

MARTIN LUTHER

THE EPISTLES OF ST.
PETER AND ST. JUDE
PREACHED AND
EXPLAINED

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Jude Preached and Explained**

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Peter and St. Jude

Preached and Explained

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR

Several years ago, among the dusty piles of old pamphlets stored away upon the upper shelves of the Union Theological Seminary library, I met with several works of Luther, in the original editions, as they were issued during his lifetime from his press at Wittemberg. Among them were his Commentaries, or rather Lectures, on the Epistles of Peter and Jude.¹ The forbidding aspect of the page, with the obsolete spelling of its words, and its somewhat coarse typography, was rather an incitement to master it; for here was Luther, presenting himself to the eye of the reader just as, more than three hundred years ago, he presented himself to the eyes of thousands of his countrymen. Upon a partial perusal of the Commentary,

¹ Another copy of this same edition of Luther on Peter, belonging to a clergyman's library which was sold at auction in this city, four or five years since, brought an almost fabulous price.

I became satisfied that it would repay a more attentive study; and finding, upon investigation, that it had never been translated into English, I set myself to the task which had been so long neglected. The pleasing labor was accomplished, and the manuscript laid aside for several years. The conviction, confirmed by a re-perusal of it, that others besides myself would be interested in the work, has led me to determine on its publication.

Luther's Commentary on the Galatians, excellent as it is, is too voluminous and expensive to be very extensively circulated, while the phraseology of the early translation, which has not been modified, prevents its proper appreciation by modern readers. And yet any one that would truly know the man, and the secret of his power, must study these in his writings. The Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude, presented in a literal but more modern style to the English reader, is not liable to these objections; and yet, in the variety of its themes, the clearness of its exposition, the stinging force of its rebukes, the simplicity and directness of its language, it is scarcely surpassed by any of Luther's other writings. On the great subject of justification by faith alone, he is here, as in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, full and emphatic. The relation of faith to works is clearly and carefully defined, while the subjects presented in the text afford full opportunity for discussing the great questions that concern the relative duties of civil and social life. The volume thus becomes at once a manual of doctrine and of

duty. On the foundation of faith is reared the superstructure of a Christian life. Luther is seen to have fully apprehended the force of all the objections that could be urged against his teachings, and with convincing ability he vindicates them from every charge. Throughout the volume we have ever before us the earnest, devout spirit of the Reformer, for the most part unfolding in the simplest manner the great doctrines of the Gospel, but occasionally indulging in volcanic outbursts of indignation against the hierarchical corruptions of his day, and pouring out upon them the lava-tides of withering rebuke.

It may seem strange that this work of Luther's has never before been translated. But, unlike his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, which he himself translated into Latin, that it might have a wider circulation among the learned of Europe, this was published by him only in the German language, which was little known in England, and hence it was deprived of that notoriety which would have drawn special attention to it, as well as of that Latin dress which would have facilitated an English translation. It is well known, moreover, that Luther formed a most humble estimate of his own writings, and was uniformly reluctant to collect his works in volumes, or bestow upon them any editorial care. He seemed perfectly willing to have them sink to oblivion, and could not be persuaded by the most urgent representations to do anything which might rescue them from such a fate. Besides, it is to be noted that a perusal of this volume especially would soon satisfy the reader, that after the accession of Queen Elizabeth

to the throne, it stood little chance of securing the necessary approval or *imprimatur* of an English bishop.

Yet the work is one of no little historical as well as antiquarian interest. It has done its part in one of the greatest intellectual and religious conflicts of the world. It is the sword that a giant wielded, and that has done execution on a broad field. In the great armory of the Reformation-writings, scarcely another deserves a more conspicuous place. It presents those views of the relative spheres of Divine and human authority which became prevalent wherever the cause of Reform advanced. It unmasked popular errors, rebuked ecclesiastical corruption, and vindicated most effectively the simple doctrines of faith. Here, moreover, we see Luther clad in the armor with which he boldly challenged the Papacy to a lifelong combat. The man is before us, girded for the battle, and we see the weapons upon which he relies. If one of those cannon balls with which English valor won the battle of Cressy,—the first in which the efficiency of the new invention was tested,—could be picked up there now, and it could be ascertained that it did service in that famous battle, it would be an object of no small interest, at least to the antiquary; but in regard to this treatise of Luther, we know full well that Rome felt its visitation as something more terrible than a bombshell exploding beneath the dome of St. Peter's. Under the authority of Peter himself it demolished the very foundations of the throne upon which his pretended successors were seated, and gave a most effective impulse to the onward movement of reform.

Nor is this all. It is still capable of doing effective service. After all the rust and tarnish of three centuries, these words of Luther are remarkably fresh, and seem almost like a living utterance of to-day. Their critical value is not indeed great, although by no means contemptible, for the quick sagacity of the Reformer in detecting the meaning and the force of the Scriptural argument, is evident on every page, and is rarely at fault; but his clear views of the Gospel, his untrammelled freedom of thought, his strong good sense, and his most effective energy of application are everywhere conspicuous. His language is uniformly simple and direct. The exposition contained in this volume was first delivered from the pulpit. According to the title-page, it is Scripture "preached and explained," and in addressing it to the people, Luther did not fail to keep in view the object upon which he set so high an estimate, when he said, "I preach as simply as possible. I want the common people, and children, and servants, to understand me."

The care with which he fortifies his positions with Scriptural citations is likewise obvious. He rarely presents views upon any theme from which one who acknowledges the authority of Scripture will feel forced to dissent, unless, with some, the subject of baptism should an exception. In regard to this, he speaks like one who as yet sees "men as trees walking."

Considerable space is given up to an exposure of the errors and abuses of the Papacy, but the exposure is made uniformly by the light of Scripture. Vehement as are Luther's occasional

bursts of indignation, he never wanders from the subject, and never ventures beyond where he is sustained by the clear warrant of the word of God.

In the purpose of presenting this translation to English readers, I have been encouraged by the prospect of affording to others the same opportunity of acquaintance with Luther's modes of thought and feeling which I have myself enjoyed. I believe, moreover, that his exposition has a high value, apart from the interest which attaches to it as the production of the great hero of the Reformation. Occasionally, the views presented have seemed to be such as required some explanatory note or correction, and in a few instances this has been appended, but the necessity has rarely occurred, and Luther is left throughout to speak for himself. The translation is strictly literal, and almost the only variations from the original are so marked, by being inclosed in parentheses. These will readily be distinguished from the passages or words included in parentheses of the original text, by their explanatory character.

It would have been a far easier task to have given a more liberal and polished rendering of Luther's language. But I think most readers would prefer to have me give them Luther, rather than—the translator. There are occasional roughnesses of expression, and some sentences which were evidently not very lucidly reported, but they are features of the book which presents Luther to us, and even the wart on the face must appear in the faithful portrait.

For assistance in the labor of revising some of the more difficult passages, I am indebted to Prof. ROBINSON, of the Union Theological Seminary, and to Rev. M. BUSHE, pastor of a German church in this city. By their aid, which I take this occasion gratefully to acknowledge, I feel confident that nearly every passage, in which the text of the original is not in fault, has been correctly rendered.

I had hoped, in this connection, to present an estimate of Luther's writings, from the pen of one of the most eminent German scholars which our country can boast. The permission to do so was kindly granted, but the limited space allowed for prefatory remark forbids it. I will only add the expression of my own conviction, that from the exceedingly voluminous works of Luther, other selections of high merit might be made, the translation and publication of which would be welcomed with grateful acknowledgment by a large class of American and English readers. I should be highly gratified if the encouragement afforded by my words or example should induce any one more competent than myself, or who can command more leisure for it, to prosecute the work which I have only just begun.

E. H. GILLET.

HARLEM, March 8th, 1859.

INTRODUCTION

Before we enter upon this Epistle of St. Peter, it is necessary to present a brief Introduction,² that it may be understood how this Epistle is to be ranked, and in order that a right apprehension of it may be attained.

In the first place, it must be understood that all the Apostles present one and the same doctrine; and it is not correct to speak of³ four Evangelists and four Gospels for all which the Apostles wrote is one Gospel. But *Gospel* means nothing but a proclamation and heralding of the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, merited and procured through his death. And it is not properly that which is contained in books, and is comprehended in the letter, but rather an oral proclamation and living word, and a voice which echoes through the whole world, and is publicly uttered that it may universally be heard. Neither is it a book of laws, containing in itself many excellent doctrines, as has hitherto been held. For it does not bid us do works whereby we may become righteous, but proclaims to us the grace of God, bestowed freely, and apart from any merit of our own; and it tells how Christ has taken our place, and rendered satisfaction for our sins, and canceled them, and by His own works justifies

² Literally, *instruction*.

³ Count.

and saves us.

Whoever sets forth this, by preaching or writing, *he* teaches the true Gospel, as all the Apostles did, especially St. Paul and St. Peter, in their Epistles. So that all, whatever it be, that sets forth Christ, is one and the same Gospel, although one may use a different method, and speak of it in different language from another, for it may perhaps be a brief or extended address, or a brief or extended writing. But yet, if it tends to this point, that Christ is our Saviour, and we through faith on Him, apart from works of our own, are justified and saved, it is still the same Word, and but one Gospel, just as there is also but one faith and one baptism in the whole Christian world.

So, also, one Apostle has written the same [Gospel] that is contained in another's writings; but they who insist most largely and emphatically on this, that faith on Christ alone justifies, are the best Evangelists. Therefore St. Paul's Epistles are more a Gospel than Matthew, Mark and Luke, for the latter give little more than the history of the works and miracles of Christ; but of the grace which we have through Christ, none write so emphatically as St. Paul, especially in his Epistle to the Romans. And yet, since more importance by far belongs to the word than to the works and deeds of Christ, and where we are to be deprived of one it were better that we should want the works and the history than the word and the doctrine; those books are to be most highly esteemed which most largely treat of the doctrine and words of the Lord Christ; for though the miracles of Christ

had never been, and we had no knowledge of them, we should yet have had enough in the *word*, without which we could not have had life.

Thus this Epistle of St. Peter is one of the noblest books in the New Testament, and contains indeed the pure Gospel; for he takes the same course as St. Paul and all the Evangelists, in inculcating the true doctrine of faith,—as that Christ has been given us, who takes away our sin and saves us, as we shall hear.

Hence you may judge of all books and doctrines, what is Gospel or not; for what is not set forth or written of in this manner, you may safely decide to be false, however excellent in appearance. This power to decide is one that all Christians possess,—not the Pope or Councils, who boast that they only have the power to determine.—This is sufficient introduction and preface. Let us now listen to the Epistle.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF ST. PETER

CHAPTER I

V. 1, 2. *Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*

That is the superscription and subscription. Here you quickly perceive that it is the Gospel. He calls himself an Apostle—that is, one sent to declare a message; therefore it is correctly rendered in Dutch, a messenger, or a twelfth-messenger,⁴ because they were twelve. But since it is generally understood what Apostle (the Greek word) means, I have not rendered it in Dutch. But its peculiar meaning is, one who bears a message by word of mouth; not one who carries letters, but a capable man who presents a matter orally, and advocates it,—of the class that in the Latin are called *Oratores*. So he would now say, I am an Apostle of Jesus Christ,—that is, I have a command from Jesus Christ that I, from Christ, am to proclaim.

⁴ *Tswolffbott* in the original, for which we have no equivalent English word.

Observe, here, how promptly all those who teach human doctrine are excluded. For *he* is a messenger of Jesus Christ who presents that which Christ has commanded; should he preach otherwise, he is not a messenger of Christ, and therefore should not be listened to. But if he does this, it is just as important as though you heard Christ himself present.

To the strangers scattered abroad. This epistle was written to lands which were formerly Christian but are now subject to the Turk, yet it is possible some Christians might be found there even at this day. Pontus is a large, broad region, lying on the sea. Capadocia is in the same neighborhood, and borders on it. Galatia lies back of them. Asia and Bithynia border on the sea—extending eastward—and are extensive regions. Paul also preached in Galatia, and in Asia; whether in Bithynia also, I do not know. In the other two he did not preach. *Strangers* are such as we call foreigners. He names them so because they were Gentiles; and it is a thing to surprise us, that St. Peter, inasmuch as he was an Apostle to the Jews, should still write to the Gentiles. The Jews called these (of whom we speak) Proselytes,—that is, associated Jews, such as adopted their law, but were not of a Jewish family or the blood of Abraham. Thus he writes to those who had previously been heathen (of the Gentiles), but were now converted to the faith, and had joined the believing Jews, and he calls them *elect strangers*, who certainly are Christians, to whom alone he writes. This is a point worthy of observation, as we shall hear.

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father. They are elect, he says. How? Not of themselves, but according to God's purpose: for we should be unable to raise ourselves to heaven, or create faith within ourselves. God will not permit all men to enter heaven; those who are his own he will receive with all readiness. The human doctrine of free-will, and of our own ability, is futile. The matter does not lie in our wills, but in the will and election of God.

Through sanctification of the Spirit. God has predestinated us that we should be holy, and, moreover, that we should be spiritually holy. Those precious words, Holy and Spiritual, have been perverted for us through the greed of the preachers, in that they have denominated the state of priests and monks holy and spiritual, and have thus scandalously robbed us of these noble, precious words, as also of the word Church, since with *them* the Pope and Bishops are the Church, while they do according to their own pleasure whatever they choose, in virtue of the declaration, "The Church has forbidden it." Holiness is not that which consists in the estate of monks, priests and nuns,—the wearing of the tonsure and cowl; it is a spiritual word, meaning that there is an inward holiness in the spirit before God. And this is the reason specially why he said this, in order to show that there is nothing holy but that holiness which God produces within us.

For although the Jews had much outward or ceremonial holiness, there was yet in this no genuine holiness. Peter would say here, God has predestinated you to this end, that ye should be

truly holy; as Paul also says, in Eph. iv., "In righteousness and true holiness"—that is, in a genuine and well-founded holiness,—for outward holiness, such as the Jews had, is of no value before God.

Thus the Scripture calls us holy, while we yet live on earth, if we believe. But the Papists have taken the name from us, and say, we are not to be holy; the saints in Heaven alone are holy. Thus we are compelled to reclaim the noble name. You must be holy, but you must also beware against imagining that you are holy through yourself or by your own merit, but only that you have God's word, that Heaven is yours, that you are truly pious and made holy by Christ.

This you must confess if you would be a Christian. For it would be the greatest affront and reviling of the name of Christ, if we took from the honor due to Christ's blood, in that it is this that washes away our sins, or from the faith that this blood sanctifies us.

Therefore, you must believe and confess if you would be holy; but by this blood, not by your own excellence must it be, inasmuch that for it you would be willing to give up life and all that you possess, and endure whatever might come upon you.

To obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. Hereby, he says, are we made holy, if we are obedient, and believe the word of Christ, and are sprinkled with his blood. And here St. Peter speaks in a somewhat different manner from St. Paul. But it is in substance the same as when Paul says that we are saved through faith in Christ; for faith makes us obedient and

submissive to Christ and his word. For to obey the word of God and the word of Christ is the same thing, and to be sprinkled by his blood is the same as to believe. For it is difficult to nature, hostile to it, and exceedingly humbling, to submit to Christ, give up all its own possessions, and account them contemptible and sinful. But yet it must be brought into subjection.

Of sprinkling, the Psalm *Miserere Domine* (li.) also speaks: "Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." It refers to the law of Moses, from which St. Peter has derived it, and he discloses Moses to our view, while he brings in the Scripture. When Moses had built the tabernacle, he took the blood of bullocks and sprinkled it over all the people.

But *this* sprinkling sanctifies not in the spirit, but only outwardly. Therefore there must be a spiritual purification, since an outward holiness, and one that pertains to the flesh, is of no avail before God. And so God, by this sprinkling, has typified the spiritual sprinkling. As though Peter had said, the Jews who were in that holiness which was outward were held as righteous, and persons of a pure life. But you are reputed base, yet you have a better sprinkling; you are sprinkled in the Spirit, that you may be pure from within. The Jews were sprinkled outwardly with the blood of bullocks, but we are sprinkled inwardly in the conscience, so that the heart is made pure and joyful.

Thus the Gentiles are Gentiles no longer. The righteous Jews, with their sprinkling, are no more righteous, but all is reversed. There must be a sprinkling which converts us and makes us

spiritually minded.

To preach sprinkling is to preach that Christ has shed his blood, and for us has ascended to his Father, and intercedes, saying, "Beloved Father! behold my blood which I have shed for these sinners." If you believe this, you are sprinkled. Thus you see the right method of preaching. If all the popes, monks and priests were to fuse all the matter of their preaching into one mass, they would not even then teach and present as much as St. Peter here does in these few words.

Thus you have the subscription of the Epistle, wherein he manifests his office and what he preaches, as you have now heard. For this alone is the Gospel, and all else that does not accord with it is to be trodden under foot, and all other books are to be avoided in which you find some fine pretence of works and prayers and indulgence that does not teach similar doctrine, and is not confessedly grounded thereon. All Papal books have not a letter of this obedience, of this blood and sprinkling. Now follows the greeting to those to whom he writes.

Grace and peace be multiplied. Here St. Peter adopts the Apostle Paul's mode of greeting, although not to the same extent, and it is as much as though he had said, ye have now peace and grace, but yet not in perfection; therefore must ye continue to increase in them till the old Adam die. Grace is God's favor, which now begins in us, but which must continue to advance and grow even till death. Whoever confesses and believes that he has a gracious God, possesses it, while his heart gains peace also, and

he is afraid neither of the world nor of the devil; for he knows that God, who controls all things, is his friend, and will deliver him from death, hell and all evil,—therefore his conscience has peace and joy. Such is the desire of St. Peter for those that believed, and it is a true Christian greeting with which all Christians might well greet one another.

Thus we have the superscription, with the greeting; now he begins the Epistle, and says:

V. 3-9. *Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance imperishable, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little time (if need be) ye are sad through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith might be found more precious than the perishable gold (that is tried by fire), to praise, honor, and glory, when Jesus Christ shall be revealed, whom ye have not seen and yet love, in whom through ye believe and see him not, yet for your faith's sake ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul.*

In this preface you perceive a truly Apostolic address and introduction to the matters in hand, and as I have said already, this is the model of a noble Epistle. For he has already exhibited and made manifest what Christ is, and what we have attained

through him, when he says, that God hath begotten us again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Christ.

Thus all good things are bestowed upon us by the Father, not for any desert of ours, but of pure mercy. These are true Gospel words which are to be preached, but how little—God save us—of this kind of preaching is to be met with in all sorts of books, even those that must be considered the best; how little agreement is there, as St. Jerome and St. Augustine have written, in this position,—that Jesus Christ is to be preached, that he died and rose again, and that he died and rose again that through such preaching men might believe on him and be saved. That is preaching the true Gospel. Whatever is not preached in this wise is not the Gospel, do it who will.

This is now the *summa summarum* of these words. Christ, through his resurrection, has brought us to the Father; and so, too, St. Peter would bring us to the Father by the Lord Christ, and he sets him forth as Mediator between God and us. Hitherto we have been taught that we should call upon the saints; that they are our intercessors with God, while, moreover, we have had recourse to our dear Virgin, and have set her up as Mediatress, and have let Christ go as an angry judge. This the Scripture does not do; it goes further, and exalts Christ; teaching that he is our Mediator, by whom we come to the Father. Oh! it is a blessing infinitely vast that is bestowed upon us through Christ, that we may go into the presence of the Father and claim the inheritance of which St. Peter here speaks.

These words also well exhibit the feelings which the Apostle had, as with the deepest reverence he begins to praise the Father, and would have us adore and bless Him for the sake of the infinite riches which He has bestowed upon us, in that He has begotten us again, and this, too, before we had desired or sought it; so that nothing is to be praised but pure mercy, in order that we may not make our boast of any works, but confess that we hold all that we have of God's compassion.

There is no more the law and vengeance before us, as heretofore, when He affrighted the Jews so that they were forced to flee, but dared not go toward the mount. He vexes and chastises us no more, but shows us the greatest friendship, creates us anew, and appoints us, not to do some work or works, but produces within us an entirely new birth and new being, that we should be something different from what we were before, when we were Adam's children,—namely, such as are transplanted from Adam's heritage into the heritage of God; so that God is our Father, we are His children, and thus also heirs of all the good which He possesses. Observe with what emphasis the scriptures present this matter; it is all a living, not a vain, matter in which we are concerned. Since we are thus begotten again the children and heirs of God, we are equal in honor and dignity with St. Paul, St. Peter, our blessed Virgin, and all the Saints. For we have the treasure and all good things from God just as richly as they; for it is just as necessary for them to be begotten again as for us,—therefore they have nothing more than all other Christians.

To a living hope. That we continue to live on earth is mainly to this end, that we should be of service to others. Otherwise, it were better that God should have taken away our breath and let us die as soon as we were baptized and had begun to believe. But He suffers us to live here in order that we may bring others also to believe, doing to them as He has done toward us. But while we remain on earth, we must live in hope; for although we are assured that through faith we have all the good things of God, (for faith brings along with it assuredly the new birth, the adoption, the inheritance, and makes them yours,) still you do not as yet behold them; but the matter exists in hope, while it is of but small importance that we may not see it with our eyes. This he calls *the hope of life*; that is, by a Hebrew phrase, as though for sinful man we should say, a man of sin. We call it a living hope; that is, one in which we certainly expect, and may be assured of, eternal life. But it is concealed, and a veil is drawn over it, that we see it not. It can only be apprehended in the heart and by faith, as St. John writes in his Epistle, 1 John v.: "We are now the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when it shall appear that we are like Him, we shall behold Him as He is." For *this* life, and *that*, cannot be commingled, cannot consist with one another, so that we should eat, drink, sleep, watch, and do other works of the flesh which this life renders necessary, and at the same time have our full salvation. Therefore we can never arrive at eternal life unless we die, and this present life passes away. Thus, as long as we are

here we must stand in hope, until it be God's pleasure that we should behold the blessings that are ours.

But how do we attain to this living hope? By the resurrection of Christ from the dead, he says. I have often asserted that no one can believe on God except through a mediation, since we can none of us treat for ourselves before God, inasmuch as we are all children of wrath; but we must have another by whom we may come before God, who shall intercede for us and reconcile us to God. But there is no other mediator than the Lord Christ, who is the Son of God. Therefore that is not a true faith which is held by the Turks and Jews,—I believe that God has created heaven and earth. Just so does the devil, too, believe, but it does not help him. They venture to present themselves before God without having Christ as mediator. So St. Paul speaks in the fifth of Romans, "We have access to God by faith, not through ourselves, but through Christ." Therefore we must bring Christ with us, must come with Him, must satisfy God by Him, and do all that we have to transact with God through Him, and in His name. That is the thought implied here by St. Peter, and he would also say, we surely expect this life, although we are still on earth. But all comes in no other way than through the resurrection of Christ, since He has arisen and ascended to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God. For on this account He ascended, in order to bestow upon us His Spirit, that we might be born again, and now through Him might come to the Father and say, "Behold, I come before thee and pray, not because I rely on my

own request, but because my Lord Christ has gone before me and is become my intercessor." These are all glowing words wherever there is a heart that believes; where there is not, all is cold and unimpressive.

Hence we may determine what genuine Christian doctrine or preaching is. If the Gospel is to be preached, it must concern the resurrection of Christ. Whoever does not preach this is no Apostle; for it is the head article of our faith. And those books are truly the noblest which teach and enforce such doctrine, as was said above. So that we may easily discover that the Epistle of James is no true Apostolic Epistle⁵ for it contains scarcely a letter of these things in it, while the greatest importance belongs to this article of faith. For were there no such thing as the resurrection, we should have neither comfort nor hope, and all beside that

⁵ The well-known views of Luther in regard to the Epistle of James, and the grounds upon which he rejected it from the canon of the New Testament, are presented in this passage. He was too impatient of the *seeming* contradiction between Paul and James upon the subject of faith, and too hastily concluded that they were irreconcilable. A careful consideration of the scope of the argument in the Epistle of James, removes the difficulty, as may be seen at large in later commentators. There is no historical reason for casting discredit upon the Epistle of James. The early Christian writers furnish very decided testimony in its favor. Clement of Rome has alluded to it twice. Hermas has not less than seven allusions to it, according to Lardner fully sufficient to prove its antiquity. Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, and most of the subsequent ecclesiastical writers quote from it, and it is found in all the catalogues of canonical books published by the general and provincial Councils. But an argument of still greater weight is, the fact that it is inserted in the Syriac version of the New Testament, executed at the close of the first, or early in the second century. None certainly would question that the Jewish believers to whom it was addressed would be the best judges of its genuineness and authenticity, and by them it was unhesitatingly accepted.

Christ has endured or suffered would have been in vain.

Therefore one should teach after this manner: You perceive that Christ has died for you, has taken upon Himself sin, death, and hell, and bowed Himself under them. But in no respect were they able to crush Him, for He was too strong for them; but He has risen up from beneath them, and has vanquished all, and brought them in subjection to Himself; and to this end, that you might be relieved from them, and made to triumph over them. If you believe, you possess this. All these things, by our own power, we could not effect; hence it was necessary that Christ should do it, otherwise He had never needed to come down from heaven. We can only conclude that if one preaches of our own works, *that* preaching does not agree and cannot consist with this. Oh, so thoroughly as we Christians should know this! so clear should the Epistle be to us!

V. 4. *To an imperishable and undefiled and unfading inheritance.* That is, we hope not for a blessing or an inheritance that is far off. But we live in the hope of an inheritance that is just at hand, and that is imperishable as well as undefiled and unfading. This blessing is ours henceforth and forever, although we do not now behold it. These are powerful and excellent words; into whosoever mind they enter, he will, I imagine, not be greatly anxious after worldly good and pleasure. How can it be possible that one who assuredly believes this, should yet cleave to perishable possessions and lusts?

If worldly good is presented in contrast with this, it is at once

seen how it all passes away and endures but for a time; but this alone lasts forever and will never consume away. Besides, *that* is all impure, and defiles us, for there is no man so devoted that worldly prosperity will not soil his purity. But *this* inheritance alone is pure; whoever has it is ever undefiled; it will not fade; it endures and does not corrupt. All that is on earth, however hard it be, is yet changeable and has no permanence. Man, as soon as he grows old, becomes deformed: but this does not change, but abides forever, fresh and green. On earth there is no pleasure that will not at length become irksome, as we see that men grow weary of all things; but with this blessing such is not the case. This do we possess only in Christ, through the mercy of God, if we believe, and it is freely bestowed upon us. For how is it possible that we poor wretches should be able to deserve such good through our own works as no human reason or sense can conceive?

That is reserved in heaven. Certain it is that our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. It is only for a little while concealed from us, until we close our eyes and are buried, when, if we believe, we shall surely find and behold it.

V. 5. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* We wait for this priceless inheritance, he says, in the hope to which we have attained through faith; for this is their order of succession: From the word follows faith, from faith is the new birth, from the new birth we pass to hope, so that we certainly expect and are assured of the blessing. So that Peter has

here asserted, in a truly christian manner, that it must take place by faith, not by our own works.

But St. Peter says here, more particularly, *ye are kept by the power of God—to salvation*. But there are many people who, if they hear the Gospel,—namely, that faith alone, irrespective of works, justifies,—break in at once and say, "Yes! I believe too!" To think their thoughts which they themselves conceive, is faith. Yet we have also been taught from Scripture that we cannot do the least work without God's Spirit; how then by our own power should we be able to do the highest work,—namely, believe? Wherefore such thoughts are nothing else but a dream and a fiction. God's power must be present and work within us, in order that we may believe; as Paul also says, Eph. i., "God grant you the spirit of wisdom that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who have believed, according to the working of His mighty power," &c. Not only is it God's will, but a power of God that is far from unimportant. For if God produces faith in men, it is certainly as great a work as though He recreated heaven and earth.

Therefore those fools know not what they say, who ask, How can faith alone answer, while many an one believes who yet performs no good work? For they imagine their own vain dream is faith, and that faith may exist without good works. But we say, just as Peter says, that faith is a divine power; when God produces faith, man must be born again and become a new creature; good works, flowing from a purified nature, must follow faith. So that

we must not say to a Christian who has faith, Do this or that work,—for he performs of himself and unbidden, mere good works.

But this must be said to him, that he is not to deceive himself with a false, imaginary faith. Wherefore let those rude babblers go, who can say a great deal on the subject that is nothing after all but mere scum and vain prating. Of whom Paul also speaks, 1 Cor. iv., "I will come to you and will seek out not the speech of those that are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God does not stand in word, but in power." Wherever this power of God is wanting, there is neither genuine faith nor good works. So that they are mere liars, who pride themselves on their Christian name and faith and yet lead a wicked life. For if it were of God's power, they would certainly be otherwise.

But what does St. Peter mean when he says, *ye are kept by the power of God to salvation?* This is his meaning: So tender and precious a matter is that which pertains to the faith which the power of God (that is with us and with which we are filled) produces in us, that He gives us a correct, clear understanding of all things that respect salvation, so that we may judge all that is on earth, and say, this doctrine is true, that is false; this conduct is right, that is not; this work is good and acceptable, that is evil. And whatever such a man determines is just and true, for he cannot be deceived; but he will be kept, and preserved, and remains, a judge of all doctrines.

On the other hand, wherever faith and this power of God are wanting, there is nothing but error and blindness; there reason

suffers itself to be led hither and thither, from one work to another, for it would gladly reach heaven by its own works, and is ever imagining after this sort, "Yes! this work will bring you to heaven: do it and you shall be saved." Hence there are so many chapters, cloisters, altars, popes, monks and nuns in the world. Into such blindness does God permit the unbelieving to fall. But he keeps us, who believe, in a just apprehension, so that we may not fall into condemnation, but attain to salvation.

Which is ready to be revealed in the last time. That is, the inheritance that is appointed for them was long ago acquired, and prepared from the foundation of the world, but now is hidden, as yet covered up, reserved and sealed. But this is only for a little while, when in a moment it shall be opened and revealed, so that we shall behold it.

V. 6. *In which ye rejoice greatly, though now for a season (if need be), ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation.* Are you a Christian, and do you look for this inheritance or this salvation? then must you cleave to this alone, and despise all that is upon earth, and confess that all worldly reason, wisdom and glory are nothing—a thing the world will not be able to bear; wherefore you are to expect that men shall condemn you and persecute you. Thus St. Peter joins faith, hope, and the holy cross together, for one follows upon the other.

And here he gives us a source of consolation if we suffer and are persecuted. This sadness shall last a little while; afterward ye shall be exceeding glad, for this salvation is already prepared for

you; wherefore be patient under your sufferings.

This is moreover a truly christian consolation,—not such comfort as human doctrines give, which attempt nothing more than to find relief from outward ill. I speak not of bodily comfort (he seems to say); it is no real injury that ye have to endure outward ill, only go onward vigorously and be steadfast; inquire not how you may be free from the trouble, but think with yourself, My inheritance is prepared and held out to me; it is only a short time before my suffering must cease. Thus we should lay aside temporal consolations, and over against them place that eternal consolation which we have in God.

Besides, it is here to be observed that the Apostle continues and tells us in what circumstances all this will be, as he will hereafter say in the third chapter, *if it be God's will*.

There are many people who would storm heaven and enter it at once, wherefore they impose a cross upon themselves for their own fancied good; for reason will do nothing but propose for ever its own works, that God will reject. They should not be our own works which we select, but we should wait for whatever God imposes upon us and ordains for us, that we may go on and follow wherever He leads us; so that you are not to run after your own pleasure, in case it should be (that is, by God's appointment) that you are to suffer, but accept it and comfort yourself with the salvation which is not temporal but eternal.

V. 7, 8. *That the trial of your faith (or that your tried faith) be found much more precious than the perishable gold, (that is tried*

in the fire), to praise, honor, and glory, when Jesus Christ shall be revealed, whom ye have not seen, yet love, in whom ye also believe though ye see him not. This should be the end of the cross and all kinds of reverses,—to enable us to distinguish between false and real faith. God lays his hand upon us, therefore, to try our faith and reveal it to the world, so that others may be induced to believe, and we also be praised and honored. For just as we exalt God, so will He in return exalt, esteem and honor us, insomuch that the false hypocrites, who do not walk in the right way, shall be put to shame.

Scripture throughout likens temptation to fire. Thus St. Peter here compares the gold that is tried by fire to the trial of faith by temptation and suffering. The fire does not take away from the gold, but it makes it pure and bright, so that all dross is removed. So God has imposed the cross upon all Christians, that they might thereby be purified. And it has been well said, let faith remain pure as the word is pure, so that we shall depend on the word alone, and trust to nothing else: for we need such fire and cross as this daily, because of the old corrupt Adam.

Thus, it is characteristic of a christian life that it should continually grow and become more holy; for if we are led to faith through the preaching of the Gospel, then shall we be justified and grow in holiness; but while we remain in the flesh we can never be fully purified. Therefore God throws us into the midst of the fire,—that is, into suffering, shame and calamity,—so that we may become more and more purified, until we die—a point

we can attain by no works of our own. For how can an outward work make the heart inwardly clean? Moreover, if faith is to be tried (purified), all that is additional and false must be separated and removed. Thence will result a noble reward,—praise and glory when Christ shall be revealed. On this it follows:

V. 8, 9. *But because of your faith, rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious, and attain also the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.* An unspeakably glorious joy shall that be, says St. Peter, whereof we have honor and praise. The world has such a joy that we receive nothing from it but shame, and of which we are compelled to be ashamed. Here St. Peter has evidently spoken of future joy,—and there is scarcely so clear a passage on the subject of the future joy as the one in this place,—and still he finds himself unable to express it.

This is one point of the introduction, in which the Apostle has shown what faith in Christ is, and how we must be tried and purified by reverse and suffering when God appoints it for us.—Now follows further how this faith is in Scripture constituted and denominated.

V. 10, 11, 12. *Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who have prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what or as to what time, the spirit of Christ which was in them, designated and testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow; to whom it was revealed, that not for their own sake, but for ours, did they minister that which is now preached to you, by those who*

have preached the Gospel, through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; into which also the angels desired to look.

Here St. Peter directs us back to the Holy Scriptures, that we may therein see that God keeps whomsoever He has called of us, for no merit of ours, but of mere grace; for the whole of Scripture is directed to this end, that it may draw us away from our own works and bring us to faith. And it is necessary that we should study the Scriptures carefully that we may be well assured of our faith. Paul also teaches us the same thing in the Epistle to the Romans, chap. i., where he says that God promised the Gospel before by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. So Rom. iii.: that the faith whereby we are justified, is testified of through the law and the prophets.

So we read also in Acts xvii. how Paul preached faith to the Thessalonians, leading them to the Scripture and explaining it to them, and how day by day they had recourse to the Scripture, and examined whether those things which Paul had taught them were so. So likewise ought we to do, going back, and from the Old Testament learning on what to base the New. Besides, we shall there discover the promise of Christ, as Christ himself also says, John v.: "Search the Scriptures, for it is they that testify of me." And "if ye believe Moses, ye must also believe me, for he wrote of me." Therefore we should let vain babblers go who despise the Old Testament, and say it is of no further use,—since from thence alone must we derive the ground of our faith; for God sent the Prophets to the Jews to this end, that they should

bear witness of the Christ that was to come. Therefore it is that the Apostles throughout convicted and convinced the Jews out of their own Scriptures that this was the Christ.

Thus the books of Moses and the prophets are the Gospel, since they have first preached and written of Christ that which the Apostles afterward preached and wrote. Yet there is a distinction between them. For although both, as to the letter, have been written out on paper, yet the Gospel, or the New Testament, cannot be said so properly to be written, but to have consisted in the living voice which published it, and was heard generally throughout the world. But that it should also have been written, is an extraneous matter. But the Old Testament was composed only in writing, and is therefore called the letter; and the Apostles give Scripture this same name also, as it only pointed to the Christ that was to come. But the Gospel is a living proclamation of Christ who has already come.

Besides, there is also a distinction among the books of the Old Testament. In the first place, there are the five books of Moses, the foundation of the Scriptures, and which are especially called the Old Testament. Then come both histories and books of narration, wherein examples of all kinds are recorded, whether of those who held or rejected the law of Moses. In the third place, there are the prophets that are based on Moses, and what he has written they have in clear language more fully explained and elucidated. But the bearing of all the prophets and of Moses is one and the same.

But you ought to understand also about that which men say, that the Old Testament is given up and laid by. In the first place, there is that distinction between the Old and New Testament, as we have said above, that the Old prefigured Christ, but that the New gives us that which was promised first in the Old, and pointed out to us by types. But these types have now ceased, because the end which they were to subserve has been answered and attained, and that which was prefigured by them has been fulfilled. So that now there should be no further distinctions of food, clothing, place and time. All are alike in Christ, in whom all has been fulfilled. The Jews have not been saved by this, for it was not given them to this end that it should make them holy, but to foreshadow to them the Christ who was to come.

Besides, in the Old Testament God introduced a twofold government,—an external and an internal. There He undertook to rule His people, both inwardly in the heart, and outwardly in person and in property. Therefore He gave them such a variety of laws, commingled one kind with the other. So it was under the government that pertained to the person, that a man might give his wife a bill of divorce and put her away.

But to the spiritual government pertained the command, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But now He rules in us only spiritually, by Christ; while the government that pertains to the body and the outward state, he exercises through the instrumentality of civil magistracy. So that when Christ came the external ceased, and God gives us direction no more as to the

outward person, time and place. But He rules us only spiritually through the word, so that we may direct as to all that is outward, and be bound in nothing that pertains to the body.

But what pertains to His spiritual government has not been abandoned, but stands forever, now as then,—the law of love to God and our neighbor, contained in the books of Moses, which God will still have sustained, and by which He will condemn all the unbelieving.

Besides, the figures, as to their *spiritual* import, remain; that is, whatever is signified by the outward figures, although the outward part has been done away. Thus that a man should separate from his wife and send her away, because of adultery, is a figure and type which even now is spiritually fulfilled; for thus also has God rejected the Jews when they would not believe on Christ, and has chosen out the Gentiles. So, also, He does still; if any one will not walk in the faith, He suffers him to be excluded from the Christian Church, that he may be led to reform.

Of a similar import also is this, that a woman after her husband's death must take her husband's brother, and bear him children, and he must suffer himself to be called by his name, and must enter on his possessions. This, although it has now ceased, or rather become invalid, so that it may be done or neglected without sin, is a figure which even now has a significance in respect to Christ. For He is our brother, for us has died and ascended to heaven, and has commanded us that we, through the Gospel, should plant the seed in our souls and make them fruitful,

be named after him, and enter on his possessions. Therefore I must not boast that I convert men, but it must all be ascribed to the Lord Christ. It is the same also with all the other figures of the Old Testament, which it would be too tedious to specify.

But all in the Old Testament which is not external, is still in force, as all those passages in the prophets concerning faith and love. Wherefore Christ also confirms it in Mat. vii.: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." Besides, Moses and the prophets testify of the Christ that was to come. As, when I preach of Christ that He is the only Saviour by whom all must be saved, I may quote to sustain me the passage in Gen. xxii.: "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed." Thence I draw a living voice and language. Through Christ, who is Abraham's seed, must all men be blessed. From that it follows, that we were all cursed and condemned in Adam; wherefore it is necessary that we should believe on the Seed, if we would escape condemnation. Out of such passages may we lay down the ground of our faith, and let it remain, that we may therein see how they bear witness of Christ, so that our faith may be strengthened thereby. That is what St. Peter intends now by these words, in which he says:

V. 10. *Of which Salvation the Prophets have searched and inquired diligently, who have prophesied of the grace that should come to you.* In this same manner Paul also speaks, toward the close of the Epistle to the Romans, of the revelation of the mystery which was hidden from all ages of the world, but is now

revealed and made known through the writings of the prophets. And so you find in the New Testament many passages quoted from the prophets, by which the Apostles show that all has been fulfilled just as the prophets foretold.

This Christ Himself proves from the prophet Isaiah, Mat. xi.. "The blind see, the lame walk," &c. As though He had said, just as it was written there it is taking place now; so also we read in Acts ix., of Paul, and in the xviii., of Apollos, how they confounded the Jews, and convinced them out of Scripture that this was the Christ. For whatever the prophets had foretold, all had now come to pass in Christ. So (Acts xv.) the Apostles show how the Gospel must be preached to the heathen that they might believe. This has also come to pass, and been put in train, so that the Jews might be convinced and compelled to confess, that all had taken place just as Scripture had foretold.

V. 11. *And have investigated what or at what time the Spirit of Christ which was in them;* St. Peter would say, although the prophets have not particularly known of a set and definite time, yet have they in general testified to all the circumstances of time and place;—as, that Christ should suffer, and what death he should die, and that the Gentiles should believe on him: so that one might certainly know by these signs when the time had come. The prophet Daniel has approached still nearer, but yet speaks somewhat darkly thereof, as to when Christ should suffer and die—when that or this should take place. So, also, they had a sure prophecy that the kingdom of the Jews should cease before

Christ came. But the day and exact time when this should come to pass was not fixed. For it was enough when this time came, that they should thereby know for a surety that Christ was not far off. The prophet Joel also prophesied of the time when the Holy Spirit should come, where he says, "I will in the last days pour out my spirit upon all flesh," &c., which passage St. Peter quotes in Acts ii., and shows that he speaks of that very time and of the particular persons.

From all which you perceive how, with great diligence, the Apostles exhibit throughout the ground and confirmation of their preaching and doctrine. The Councils and the Popes now reverse this course, and would deal with us apart from Scripture, commanding us, by obedience to the church and the terrors of excommunication, that we should believe on them. The Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, and were certain that they were sent by Christ, and preached the true Gospel; yet they did not exalt themselves, and did not ask men to believe them, unless they conclusively proved from Scripture that it was just as they said, so that the mouth of the unbelieving was stopped, insomuch that they could object nothing further. And shall we believe those grossly unlearned heads who do not preach God's word at all, and can do nothing else but cry out continually, "Surely the fathers cannot have been in error, and this has been decided now for a long time, so that it must no more be a question?" But this we can clearly prove from the Scriptures, that no one can be saved but he who believes on Christ, so that against this they can say

nothing. But on their side they will never be able to prove to us from Scripture that he is to be condemned who does not fast on this or that day. Therefore we ought not and shall not believe them.

Now St. Peter says further:

V. 11. *Which spirit testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should thereafter be revealed.* This may be understood of both kinds of suffering,—that which Christ, and we also, suffer. St. Paul calls the sufferings of all Christians the suffering of Christ. For just as the faith, the name, the word and work of Christ are mine, inasmuch as I believe on Him, so His suffering is also mine, since I suffer also for His sake. Thus will the sufferings of Christ be daily fulfilled in Christians, until the end of the world.

This is then our consolation in all the sufferings that we experience, that all that we suffer Christ shares with us, that He accounts it all as His own suffering. And of this we are assured, that speedily after suffering glory shall follow. But this we must also understand, that Christ was not glorified before He suffered, so that we are to bear our cross with Him first, that afterward we may share His joy.

All that we now preach, he says, the prophets previously foretold and described in the most explicit manner, just as the Holy Spirit revealed it to them. That we so imperfectly understand the prophets is, because we do not understand their language, since they have spoken clearly enough. Therefore they

that are acquainted with the language, and have the Spirit of God, which all believers have, to them it is not difficult of apprehension since they know the scope of all Scripture. But if any one does not understand their language, and has not the spirit, or a christian apprehension, it might seem to him as though the prophets were drunken and full of new wine; although where we must want one, the spirit without the language is better than the language without the spirit. The prophets have a peculiar phraseology, but the sentiment is the same which the Apostles preach, for both have spoken largely of the suffering and of the glory of Christ, as well as of those things that relate to faith. As when David speaks of Christ (Ps. xxi.), "I am a worm and no man," whereby he shows how deeply he is cast down and despondent in his suffering. Likewise, also, he writes of his people and of the affliction of Christians, in Psalm xlv.: "We are despised, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

V. 12. *That not for their own sakes but for ours did they minister that which is now preached unto you, by those who have preached the Gospel to you, through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;* that is, the prophets possessed enough thereof to know the fact. But that they should have left it behind them (on record) calls for our gratitude; they have become our servants, and have so ministered to us, that we, through them, might go to school and learn the same lesson. There we have an argument to show that our faith should grow stronger, and we be enabled to arm and sustain ourselves against all false doctrine.

Into which also the angels desired to look. So great things have the Apostles declared to us, through the Holy Spirit, which descended upon them from heaven, as even the angels would gladly look into. When this Spirit opens our eyes and makes us see what the Gospel is, we shall have an appetite for it and a joy in it, although we cannot behold it with bodily eyes, but must believe that we are partakers and fellow-heirs of the righteousness, truth, salvation and all the blessings which God has to bestow. For since He has given us His only Son, that highest good, He will also, through Him, give us all good things, riches and treasures, whereof the angels in heaven have all their joy, and of which they are most desirous. All this is offered to us through the Gospel, and if we believe we shall also have a like desire for them. But our desire for them cannot be as perfect as that of the angels, so long as we live on earth; but it is a good beginning in us, if we experience, through faith, something of it. But in heaven it is so great that no human heart can conceive it; but if we reach that place we shall ourselves feel it.

Thus you see how St. Peter teaches us to arm and equip ourselves with Scripture. For hitherto he has described what it is to preach the Gospel, and shown that as it heretofore has been preached by the prophets, so it should still be, and should be preached in like manner. Now he proceeds farther, and admonishes us in this chapter that we should cleave to the same preaching of the Gospel by faith, and follow after it by love, and therefore says,—

V. 13-16. *Gird up therefore the loins of your mind; be sober, and fix your hope firmly on the grace which is offered you through the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not conformable to the previous lusts of your ignorance; but as He who has called you is Holy, be ye also holy in all your conduct, as it is written, Be ye holy for I am Holy.*

This is an admonition to faith, and the sense is this: while such things are preached to you and bestowed upon you through the Gospel as the angels would rejoice and be desirous to behold, rely on them, and fix your confidence thereon with all firmness, so that it shall be a real faith, and not a painted or fictitious fancy or dream.

Gird up the loins of your mind. Here Peter speaks of a spiritual girding of the mind, just as one girds his sword to the loins of his body. This girding has Christ also enforced, Luke xii., where he says, "Let your loins be girt about." In some places the Scriptures speak of the loins with reference to bodily lust; but here St. Peter speaks of the loins of the spirit. As to the body, Scripture speaks of the loins with reference to natural generation from the father; as we read, Genesis xlix., that from the loins of Judah Christ should come. Likewise the bodily girding of the loins is the same with chastity, as Isaiah says, chapter xi., "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faith the girdle of his reins." That is, only by faith is wicked lust subdued and restrained.

But this spiritual girding, whereof the Apostle speaks, means more. As a virgin is pure and inviolate in body, so is the soul

spiritually inviolate through faith, by which it becomes Christ's bride. But if it falls from faith into false doctrine, it must be brought to shame. Hence Scripture uniformly calls impiety and unbelief, adultery and whoredom,—that is, when the soul relies on human doctrines, and thus lets go its hold on faith and Christ. This St. Peter here forbids, when he calls on us to gird up the loins of our mind; as though he would say, ye have now heard the Gospel and have come to believe, therefore see to it that ye abide therein, and do not suffer yourselves to be drawn away with false doctrine, so that ye shall not waver and run hither and thither with works.

And here he adopts a peculiar mode of speech, not after the manner of St. Paul, where he speaks of "the loins of your mind." He calls *that* mind here which we speak of as disposition; as when I say, "This seems to me right and as Paul speaks, so we understand it, so we are *disposed*." In this he refers especially to faith, and would say: ye have attained a correct apprehension that we must be justified through faith; abide in that mind; gird it up well, hold fast thereon, and suffer not yourselves to be torn from it; then shall ye stand well. For many false teachers shall come in and set up human doctrines that they may pervert your understanding and loose the girdle of your faith; wherefore be admonished, and bind it well to your mind.

The hypocrites who rest on their own works, and hence pass a carefully abstemious life, are thus minded, that God must bring them to heaven for their works' sake; they are puffed up,

become proud, abiding in their own opinion and blindness, like the Pharisees, Luke xviii. Of whom also Mary speaks, in the *Magnificat*, where she uses the same word that stands here in Peter, He hath scattered the proud in the disposition of their hearts,—that is, in their own minds.

Be sober. To be sober is of service outwardly to the body, and is the chief work of faith. For though a man has been justified, he still is not secured from evil lusts; faith has indeed begun to subdue the flesh, but this is ever bestirring itself, and likewise running riot in all sorts of lusts, which would gladly break forth again and act after their own will. Therefore the spirit must daily work to restrain and subdue it, and must charge itself therewith, without intermission, and have a care of the flesh that it do not destroy faith. Therefore those persons deceive themselves, who indeed say they have faith, and imagining that this is enough, live thenceforth according to their own caprice. Where the faith is genuine it must control the body and hold it in check, so that it shall not do what it lusts after. Therefore St. Peter says that we should be sober.

Yet he would not have us destroy the body or weaken it too much, as we find many do who have fasted and tortured themselves to death. St. Bernard, even, continued for a long time in this folly, although he was truly a holy man, for he mortified his body to such an extent that his breath was offensive and could not be endured. Yet he afterwards forsook it, and charged his brethren that they should not inflict injury upon the body; for he

saw very well that he had rendered himself unfit to be of service to his brethren. Therefore St. Peter requires nothing more than that we should be sober,—that is, mortify the body to such an extent as to prevent its being in our apprehension too wanton; for he fixes no definite time how long we should fast, as the Pope has done, but leaves it to each, individually, to fast so that he remain sober and do not burden the body with gluttony, to the end that he remain in possession of reason and reflection, and consider how far it is necessary for him to hold the body in check. For it is utterly idle to impose one and the same command upon a whole congregation and church, since we are so unlike one to the other; one strong, another weak in body,—so that one must mortify it more, another less, provided the body is to remain sound and in the best state for exertion.

But another multitude mistake here, determined that they will not fast, and that they may eat flesh, and herein are wrong. For these persons reject the Gospel also, and are unprofitable as well as the others; doing no more than contemn the Pope's command, unwilling to gird up their mind and spirit, as Peter says, leaving the body to its own caprice, that it may become corrupt and wanton. It is well to fast; but that only can be called true fasting, when we give the body no more food than is needful for it that it may retain its health and endure labor and watchfulness—that the old ass do not become too obstinate, and going on the ice to dance, break a bone; but go on subject to control, and following the spirit; not after the manner of those who, whenever they fast,

fill themselves so full of fish and the best wine, that their bellies are puffed out. Thus St. Peter directs us to be sober, and now says further:

And fix your hope firmly (or with all deliberation) on the grace which is offered you. The christian faith is of such a nature that it plants itself freely on the word of God with entire confidence, ventures freely thereupon, and goes joyfully onward. Therefore Peter would say: The loins of your mind are girt about, and your faith is genuine, when you venture it thus on that Word, let it cost what it will,—property, honor, limb, or life.

Thus has he with these words in truth well described a genuine and unfeigned faith. It must not be a corrupt and sleepy faith, becoming thus only a dream, but a living and active reality, that we may with all deliberation devote ourselves to it and cleave to the Word, so that, let God permit it to go with us as it will, we will yet press onward through good and ill. Thus when I come to die I must venture promptly on Christ, lift my head boldly, and rely upon the word of God which cannot deceive me. Thus must faith go straight forward, in nothing permit itself to be led astray, and subject to scrutiny all that it sees, hears and feels. Such faith St. Peter requires as consists, not in thought or word, but in such power as this.

Again, St. Peter says: Set your hope on the grace which is offered you. That is, ye have not deserved this great grace, but yet it is freely offered you; for the Gospel, which reveals this grace, is no invention or discovery of our own, but the Holy Spirit has

sent it down from heaven into the world. But what is it that is offered to us? This, that we have already heard, that whosoever believes on Christ and cleaves to the Word possesses *Him*, with all the blessings He has to give, so that He is Lord over sin, death, the devil and hell, and is assured of eternal life. This treasure is brought to our doors and laid in our bosom without our help or desert, yes, beyond our expectation and without our knowledge or thought. Therefore the Apostle would have us venture thereon cheerfully, for God, who offers us such grace, will surely not deceive us.

Through the revelation of Jesus Christ. God permits none to make the offer of His grace except through Christ. Therefore no man should attempt to approach Him apart from this Mediator, as we have already above heard sufficiently. For He will hear no one but him who brings His dear Son with him, whom He alone regards, and for His sake those that depend upon Him. Therefore He would have us confess the Son, that we are reconciled through His blood to the Father, so that we may approach before Him. For to this end did Christ come into the world, assume flesh and blood, and joined Himself to us, that He might obtain such grace for us with the Father. So, too, all the prophets and patriarchs have been kept and saved, through such faith on Christ. For they all have exercised faith in the promise which God made to Abraham, "Through thy seed shall all nations be blest." Therefore, as we have said, to the Jews and to the Turks, faith is of no avail, neither to any that rest upon their own works and

would thereby reach heaven. So Peter says, this grace is offered you, but it is through the revelation of Jesus Christ (or to render it more clearly into our language), because that Jesus Christ has been revealed to you.

Through the Gospel it is made known to us what Christ is, that we may learn of Him, moreover, that He is our Saviour. He rescues us from sin and death, and helps us out of every evil, reconciles us to the Father, and, apart from our own works, justifies and saves us. Whoever then does not thus confess Christ must be lost; for although you may know that He is the Son of God, that He died and has risen, and sits at the right hand of the Father,—still you have not yet truly known Christ, it is all of no avail to you; but you must know and believe that He has done it all for your sake, if your faith is to help you. Therefore that is a vain, senseless doctrine that has been hitherto preached and taught in the great schools, which have had no experience of this knowledge, and have only attained to imagine how the curse afflicted Christ our Lord, and how He sits above in heaven unemployed, and possesses a joy with Himself; and thus their hearts remain barren, so that faith cannot live in them. But Christ does not stand there for Himself, but He is to be preached that He is ours. For what necessity could there then have been that He should have come down to earth and have shed His blood? But since He has been sent into the world, as He says, John iii., "that the world through Him might be saved." He certainly must have fulfilled this mission, because He was sent from the

Father. For this sending forth and proceeding from the Father is to be understood not only of the divine nature, but also of the human nature and of His ministry. As soon as He was baptized this began, and He has fulfilled it, for which end He was sent and came into the world, to wit, that He might preach the truth and obtain it for us, that all who believe on Him shall be saved. Thus has He revealed Himself, and presented Himself to our knowledge, and offered us grace.

V. 14. *As obedient children.* That is, conduct yourselves as obedient children. Obedience in Scripture means faith. But the Pope, with his high schools and cloisters, has even wrested the word from us, and falsely rendered what is recorded in Scripture concerning this obedience, as the passage in I. Kings xv.: "Obedience is better than sacrifice." For while they perceive that obedience is highly praised in Scripture, they have usurped the claim of it to themselves, so that they might blind the people, and that men should think it was obedience to their stuff of which the Scripture speaks. Thus they would bring us away from God's word to their lies, and to the obedience of the devil. Whoever hears the word of God and believes thereon, is an obedient child of God. Therefore, whatever is not the word of God, tread it under your feet and pay no attention to it.

Not conformed to the former lusts of your ignorance. That is, that you should not exhibit such ostentation and lead such a course of life as before, and that you be not found in the same condition in which you formerly were. Once you were

godless, and lived in lewdness, gluttony, drunkenness, avarice, pride, anger, envy and hate, which was an evil, heathen-like state, and one of unbelief, and when you had gone into such a state like the blind, you have not known what you have done. Avoid now those same evil lusts. Here you perceive how he makes the charge against ignorance, that all evil proceeds therefrom. For where faith and the knowledge of Christ are wanting, there remains mere error and blindness, so that men are ignorant of what is right and wrong, insomuch that the people fall into every kind of vice.

Thus has it been hitherto: where Christ has been kept out of sight and eclipsed, there error has begun to prevail; and throughout the world the question has torn its way, how man may be saved. This is at once a sign of blindness or ignorance, that the true apprehension of faith is lost, and no one knows anything more about it. Hence the world is so full of such various sects, and all are divided, for every one will devise for himself a way to heaven of his own. In our misfortune we must be continually falling deeper in our blindness, since we cannot help ourselves. Therefore St. Peter would say: Ye have already befooled yourselves enough; now desist therefrom, since ye have been instructed and have attained to a correct understanding.

V. 15, 16. *But according as He that hath called you is holy, so be ye also holy in all your conduct, as it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy.* Here St. Peter quotes a passage from the Old Testament, Lev. xix., where God says: "Be ye holy for I am holy;" that is, since I am your Lord and God, and ye are my people, ye too

must be as I am. For a faithful master secures that his people shall be like him, and walk in obedience, and be conformed to the master's will. As then God our Master is holy, so are His people holy also, and we are all holy if we walk in faith. Scripture says not much of the saints that have died, but of those who live on the earth. So David puts forth his claim in Ps. lxxxv.: "Lord, preserve my soul, for I am holy."

But here our learned men have for once perverted the passage, and they say: the prophet had a particular revelation, in that he called himself holy; whereby they themselves confess that they do violence to faith, and have not the revelation of Jesus Christ, otherwise they would surely be sensible of it. For whoever is a Christian experiences within himself such a revelation; but they who do not experience it are not Christians. For whoever is a Christian enters into a participation with Christ our Lord, of all his good things. Since, then, Christ is holy, he must also be holy, or deny that Christ is holy. Hast thou been baptized? then thou hast put on the holy garment, which is Christ, as Paul says.

The word Holy means that which is God's own, and which belongs to Him alone, or as we render it in Dutch (*geweiht*), consecrated. Thus, Peter here says: you are merely required to give God His own; therefore beware that ye do not suffer yourselves to be led back again to worldly lusts, but let God alone rule, live and work within you; then shall ye be holy, even as He is holy.

Thus he has hitherto described the grace which is extended to

us through the Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, and has taught us how we should therefore conduct ourselves, namely: that we abide in a pure, inviolate mind of faith, since we know that no work that we can do or imagine, can at all help us: when such doctrine as this is preached, reason objects, and says, Ah, if that is true, I need not do any good work. And then the great heads fall foul of it, and from a christian condition, educe a freedom of the flesh, imagining they may do what they will. These St. Peter here meets, and anticipates them, and teaches how we are to use our christian freedom only towards God. For nothing more is needed but faith, to the end that I should give God the honor due Him, and embrace Him as my God, confessing that He is just, true and merciful; such faith sets us free from sin and all evil. If now I have made such a return to God, whatever time I yet live I am to live for my neighbor, so as to serve and help him. The greatest work that follows from faith is this: that with my mouth I should confess Christ, sealing that confession with my blood, and laying down my life for it, if so it be. Yet God does not need this work; only I am to perform it, that my faith may thereby be tried and known, so that others also may be brought to believe. Thereafter follow also other works, which must all be directed to this end, that I may thereby serve my neighbor,—all of which God must work in us; for it profits not that we should lead a carnal life and do whatever we please. Therefore St. Peter now says:

V. 17-21. *And since ye call on the Father, who judgeth without*

respect of persons, according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear; and be aware that ye are not redeemed with corruptible silver or gold, from your vain conduct in the traditions of your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of an innocent and unspotted Lamb, who indeed was provided previously before the world began, but is revealed in these last times for you, who through Him believe on God, who raised Him from the dead, and hath given Him dominion, that your faith and hope might be in God.

So says St. Peter: Ye have through faith hereunto attained, that ye are the children of God, and He is your Father. And ye have obtained an incorruptible inheritance in heaven, (as has been already said.) Thus nothing more now remains, except that the veil be taken away, and that be uncovered which is now concealed, for which ye are still to wait until ye shall behold it. Though ye are now arrived at that state in which ye may joyfully call God your Father, yet is He so righteous that he will reward every man according to his works, and respect not persons. Wherefore thou art not to imagine, although thou hast that great name so that thou art called a Christian or a child of God, that He will therefore continue thine if thou livest without fear, and thinkest that it is enough that thou dost glory in such a name. The world indeed judges by the person, since it does not punish all alike, and respects those who are friendly, rich, reputable, learned, wise, and powerful. But God regards nothing of this kind; it is all alike to him, be the person as great as he

may. Thus in Egypt he struck the son of King Pharaoh dead, as well as the son of the poor miller.

Therefore the Apostle would have us expect such judgment from God, and stand in fear, so that we do not glory in our title that we are Christian, and thereupon become negligent, as though he would for this reason pass us over more readily than others. For in this the Jews were formerly deceived, who boasted that they were Abraham's seed and God's people. Scripture makes no difference in respect to the flesh, but in respect to the spirit. It is true that Christ was to be born of Abraham's seed and that a holy people should spring from him, but it does not therefore follow that all who are born of Abraham are the children of God. He also promised that the Gentiles should be saved, but he has not said that he would save *all* the Gentiles.

But here now a question arises: When we say that God saves us alone by faith, without regard to works, why does St. Peter say that He judges not according to the person, but according to works? Answer. What we have taught as to faith alone justifying before God, is true beyond doubt, since it is so clear from Scripture that it cannot be denied. That which the Apostle here says, that God judges according to the works, is also true; but we must certainly hold, therefore, that where there is no faith, there can be no good work; and on the other hand, that there is no faith where there are no good works. Therefore join together faith and good works, since it is in both that the sum of the whole christian life consists. As you now live, so will it be with you, for

thereafter God will judge you. Therefore, although God judges us according to our works, still it remains true that works are only the fruits of faith, by which we perceive when there is faith or unbelief; therefore God will sentence you from your works and convict you, either that you have or have not believed. So it is that no one can convict and judge a liar, except from his words. Yet it is evident that he is not made a liar by the word, but became a liar before he spoke the lie, for the lie must come from the heart into the mouth. Therefore, understand this passage thus, in the plainest way: that works are fruits and signs of faith, and that God judges men according to such fruits which must certainly follow it, so that it shall be openly seen whether there is faith or unbelief in the heart. God will not judge by this whether you are *called* a Christian, or have been baptized, but will ask you, "*Art thou a Christian?*" then tell me where are the fruits by which you can evidence your faith."

Therefore St. Peter goes on to say: Since ye have such a Father, who judges not after the person, pass the time of your pilgrimage in fear; that is, stand in fear before the Father, not of pain and punishment,—as the Christless, and even the devil, is afraid,—but lest He forsake you and withdraw His hand; just as a dutiful child is afraid lest he provoke his father, and do something that might not please him. Such a fear would God have within us, that we guard ourselves against sin, and serve our neighbor, while we live here upon the earth.

A Christian, if he truly believes, possesses all the good things

of God, and is God's child, as we have heard. But the time which he yet lives is only a pilgrimage: for the spirit is already in heaven by faith, through which he becomes Lord over all things. But to this end God permits him yet to live in the flesh, and his body to remain on earth, that he may help others and bring them also to heaven. Therefore we are to use all things on earth as a guest, who goes on wearily and arrives at an inn where he must tarry over night, and can receive nothing from it but food and lodging; yet does not say that the property of the inn is his. So must we also proceed in regard to our temporal possessions, as though they were not ours, and we enjoyed only so much of them as is needful to sustain the body, and with the rest we are to help our neighbor. Thus the christian life is only a night's sojourning; for we have here no abiding city, but must find it, where our Father is, in heaven. Therefore we should not here live in wantonness, but stand in fear, says St. Peter.

V. 18. *And be aware that ye are not redeemed with corruptible silver or gold, from your vain conduct in the traditions of your Fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ.* This should draw you, he would say, to the fear of God, wherein ye should stand, that ye should remember how much it has cost that ye might be redeemed. Before, ye were citizens of the world, and were held in subjection to the devil, but now, God has rescued you from such a state, and set you firm in another, so that your citizenship is in heaven; but ye are strangers and guests upon earth. And see at how great a cost God has reclaimed you, and how great

the treasure is, wherewith ye are purchased, and brought into this state, to become the children of God. Wherefore pass your sojourning in fear, and see to it that ye do not despise such redemption, and lose the noble, precious treasure.

What now is the treasure wherewith ye are ransomed? Not corruptible gold or silver, but the precious blood of Christ the Son of God: the treasure is so costly and noble, that no human sense or reason can conceive it, insomuch that only one drop of this innocent blood were more than enough for the sin of all the world: yet has the Father been willing to dispense his grace so richly upon us, and denied Himself so much as to suffer Christ His Son to shed all His blood for us, and has bestowed upon us the whole treasure. Therefore He would not have us disregard such great grace, and count it as a small matter, but continue on our guard, so as to live in fear, that this treasure be not taken away from us.

And here it is well to remark, that St. Peter says, ye are ransomed from your vain conversation in the traditions of your fathers; for he thereby strikes to the ground all the supports whereon we lean when we imagine our view must be right because it has thus been preserved from of old, and our forefathers all of them have so held it, among whom there were certainly wise and pious people. It is as much as to say, all which our fathers have ordained and done, was evil; what from them has been taught you of the worship of God, is also evil; for it has cost the Son of God His blood to redeem the people therefrom;

whatever, therefore, has not been washed in this blood, is all poisoned and cursed by reason of the flesh. Thence it follows, the more a man undertakes to make himself righteous and has not Christ, the more only he confounds himself, and sinks deeper in blindness and wickedness, and condemns himself in respect to this precious blood.

External matters, important in themselves, are even trifling in comparison with this, that a man should teach how we may be justified by works, and devise a worship of God according to our reason; for thereby the innocent blood is most deeply dishonored and reviled.

The heathen have committed many great sins, in that they have prayed to the sun and moon, which they held for the true worship of God, though this was joined with other sins. But human justification (justification by human works) is mere reviling of God, and the greatest of all sins that a man commits. So, also, that mode of life wherewith the world is now busied and which it holds as the worship of God, and piety, is in God's sight more provoking than any other sin, as is the priestly and monkish order, and which while it appears fair before the world, is yet without faith. Therefore whoever will not obtain favor before God through this blood, it were better for him that he should never come into God's presence, for he thereby only the more and more dishonors His Majesty.

V. 19. *As of an innocent and unspotted lamb.* But here St. Peter explains the Scripture,—for this though so short is an

exceedingly rich Epistle,—since as soon as he had spoken of their vain course in the traditions of the fathers, he finds much instruction for us in the prophets—as in the prophet Jer. xvi.: "The heathen shall come to you from the end of the world, and say, our fathers have gone astray with lies," as though St. Peter had said, there the prophets foretold that ye should be redeemed from the tradition of your fathers.

So when he says here, ye are redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of an innocent and unspotted lamb, he would again refer to the Scripture, and explain that which is contained in the prophets and Moses—as Is. liii.: "Like a lamb he is led to the slaughter." So as to the type, Ex. xii., of the Paschal Lamb, all this he here explains, and says, this lamb is Christ; and as the one of old was to be unspotted, so must this, also, whose blood is shed for us, be unspotted and innocent.

V. 20. *Which indeed was provided previously, before the world began, but is revealed in these last times for you.* That is, we have not deserved nor even prayed this of God, that the precious blood of Christ should be shed for us, therefore we can glory in no respect; the glory belongs to none but God alone. God has promised and revealed or made known to us, not for any merit of ours, that which He from all eternity had provided and foreordained, before the world was made. In the prophets it is indeed promised, yet dimly and not openly; but now, since Christ's resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, it is publicly preached and disseminated throughout the whole world.

This is now the latter age (the last time), as St. Peter says, wherein we live—now—from the ascension of Christ until the last day. So the Apostles and prophets, and Christ Himself, also, call it the last hour; not that the last day was to come immediately after Christ's ascension, but because after this preaching of the Gospel of Christ no other should ever come; and there will be no further revelation or manifestation, except as this is explained and revealed. One revelation after another has indeed gone forth. Therefore God says, Ex. vi., "By my name Jehovah was I not known to them." For the patriarchs, although they knew God, yet at that time had not so clear a manifestation of Him as was afterwards put forth through Moses and the prophets; but now there has no more glorious or clear manifestation of Him come into the world than the Gospel. Therefore it is the last; all dispensations have run their course, but the present,—the last,—which is revealed to us.

Besides, the time hereafter is not long to the end of the world, as St. Peter shows, II. Pet. iii., where he says: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." And so he would lead us by this reckoning of time, to conclude, after God's method, that it is the last time, and that the end approaches, but the time which still remains is nothing in the sight of God. The salvation is already revealed and completed: God permits the world to stand yet longer, merely that His name may be more widely honored and praised, although He for Himself is now fully revealed.

V. 21. *For you, who through Him believe on God, who raised Him from the dead, and hath given Him dominion that your faith and hope might be in God.* For our sakes, he says, is the Gospel revealed. For God and the Lord Christ have not needed it, but have done it for our profit, that we might believe on them; and that, not through ourselves, but through Christ, who intercedes for us with the Father, whom He has raised from the dead, that He might be Lord over all things; so that whoever believes on Him possesses all His good things, and through Him has access to the Father. Thus we have faith in God, and a hope through the same faith. Faith alone must save us, but it must be a faith in God; for if God does not help us, then we are not holpen; so that it is not enough, although you had all men's friendship, but you must have the friendship of God, that you may boast that He is YOUR Father, and that you are His child, and confide in Him even more than in your beloved father and mother, that He will help you in all your troubles, and this only through the one Mediator and Saviour, the Lord Christ. Such faith comes not (he says) from human power, but God creates it in us, because Christ has merited it by His blood; to whom He has given glory, and whom He has seated at His right hand, that He, by God's power, should produce faith in us.

Hitherto we have heard St. Peter admonishing us that we should gird up the loins of our mind, that we may remain undefiled and live in faith; then, also, that which meanwhile is so important, that we should walk in fear and never forget that we

are called Christians, since God is a judge who respects none, but judges one like the other, without distinction of persons.

V. 22-25. And purify your souls, through obedience of the truth in the Spirit, to unfeigned love of the brethren, and have fervent love toward one another, out of pure hearts, as those who have been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, namely, of the living word of God, which endures forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever; and this is the word which is preached unto you.

Paul, in Gal. v., points out the fruits which follow faith. The fruits of the Spirit, he says, are joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. So St. Peter speaks here of the fruit of faith,—to wit, that we should purify our souls, through obedience to the truth in the Spirit. For where there is real faith it brings the body in subjection to itself, and controls the fleshly lust; and although it does not entirely destroy it, yet it makes it subject and obedient to the Spirit, and holds it in check. St. Paul implies the same thing when he speaks of the fruits of the Spirit. It is a great achievement that the Spirit should attain control over the flesh, and restrain the evil lust which descends to us from our parents: for it is not possible that we should succeed without grace in leading a chaste life in the married state, to say nothing of the unmarried.

But why does he say then, purify your souls? He is well aware

that the desires of the flesh remain with us after baptism, even to the grave. Therefore it is not enough that a person should refrain from works and remain pure outwardly, while he permits evil lusts to cleave to his heart, but must thereafter beware that the soul be pure, as well as whatever proceeds out of the heart, and that the soul be opposed to these wicked lusts and desires, and continually contend therewith, until it is free from their power.

And here he adjoins an excellent provision: that we should purify our souls,⁶ *through obedience to the truth in the Spirit*. Much has been preached on chastity, and many books have been composed on the subject. They have said, we should fast for so long a time, we should not eat flesh, we should not drink wine, etc., that we may be free from temptation. These things may perhaps have aided somewhat to that end, but it has not been enough, it has not subdued lust.

So St. Jerome writes of himself, that he had mortified his body to such an extent that he had become like a Moor; still it had been of no avail, and he had dreamed of being at Rome at a revelry among harlots.

St. Bernard also subjected himself to such austerities, and so mortified his body that it became offensive, as I said above. They endured severe temptation, and purposed thus to subdue it by external methods. But since it is external, it is only an outward plaster, with no inward application. So that it does not suffice to subdue lust.

⁶ Make them chaste.

But here St. Peter has prescribed an appropriate remedy,—namely, obedience to truth in the Spirit, as Scripture also has done in other places,—as Isaiah xi.: "Faith shall be the girdle of his reins." This is the true plaster that girds the reins, for it must proceed from within outward, not from without inward. For it has penetrated into the flesh and blood, the marrow and other parts of the living system; it is not outward in the dress or clothing. Therefore it is not to be expected that we should subdue lust with outward things; we may weaken the body and destroy it with fastings and labors, but the evil lusts are not thereby banished; yet faith can subdue them, and guard them, that they shall be compelled to give the Spirit place.

So likewise speaks the prophet Zachariah, ix., of the wine which Christ has, whereby the pure grow, and of which he gives them to drink. Other wine usually invites to wicked lust, but this wine,—that is, the Gospel,—subdues it, and makes the heart chaste. This is what St. Peter speaks of when any one heartily embraces the truth, and is obedient to it in spirit. This is the true help and the most powerful remedy for it, since you will find none which can still all evil thoughts like it; for if this enters our hearts, evil inclinations quickly leave; let whoever will try it, he shall find it true, and whoever has tried it, knows it well; but the devil lets no one easily attain it, and comprehend the word of God so as to delight in it; for he well knows how powerful it is to subdue evil lusts and thoughts.

St. Peter, therefore, would here say, if you would remain

chaste, then must you render obedience to the truth in the Spirit, that is,—we must not only read and hear the word of God, but apprehend it in our hearts. Therefore it is not enough that a man should preach or hear the Gospel once, but he must ever press after it and persevere; for such grace does the word possess, that the more we taste it the more delightful it is; although there is, throughout, one and the same doctrine of faith, yet it cannot be listened to too much where the heart is not wanton and untamed.

To unfeigned love of the brethren. To what end, then, are we to live a chastely holy life? In order that we may be saved thereby? No! but in order that we may be useful to our neighbor. What am I to do that I may restrain my sin? I am to have obedience to the truth in the Spirit. But why am I to restrain it? In order that I may be of service to others, for I must first control my body and the flesh by the Spirit, and thus I can afterward be of service to others.—It follows further:

And have fervent love toward one another out of pure hearts. The Apostles Peter and Paul distinguish brotherly love, and love in general, from one another. Brotherhood is, that Christians should dwell altogether as brethren, and make no distinctions between themselves. For since we all have a common Christ, one baptism, one faith, one treasure, I am no better than thou; that which thou hast, I have also, and I am just as rich as thou. The treasure is the same, except that I may have it in a better shape than thou, since I may have it lying in gold, but thou in a poor garment. Therefore as we have the grace of Christ and

all spiritual blessings in common, so should we also hold body and life, property and honor, in common, that one should be of service to another in all things.

Here he speaks plainly: *in unfeigned brotherly love*. The Apostles love to make use of the word, but have clearly perceived that were we called Christians and brethren universally one with another, it would be false, a feigned or imagined thing, and would be only hypocrisy. We have many brotherhoods set up in the world, but they are vain deceptions and corruptions, which the devil has devised and brought into the world, which are only antagonist to the true faith and to genuine brotherly love. Christ is mine as well as St. Bernard's; thine as well as St. Francis'; if one therefore should come to you and say, I shall go to heaven if I belong to this or that brotherhood, then tell him that he is deceived; for Christ cannot suffer, and will not allow any other than the common brotherhood, which we all have one with another; yet you come here, you fool, and will set up one of your own. This I will readily permit, that they be set up, not to help the soul, but as some one's endowment, and thus serve as a fund from which they who need shall be helped.

Thus we all of us, as Christians, have attained a brotherhood in baptism, whereof no saint possesses more than I or you. For just as costly as that one was purchased, at the same price was I also purchased. God has devoted as much toward me as to the greatest saint, except that *he* may have employed the treasure better, and may have a stronger faith than I.

But love is greater than brotherhood, for it extends even to our enemies, and especially to those who are not worthy of love. For as faith performs its work where it sees nothing, so also should love see nothing, and there especially exercise its office where there appears nothing lovely, but only disaffection and hostility. Where there is nothing that pleases me I should the more seek to be pleased. And this spirit should go forth fervently, says St. Peter, from the whole heart, just as God loved us when we were not worthy of love.—Now follows further:

As those who have been born again. Again we should do this, because we are not what we were before (he says), but have become new creatures. This has not come to pass through works, but is a consequence of the new birth. For thou canst not make the new man, but he must grow, or be born; as a husbandman cannot make a tree, but it must grow, itself, out of the earth, and as we certainly do not become the children of Adam, except as we are born and derive sin from our parents. So here it cannot come to pass through works that we should become the children of God, but we must also experience the new birth. This, therefore, is what the Apostle would say: since ye then have become new creatures, ye should conduct yourselves otherwise than ye did, and lead a new life. As ye before lived in hate, ye are now to walk in love—in all respects the reverse. But how has the new birth taken place? This, also, follows:

V. 23. *Not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, even of the living word of God which endures for ever.* Through a seed are we

born again, for nothing grows as we see otherwise than through seed. Did the old birth spring from a seed? then must the new birth also spring from a seed. But what is this seed? Not flesh and blood! What then? It is not corruptible, but an eternal word. It is, moreover, that whereon we live,—food and nourishment. But especially is it the seed whereby we are born again, as he here says.

But how does this take place? After this manner: God lets the word—the Gospel—go forth, and the seed falls in the hearts of men, and wherever it fastens on the heart the Holy Spirit is present, and makes a new man; then the man becomes another, of other thoughts, of other words and works. Thus you are entirely changed. All that you before avoided you now seek out, and what you before sought after that you fly from. In respect to the birth of the body, it is the case that when conception takes place the seed is changed, so that it is seed no longer. But this is a seed which cannot be changed; it remains for ever; it changes me, so that I am transformed in it, and whatever is evil in me passes away from my nature. Therefore it is indeed a wonderful birth, and of extraordinary seed.—Now St. Peter says, further:

V. 24, 25. *For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.* This passage is taken from the prophet Isaiah, xl., where the prophet speaks in this manner: "Cry! what shall I cry? Cry thus: all flesh is grass, and all its glory like a flower of the field; the grass withereth and

the flower falleth away, but the word of God endureth for ever." These words St. Peter introduces here; for this is, as I have said, a rich epistle, and well spiced with Scripture.

Thus speaks the Scripture, then: *The word of God endures for ever*. What is flesh and blood is corruptible, like the grass which is yet green, so that it blooms; so whatever is rich, strong, wise and fair, and thus is flourishing (which all belongs to the bloom), yet you observe its bloom wither; what was young and vigorous will become old and ugly; what is rich will become poor, and the like. And all must fall by the word of God. But this seed cannot perish.—Now Peter concludes:

This is the word which is preached unto you. As though he would say, ye are not to look far in order to reach the word of God; ye have it before your eyes; the word is that which we preach; therewith may you subdue all evil lusts. You are not to seek it from afar; you have nothing more to do than fully to apprehend it when it is preached. For it is so near us that we may hear it, as Moses also says, in Deut. xxx.: "The word that I command you is not far from thee, that thou must go therefor far away; ascend into heaven or go beyond the sea, but it is near thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." It is indeed soon spoken and heard. But if it enters our hearts it cannot die or perish, and will not suffer you to perish; as long as you cleave to it, it will cleave to you.

As when I hear that Jesus Christ died to take away my sins, and has purchased heaven for me, and bestows upon me all that

He has, then I hear the Gospel; the word quickly is gone if some one preaches it, but if it falls into the heart and is apprehended by faith, it can never pass away. This truth no creature can overthrow; the clearest reasoning avails nothing against it; and if I too would strike the devil while I am in his jaws, and am able to lay hold on this, I must oppose him from this and abide fast by the word. Therefore he well says, ye must look for no other Gospel than that which we have preached to you.

So St. Paul also says, in the first part of the Epistle to the Romans: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God which saves all that believe in it." The word is a divine and eternal power; for although the voice or speech is soon gone, yet the substance remains,—that is, the sense, the truth, which is conveyed by the voice. As when I put a cup to my mouth in which wine is contained, I swallow the wine, although I do not thrust the cup down my throat.

So likewise is the word which the voice conveys; it falls into our hearts and lives, while the voice remains without and passes away. Therefore it is indeed a divine power; yea, it is God Himself. For thus He speaks to Moses, Exodus iv.: "I will be in thy mouth;" and Ps. lxxx.: "Open thy mouth wide, proclaim glad tidings; say thou art hungry, I will satisfy thee, I will presently speak to thee comfortable things."

So, also, in John xiv., Christ says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Whoever confides in this is born of God; so that this seed of our Lord is itself divine. All this goes to teach us

that we cannot be helped by works. Although the word is a small matter, and seems as nothing while it proceeds out of the mouth, yet is there such an immense power in it that it makes those who confide in it the children of God. John i. Thus does our salvation raise us to an exalted blessedness.

This is the first chapter of this Epistle, wherein you perceive in what a masterly manner St. Peter preaches and treats of faith, whence we easily see that this Epistle is true Gospel. Now comes the second chapter, that will instruct us in matter of works, how we should conduct ourselves toward our neighbor.

CHAPTER II

V. 1-5. *Wherefore lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and hatred, and all evil speakings, and desire the sincere milk of the word, as new-born babes, that ye may grow thereby, if ye have besides tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom ye are come as to a living stone, which indeed is rejected by men, but before God is elect and precious. And be ye also as living stones built up into a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Here he begins to show what the characteristic and fruit of a christian life should be. For we have said often enough that a christian life consists in two things,—faith toward God and love toward our neighbor. Besides, although christian faith has been given us, yet as long as we live many evil lusts remain in the flesh, since every saint must be in the flesh, but what is in the flesh cannot be entirely pure. Therefore St. Peter says, be ye armed, that ye may guard yourselves against the sins which still cleave to you, and strive continually against them. For the worst enemies that we have hide themselves in our bosoms, and in our very flesh and blood, wake, sleep, and live with us, like a wicked spirit which we have brought home with us and cannot send off. Wherefore, since through faith Jesus Christ is entirely yours, and ye have obtained salvation and all His blessings, let it be your aim henceforth to lay aside all wickedness, or all that is

evil, and all guile, so that no one act toward another deceitfully or falsely; as with the world it has become a common expression to say, the world is full of falsehood, which is indeed so. But we Christians should not act with such deceit, but uprightly and with pure hearts, toward men as toward God, fairly and justly, so that none take the advantage of another in sale, purchase or promise, and the like.

Likewise also St. Paul says to the Ephesians, ch. iv., "Lay aside lying, and speak truth every one with his neighbor." Truth is, that yea be yea, and nay, nay,—but hypocrisy, when any one represents himself by his outward mien as being what he is not in his thoughts. For solemn is the obligation that we should show ourselves to be what we are at heart. A Christian should so act that he could permit all men to see and know what he thinks in his heart. Let him, then, in all his walk and conduct, be anxious only to praise God, and serve his neighbor, and be afraid of no one; and let every one be in heart what he is in appearance, and not act a feigned part, whereby he shall make others gape with wonder.

Furthermore, St. Peter says that we should lay aside hatred and evil speaking. Here he fitly takes up the common vices among men, in their intercourse with one another. This evil speaking is exceedingly common and injurious,—is soon done, insomuch that none of us is aware of it. Therefore he says, be on your guard, if ye already have a christian spirit, that ye may know what are the fruits of this spirit.

V. 2. *And desire the sincere milk of the word, as new-born babes.* Here he institutes a comparison, and would say,—ye are like those new-born babes who seek nothing but the milk: like them, striving for the breasts and milk, so be ye also eager for the word; endeavor for it, have an appetite for it, that ye may suck in the intelligible, sincere milk.

These words are, indeed, figurative; for he did not mean literal milk, or literal sucking, as he does not speak of a literal birth. But he speaks of another milk which belongs to the mind, which is spiritual, which is procured by the soul, which the heart must draw in. It must be, moreover, sincere (or unfalsified), not as the custom is, to sell false wares; since there is truly strong obligation, and great necessity, that to the new-born and young Christian, the milk should be given pure, and not corrupted. But this milk is nothing but the Gospel, which is also the same with seed, whereby we are conceived and born, as we have heard above. Yet it is also the food which nourishes us when we arrive at maturity; it is also the harness wherewith we equip and clothe ourselves,—yea, it is all these in common. But whatever is appended to it is human doctrine, whereby the word of God is falsified; therefore the Holy Spirit would have it so that every Christian shall see to it, what he sucks for milk, and shall himself learn to decide in regard to all doctrines.

But the breasts which yield this milk, and which the babes suck, are the preachers in the christian Church. As the bridegroom says to the bride, in Cant. iii., "Thou hast two breasts

like two young roes; they are as though they were hung with a bundle of myrrh;" as the bride says, Cant. i., "My beloved is like a bundle of myrrh that lies continually between my breasts." That is, we should ever *preach* Christ. The bridegroom must resort to the breasts; so that it is unjust, and the milk will be corrupt, if we do not preach Christ alone.

There is this, besides: when it is preached that Christ died for us, and rescued us from sin, death, and hell,—this is delightful and sweet, like milk; but after this, the cross also must be preached, that we are to suffer, as we have done; and this is a strong draught, it is strong wine. Therefore, Christians should have at first given them the weakest drink,—that is, milk. For it cannot be preached in its simplicity, except Christ be preached first of all; which is not bitter, but is mere sweet, rich grace, from which you receive yet no smart. This is the sincere milk of the word.

But here St. Peter has supported himself by Scripture, as he is throughout rich from the Scriptures. In the Old Testament it is written, both in Exodus xxiii., and Deuteronomy xiv., "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk." For what reason did God permit that to be written? Of what concern to Him was it that no suckling should be killed while as yet it sucks milk? Because He would thereby give us to understand that which St. Peter here teaches; and it is as much as if he had said, preach gently to the young and weak Christians; let them be carefully fed, and thrive in the knowledge of Christ; burden them not with

strong doctrine, for they are as yet too young, but after they have become strong, let them then be slaughtered and sacrificed on the cross.

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