an English version, it must be inverted),  
**how small a fire kindleth how great a  
forest** (the word also sometimes signifies  
“*matter*,” and thus the A.V. But the  
ordinary meaning, **forest**, gives a far livelier and more graphic sense here)!

**6.]** **Likewise the tongue is a fire, that  
world of iniquity** (a complete repertory of  
all wickedness, as the world is of all  
things): **the tongue is** (literally, is constituted: but meaning no more than that  
it *is*) **among our members, that one which  
defileth the whole body** (thus justifying  
the title given to it of “*that world of  
iniquity*”), **and setteth on fire** (the other  
clause, **the tongue is a fire**, is now taken  
up) **the orb** (or, **wheel**) **of the creation**  
(in interpreting these difficult words, one  
thing must especially be borne in mind:  
that, like *the whole body*, they designate  
some material thing which agreeably to  
the figure used may be set on fire. This  
would at once set aside all figurative explanations  
See the proposed meanings  
discussed in my Greek Test. The sense,  
*the whole orb* or *cycle of creation*, is that  
which I have seen cause to adopt: for  
other reasons, and because it fits well into  
the context. After the mention of the  
*orb of creation*, it is natural that the  
Apostle should take up, with the **for**  
(ver. 7), the details of creation, and assert  
that they might all be tamed by man,  
but that the tongue is untameable. Again,  
such sense is most agreeable to the similitude just used, of a small spark kindling  
a vast forest. The expression in the A. V.,  
**the course of nature**, is sufficiently near  
the meaning, and expresses it in better  
English, perhaps, than any other); **and is  
itself set on fire** (in the original the verb  
is in the *present* tense, indicating that it  
is habitually, continually, so set on fire:  
see below) **by hell** (which is itself *the hell  
of fire*, in Matt. v. 22, and many other  
places. These words are not to be explained away: but are to be literally  
taken. It is the devil for whom hell is  
prepared, that is the tempter and instigator  
of the habitual sins of the tongue. It is  
out of the question [see above] to regard  
the sentence as alluding to the original  
temptations of the fall: equally so, to suppose it to have a future reference, and to  
imply that the tongue shall be tormented  
in hell: as some have done. Wiesinger  
says: “This passage reminds us, in its  
general sense, of the Old Test. sayings,  
Prov. xvi. 27; Ps. cxx. 2–4; Ecclus. xxviii.  
11 ff.” This last clause is strikingly  
paralleled by the Targum on Ps. cxx. 2,  
where the deceitful tongue is compared  
with coals of juniper, which are set on fire  
in hell beneath. But none of these passages  
treats of the destruction which the  
tongue brings on its own body).

**7, 8.]** *The untameableness of the tongue*.  
The thought in ver. 3, though not directly  
leading on to this, yet is a hint tending  
towards it. **For** (a fresh fact is adduced,  
substantiating the strong terms used of  
the mischief of the tongue) **every nature**  
(natural generic disposition and character;  
and so below, when joined to **of man**: not,  
*kind*, ‘genus,’ as A. V. and many Commentators) **of beasts** (quadrupeds, see below), **and winged things, and of creeping  
things, and things in the sea** (creation is  
divided into these four classes. The first  
then is not to be taken in its wide sense,  
as Acts xxviii. 4, 5, but as distinguished  
from the other three, i.e. as in quadrupeds,  
beasts of the earth, proper. The classification in Peter’s vision, Acts x., is different: “*Fourfooted things of the earth,  
and Beasts, and creeping things, and  
winged things of heaven:*” *beasts* there  
at least including the fishes), **is** (habitually)  
**tamed, and hath been tamed** (has long ago  
been reduced into subjection: such taming  
has become an enduring fact in the world’s  
history, exemplified every day) **by the**