

mies of christianity testify to the fact of the early christians meeting on a "set solemn day" for religious purposes. Pliny, governor of Bythynia, in a letter to the Roman Emperor, says of the christians in his day: "Upon a *set solemn day* they were wont to meet together, and oblige themselves by a sacrament, or, solemn oath, not to commit any wickedness," &c.

From these facts I conclude that it is the duty of christians to observe the first day of the week sacredly to the Lord. With the Bible before them they ought to inquire how shall I in the best manner promote the cause of the Lord? The spiritual interest of our fellow men should be kept distinctly in view. All our words and our actions should have special reference to the death and resurrection of our Lord, and thus we shall best promote the present and future salvation of the human family. And on every other day, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, all should be done to the glory of God."

W. W. E.

STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

No. 3.

EPISTOLARY WRITINGS.

BY A. CAMPBELL.

EPISTOLARY communications are not so easily understood as historic writings. The historian writes upon the hypothesis that the reader is ignorant of the facts and information which he communicates, and therefore explains himself as he proceeds. The letter-writer proceeds upon the hypothesis that the person or community addressed is already in possession of such information as will explain things to which he only alludes or simply mentions. This is more especially the fact when the writer of a letter addresses a people with whom he is personally acquainted, amongst whom he has been, and with whom he has already conversed upon most of the subjects on which he writes. A letter to persons who have heard the writer before, who know his peculiarity; and, above all, who are perfectly acquainted with their own circumstances, questions, debates, difficulties, conduct, &c. may be every way plain and of easy apprehension to them, when it may be very difficult, and in some places unintelligible, to persons altogether strangers to these things. It is a saying to which little exception can be made, that every man best understands the letters addressed to himself. It is true, if another person were made minutely acquainted with all the business from first to last, with all the peculiarities of the writer, and circumstances of the person addressed, and with all the items of correspondence, he might as fully and as clearly understand the letter, as those to whom it was addressed.

There is no doubt but that the apostolic letters were plain and of easy apprehension, as respected the style and sentiment, to the persons who first received them, though some of the things contained in them might be difficult to be comprehended or fully understood even by them. The difficulties that lie in our way of perfectly understanding them, though much greater than those in the way of the persons to whom they were first sent, are not at all insurmountable. The golden key of interpretation is very similar to the golden rule of morality. To ascertain what we