§ 1.) FOR WHAT READERS WRITTEN. [rytropuction.   
   
 of this sane Jewish error, which was the successor of the Pharisaical   
 confidence in the fact of possessing the law, without a holy life: sce   
 Rom. ii. 17 ff. Justin Martyr says of the Jews: “They say that even   
 if they be sinners, but know God, He will never impute sin to them.”   
 There is indeed no trace in the Epistle of an anxious and scrupulous   
 observance of the Mosaic ritual on the part of the readers: but this may   
 be because in the main on this point the Writer and his readers were   
 agreed. And we do find in it traces of an erroncous estimate of the   
 value of mere “ religious service” (ch. i. 22 ff.): and a trace of fanatical   
 zeal venting itself by “wrath.”   
 5. The situation of these Judeo-Christian churches or congregations,   
 as discernible in the Epistle, was this. They were tried by manifold   
 trials, ch. i. 2. We are hardly justified in assuming that they were   
 entirely made up of poor, on account of ch. ii. 6, 7; indeed, the former   
 verses of that chapter seem to shew, that rich men were also found   
 among them. However, this probably was so for the most part, and   
 they were oppressed and dragged before the judgment-seats by the rich,   
 which trials they did not bear with that patience and humility which   
 might have been expected of them as Christians, nor did they in faith   
 seek wisdom from God concerning them: but regarded Him as their   
 tempter, and their lowliness as shame, paying carnal court to the rich,   
 and despising the poor.   
 6. As might have been expected, such worldliness of spirit gave rise   
 to strifes and dissensions among them, and to a neglect of self-preserva~   
 tion from the evil in the world, imagining that their Christian faith   
 would suffice to save them, without a holy life.   
 7. There is some little difficulty in assigning a proper place to the   
 rich men who are addressed in ch. v. 1 ff. They can hardly have been   
 altogether out of the pale of the Christian body, or the denunciations   
 would never have reached them at all: but it is fair to suppose that they   
 were unworthy professing members of the churches.   
 8. It must be owned that the general state of the churches addressed,   
 as indicated by this Epistle, is not such as any Christian teacher could   
 look on with satisfaction. And it is extremely interesting to enquire,   
 how far this unsatisfactory state furnishes us with any clue to the   
 date of our Epistle : an enquiry which we sball follow out in our next   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 section.   
 9. The designation “in the dispersion” need not necessarily limit the   
 readers to the Jewish churches out of Palestine: but the greater cir-   
 cumference may include the lesser; the term “dispersion” may be   
 vaguely used, regarding Jerusalem as the centre; and as in Acts viii. 1,   
 where we read “and they all were dispersed throughout the lands of   
 Judea and Samaria,’—the exception being the Apostles, who remained   
 in Jerusalem,—may comprehend Palestine itself.   
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