ces; and then to eſtabliſh the faith and animate the hope of ſincere believers, both under their preſent and their approaching ſufferings.”

The opinions which he is moſt anxious to refute are theſe, that God is the author of ſin, (ch. i. 13.); that the belief of the doctrines of the goſpel was ſufficient to procure the favour of God for them, however defi­cient they were in good works, (ch. ii.) He diſſuades the Jews from aſpiring to the office of teachers in the third chapter, becauſe their prejudices in favour of the law of Moſes might induce them to pervert the doctrines of the goſpel. He therefore guards them againſt the ſins of the tongue, by repreſenting their pernicious ef­fects; and as they thought themſelves wiſe and intelli­gent, and were ambitious of becoming teachers, he adviſes them to make good their pretenſions, by ſhowing themſelves poſſeſſed of that wiſdom which is from above, (ch. iii.).

The deſtruction of Jeruſalem was now approaching; the Jews were ſplit into factions, and often ſlaughtered one another; the apoſtle, therefore, in the fourth chap­ter, admoniſhes them to purify themſelves from thoſe vices which produced tumults and bloodſhed. To rouſe them to repentance, he foretels the miſeries that were coming upon them. Laſtly, he checks an irreligious ſpirit that ſeems to have prevailed, and concludes the Epiſtle with ſeveral exhortations.

The authenticity of the firſt Epiſtle of Peter has never been denied. It is reſerred to by Clemens Romanus, by Polycarp, and is quoted by Papias, Ire­næus, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian. It is addreſſed to the ſtrangers ſcattered through Pontus, &c. who are evidently Chriſtians in general, as appears from chap. ii. 10. “In time paſt they were not a people, but are now the people of God.” From Peter’s ſend­ing the ſalutation of the church at Babylon to the Chriſtians in Pontus, &c. it is generally believed that he wrote it in Babylon. There was a Babylon in Egypt and another in Aſſyria. It could not be the former, for it was an obſcure place, which ſeems to have had no church for the four firſt centuries. We have no authority to affirm that Peter ever was in Aſſyria. The moſt probable opinion is that of Grotius, Whitby, Lardner, as well as of Euſebius, Jerome, and others, that by Babylon Peter figuratively means Rome. Lardner dates it in 63 or 64, or at the lateſt 65.

St Peter’s chief deſign is to confirm the doctrine of St Paul, which the falſe teachers pretended he was oppoſing; and to aſſure the proſelytes that they flood in the true grace of God, (ch. v. 12.) With this view he calls them elect; and mentions, that they had been declared ſuch by the effufion of the Holy Ghoſt upon them, (ch. i. 1,2.) He aſſures them that they were re­generate without circumciſion, merely through the goſ­pel and reſurrection of Chriſt, (ver. 3, 4. 21­­—25.); and that their ſufferings were no argument of their be­ing under the diſpleaſure of God, as the Jews imagined, (ver. 6—12.) He recommends it to them to hope for grace to the end, (ver. 13.) He teſtifies, that they were not redeemed by the Paſchal lamb, but through Chriſt, whom God had preordained for this purpose before the foundation of the world, (ver. 18—20.)

The second Epiſtle of Peter is not mentioned by any ancient writer extant till the fourth century, from which

time it has been received by all Chriſtians except the Sy­rians. Jerome acquaints us, that its authenticity was diſputed, on account of a remarkable difference be­tween the ſtyle of it and the former Epiſtle. But this remarkable difference in ſtyle is confined to the 2d chap­ter of the 2d Epiſtle. No objection, however, can be drawn from this circumſtance; for the ſubject of that chapter is different from the rest of Peter’s writings, and nothing is ſo well known than that different ſubjects ſuggeſt different ſtyles. Peter, in deſcribing the cha­racter of ſome flagitious impoſtors, feels an indignation which he cannot ſuppreſs: it breaks out, therefore, in the bold and animated figures of an oriental writer. Such a diverſity of ſtyle is not uncommon in the beſt writers, eſpecially when warmed with their ſubject.

This objection being removed, we contend that this Epiſtle was written by Peter, from the inſcription, *Si­mon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.* It appears from chap. i. 16, 17, 18, that the writer was one of the diſciples who ſaw the transfiguration of our Saviour. Since it has never been aſcribed to James or John, it muſt therefore have been Peter. It is evident, from chap. iii. 1. that the author had written an Epiſtle before to the ſame perſons, which is another circum­ſtance that proves Peter to be the author.

It is acknowledged, however, that all this evidence is merely internal; for we have not been able to find any external evidence upon the ſubject. If, therefore, the credit which we give to any fact is to be in proportion to the degree of evidence with which it is accompanied, we ſhall allow more authority due to the goſpels than to the epiſtles; more to thoſe epiſtles which have been generally acknowledged than to thoſe which have been controverted; and therefore no doctrine of Chriſtianity ought to be founded ſolely upon them. It may alſo be added, that perhaps the beſt way of determining what are the eſſential doctrines of Chriſtianity would be to examine what are the doctrines which occur oſteneſt in the goſpels; for the goſpels are the plaineſt parts of the New Teſtament; and their authenticity is moſt completely proved. They are therefore beſt fitted for common readers. Nor will it be denied, we preſume, that our Saviour taught all the doctrines of the Chris­tian religion himself; that he repeated them on different occaſions, and inculcated them with an earneſtneſs pro­portionable to their importance. The Epiſtles are to be considered as a commentary on the eſſential doctrines of the goſpel, adapted to the ſituation and circumſtances of particular churches, and perhaps ſometimes explaining doctrines of inferior importance. 1. The eſſential doc­trines are therefore firſt to be fought for in the goſpels, and to be determined by the number of times they occur. 2.They are to be ſought for, in the next place, in the un­controverted Epiſtles, in the ſame manner. 3.No eſſential doctrine ought to be founded on a ſingle paſſage, nor on the authority of a controverted Epiſtle.

That Peter was old, and near his end, when he wrote this Epiſtle, may be inferred from chap. i. 14. “Knowing that ſhortly I muſt put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jeſus has ſhewn me.” Lardner thinks it was written ſoon after the former. Others, perhaps with more accuracy, date it in 67.

The general deſign of this Epiſtle is, to confirm the doctrines and inſtructions delivered in the former; “to excite the Chriſtian converts to adorn, and ſtedfaſtly ad-