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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

CHRIST PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

1 PET. III. 18-20.

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IN the English version of this passage we read: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. iii. 18-22). In the original the essential words are: "θανατωθεις μὲν σαρκί, ζωοποιηθεις δὲ πνεύματι, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι πορευθεις ἐκήρυξεν, ἀπειθήσασί ποτε, ὅτε ἀπεξεδέχετο ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροθυμία ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε, κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ."

The object of this Article is to ascertain *when, where, by whom* (instrumentally or otherwise), and *to whom*, this preaching was done.

The issue lies between two widely diverse constructions of the passage: first, that which assumes that this preaching was done — as to *time when* — in the interval between Christ's death and resurrection; as to *place where* — in Hades — the realm of the dead; on the point *by whom* — by Christ himself in his disembodied state; on the point *to whom* — to the lost spirits who while living on earth were of Noah's generation, the very men who were persistently unbelieving during the period while the ark was in preparation. Second, that which assumes that this preaching was done — as to *time when* — while the ark was in preparation; as to *place where* — on this earth, and not in Hades; on the point *by whom* — by Christ really, but through Noah instrumentally, whom Peter himself speaks of elsewhere as “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. ii. 5); on the point, *to whom* specifically — to those hardened, defiant sinners, with whom God in long-suffering waited so long, and of whom he at length said, “My Spirit shall not always strive” [with these men]. The main issue lies between these two constructions; all minor issues over this passage are of comparatively trivial importance.

I maintain that the latter construction (not the former) is the true one. My argument will be more readily apprehended if I first suggest what I take to be the course of the writer's thought in this passage and its context.

The Christians to whom Peter is writing were obviously exposed to contumely, and perhaps to violent persecution. Peter tells them it is better to suffer (if they must) for doing well than for doing ill, and would enforce this by the example of Christ. He suffered for us even unto death, but rose therefrom to a more glorious life — suffered beyond most of his people under the extremest frailties of flesh, but by the Spirit of God was exalted in his resurrection to a deathless, omnipotent power. Expanding and illustrating the latter point, he thinks of the Divine Spirit as the embodiment of divine power, and as having been manifested first (in the order of the inspired record) in his striving with the resisting, impersuasive generation of Noah's time, but as

reaching its climax of augmented force at and after his resurrection, when Jesus through the mission of the Holy Ghost entered upon a dispensation of efficiency never known before. The going (*πορευθεῖς*) to preach to the wicked men of Noah's time (vs. 19) is set over against the going (*πορευθεῖς*) into heaven (vs. 22), which shortly followed his resurrection, when he took his seat at "the right hand of God; angels, authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." The former going and preaching proved unavailing; but the latter going, following close upon his death of agony, opened a new era of unsurpassed power and majesty. Therefore, with such a case before them let his saints have no fear of suffering, be it only for righteousness' sake; there is unspeakable glory to follow.

This antithesis between the first going (*πορευθεῖς*), translated "went" (vs. 19), and the second (*πορευθεῖς*), translated "is gone" (vs. 22), but better, having gone (the precise usage of the aorist participle without the article), — that is, between the less successful, not to say unsuccessful, work of the Spirit at the first stage of his manifestations, and his gloriously successful work in his last stage, — should not be overlooked. That this antithesis, amounting almost to contrast, was in Peter's thought cannot well be doubted. At the beginning point, where the Spirit's moral agency appears first on the scripture record, almost the whole living world resisted the Spirit, and were consequently lost under the flood. You might even *count* the saved, only eight, all told, from that whole generation; but at the closing point — which Peter so well remembers — one day brought in three thousand, all baptized; for baptism is suggested to Peter here by the waters of the flood from which Noah was saved. Such I take to be the scope of thought throughout this passage and its context.

Of the two rival constructions above put, I reject the former and justify the latter by the three considerations following:

I. The grammatical usage of the Greek language admits the second construction, and favors it rather than the first.

II. The points assumed in the second construction (as above put), and underlying it, are fully in harmony with the scriptures, and especially with the known views of Peter, with his habits of thought, and with the scope of the context.

III. The points assumed under the first construction and the results involved in it are in harmony neither with Peter nor with any other inspired writer, and are in the highest degree improbable, not to say morally impossible.

I. The grammatical usages or laws of the Greek language admit and favor the second construction rather than the first.

The main point to be ascertained is the *time when* this preaching was done, and, especially, the time as related to the disobedient state referred to in the aorist participle (*ἀπειθήσασι*). There can be no doubt that the "spirits" preached to were the men of Noah's generation; nor is there any doubt that they are spoken of as "disobedient" (i.e. unbelieving, impersuasive) *then*, i.e. while living on the earth before the flood. The real point to be settled, therefore, is this,—the time-relation of the preaching to the disobedient state; was it substantially simultaneous, i.e. only shortly preceding—preceding, perhaps, in the order of nature, they being preached to because they were in an unbelieving state, and needed the most solemn admonition to save them from their impending doom; or may the disobedient state have been two or three thousand years before the preaching, having, therefore, no special time-relation to it whatever?

This nice point is determined in the Greek participle by the omission or insertion of the article. The article being omitted (as here), the participle becomes, in its sense, an adjective, and as to its time-relations, implies that the disobedient state was co-existent with the preaching, or preceded it by only the briefest time-period. The preaching was done to spirits *then disobedient*.

On the other hand, the participle with the article inserted before it (the noun which it qualifies being made definite, as here, by the article) becomes essentially equivalent to the finite verb with its relative pronoun, and would merely

identify these spirits as the same who were disobedient in the time of Noah. This, it will be seen, would admit and sustain the theory that the preaching was done long after the disobedient state referred to. It would really make no account of the time when the disobedience existed.

Our authorized version translates by using the finite verb and relative pronoun: "Who sometime were disobedient." This would require in the Greek, either the finite verb with the relative (a literal translation), or the participle with the article repeated before it (*τοῖς ἀπειθήσασι*). But the present Greek text requires the translation, "Preached to the spirits, they being disobedient," or "Preached to those disobedient spirits."

This point of distinction, viz. between the participle with the article preceding and the participle without it, being thoroughly fundamental in our present discussion, should be made as clear as possible. Grammarians have not been uniform in their use of terms for defining this distinction, yet the distinction itself they have universally recognized.¹ It being supposed always that the noun which the participle qualifies has the article, and that a pronoun, expressed or implied, is equivalent to a noun made definite by the article, then the participle with the article repeated before it serves to identify, and answers the question *Who?* Without the article it expresses some circumstance or quality. If the verb be intransitive, its participle approximates closely to an adjective; and it answers the question *What?* This distinction will become more apparent by reference to actual usage. Examples from Peter are specially in order. We have one in 1 Pet. v. 10: *ὁ δὲ θεὸς πάσης χάριτος, ὁ καλέσας ἡμᾶς*, (the same who hath called us; but not, having called us, nor, when he hath called us); *εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον αὐτοῦ δόξαν ἐν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὀλίγον παθόντας*—us, having suffered

¹ When without the article as in our passage it is called "circumstantial" appositive; also by some a predicate, or a predicative participle; while *μετὰ* the article it is called an "attributive," or an "epithet" describing and defining.

a little while, or *after* we have suffered ; but not, us who have suffered a little while, for this would simply identify the parties, and would require either the article before the participle or the finite verb. The reader will notice that here we have both cases illustrated, that of the aorist participle *with* the article, (*ὁ καλέσας*), and that of the same participle *without* it, (*παθόντας*). In the latter case, the participle is brought into the closest time-relations with the word it qualifies, “hath called us, having suffered awhile ; us, transient sufferers.” The implication here is, calls us into his eternal glory immediately after this transient suffering ; or in other words, the aorist participle gives antecedent (past) time, yet not indefinitely long past, but the shortest time — immediately preceding. See another example : *Καί ταύτην τὴν φωνὴν ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐνεχθείσαν* (2 Pet. i. 18) ; ungrammatically translated in the English version : “This voice which came from heaven we heard ;” but correctly translated thus : “This voice we heard *as it was borne down* from heaven ;” or more closely, “We heard it *coming* down.” The English version would require in Greek either the article before the participle, or, as the English translators put it, the finite verb. The true construction here suggested gives the sense of the participle without the article. The reader will notice that the article preceding this participle would give the sense, This voice — the same which came down from heaven — we heard, etc., and would lay stress upon its identification ; but would leave the time-relations altogether loose, for the voice might have come down indefinitely long before it was heard. On the other hand, the participle without the article makes the time-relation very close : This voice we heard coming down, or as it came down. Of course the time of the aorist participle is past, but in usage, naturally, as here, only by the shortest time-period : we heard it on its way down. Yet again, see the participle with the article repeated before it in Acts xvii. 24 : *ὁ θεός ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον*, God, he who made, or the same who made, the world ; the participle with the article identifying God as the Creator, yet indicating

no special time-relation. But without the article, this would be good Greek: God having made (*ποίησας*) the world in six days, rested on the seventh; the time-relation in this case being close and definite.

That the participle with the article is substantially equivalent in identifying force to the finite verb with its relative, may be seen in Rev. vii. 14. To the question, "Who are these, — the ones arrayed in white robes — and whence came they?" The answer describes and identifies them thus: The comers forth from great tribulation (*οἱ ἐρχόμενοι*) — the *same* who came out of, etc., and who have washed [finite verb], and have made them white [finite verb] also. The defining answer begins with the participle [article prefixed], but continues with two finite verbs in the same line of thought. Correspondingly in our passage, with the article prefixed, this participle (*τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν*) would have defined these spirits as the same who were some time or other disobedient, but without giving any special light as to the time when. The finite verb and its relative pronoun (as in the authorized version) would mean the same — both answering the question *Who?* But without the article, the participle answers the question *What?* What about them? — by saying "disobedient," impersuasive; and as to time when, assumes it to be coëtaneous, or at farthest, shortly preceding. Cases illustrating and proving this close time-relation, are in place here, and may be found in profusion; e.g. Peter's own words (Acts v. 30, essentially repeated Acts x. 39); not quite accurately put in the authorized version: "Whom ye slew and hanged [Aor. Part.] on a tree;" the sense of the Greek being, not that they first slew him, and then hung his dead body on a tree; but this: Whom, having hung him upon the wood [of the cross], ye slew; i.e. slew by hanging — by crucifixion. The hanging preceded the taking of life, yet only by a very short interval. Paul might furnish cases, e.g. Acts xvii. 32: "Hearing of the resurrection from the dead [Aor. Part.], "some mocked," — i.e. upon hearing; as soon as they heard. "Howbeit certain men, attaching themselves unto him

[Aor. Part.], believed.” The attaching themselves and the believing were closely related in time.

Cases in which the aorist participle qualifies the subject [nominative] of a finite verb, and exemplifies this close relation of time, are most abundant. Running the eye over a single chapter (Acts vii.), we may note: “Then, *having gone forth* (ἐξελθὼν) from the land of the Chaldeans, he dwelt in Charran” (vs. 4), with no long interval of time between; “The patriarchs, *moved* with envy [Aor. Part.], sold Joseph into Egypt” (vs. 9) — as closely related in time as cause and effect; “Jacob, *hearing* of corn in Egypt [Aor. Part.] sent out our fathers” (vs. 12), i.e. as soon as he heard, by reason of his having heard; “Joseph *having sent*, [Aor. Part.], called to him his father Jacob” (vs. 14), i.e. he invited him by means of a special embassy with wagons; the time-relation being as close as the agency employed is to the thing done; “He brought them forth, *having shown* [Aor. Part.] wonders and signs” (vs. 36), i.e. by means of miracles he effected their exodus — the time-relation of the two acts being that of the means used to the end accomplished.

I close the list with two other examples, from Peter, viz. “For not by *following* [Aor. Part.] cunningly devised fables have we made known unto you,” etc. (2 Pet. i. 16) — the time-relation being most intimate; “But saved Noah, *bringing in* [Aor. Part.] the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. ii. 5), i.e. he put Noah in a place of safety, *what time* he was bringing that flood upon the wicked.¹

My argument, therefore, holds that the Greek text of our passage — the participle ἀπειθήσασι qualifying τοῖς πνεύμασι, but without repeating the article — cannot be used to identify the spirits preached to as the same who lived in the age of the flood, since this would require the article before the participle. Being without the article, it must describe a fact of their state *at the time* of the preaching, or immediately

¹ A very elaborate and able discussion of our passage in its grammatical relations appeared in the *New Englander* for October, 1872, p. 601, from Prof. S. C. Bartlett.

preceding it, as a reason why the preaching was vital to their salvation. This close relation of time between the preaching and the disobedient state is, therefore, one point of my argument. The other is that broad distinction between the participle with the article before it, *identifying*, answering the question, *Who?* and the participle without the article, answering the question *What?* by giving some fact or circumstance or quality, in the nature of an adjective.

By virtue of these points of Greek usage, I feel justified in the position that this Greek text admits and favors the second of the constructions put above, rather than the first. I purposely make this statement moderate, impressed that I might make it stronger, even to the extent of saying that Greek usage *demand*s the construction I give the participle. But my argument requires not this added strength; if the Greek *admits* my construction, the points that follow will supply the necessary force of argument.

The use of the Greek particle *πότε*, following *ὑπειθήσασι*, comes into this discussion, inasmuch as it is supposed by some to favor the English version. The rendering "some time" is not specially felicitous; its sense being rather, *in ancient time*, long ago. Cases of its use appear in our author, rendered "in the old time" (1 Pet. iii. 5), and said specially of Sarah, the wife of Abraham; also, "Prophecy came not *in old time* by the will of man" (2 Pet. i. 21); and "in time past" (1 Pet. ii. 10), said originally of the Gentiles, through long ages alien from God.¹ As used in our passage, we might translate: They being persistently unbelieving in that ancient time when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah through the entire period while the ark was in preparation.

II. My second argument is, that the points assumed and made to underlie the construction I adopt are fully in harmony with the scriptures, and particularly with the known views of Peter, with his habits of thought, and with the scope

¹ Other cases of its usage occur in Rom. vii. 9; xi. 30; Gal. i. 13, 23; Eph. ii. 2, 3, 11, 13, etc.

of the context. These points assumed and underlying may be put in the order which the course of thought in our passage suggests.

1. That "being quickened" (*ζωοποιηθείς*), being in antithesis with "being put to death," must refer to Christ's resurrection. This seems too obvious to require argument.

2. "Quickened," i.e. raised from the dead, "*by the Spirit*" (*πνεύματι*), cannot mean in his spiritual nature, as distinct from his physical; for this, as applied to his resurrection, gives no pertinent sense. I must therefore take this word to denote the power by which he was raised from the dead, viz. the *Spirit of God*. Peter is accustomed to ascribe Christ's resurrection to the power of God (See Acts ii. 24, 32, 33; iii. 15; iv. 10; x. 40). That he should put it here in this form (*πνεύματι* — the Spirit), may be due to one or more of the following considerations:

(a) The influence of antithesis with the "flesh" just preceding. Flesh is weakness; spirit is power. Peter's mind runs to antitheses.

(b) In apostolic thought especially, and in general throughout the scriptures, the Spirit of God is almost synonymous with *divine power*. The conception of the Spirit seems to be, *God in the manifestation of his power; God in act; God putting forth energy*. Thus, throughout the Old Testament the Spirit of God *came upon* men, and made them heroes of faith and valor; e.g. Othniel (Judg. iii. 10); Gideon (vi. 34); Jephthah (xi. 29); Samson (xiv. 6, 19). In the same sense the Spirit was in Joshua, as also in Moses (Num. xxvii. 18); was upon Elijah conspicuously (Luke i. 17); and in double portion upon Elisha (2 Kings ii. 9, 15, 16). God's creative energy is said to be in and by his Spirit (Gen. i. 2; Ps. xxxiii. 6; civ. 30). The usage of Luke, or rather of Jesus himself, as given by Luke, is strongly in point: "Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with *power* from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49); "Ye shall receive *power*, the Holy Spirit coming upon you" (Acts i. 8); "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with *power*" (Acts x. 38).

(c) The case of Jesus, first suffering even to death, then raised to highest glory *by the Holy Ghost*, becomes by analogy more directly practical to the point of Peter's exhortation in this context; for Christians get their blessings from suffering, by means of the Spirit of God coming more abundantly upon them. We see, a little onward, that this is in Peter's thought: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for *the Spirit of glory and of God* [as here upon Christ] *resteth upon you*" (1 Pet. iv. 14).

3. Jesus raised from the dead by the Spirit of God suggests the glorious effusions of the Spirit which immediately followed and signalized that event, and also the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of the Father in unutterable majesty, as we see at the close of this chapter. But these glories will be seen more impressively in the light of contrast. Go back, therefore, to the first example recorded in scripture of the moral working of the Spirit of God (viz. in Gen. vi. 3) upon Noah's generation, in connection with his preaching of righteousness — when Christ went down and began his ministrations of preaching through human lips, and the Holy Ghost accompanying. Note how persistently impersuasible that whole generation were, and how Christ was morally compelled to desist from this endeavor, and say: My Spirit shall strive with these scoffing unbelievers no longer.

Do these assumed facts need special proof? What Peter thinks of Noah as "a preacher of righteousness," he has himself made entirely certain by a second reference to him in a similar connection, (2 Pet. ii. 5), where he uses the same word as here, calling him a *κήρυξ* — a herald, one who proclaims as with loud voice to a people reckless, morally deaf, all absorbed in their worldly engrossments. Such is the character everywhere ascribed to the sinners of that generation. Recall the tone of the narrative in Gen. vi.; consider the allusions in Job xxii. 15–18; and close with the testimony of Jesus, Luke xvii. 26, 27. Surely no generation of sinners in our race has a reputation more pronounced than they for bold, blasphemous, persistent unbelief and sin.

Can it be necessary to prove that in Peter's theological system, Christ was in and with the Old Testament saints and prophets, preaching through their lips, with the Holy Ghost attending, even as under the gospel dispensation? These Epistles testify that in his view "holy men of God spake in old times as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21), and that "the prophets searched diligently what time the *Spirit of Christ which was in them* did signify" (1 Pet. i. 11.). If still it should seem to some reader that this construction puts a New Testament sense upon Old Testament historic facts, I only answer, even so; and so it should be; for is not the author a New Testament man, looking back upon Old Testament facts with New Testament eyes, from the stand-point of the gospel age? Can we forget that Peter has been through the scenes of the great Pentecost, and is blessedly familiar with this glorious doctrine of the gospel age — that Jesus preaches through the lips of men, by and with the Holy Ghost?

4. But these "spirits" are thought of as "in prison," and obviously, either when Christ was preaching to them, or when Peter was writing about them. I freely admit that the former would be the more natural construction if there were no objections to it; but, such objections existing, the latter construction seems admissible. It is plain enough in these Epistles that Peter continually thinks of the wicked dead as "reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. ii. 9), "to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever" (vs. 17); and of "the angels that sinned as cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (vs. 4). Indeed, this view of their state was entirely familiar to his mind; so familiar, that it is by no means strange that when those sinners of Noah's time came up to his thought, he should describe them as "in prison." Why he called them "spirits" it may be difficult to decide absolutely; whether because they were, in fact, only "spirits" at the time of his writing, — their bodies having long before perished in the flood, — or through some word-attraction with

the term "spirit," just before used, and so present to his mind.

5. It remains to say that these allusions to Old Testament history are thoroughly in harmony with Peter's habits of thought and of writing. Peter, himself a Jew, and writing to Jews; himself familiar with the Jewish scriptures, and writing to men likewise familiar with them, was in the habit of referring to those scriptures, and especially to historic cases on record there, to illustrate or to confirm his positions. See instances in 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6; and 2 Pet. ii. 5-8, 15, 16; and iii. 5, 6; where we have allusions to Sarah and to the holy women of olden time; to Noah a second time, as here; to Sodom and Gomorrhah, and to Lot; to Balaam and to his history; to the deluge a third time. It should not surprise us, therefore, to find in our passage a reference to Noah, as acting for Christ, preaching righteousness to the persistent scoffers of his age during the many years while the ark was in preparation. Such reference is altogether in harmony with the habit of this apostle's thought and writing.

This remark may be extended to all the points above made, as assumed and underlying the construction which I present as the true one; viz. that "quicken'd" should refer to Christ's resurrection; that this resurrection was by divine power, of which the Holy Spirit is the recognized embodiment and manifestation; that thus the whole circuit of Christ's relations to the Holy Spirit comes up to the writer's mind; that the preaching of Noah to the men of his generation was with the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, was referred to and involved in the words: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. vi. 3); that this preaching may be said to have been done by Christ ("he went and preached")—the Spirit always representing Christ, witnessing both with and for him ("he shall receive of mine and shall show unto you," John xvi. 14). Moreover, it is thoroughly in harmony with Peter's thought to speak of those lost souls as being "in prison;" and finally that it was but natural for the mind of Peter to grasp the entire sweep and range of Christ's spiritual

work on the hearts of men as associated with his resurrection; yet as beginning, where it first appears in the scripture record, in the age of Noah, in its comparative weakness; but as reaching the acme of its power in his own age, and subsequent to the scenes of the great Pentecost. His words in this passage show that his mind spanned the whole space between the point where Christ went and preached to the spirits, then (in Noah's time) persistently impersuasive; and the point where he went into heaven to be enthroned high "above all principalities and powers." This construction is therefore in harmony with the current doctrines of the scriptures, with the well known views of this writer, and with the course of thought in this entire passage; and therefore, for all these reasons, commends itself to us as the true one. If the question be asked, why did Peter in this passage single out those sinners in particular, and that special case of Christ's preaching, the answer is abundantly obvious.

III. It remains to substantiate our third position; viz. that the points assumed and underlying the first above-named construction are neither in harmony with Peter nor with any other sacred writer; and are in the highest degree improbable, not to say morally impossible.

1. This construction has no support from other passages of scripture. On this point the sole reliance has been upon Ps. xvi. 10, quoted by Peter in Acts ii. 27. The English version of the passage in Ps. xvi., with its context is: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope; *for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." In Acts ii. 25-27 Peter quotes these words from the Septuagint with no essential variation, inferring from them that this passage relates to Jesus, and not to David, and proves that the resurrection of his body before corruption in the grave was definitely predicted by the prophet David.

The great question here is, Does this passage whether in

David or in Peter, teach that Christ's soul went down to hell, taking this word in the sense of the *abode of imprisoned souls*. I answer, Not at all; for "soul" is not to be taken here in distinction from body, but rather in the sense of me, myself — a position sustained by frequent Hebrew usage, and by the parallelism of the verse "thy Holy One." The verse should be construed to affirm not two facts, but one only; not the destiny, first of the soul, and, secondly, of the body; but one fact only, of Jesus, with no special distinction as to body and soul — that he should not be given up to death (personified) so as to experience corruption in the grave. For, let it be carefully noted, this is the only point that comes into Peter's argument, and, remarkably, is the only point which Paul (Acts xiii. 35), quoting this very passage from David, even names at all. He manifestly assumes that he has the whole thought of the verse in this second clause. Farther, both Sheol in Hebrew, and Hades in Greek, are used by poetic license to personify the power of death, especially to corrupt and destroy the body. Such personification appears in Paul (1 Cor. xv. 55), according to the current text, and in Hos. xiii. 14. The sense then would be, thou wilt not surrender me to this decomposing power. The tyrant grave shall not be suffered to turn my body back to dust. With this corresponds the usage of the Hebrew verb [אָנַח] to which Gesenius, in this passage, gives the sense, "to leave at one's disposal," "to give up to his pleasure"; and Fuerst, "to surrender to one's disposal."

Under the head of our exegetical argument it remains to say that the prepositions — both that before Sheol [לְ] and that before Hades [εἰς] — go strongly against the sense of *leaving in* a place, and in favor of the sense, *surrendering to*, into the power of. Legitimately, normally, they both mean *to* or *into*, not *in*. Thus far our exegetical argument, which I present in the briefest manner, because the current of modern exegetical opinion is so decidedly strong in support of the construction here given.

There is another kind of argument appropriate to the point

in hand—that of logic or common sense. Thus, it is claimed that Christ went down to hell to preach to lost spirits there—to preach a second probation and a new era of mercy. This, it is claimed, the words of Peter, now under discussion, signify, and therefore, affirm. In farther support of this theory appeal is made to David (Ps. xvi. 10), and to Peter (Acts ii. 27). But, unfortunately, these passages, even conceding the construction which the parties referred to give them, say nothing about the missionary enterprise; nothing about gospel preaching, nor, indeed, about any sort of preaching; but simply teach us that *God would not let him stay there!* Indeed! the compassionate Jesus zealously pushing a missionary enterprise into the very prison of the lost; but the Lord his God interposing to remand him back, even before his body in the grave could see corruption! What can this mean? Who planned this missionary enterprise? Was God's blessed will in it, and was Jesus in full sympathy with his Father's will? If so, how happens it that the only allusion to this mission, outside of our passage in Peter, is this in which the spirit of prophecy through David expresses the exultant hope that God would not let Jesus remain there! To complicate the case still more, the passage (Ps. xvi.) speaks in the person of Jesus himself, and expresses, therefore, not merely the purpose of God that he should not stay there, but the exulting hope and confidence of Jesus that his Father would not let him stay! What kind of missionary spirit, then, is this? Again, the reference to the Divine Spirit as co-working with Christ in this preaching would seem to imply that he was, at least, in sympathy with this preaching—a circumstance which renders it yet more inexplicable that the Father should be only solicitous to get him away. Is it not more than probable that this whole theory of a missionary enterprise to the abode of lost souls is a mere fancy, utterly foreign from fact?

2. That it is a mere fancy and no fact would seem to be sufficiently proved by Christ's words to the penitent thief: "This day shalt thou be with me" (Luke xxiii. 43). Where?

Not in that Hades where spirits are "in prison," but "in Paradise." Thus Christ's own testimony on the point of his locality immediately after death, brought into court upon the question of his going down to the prison of the lost, *proves an "alibi."* He did not go down to that hades, because by his own showing, he did go up to heaven. Will it be maintained that hell and heaven are precisely the same place, and that Jesus comforted the penitent thief with the promise of being that day with him among lost spirits "in prison," "reserved in chains under darkness"?

3. There is still another grave objection to the theory that Christ went to hell with the attendant agency of the Holy Ghost to preach to those lost souls "who sometime were disobedient," that is, in the age of Noah.

The hypothesis of another probation for sinners after death attracts some truly benevolent minds, and they look favorably, may we not even say hopefully, wistfully, toward it, as affording a possible relief from the thought of a ruin absolutely hopeless and remediless. Consulting human reason, it seems to them almost or quite demanded that those who die in very early life, also those who have never heard of Jesus and have had no light from a written revelation, should have a new probation under more auspicious circumstances. This is not the place to discuss these fairest aspects of this great question extensively. I allude to them rather for the purpose of saying that if this supposed allusion in scripture to a future probation obviously *contemplated these classes of our world's population*, the argument would have much greater plausibility, not to say force. But note how far otherwise are the facts of the case, even on the construction of our passage now under discussion. The class of sinners thought of here as being visited and preached to (according to the construction now in question) are precisely those who appear on the scripture record, not as never faithfully warned; not as having never enjoyed the preaching of God's faithful servants; not as having never had the light and the strivings of the Spirit; but as having had both the preaching of righteousness

and the striving of the Spirit to such a degree that their case stands out in this respect very prominently on the sacred record; and, moreover, as having repelled every merciful endeavor to bring them to repentance with most persistent infatuation and insolent scorn. Eliphaz (in Job xxii. 15–18) puts their spirit before us by means of a few graphic strokes: “Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden, who were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood; who said unto God, depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for them,” i.e. for his own people? Our Lord (Luke xvii. 26, 27) represents them as utterly unmoved by the solemn announcement of God’s displeasure and of the impending flood, up to the very hour when Noah entered into the ark. On the sacred record throughout they stand as special and prominent examples of sinners *resisting the Holy Ghost*, until Infinite Mercy, to shield the Spirit’s person and work from dishonor, and to show a scoffing world that neither his person nor his mission can be persistently scorned with impunity, proclaimed before heaven and earth, “My Spirit shall not always strive” with these men: let the flood come! Now, on the theory under discussion, these identical sinners are selected from among all the indefinite varieties and classes of the whole world’s population as those to whom Jesus hastened as soon as his soul left his body, *to preach to them new hope and mercy!* Note also, in order to see the case in its full and true light, he went *by and with the Spirit* — the same Holy Ghost whom they had insulted, grieved, resisted, until God declared in awful earnestness before heaven and earth, “My Spirit shall strive [with such sinners] no longer.”

What shall we say of this? Is the policy of God’s counsels reversed? Has the unchangeable God revoked the earlier policy and adopted a new one? Or is the God of the Old Testament one being and the God of the New another? Or is the policy of God the Father one, and the policy of Christ and of the Holy Ghost another? Or, again, do the words, “shall not strive with men forever,” mean that the Spirit

takes up the work after death, and then and thenceforward prosecutes it forever? And is the sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost to have forgiveness "in the world to come"? Has the Lord repented of his early policy as being too rigorous and not sufficiently lenient and compassionate, that Jesus should hasten to testify to a change of administration by singling out those very men whose doom as incorrigible and hopeless stands out so prominently under the old economy, and by making this special mission to them as soon as death released soul from body?

If it be, indeed, true that God has reversed his policy in regard to those sinners whose contemptuous scorn of the Holy Ghost made their case utterly hopeless for this world, then unquestionably this supposed mission of Christ, with the Spirit's presence attending, to this very class of sinners, is of all supposable methods the most decisive to prove it. I do not see how any less or other significance can be found in it. There could not be the least danger of mistaking its meaning. For aught I can see the whole question might fitly be made to turn on this single point: Can it be safely assumed that God has abandoned the policy so clearly declared over the case of those hardened men of Noah's age; so distinctly and solemnly reiterated in the subsequent records of his written word; and so terribly foreshadowed, not to say fulfilled, in his retributions on sinners throughout all the ages of human history? Is this change of policy destined to open a new field for the preaching of Christ and for the agency of the Holy Ghost, beginning, for the sake of a more brilliant example, with those sinners whose doom as they went down under the flood *seemed* to show, according to our author, that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. ii. 3-9)? And is this total change of policy destined to work to the utter reversal of those declarations which have certainly seemed to be as clear and emphatic and solemn as human language ever bore: "He that believeth not the Son *shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth*

on him" (John iii. 36)? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46)?

Or, the point of my present argument may be put in few words, thus: Let it be assumed that Christ descended into hell to preach to the spirits of the dead men of Noah's time; and then let the question be put, Why did he select those sinners to preach to in hell above any and every other class? Why preach to them, and to them only, unless (as said above) that he might the more decisively reverse the divine policy manifested in withdrawing his Spirit from them, and in hurling upon them, instead, that awful flood?

It cannot be necessary to expand and press this argument farther. The construction named first above must be set aside as not only lacking all support from the Bible but as in palpable antagonism against it. It is utterly reckless of the scope of this context. It leaves neither dignity nor self-consistency to the character of God. It is, therefore, not only more than improbable, it is morally impossible.

I close with but a single remark, bearing on the subject of a future probation.

The doctrine of a future probation for those who have had a probation in this world is not only without scripture authority, but squarely, utterly, and irreconcilably, against it. As to a future probation for those who have had no probation in this world, all we need say here is, that it lacks definite scripture authority. The Bible does not teach it, we might say does not *touch* it. The assumption that the passage herein discussed favors it is simply baseless, for these two reasons: (a) *It has no reference to that class of moral agents*, but does refer to another and totally different class. (b) That construction of this passage by which some have sought to make it a foundation for this theory, or even this hope, lacks support grammatically, while logically and scripturally it cannot possibly be true. So far forth, therefore, as any support from revelation is concerned, the theory of a future probation (analogous to the moral probation given to our race in the present life) is a theory with no bottom underneath.