ARTICLE IV.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PETER.

BY THE REVEREND CHANCELLOR J. J. LIAS,
HAYWARD'S HEATH, ENGLAND.

THE question of the genuineness of St. Peter's Second Epistle has long been discussed. In ancient times, as well as our own, that genuineness has been disputed. Since the advent of a succession of critics of various schools in Germany who have revived the question of the canon of Scripture on modern lines, a lively discussion has been carried on, and arguments more or less cogent have been adduced on both sides. Of late, as we all know, a school of critics has arisen that refuses to discuss such questions at all. The point at issue is declared to be already settled by the "final and irreversible conclusions of modern scientific criticism" (as if *any* conclusions of science, until they have been fully tested by comparison with established facts, can be regarded as settled); and if any one presumes to question those conclusions, he is annihilated by a supercilious stare, or reduced to silence by a smile of haughty contempt. Nevertheless, the *last* German critic, Theodor Zahn, not less thoroughly equipped for his task than those of his nation who have gone before him, has decided in favor of the genuineness of the Epistle, and largely on the ground, on which the writer of these lines may claim to have anticipated him, that the Christian church in its

early days was hardly likely to have been imposed upon by a deliberate forgery.[1]

It may be thought impossible to say anything new on so hackneyed a subject. But a line of argument has occurred to the writer, based on a fact which has been observed by others beside himself, *that the construction of the sentences in First Peter, Second Peter, and Jude* is unlike that in any other book of the New Testament, and that these peculiarities of construction are common to the three writers. The argument from the use of particular words in First Peter and Second Peter has been somewhat too readily abandoned, in face of the facts that both of these Epistles lay great stress on the argument from prophecy, and that both Epistles appeal to the personal experiences of the Apostle.[2] But the point that I shall endeavor to demonstrate is, that the order of the words in various sentences is (1) more disturbed, and (2) more involved, in these three Epistles, than in any other New Testament writer. It must be remembered that Second Peter and Jude have generally been regarded as having a close connection with each other.

The order of the words usual in New Testament Greek is the same as in English. Taking no account of particles, the noun usually comes first, with such words as depend upon it, then the verb, then the words in various ways dependent upon the verb, and on one another. This order of words is seldom departed from in the Gospel and Epistles of St. John, and in the Apocalypse.[3] Yet if (and the same thing is common in

[1] Principles of Biblical Criticism, p. 198.

[2] See 1 Peter i. 10, 11; 2 Peter i. 19–21; 1 Peter v. 1; 2 Peter i. 14, 17, 18; cf. John xxi. 18.

[3] It is obvious that, as far as it goes, this suggests St. John's authorship of the Apocalypse. All the writers of the New Testament, with the exception of St. Luke, were Jews.

English) it is desired to lay emphasis on any particular word, it is invariably removed from its ordinary place in the sentence. It is needless to give instances of this. Every reader of the Greek Testament is familiar with it. Then at times the genitive or other case dependent on a noun, as well as the article belonging to it, is placed between the article and the governing noun in agreement with it. So we have in Heb. vi. 1: "Therefore leaving the of the beginning of Christ discourse."[1] In verse 7 we have a more involved construction: "For land which drinketh the upon it coming oftentimes rain." I quote the Epistle which is supposed to be written in the best Greek. I confine myself to the Epistles, because in narrative such inversions of the order are comparatively rare. St. Paul makes considerable use of the inversion for the sake of emphasis. In his later Epistles he makes more use of the insertion of the dependent genitive between the article and the word in apposition to it, than in his earlier Epistles.[2] In St. James the inversion for emphasis is not *very* frequent. There are instances of the insertion of dependent words between the article and the substantive in iii. 9; iv. 14. St. John, I believe, has *but one* instance of the latter, and not many of the inversion for emphasis. Instances of more complicated construction of sentences in these writers are *very few indeed.*

If we turn to the three Epistles mentioned above, considerable harshness of construction is, on the contrary, very common. It makes the Epistles very difficult to translate. Not only are the inversions for emphasis and the inclusion of the dependent genitive between the article and the governing

[1] I have been requested to avoid the use of Greek characters. I trust I may be able to make my meaning intelligible in English.

[2] See Eph. i. 15; iii. 9, 19; iv. 24, etc.; Phil. i. 29; ii. 12, etc.

noun very common, but inversions of a far more unusual character are found very frequently in them all. I proceed to enumerate them.

FIRST PETER.

In First Peter i., such constructions as "those in the power of God guarded" (ver. 5) and "of you the faith" (instead of "the faith of you," i.e. your faith, ver. 7) are very common indeed. In verse 11 we have "the in them Spirit of Christ, testifying beforehand." This construction is as unusual in New Testament Greek as in English.[1] In verse 14 we have "to the former in your ignorance lusts." In verse 15 the verb is at the end of the verse, as it would usually be in Latin and German. Placing a dependent genitive between the definite article and the governing noun is common in German, but impossible in Latin, as that language has no definite article. In verse 17 we have the curious construction, "in fear the of your sojourning time have your conversation." In verse 18 we have "from the vain of you conversation"; in verse 19, "but by the precious blood as of a lamb blameless and unspotted Christ." In ii. 12 we find "your conversation among the Gentiles having good"; in verse 16, "and not as a cloak having of wickedness the freedom"; in verse 18, "Being subject [St. Peter, by the way, seems fond of the participial construction] in all fear to your masters"; in verse 19, "For this is a grace, if for conscience of God bears any one griefs, suffering unrighteously." He is also very fond of putting the verb at the end, as in verse 20. In verse 24 we have "who our sins himself offered up" (or "bear").

In chapter iii. we have such constructions as "through the of the women conversation without word will be gained over"

[1] Note that the word translated "testifying beforehand" agrees, not with "Christ," but with "the" and "Spirit."

(ver. 1); "regarding the in fear your pure conversation" (ver. 2); "Of whom let there be not the without of braiding of hair and putting round of golden [ornaments] or the robing of garments order" (or "adornment," ver. 3); "the hidden of the heart man" (ver. 4); "The men likewise, dwelling according to knowledge as with the weaker vessel — the female [one]" (ver. 7); "Ready ever for defense to everyone who asketh you a discourse" (ver. 15); "That in what they speak against [you] may be put to shame those who accuse your good in Christ conversation" (ver. 16); "In whom [or "in which"] also to the in prison spirits having gone he preached" (ver. 19); "Which also you an antitype now saveth baptism" (ver. 21).

Chapter iv. contains even more surprising constructions: "that no longer of men to the desires but to the will of God the rest in flesh to live time" (ver. 2); "in which they esteem it strange not running you unto the same of the of riot excess speaking evil" (ver. 4); "Before all the unto yourselves love earnest having" (ver. 8); "Think it not strange at the in you burning to temptation to you happening" (ver. 12); "because the of the glory and the of God spirit on you resteth" (ver. 14).

In chapter v. we have: "The also of the coming to be revealed glory sharer" (ver. 1); "the unfading of the glory crown" (ver. 4); "knowing the same things of the sufferings which in the world of you brotherhood to be perfected" (ver. 9); "Who hath called you unto the eternal of him glory in Christ" (ver. 10).

SECOND PETER.

We come now to the Second Epistle. This is addressed "to those equally valuable to us obtaining faith" (ver. 1).

In verse 10 the faithful are exhorted to "give diligence sure of you calling and election to make." In verse 15 St. Peter says that he "gives diligence moreover each of you to have you after my departure the of these things memory to make," and proceeds "for not by means of sophisticated fables having followed out did we make known to you the of our Lord Jesus Christ power and presence" (ver. 16). In verse 17, "for having received from God the Father honor and glory a voice having come to him such from the majestic glory," the position of the word "such" is most unusual, even with St. Peter. Verse 19 is curiously arranged: "We have more sure the prophetical utterance." Chapter ii. 3 has "and in covetousness with manufactured [or "artfully contrived"] words of you they make merchandise." In verse 5 there is "but the eighth Noe of righteousness herald he preserved." In verse 6 we find "and cities of Sodom and Gomorrah having laid in ashes to a catastrophe he condemned, an example of those about to become ungodly having appointed them"; in verse 7, "and righteous Lot, wearied out by the of the lawless in lasciviousness conversation, he rescued." Verse 8 is a hardly less involved instance of the same kind of arrangement. Verse 9 is similar. In verse 10 we have "especially those after flesh in desire of defilement going, and despising lordship"; verse 12, "but these as reasonless living beings having become natural unto capture and corruption."[1] The whole chapter is full of inversions which elsewhere are rare, and where emphasis hardly seems to be needed. I will mention only two more: "from the having been delivered to them holy command" (ver. 21), and "the of the true proverb," the proverb itself following.

Chapter iii. has: "I stir up of you in remembrance the

[1] Cf. Jude 15.

pure understanding" (ver. 1); "and the of your apostles commandment of the Lord and Saviour" (ver. 2). The chapter contains several other instances of placing the dependent genitive and its article between the article and the noun in dependence upon it. As already stated, that construction is elsewhere somewhat uncommon.

JUDE.

The sentences in the Epistle of Jude are less involved. Nevertheless, in an Epistle of one chapter the following present themselves: "to the in God the Father beloved and by Jesus Christ preserved called [ones]" (ver. 1). In verse 3 the "called" are exhorted to strive earnestly "for the once delivered to the saints faith." In verse 5 they are reminded that "Lord people from the land of Egypt having saved, the second time those who believed not destroyed." And "the angels [he proceeds in ver. 6] who did not keep their own order, but left their own household unto the judgment of the great day in chains eternal hath under darkness he kept." In verse 12 there is the curious construction, "trees with autumnal [i.e. more or less decayed] fruit, without fruit, twice dead, rooted up." Verse 15 may be noted for a curious use of the word ἀσεβέω and its derivatives.[1] Verse 18 tells us that "in the last of the time shall be mockers according to their own lusts going of ungodly things" (ungodliness, R.V.). Besides a considerable tendency throughout to put the verb at or near the *end*, instead of the *beginning*, of a sentence, in verse 23 we have "hating also the from the flesh spotted garment."

It will be seen that the Greek of these three Epistles has a peculiar character of its own. Future research may be able

[1] Cf. 2 Peter iii. 3.

to locate this singular form of the Greek of the apostolic age. I cannot undertake the task. But I have observed that the same difference exists between the Greek of one Father and another, though whether that is a matter of locality or not I am unable to say. But it seems probable that Alexandrian, Asiatic, and Palestinian Greek may be found to have their specific differences, and that now attention has been called to the fact that the Greek of the New Testament is not simply Hebraistic, but a form of a language which was widely spoken in the apostolic era, the various dialects and styles of this widespread form of Greek may eventually attract as much attention as those of ancient Greece. My humbler task has been to direct attention to the phenomena presented by these three Epistles, and to hope that it may henceforth be found a factor in the question of the genuineness of the Second Epistle ascribed to the leader of the apostolic band.