it. "The elect sister" of that verse cannot be a proper name. With more probability it is thought that the term for "lady" is to be understood as a proper name, and that we should translate as follows: "To the elect Kyria." Kyria was in use as the name of a woman in those ancient times, and there is no impropriety in so understanding it here. At any rate, she was a person of note and of influence. She was training her household in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the aged apostle attests her faithfulness and her success; he found her children walking in the truth, and it rejoiced his heart.

He writes, (1) to exhort the Lady (Kyria) to steadfastness in love and obedience (vers. 5, 6). The phrase "love one another" is characteristic of John (1 John iii: 11), as is also love to God (1 John iv: 21). This is no new commandment, but one had from the beginning. He defines more exactly what he means by love—"And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments." Walk denotes the daily life. It includes the temper of mind and the external deportment which go to make up character. The Christian walk is to be the constant exercise of love, obedience, steadfastness and patience.

He writes (2), to warn her against false teachers and false doctrine (vers. 7, 8). Many deceivers were abroad, men who rejected the blessed hope of the Lord's coming in visible glory and power. In 1 John iv: 3 the apostle brands every "spirit" that rejects the great truth of the incarnation ("Jesus Christ is come

in the flesh") as Antichrist. Here in 2 John the solemn charge is that whoever does "not confess that Christ cometh in the flesh is a deceiver and an antichrist." The great adversary, Antichrist, when he shall appear, will be both—a false Christ, a mock Messiah—but also a malignant and determined foe of Christ. He who denies the coming of the Lord is a deceiver of himself and of the people who heed his teaching, but he is likewise a foe of Christ and himself a false Christ.

The false teachers are further described in ver. 9: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God." They are those who forsake the old paths, who go beyond what the Lord has taught, who give up much of the Gospel, or who declare that it is no longer adapted to "the modern man." They are the advanced thinkers, the inventors of novelties, the patrons of the spirits of the age. There is a vast crop of them on earth now.

(3) Warning against a false charity, vers. 10, 11. Some might be disposed to say, "Well, if love is so noble and ennobling, let us love all and fellowship all without distinction or discrimination." No, John replies; you cannot afford to fellowship those who propagate error that is destructive, for if you do you thereby become sharers in their evil works. Separation from the ungodly and repudiation of all teachers of bad doctrine is John's earnest counsel.

THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

This letter is addressed to the "well-beloved Gaius," one of the most common names in the Roman Empire in those ancient days. Four with this name of Gaius are mentioned in the New Testament—Gaius of Macedonia (Acts xix: 29); Gaius of Corinth, with whom Paul was lodging when he wrote the epistle to the Romans (Rom. xvi: 23); Gaius of Derbe (Acts xx: 4); and this Gaius whom it so highly commends. Whether he was the same as any one of the three mentioned above is unknown. The following matters in the epistle are worthy of careful study:

(1) The joy of apostles and ministers over the fidelity and the steadfastness of their converts in walking in the truth (vers. 2-4). It hurts, it wounds us deeply when those whom we have tried to lead into the saving acquaintance with Christ go back and walk no more with us.

(2) Hospitality praised (vers. 5-8). Gaius had shown his love and generosity in the entertainment which he extended to those who were laboring in the cause of missions and in the noble help he gave them. The missionaries were thoroughly unselfish and self-sacrificing in their good work—"For the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." All the greater, therefore, was the need that Christian brethren should support them. Gaius was

one of the most conspicuous of those who did so. It was a "faithful work toward them that are brethren and strangers withal" which he did, and it was prompted solely by love. The aged John commends him in the highest terms and sets the seal of divine approval on his loving hospitality.

(3) Denunciation of hierarchical arrogance and ecclesiastical despotism (vers. 9, 10). Diotrephes acted in a very different spirit. He loved pre-eminence in the church, grasped after authority, set himself against the apostle himself and treated him with insolence and indignity, refused to receive the missionaries, and prohibited others from doing so. His conduct is denounced, his behavior held up as a warning to all, and John deals with him according to his deserts. How hateful to the inspired writers is ecclesiastical tyranny, the arrogant claim of lordship over God's heritage!

(4) A good man cordially commended (vers. 11, 12). "Demetrius hath good report of all, and of the truth itself." The witness borne to his goodness was that of his fellow-Christians. "He that doeth good is of God." Demetrius belongs to this select class. "He that doeth evil hath not seen God." Diotrephes must be put into this unhappy class. "Imitate not that which is evil," Diotrephes and his company, "but that which is good," Demetrius and his fellow-saints.

These two short epistles give us some insight into the membership and conditions of the primitive church. Christians then had their weaknesses and their imperfections even as we; they had also those

who were noble and true, but likewise some ignoble and unworthy members. Some were generous and self-sacrificing in the highest degree, others were ambitious and self-seeking. But brotherly love was the prevailing feature among the majority. It is noteworthy that individual Christians are singled out and commended or condemned, for ecclesiasticism had not then hardened into an organism in which the individual was swallowed up, the huge body being everything.

EPISTLE OF JUDE

The writer of this short epistle calls himself Jude, or Judas. His name was a very common one among the Jews: there was hardly another of more frequent use. Two among the apostles bore it, viz: Judas, mentioned in John xiv: 22; cf. Luke vi: 16, and Judas Iscariot. Jude describes himself as "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." The James here mentioned is no doubt the same called "the Lord's brother" (Gal. i: 19), the writer of the epistle which bears his name. Neither was an apostle. Both belonged to the family of Joseph, and both are called the Lord's brethren. In Mark vi: 3 the sons in Joseph's family are James, Joses, Judas and Simon. Sisters there were also, but they are not named nor their number given. The appellation "servant of Jesus Christ," Alford affirms, "is never thus barely used in an address of an epistle to designate an apostle." Phil. i: 1 has a similar expression, "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ," "but the designation common to two persons necessarily sinks to the rank of the inferior one. In every other case servant is associated with apostle." It is noteworthy that neither James nor Jude hint at their relationship with Jesus; their unaffected humility will not suffer them to do so. Jude speaks of his being the "brother of James" perhaps to give authority and weight to his

letter, for James was far more distinguished and influential than he.

Both Jude and James pertained to the family of David. An early historian, Hegesippus (c. A. D. 175-190), records that two of Jude's grandsons were brought before the Roman Emperor Domitian toward the close of the first century and were questioned by him as to their connection with the house of David. They told the Emperor that they were of David's family, which obviously identifies the household of Joseph and Mary with the royal house of Israel's greatest king. Domitian asked them about their wealth. They said they had some money—9,000 denaries, some \$1,500—they had also 39 acres of land which they tilled themselves, and as proof of their toil they showed the august ruler their rough and hardened hands. The Roman asked them about Christ and His Kingdom, of what nature it would be and when it would appear, and the two men replied that it would not be of this world nor earthly, but heavenly and angelic, and that it would appear at the end of the age, at which time He will come in glory and judge the living and the dead, and will give to each one according to his works. The Emperor dismissed them, despising them as poor men without influence and without power. The two brothers afterward became leaders in the church because they had stood before the Emperor as witnesses, and because they were of the family of the Lord. "This Hegesippus relates" (Eusebius).

This interesting story takes us back into the first

century, about the year A. D. 90, while the Apostle John was still living, and Jude their grandfather had passed away perhaps less than twenty-five years before. Two facts of great importance are established by this narrative: First, that the family of Joseph and Mary was identified with the royal house of David; no one raised a question touching the reality of such relation. Second, that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was in the minds of Christians generally and in the minds even of the rulers of the Empire closely associated with the throne of David.

The address of the epistle is remarkable for the affection Jude expresses for these saints. He speaks of them as "called," "beloved in God the Father," "kept for Jesus Christ" (R. V.). He wishes mercy, peace and love may be multiplied to them—a prayer without a parallel in any other epistle of the New Testament. They must have been a worthy band, a noble and trustworthy company of believers, to merit such an address.

The design of the epistle is indicated very distinctly in ver. 3: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Jude in these words clearly intimates that he had meditated writing at length on the common salvation, perhaps an essay or a treatise; but the solemn and urgent necessity pressed upon his heart that he must warn Christians of the dangers that threatened the truth, and to protest against the evils

and the evildoers that had invaded the brotherhood. The faith was in jeopardy, nay, Christianity itself. Every loyal soul must bestir himself to the uttermost. To falter in the presence of such tremendous perils as Jude describes would be cowardly, would be treason to Christ. And so Jude urges each believer to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

Peter vigorously denounces the like evils, but he speaks of them as undeveloped, not yet fullgrown, but sure to reach a fatal maturity (2 Peter ii, iii). Jude represents them as actually present and as doing incalculable injury. Peter sees them as an invading army, the advanced guard as already on the ground with the main body in sight. Jude speaks of them as enemies who are already within the sacred camp and doing their ruinous work in all parts of it. Peter predicts the advent of these foes of truth in the following terms: "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter iii: 3, 4). Jude appears to quote this prediction and to affirm that it has its fulfilment in his day: "But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: that they said unto you, In the last times there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts" (vers. 17, 18). There is an almost exact parallel between the two

writers, Peter and Jude, in the two passages. The differences between them, slight as they are, may be accounted for by Jude's use of the plural apostles, thus glancing perhaps at the like words of Paul in 1 Tim. iv: 1; 2 Tim. iii: 1ff. There seems to be indicated here that the predictions both of Peter and of Paul are older than this epistle of Jude, and that Jude was acquainted with both and had them in mind when he wrote. If this be admitted, the inference is both legitimate and conclusive that Second Peter was in existence when Jude wrote, and that he received it as the word of God, a true prophecy touching the Last Times. It must be borne in mind, however, that the prophecies of neither Peter nor Jude are to be tied up to the times when they lived and wrote, nor are their writings to be regarded as dealing exclusively with the evils then existent. They do indeed apply to prevailing conditions then, but both writings pertain to the church in all its history. Whenever like conditions prevail these two epistles bear their solemn and urgent testimony with the same force as they did when first written. They belong to the age in which we now live; they will find their full accomplishment in the Last Days when wickedness will be at the flood.

Jude begins with the statement that the saints are "preserved in Jesus Christ." He ends with their presentation as "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." The two statements disclose the theme of the epistle, viz.: the preservation and presentation of the saints. They are "preserved," and they shall be "presented without blemish" before

God's glorious presence. There can be no presentation of them in glory unless they are safely guarded by God's grace and power. For, as already indicated, the epistle contemplates a perilous situation; it deals with a time when the professing body is filled with men of the loosest morals, of the most flagrant life, and when destructive doctrines are taught and the wildest errors are disseminated. Against these corruptors and skeptics Jude writes with a vehemence that in the New Testament is without parallel. His denunciations are terrific. The character and doom he assigns to them are appalling. Matters have come to a dreadful pass when the Spirit of God is compelled to use such stern and awful language. Let us note what he says of them. The character given them is as bad and black as it can well be.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APOSTATES.

I. They are surreptitious foes. "For there are certain men crept in unawares—ungodly men" (ver. 4). The language points to their stealthy and insidious entrance into the Christian Brotherhood. Like a serpent, like a cunning beast of prey, these ungodly men creep into the company of the godly. Peter represents them as "false teachers who privily shall bring in damnable (destructive) heresies" (2 Peter ii: 1). Paul also employs very similar terms as to the false teachers among the Galatians—"false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty" (Gal. ii: 4). In every case they are men who

are within the Christian church as enemies who feign to be friends, therefore in reality spies and traitors.

2. They are perverters of grace and deniers of Christ—"turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 4). They are those who by a vile perversity turn the liberty and the grace of the Gospel into a means of gratifying their base and unholy passions, and who thereby, both in doctrine and life, deny their Master and Lord.

3. They are censorious and arrogant detractors: "Dreamers who despise dominion and speak evil of dignities" (ver. 8). Destitute of true reverence, they rail at the holiest and the best things, and pronounce judgment on all authority and all rule. Defiant like Pharaoh, they say, "Who is the Lord that I should hearken to his voice?" (Ex. v: 2). They have the proud tongue of the lawless: "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Psalms xii: 4).

4. Ignorant calumniators they are, and brutish sensualists; "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (ver. 10). What they do not know nor understand, as something lofty and noble, they deride and denounce; what they know is that which ministers to their disordered appetites and their debased tastes.

5. They are hypocrites and deceivers, whose lives are fruitless, and whose presence among Christians is contaminating (vers. 12, 13): "These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast

with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever" (R. V.). This is terrific but most graphic language. The imagery is most vivid; one can see these insincere, depraved professors as if they stood before him in flesh and blood. Their character and their wicked behavior are made visible; like sunken reefs they wreck the noblest and purest lives; like clouds that promise much but forever disappoint; like trees with withered fruit, leafless, dead and unprotected; like the raging sea, they cast out only their acts of shame; like meteors that stray through the sky at random and without law, and go out at last into a night that knows no morning—such their character and doom.

6. They are grumblers, faultfinders, pleasure-seekers, boasters, parasites: "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (ver. 16). They find fault with the authority of every sort, human and divine; they are dissatisfied with their lot, with circumstances, with Providence; they boast that they could manage things better themselves; and yet they can be servile, sycophantic when thereby advantage is secured.

7. They are schismatics and sensualists: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (ver. 19).

Such is the forbidding portrait which Jude draws of the ungodly. But he adds other traits and features which must be noted if we are to have a complete conception of the situation. He furnishes a number of examples of apostates and of apostasy which disclose even more strikingly the spirit and end of them that pervert and corrupt the truth, that deny the Lord Jesus Christ, and that mock at the things of God. These are marks of a fatal degeneracy, tokens of the "falling away" which prepares the way for the revelation of the man of sin and son of perdition whose destruction Christ Himself accomplishes at His coming (2 Thess. ii). To these seven marks we now turn.

(1) *Unbelief*. "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not" (ver. 5). Unbelieving Israel, though redeemed from bondage by almighty power, afterward fell beneath the judgment of God. By their distrust and disobedience they provoked the Lord to anger, so that He swore in His wrath, They shall not enter into my rest (Heb. iii: 11; cf. Psalm xcv: 11). Unbelief is deadly. Luther said strongly but not too strongly, "Nothing damns but unbelief." Let the saints remember the mournful example of faithless Israel, and hold fast their trust in the living God. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God" (Heb. iii: 12).

(2) *Pride*. "And the angels which kept not their

first estate (their own principality), but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto judgment of the great day" (ver. 6). The fall of the angels is involved in profound mystery. Peter seems to teach that they fell when they were still dwelling in heaven: "For if God spared not the angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness"—They were cast down because they sinned even in His glorious presence (2 Peter ii: 4). Jude alludes to the same fact in the expression, "Kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation," *i. e.*, they deliberately apostated from the blessed state and place in which they had been placed by creative power. They were once innocent, but they sinned against God and were expelled from their habitation. Paul teaches that it was through pride Satan fell under condemnation (1 Tim. iii: 6). Pride, ambition, rebellion, and then expulsion from the lofty habitation—this appears to be the brief history of the angelic apostasy. They are now felon outcasts with a doom far more terrible awaiting them in the future.

Serious error is sometimes taught concerning the fall of the angels. The cause of it, we are told, was their sin with women, and Gen. vi: 2, 4 is cited in proof—"The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." Jude 7 is supposed to lend support to this view: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange

flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Against this application of the two passages in Genesis and Jude very strong and conclusive objections may be urged. (a) "Sons of God" may mean angels; the expression probably does in Job i: 6; xxxviii: 7. But in every instance where it is thus used it designates good angels, unfallen beings. Even in Job i: 6 Satan is carefully distinguished from the "sons of God;" he is not identified with them, he only appears "among them." Not once in all the Bible are Satan and his hosts called "sons of God" (cf. 2 Cor. iv: 4; Eph. ii: 2; vi: 12; Rev. xii: 9; xx: 2, etc.). The Devil is always the Devil, and so are demons always demons; they are not named "sons of God." If therefore these "sons of God" represent unfallen angels, they could not be guilty of such a crime as is alleged; if demons are meant by the title, they could not possibly be called God's sons. (b) If the good angels are meant, they could not marry women of our race and have offspring by them, for these angels are sexless according to Jesus' teaching: "But Jesus answered and said unto them (Sadducees), Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven" (Matt. xxii: 29, 30). Like the angels the "sons of the resurrection" are immortal, they are forever free from the limitations and passions of the earthly life, and are like the angels, in that procreation and family relationships have forever ended. (c) If fallen angels are meant, then we are confronted with

this immense difficulty: Demons are spirits; how could such beings take women of our race as wives, and how could they have offspring by them? It may be alleged that they assumed human bodies and so could become husbands of the daughters of men. But there is no hint in Scripture that they have ever done so. In fact, they are never represented as appearing in human bodies. Demoniactal possession is a very different thing; in it there is no assumption of a body at all. Demons seek to enter bodies, even those of animals (Luke viii: 32), but they never become incarnate. Besides, to do this would require a miracle such as evil spirits could by no possibility work. God alone could effect so mighty a transformation. But is it conceivable that the Holy One who cannot connive at sin would lend His power to effect so vile a deed? (d) The children of these unholy alliances are called *men* (Gen. vi: 4). They are likewise called Giants, but the Giants in Scripture are kings, rulers, warriors (Num. xiii: 33; Deut. ii: 10, 11, 21; iii: 11). If they had been the offspring of demons and women, they would have been neither the one nor the other, but an unnatural grotesque mixture of the two—monsters, like the fabled Centaur and Cecrops of Greek Mythology. (e) The statement in Jude 6, 7 does not necessarily require that the sin of the angels was the same as that of Sodom, but only that in both cases, that of the angels and this of Sodom, there was apostasy from God and deserved punishment on account of it. (f) "Sons of God" denotes, as a phrase, not the angels at all, but the pious Sethites, while the

"daughters of men" are the descendants of wicked Cain. Alliance between these two distinct bodies, the religious and the irreligious, the people of God and the people of the world, leads inevitably to degeneracy and moral corruption, and ultimately to apostasy. This is precisely Jude's theme, the peril against which he so urgently warns. God's servants were called in the Old Testament times "sons of God" (cf. Hos. i: 10).

(3) *Lust*. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire" (ver. 7). These two infamous places give the name to an infamous crime. So infectious and so widespread was the moral taint of Sodom that Lot's family, in spite of his righteous testimony against it, was smitten with it and his daughters became the authors of one of the blackest deeds recorded in the Old Testament.

(4) *Vituperation*, vers. 8-10. "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," etc. Michael the Archangel is adduced as a witness against these calumniators. In his contention with the devil Michael durst not bring a railing accusation against him; he only said, The Lord rebuke thee. By reason of his exalted dignity he might have denounced the slanderer in the sternest language. For he is "the archangel," a title that denotes the highest angelic rank. Only in one other place in the Bible is this great name, archangel, found, 1 Thess. iv: 16. It occurs in the singular num-

ber, never in the plural, whence the inference is drawn that there is but one such angel. In Daniel x: 13 he is called "one of the chief princes," and in ver. 21 of the same chapter "Michael your prince," as if he stood in some intimate and peculiar relation to Israel. In Rev. xii: 7-9 he is described as the leader of the heavenly host against the Dragon and his army. All this indicates the illustrious station he holds. And yet, great as Michael is, he durst not bring a railing of judgment against the devil. Why "durst not?" Because even the loftiest angel cannot pass final judgment on even such an accuser as the devil. What an example he is to men in the proper use of speech and in the government of the tongue!

The altercation was about the "body of Moses." The reference is mysterious. Just what is meant, or to what Jude alludes, it is by no means easy to determine. It is unlikely that it is the same contention mentioned in Zech. iii: 1f—the dispute as to Joshua the high priest, for the differences between that and this are quite marked. Nor was it about Moses' burying-place, for the Hebrews were never guilty of ancestral worship, nor of devotions at the tombs of their illustrious dead. That idolatrous custom lies at the door of Gentiles. Nor was it a dispute as to whether Moses' body should have a burial at all. For the record tells us that "he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv: 6). Neither angel nor demon could challenge such authority as this. The Lord superintended the sepulture of His servant.

We believe that Jude refers to Moses' resurrection from the dead. Together with the prophet Elijah, Moses appeared "in glory" at the Lord's Transfiguration, and the two heavenly visitants talked with Jesus of His decease He was shortly to accomplish at Jerusalem. The two were living men, *visible*, for they appeared; *audible*, for they were speaking with Him; *recognizable*, for they appeared in glory—language which plainly indicates that the two had bodily forms. Elijah certainly had his body, for he had never passed through the gates of death. Moses had died, but God closed his eyes and hid his body from mortal sight and kept it safe till he should appear in the glorious scene on the Mount. It is our belief that it was then Moses was raised up from the grave. It may have been that the devil resisted his resurrection, and that he sought to prevent it, while Michael, the prince who stands for Israel, vindicated the Lord's dealing with Moses and besought Him to rebuke the accuser. "These dreamers" speak evil of those things which they know not; Michael knows, yet tempers speech with a wise caution. A notable example of self-control.

- * (5) *Hatred*. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain." He was the first murderer, a wretched fratricide. John says, Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother because his works were evil, and his brother's righteousness (1 John iii: 12). Hate lies hard by railing, vituperation. Accordingly, a malignancy that is murderous reigns in the hearts of these apostates. If they offer sacrifice, it is that of

Cain; if a saint nearby them is righteous and worships acceptably, they are ready to murder him in their deadly jealousy and hate.

(6) *Greed*. "And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." Three times in the New Testament is Balaam mentioned, and in each case with unsparing condemnation. Peter speaks of him as one who "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter ii: 15). John charges him with having "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (Rev. ii: 14). And Jude says he "ran greedily after reward," his chief error. Balak's gold had an irresistible attraction for him, and have it he would even if the angel of the Lord should bar his way with drawn sword. He is an instance of light resisted, conscience perverted, of crime added to crime. What a picture all this furnishes of the temper and the spirit of the apostates!

(7) *Rebellion*. "Perished in the gainsaying of Korah" (vers. 11). The rebellion of Korah and his company is recorded in Num. xvi. His gainsaying was his denial and repudiation of the leadership of Moses and Aaron and rebellion against their authority. But this was rebellion against God who had appointed these two men to their high office, and accordingly the Lord Himself dealt directly with the rebels: earth, like an enraged animal, swallowed them alive, a most uncommon punishment. Likewise the apostates of Jude's epistle despise dominions, scoff at constituted authority, and would exalt themselves into the seats of dignity and power.

Such is the dreadful picture which the inspired pen of Jude draws of the ungodly and the apostate. It is not surprising that he employs the sternest words about them, words that fairly burn in their intensity of abhorrence: "These are they who are hidden rocks in your lovefeasts"—rocks on which the church is in danger of shipwreck and destruction: "shepherds" who devour the flock; waterless clouds, whirled about by fierce winds; fruitless trees, uprooted trees; wild waves of the sea which cast up only mire and dirt—their own shame; lawless meteors that dart through the sky, then go out into a darkness which shall never know any light.

Jude pronounces their doom in the words of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam": "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." It is generally believed by modern interpreters that this prophecy of Enoch is quoted by Jude from the apocryphal book of Enoch, part of which was written before the Christian era and part of it after that time. Granting such quotation, that fact does not warrant us to affirm that Jude endorsed the book. Paul cites from three Greek poets: from Aratus (Acts xvii: 28); from Meander (1 Cor. xv: 33); and from Epimenides (Tit. i: 12). Does anyone imagine that Paul endorses all these poets wrote? So Jude cites a passage from a non-canonical book not because he accepts it as

Scripture, but because this particular prediction found in it is from God and therefore true. In like manner Paul quotes a verse from Epimenedes and adds, "This testimony is true (Tit. i: 13), but no one would be so foolish as to conclude that Paul means the whole poem is true. Whence the writer of the book of Enoch derived the prediction is unknown. It may have been preserved as a tradition and faithfully transmitted from generation to generation, or in some other way preserved. But no one who accepts the Bible as the word of God doubts its genuineness and truthfulness any more than he doubts Paul's quotation from the Lord Jesus in Acts xx: 35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," though whence he derived the precious saying is utterly unknown.

The depraved men of whom Jude writes were found in the professing body. They called themselves Christians, no doubt, and they sought to be recognized as such by the children of God. But in this short epistle the Spirit God brands them as enemies and apostates. "No prophecy is of private interpretation" (2 Peter i: 20). That is to say, the prophecies of the Bible do not originate with the prophets, nor are they to be tied up to their times and conditions, nor are they exhausted with themselves and their contemporaries. A prediction may be occasioned by conditions existing at the time of the prophet, but it is not necessarily limited to his day and his circumstances. Often indeed it starts from a point near the prophet himself, but its ultimate and complete fulfilment may be in the distant future, the time of the End and the

Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It can scarcely be doubted but that this is the characteristic phase of Jude's prophecy. Enoch's prediction makes it certain. No doubt the conditions of his day were as he so graphically describes them. But his message must not be confined to these. Jude deals with the final apostasy from the faith of Christ, of which Paul likewise speaks in 2 Thess. ii: 3: "It will not be except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Peter also bears witness to the same awful fact: "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The "last days" obviously point to the time of the End, the final consummation when our Lord shall return in majesty and great glory to judge the earth in righteousness.

The time of the "falling away" will be one of dreadful wickedness, of unbridled lawlessness, of the sway of the worst passions of our fallen humanity, and of colossal crimes. So both Peter and Jude picture it; so does Paul, and so do John in the Revelation and Daniel in his prophecies. Every thoughtful, believing man who sees with clear vision the evil principles now at work in human society, and who reads prophetic Scripture with the open eye and mind, must feel profoundly that the "falling away" is near at hand if indeed it has not already set in. The tendencies of the times indicate a breaking away from the

authority of the Bible and a change of attitude as to truth for which the Christian Church has stood during the centuries of its witness-bearing. The outcome of these tendencies Scripture leaves us in no doubt about—revolt against the authority of God, the manifestation of the Man of Sin, and the Advent of Jesus Christ for judgment and the establishment of His own glorious Kingdom. It should be the supreme duty of every believer in Christ to heed faithfully the exhortation of Jude to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.”

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