

SCRIPTURE CLASS NOTES.

The Second Epistle of Peter.

It is with extreme reluctance that many commentators admit the canonicity of this Epistle. Many more are still less inclined to attribute it to St. Peter. Origen, who is the earliest writer mentioning it, about the year 230 A.D., admits its doubtful authority. If it be considered as a confidential letter to a body of students pledged to secrecy as to the instructions received in it, or referred to there as having been previously imparted orally, its subsequent divulgence at a later date will serve to account for some of these difficulties. It was not written to the multitude, but to those who had obtained their lot in the opportunities and advantages of that era, to remind them (i: 12) of the mysteries that had been revealed to them. The exoteric churches of the present day, with no glimmer of the truths hid in these chapters, naturally find the Epistle difficult of explanation, while the English translators have concealed the meaning of many passages. The teaching followed is that of the mystic Gnostic and other philosophies of the early Christian era, and is identical with the large measure of the secret teaching made public through the Theosophical Movement of the present day. The various steps of progress towards the realization of the Godhead or divine nature (i: 4; Acts xvii: 29) are clearly indicated (i: 5-7). To faith, that is, loyalty to your ideal, whatever it be, supply virtue; to virtue science, gnosis; to science, self-control; to self-control, endurance or patience; to endurance, piety, not the ascetic quality, but the more practical reverence of constant aspiration, for to piety is to follow love of brotherhood, and to that the wider and all-reaching love of the highest charity. These things lead to the super-science, the over-knowledge, or epignosis of the higher planes of consciousness (i: 8). He that lacketh these things is blind, short-sighted, having taken of Lethe, as the original has it (i: 9) referring to the Greek mysteries, though the translators have buried the idea in an English commonplace.

The central idea of all occult teaching, that man is a being who periodically incarnates in a body on the physical plane

until he has perfected himself through the power and presence of the Lord or Master (ii: 2) inspires the thought of dwelling in the body as in a tabernacle (i: 13) and that the writer, after his exodus, his going out, (the expression used in the East to the present day), here translated decease, (i: 15) would do his best to help his pupils to keep these things in remembrance. They are not fables (i: 16) but matters into which the apostles had been initiated as epoptai, the highest degree of the Eleusinian mysteries, but here translated "eye-witnesses." They had therefore the word of prophecy (i: 19) more sure, whereto all should take heed, until for themselves Phosphor or Lucifer, the light-bringer, the Christ, translated day-star, arise in their own hearts. Prophecy does not come by desire but holy men speak as they are moved, (i: 21).

The second chapter deals with the prevailing wickedness of the times under illustrations of previous periods. The type of the materialist, the carnal man, is drawn, walking after the flesh, despising Lordship and Dominion, daring, self-willed. This is the merely animal man, *aloga*, irrational, without the higher spiritual life, physical (*phusika*) creature only (ii: 12) in whom the incarnation of the higher self has not been accomplished.

The third chapter cites ancient scriptures of many religions concerning the end of the various cycles and the certain passing away of all phenomenal things, even heaven itself having to be renewed. Our limits do not permit of more than suggesting what may be found by study; but the presence of the Eternal should be held in mind, the practical non-existence on the higher planes of space and time, as we understand them, (iii: 8) should be remembered, and the solemn and necessary warning of (ii: 21) should be well considered.

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS.

July 21. Leviticus x: 1-11.

Some recent writers, in an attempt to defend the reputation of the Almighty from the imputation of blood-thirst, inhumanity and injustice, have recognized in the accounts given in this passage and the similar narrative of Korah, Dathan