INTRODUCTION. ] 2 PETER. (cH. xvnn   
   
   
 of the wicked,” &e., iii. and the more detailed exhortation of i, 5—8   
 is compressed together in the shorter “but grow in grace,” &c., of iii. 17.   
 Thus also the qualifying expression, “in the righteousness,” ch. i. 1, is   
 borne in mind in ii, 21 and iii, 13. So again, iii. 1 takes up again i, 13,   
 and the words “ by the holy prophets” of iii. 2, refer back toi. 19. In   
 fact, the contents of this short Epistle are bound together by the closest   
 and most intimate connexion and coherence,   
 7. The above notices will make sufficiently plain the occasion of the   
 Epistle. It was, the prompting of a holy desire to build up and confirm   
 the readers, in especial reference to certain destructive forms of error in   
 doctrine and practice which were then appearing and would continue to   
 wax onward.   
 8. If we seek to fix historically the heretics here marked out, we find   
 the same difficulty as ever besets similar enquiries in the apostolic Epis-   
 tles, They are rather the germs of heresies that are described, than the   
 heresies themselves as known to us in their ripeness afterwards. These   
 germs ever found their first expansion in the denial of those distinctive   
 doctrines of the Gospel which most closely involve Christian practice   
 and ensure Christian watchfulness. First came the loosening of the   
 bands which constrained man by the love of Christ and waiting for   
 Him; then when true liberty was lost, followed the bondage of fanciful   
 theological systems and self-imposed ereeds. The living God-man   
 vanished first out of the field of love and hope and obedience, and   
 then His place was taken by the great Tempter and leader captive of   
 souls, .   
 9. So that when we enquire to which known class of subsequent   
 heretics the description in our Epistle applies,—whether to the Carpo-   
 eratians as Grotius believed, or to the Sadducees, as Bertholdt, or to the   
 Gnosties, or Nicolaitans, as others, the reply in each case must be, that   
 we cannot identify any of these precisely with those here described :   
 that the delineation is both too wide and too narrow for each in succes-   
 sion: but that (and it is an important result for the question of the date   
 of our Epistle) we are here standing at a pomt higher up than any of   
 these definite names of sects : during the great moral ferment of the first   
 fatal apostasy, which afterwards distributed itself into various divisions   
 and sects.   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 SECTION IL.   
   
   
 FOR WHAT READERS IT WAS WRITTEN.   
   
 1. The readers are nowhere expressly defined. By ch. ifi, 1, it would   
 appear that they are identical with at all events a portion of those to   
 whom the first Epistle was addressed, And to this the expression of   
 258