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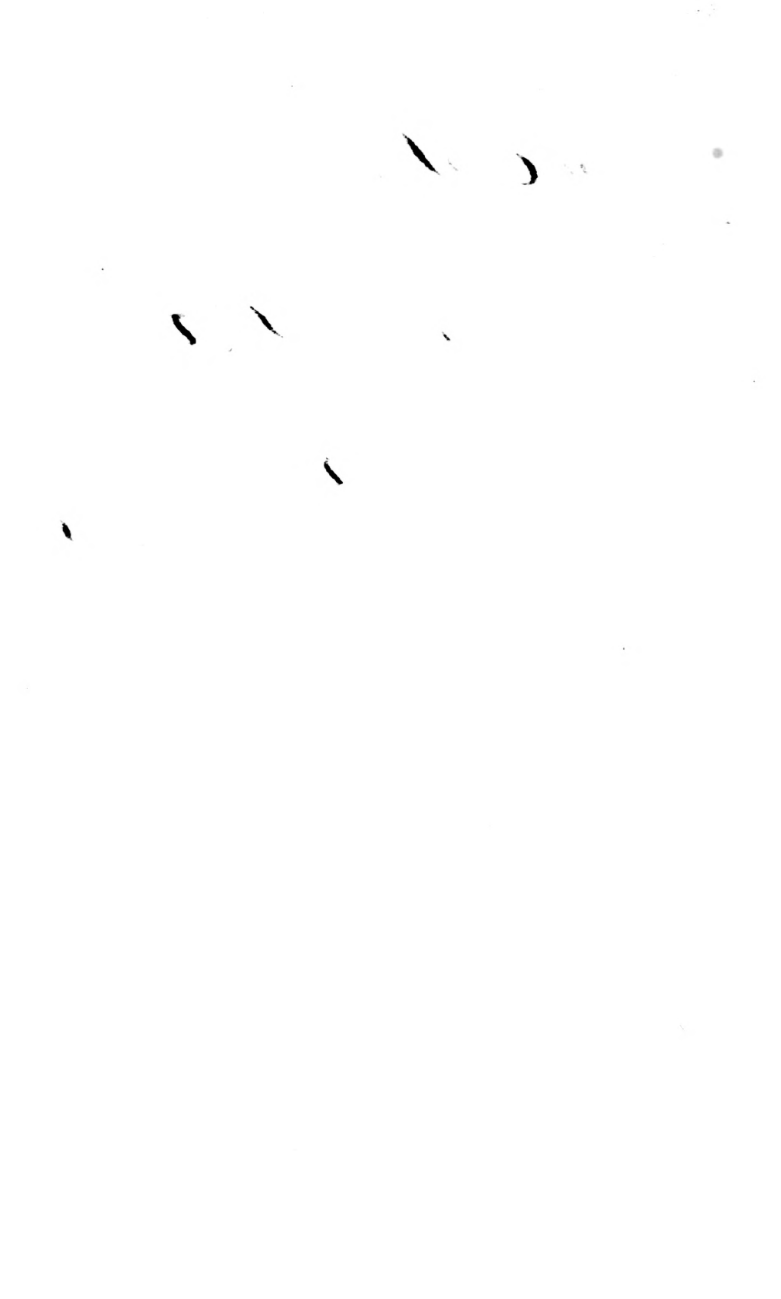
S. C. Savage,

from

Mr. J. S. Ropes.

Roxbury,

Sept., 1860.



Morning Hours in Patmos.



MORNING HOURS IN PATMOS:

THE

OPENING VISION

OF

THE APOCALYPSE,

AND

Christ's Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia.

BY

A. C. THOMPSON,

AUTHOR OF "THE BETTER LAND," "GATHERED LILIES," ETC.

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MORNING HOURS IN PATMOS.

Chapter First.

THE BENEDICTION.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand. *REV. 1:1—3.*

PATMOS.

OUR company, sailing along the southern shore of Asia Minor, came among that group of classical islands known as The Sporades. The day

previous we left Rhodes, and its harbor, where once stood the renowned Colossus, accounted one of the Seven Wonders of the world. We were now off the coast of ancient Caria. Before us lay the island of Samos, celebrated as the birth-place of Pythagoras; and a little farther on was Chios, long famous for its wines. Several hours before the dawn of day, we came abreast of a small rocky island. Its circumference is perhaps fifteen miles, its coast high and stern, and its whole aspect cheerless. On account of its lonely, prison-like character, it was selected by the Romans as a place of banishment for state criminals.

Yes, there is Patmos! the scene of apocalyptic visions. There was the last inspired prophecy communicated; there, for the last time, did the Lord Jesus reveal himself to an entranced seer, never more to appear thus visibly to mortal eyes, till he shall come again with the clouds of heaven, when every eye shall see him. Thou hoary-headed evangelist, apostle and prophet, how did thy venerable form bend under labors in the quarry and the mine! How was thy holy soul grieved by the converse of culprits, meriting, as

thou didst not, such penal banishment! What scenes of transcendent glory and terror passed before thine eye, with symbols of deep mysterious meaning,—scrolls written over with the hieroglyphics of Heaven! What trumpet-tones of startling import didst thou hear! How did thine affectionate eye glance across the water to beloved disciples at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea!

It was a bright moonlight. The solemn stillness of surrounding waters, and the shadowy outlines of silent Patmos, were quite consonant with the grandeur and dark prophetic shading of the Apocalypse. During those quiet early hours, and whilst the morning sun poured his rays on the Ægean Sea, the author read—and naturally with special interest—the opening Vision of John. The thoughts which here follow were then, for substance, suggested to him.

In prosecuting our voyage, we afterwards came among the Cyclades; but none of those shining islands, immortalized by classic song and history, had a thousandth part of the interest

which attached to the crest of that rugged rock, still visible in the distant horizon. It is not Homer or Sappho that we expect to meet in the New Jerusalem ; but, by the grace of God, we do hope yet to see our brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, who was in the isle that is called Patmos. And if so favored at last—if permitted to sit down with him as interpreter — it will be an additional occasion for thanksgiving, that the eye once rested for a few hours on the very spot of earth where was made “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.”

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

The Apocalypse is a panorama of the glory of Christ. We are comparatively familiar with the gospel of his condescension to the poor, his healing mercies, and his atoning sacrifice ; but here is the gospel of his enthronement, and his coming again for judgment. A voice has cried in the wilderness, Behold the Lamb of God ! A voice

now proclaims from heaven, Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah!

It is with deep reverence that we would open the roll of this prophecy. No book of the Bible takes us so irresistibly and at once into another sphere. With what a conflict of curiosity and awe do explorers of ancient cities in Central America, or, more recently, of ancient cities in regions toward the Euphrates, visit those ruins—colossal, rude, grand, but silent! And with what lively interest have modern travellers in Africa lighted upon cities before unknown to us, numbering their inhabitants by thousands, who, in common with ourselves, are moving on toward the world of spirits! Similar are the feelings of one who, with eyes and ears open to the wonders of the “Revelation of Jesus Christ,” first approaches this impressive monument of the past, this living portraiture of the present and the future. Here are found vastness and magnificence, unparalleled; strangely significant sculptures and inscriptions; long vistas, bounded by no terrestrial objects, but stretching on into other worlds. Throughout the whole is the utmost intensity of

life ; movements of the widest sweep, and the highest spiritual importance ; whilst mingling splendor and mystery give to it a grandeur beyond any other production since time began.

Yet the Apocalypse is to many an unexplored city, and to many even a buried city. Perhaps no portion of the New Testament, and, unless it be some of the historical books, or some of the minor prophets, no part of the Old Testament, is less perused.

CAUSES OF NEGLECT.

There are various reasons for this comparative neglect. One is, the intrinsic difficulty of interpreting portions of it. The obscurity, however, resting upon certain scenes in the revelation made to John, is no greater than hangs over a part at least of the more ancient prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah, which certainly were embraced within the scope of Christ's command, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they that testify of me." Did Paul make an exception of those, when he affirmed, "All Scripture is given

by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"? The design of revelation is not to repress, but to stimulate curiosity and study; and the value of no part of Holy Writ depends on the absence of necessity for investigation.

Another reason for such neglect is the injudicious manner in which this "Testimony of Jesus Christ" has been treated. No other book in the Bible was the subject of comment so early and to such an extent, nor has any other been the occasion of more mistakes and extravagance. Its structure and topics, and the mode of treating them, will account for this. It has a larger proportion of symbolic language than is found elsewhere, and such language is proverbially capable of misconception. Hence many strange notions have been interpreted into the book, and many an unfounded hypothesis has been put forth, as if the study of prophecy conferred the gift of prophecy. Whilst Protestant writers have sometimes indulged their fancies in a very lawless manner, Roman Catholics have endeavored to turn against them, and against Luther, all pas-

sages which had been applied to the Pope and Popery. An attempt was made, many years ago, to prove from the apocalyptic numbers that the total overthrow of Protestantism would take place in the year eighteen hundred and twenty-five.

Vagaries thus indulged have naturally created a prejudice against the book. A clergyman of the English church, more distinguished for wit than piety, remarked long ago that the Apocalypse either finds or leaves a man mad; and a continental scholar compliments Calvin for displaying no less good sense in not commenting on this book, than he displays in the commentaries which he did write. But shall the wisdom of God be discredited by the folly of man? Does abuse justify the disuse of what the Holy Spirit has given for our benefit? "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." The superficial and the prejudiced may slight it; but the lofty genius of Sir Isaac Newton did not disdain a patient study of this wonderful book. He prepared his observations on it with the greatest

care, writing and re-writing again and again, before committing them to the press.

Another and far less justifiable cause of such neglect as now exists, may be found in the absorbing devotion of modern mind to things seen and temporal. There is a general and strangely engrossing attention to the present ; an infatuating bondage to business and fashion ; and hence a natural disrelish for such books, inspired or uninspired, as urge the realities of an unseen world and a momentous future on our notice. It would appear to have been with a prescient eye upon just this state of things, that our Lord communicated, in Patmos, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."

THE WRITER.

"And he sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

These are the words of an apostle ; for there

is no doubt that the John who here speaks, is the beloved and highly favored one of the Twelve who bears that name. Some, as James, were apostles, without being evangelists or prophets. Luke was an evangelist, without being an apostle or prophet; Matthew was not a prophet, though an evangelist and apostle; but John was at once evangelist, apostle, and seer; and if eminence in office, services and age, could enhance the importance of words which the Holy Ghost communicated, then have the words of his prophecy peculiar significance.

THE BLESSING PRONOUNCED.

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.”

There are two strongly marked divisions of this “Testimony of Jesus Christ,” as indicated in verse nineteenth of the first chapter. One division, devoted chiefly to “the things which are,” embraces the first three chapters, and contains the opening vision, together with the seven

epistles. The other, presenting "the things which shall be hereafter," consists of the remaining nineteen chapters, and is more characteristically, The Revelation. The former of these is comparatively plain and easily understood.

It cannot fail to be noticed as an unusual circumstance, that, after announcing the title, the aged penman immediately pauses to utter a benediction. And where is there so formal a blessing pronounced upon the reading and observance of any other part of the sacred canon?

What encouragement, then, we have for studying this last of the lively oracles! and what presumption it is to plead difficulty of interpretation, or other reasons, as an excuse for neglect of our Lord's final messages from heaven! Though obscure in parts, it is intelligible enough to be highly useful. It belongs to that holy circle of writings, all which are profitable, and profitable for all. The blessing pronounced by the venerable prophet on Patmos, was not made conditional on our understanding the whole "Revelation of Jesus Christ," or on a complete understanding of any part of it; but "Blessed is he that readeth,

and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Is it for us to slight the production of an inspired man, though he open his mouth in a parable, and utter dark sayings of old? "Whoso is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them."

INDUCEMENTS TO STUDY.

There are several respects in which the hearing and keeping of the words of this prophecy may prove a gratification and blessing.

The natural desire which all have to know something of the future, is here, in a measure, met. Such a yearning is instinctive in the human mind. It is on the basis of this uncontrollable curiosity that systems of soothsaying have been built up, and are singularly perpetuated. But the "Record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ," reveals scenes of surpassing grandeur and interest yet to be realized. Here are the sacred Urim and Thummim, where alone we may inquire of the

Lord, "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled." To every humble inquirer comes the response, "Blessed is he that readeth."

The apocalyptic agency is a guarantee of benefit to those who study the book. The Revelation, like every other part of Holy Writ, has in its divine source a sufficient pledge of high value to man. But there is here an enhancing peculiarity. While its origin is, with marked distinctness, ascribed to God, there are introduced circumstances that indicate an extraordinary importance in the production.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. He sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John."

It comes from the great Fountain of all wisdom and truth; but it was in the first place communicated to Jesus Christ, who, as Son, is equal with the Father, but as mediator stands in subordination to him. The Saviour, when on earth, said, "The Father loveth the Son, and

showeth him all things that himself doeth." "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak."

It was only occasions of more august revelation, that seemed to require the agency of angels; as at Sinai, where the law was received by their dispensation. Gabriel, who appeared in vision to Daniel, came with a special message to him. The same exalted messenger also made the annunciation to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Near the close of the Apocalypse is a renewed mention of this department of agency: "The Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." So that the part performed by the angel thus employed, appears to have been the unfolding of such symbolic scenery as was successively disclosed in vision to the seer.

There is, then, in the prologue to this closing book of the sacred volume, manifest intimation of its being one of peculiar weight and value. John, the apostle, remains in the background;

but what is superhuman and divine, at once engages, and throughout absorbs, the attention.

Peculiar benefit may be derived from warnings here presented. Where else are found such terrific revelations of vindictory justice? What friend or foe of Christianity can even peruse the record of these visions without "falling as dead at the feet" of Him whose awfully majestic and glorious form presides over the whole?

Here too are all-sufficient and sublime sources of comfort. Here is a grand charter of rights and privileges to the militant church of the Most High, embellished with views of the inheritance of the saints in light—a charter bearing the sign manual, and sealed with the great seal of the King of kings. If the persecuted and downcast followers of the Lamb would have their faith and hope made lastingly triumphant, let them with prayer peruse, again and again, the testimony of Jesus Christ. They will lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draweth nigh. In the whole range of composition, uninspired or inspired, this book stands unsurpassed for momentous topics and impressive imagery. It

is the Mont Blanc of prophetic landscape, with its *mer de glace*, its rushing torrents, its frightful avalanches,—the veil never wholly withdrawn from its face, whilst its higher summits rise in celestial clearness above the clouds that hang beneath. Herein prophecy culminates. And what a fitting conclusion it is to the most wonderful of all books! Here is the grand supplement and key to previous predictions uttered by holy men of God, and by our Lord himself. With strangely graphic power, it conducts the militant church through appalling scenes of flood, fire, and carnage, to her final era of glorified rest and everlasting bliss. Can there be anything better suited to elevate the soul, to cultivate a sanctified dignity of character, than devout familiarity with such a production?

THE IMPORTANCE CUMULATIVE.

“For the time is at hand.”

The importance of studying the Apocalypse increases with the lapse of time. Here are “things which must shortly come to pass;” that

is, are in the process of fulfilment. Even when John bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw, the long period within which those successive scenes were to be realized was at hand. The first in the connected series was on the eve of accomplishment. If proximity then constituted a motive for heeding these contents, how much more does it now! Every revolving century, every closing year, adds to the urgency with which attention is challenged to the concluding portion of Holy Writ. And does not that intensity of devotion to the present, which characterizes our times and our country, enhance the reasonableness of this claim? Never, surely, was there a period when some mighty counteracting power was more needed. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, duly studied, supplies an appropriate corrective influence. Would that all Christians might, in fullest measure, receive the blessing of "them that hear the words of this prophecy, and that keep the things which are written therein, for the time is at hand."

Chapter Second.

THE SALUTATION AND DOXOLOGY.

JOHN, to the seven churches which are in Asia; Grace be unto you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. REV. 1 : 4—6.

THE SALUTATION.

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia.”

By Asia here is not of course to be understood the whole continent, nor yet that extensive portion called Asia Minor; but a limited part

of the latter, with Ephesus for its chief city. It is quite possible that this district, at the date of the Apocalypse, embraced other churches besides the seven named; as, for example, at Colosse, Hierapolis, Tralles, and Magnesia. Whether that were the case or not, there was special reason why these seven should be particularly addressed; for they were no doubt the chief; they were near to Patmos, and not far one from another. The apostle may have sustained some peculiar relation to them,—they being, perhaps, his special nurslings; or they may have stood in some affiliated relation to one another. There certainly was a peculiarity of condition among them which rendered such public and formal appeals necessary.

The first three chapters, and particularly the second and third, form the epistolary part of the Revelation. There is, however, no good reason for supposing that while thus primarily and specifically addressed by our Lord to the seven churches of Asia, these brief epistles were designed to be any more restricted in their use than the rest of the Apocalypse, or than the

epistles of Paul, James, and Peter. In their counsels, reproofs and encouragements, they carried a purpose and a value for all other churches then, and all churches since.

CHARACTER OF THE ADDRESS.

“Grace be unto you, and peace.”

What is the subject-matter of the salutation? Does the hoary-headed man on Patmos wish long life for Christians at Ephesus, at Smyrna, and other churches of the sisterhood? Does he say, May your storehouses overflow, your wine-presses burst out with new wine; may you have civil liberty and social quiet; may the Roman soldier leave your neighborhood, the tax-gatherer cease his extortions? The holy man has something immeasurably higher to supplicate for them. “Grace be unto you,” — the grace that pardons and sanctifies; the grace that enables you to endure, and to rejoice under your grievance; the grace that gives full assurance of hope, and a final share in the glories unfolded by this apocalyptic vision, — such grace be unto you.

“And peace,” — the peace of God, peace after the war within; heaven-derived peace to souls before dissatisfied and burdened; peace such as the Emperor Domitian cannot produce or disturb; peace which, as a central characteristic of inward experience, shall foster all the elements of spiritual life and happiness. “Grace and peace,” — grace in its largest measures, and peace in all its fulness. God’s favor and its seal; the divine implanting, and the blessed fruits thereof. Where grace is granted, peace follows; where special grace is not, there is no satisfactory peace. Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto you; a benediction apostolic, weighty, cordial.

The gifts bestowed are not, however, from John, richly endowed as he was; but from the Great Fountain, the Great Storehouse of the spiritual world.

THE SOURCE OF BLESSING.

“From him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the

faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.”

Though similar to other apostolic salutations, this is peculiar in its elevation and mystery of language; it is sublimely in keeping with the whole grand and impressive character of the Revelation.

“From him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” “I am that I am,” hath sent me unto you. What consolation in the promises, what alarm in the warnings to the seven churches, and to all churches, from the everlasting God! His eternity and unchangeableness stand forth to enhance the solemnity of this message. To him are no new years, and no waning years. Here is a sweep commensurate with the whole contents of the Apocalypse. He who was with the church in the ark, in the wilderness, in every past storm and strait, is with her now; and he will stand by her in all the troubles, perils, and revolutions, that betide her future course.

“And from the seven spirits which are before his throne.” That is, from the Holy Spirit, denom-

inated "the seven spirits," because seven is a sacred and perfect number; not thus named with reference to his essential participation in the divine nature, so much as to his official procession; not as denoting interior plurality, but the fulness and perfection of his gifts and operations. His own unity, and the unity of the triune Godhead remain intact, while he is thus once designated "the seven spirits," to intimate the variety and abundance of his communications.

Some suppose, and particularly Roman Catholics, who are so destitute of any pretext in favor of angel-worship, that this clause signifies seven angels; as we read in the eighth chapter, at the second verse, "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God." But if angels were meant, why were they not so called, instead of spirits? And what business have angels in such a category, taking rank between God the Father, and the Son, as if grace and peace could come from them, as well as from the first and the second persons of the adorable Trinity?

CHARACTERS OF CHRIST.

“And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness.” It had been foretold through Isaiah, “Behold I have given him for a witness to the people.” Before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession. He is one to be depended upon. Preceding prophets had, indeed, borne truthful witness of him; but he is the truth itself. “The first-begotten of the dead.” He has pre-eminence in this as a predicted fact, and in the circumstances attending it; but most of all in its being a return to confirmed life, to a victorious, lasting power over death. Those who had been raised before his advent, and those raised during his sojourn on earth, were still subject to death; they died again, and that presently. But Christ, the first-fruits of them that slept, never slept again. It is fitting that he, the eldest in the family, should take this signal precedence in becoming alive forevermore. “Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preëminence.”

“The prince of the kings of the earth.” This regal character of Messiah had been the subject of prediction: “I will make him my first-born higher than the kings of the earth.” During the incarnation, his dignity was much in abeyance; it was humanity that stood next to us; but that period was only a temporary eclipse of the King of day. Emerging, he shone with new lustre; he rose on the universe, the infinitely resplendent luminary, the glory of all worlds. “On his vesture and on his thigh is a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords;” on his head are many crowns. His is the throne high and lifted up, a throne that shall never crumble; he is our all-sufficient, our everlasting prophet, priest and prince.

SCOPE OF THE BENEDICTION.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ” here laid before us, has no limited range of period, or of believers addressed; it is for his servants till the end of time. The hoary-headed apostle on Patmos spoke first, indeed, to churches in Proconsular

Asia; but he spoke also to the saints in Christ Jesus, of all lands, and through all succeeding centuries. Who, then, will not gather courage for future storms, in the benediction of “grace and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth?”

THE ASCRIPTION.

What response shall be made? What testimonial of regard befitting the rank of him who salutes us, shall be returned? Holy Spirit, indite thou a reply for us! Do thou who art resident at the court of the King of kings, familiar with the proprieties of heaven, who hast often aided ignorant earth-bred man, supply us with hearts and with words acceptable to him who is Alpha and Omega, the great Creator, Sovereign and Saviour! Thanks be to thee for the doxology here given.

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

We had thought that our earthly father loved us; that a fond mother loved us; that an affectionate brother loved us; that a bosom friend had given peculiar proofs of attachment; but now we see that none beside Christ's love deserves the name. “Greater love hath no man than this,” — and few, very few, have this, — “that a man lay down his life for his friends.” But here is love commended to us, in that while we were yet enemies Christ died for us. He alone has surrendered rank, and wealth, and life for us. “Unto him that loved us;” no one else has shown affection. Many are the admiring thoughts that rush into our minds, but all resolve themselves into this: “Unto him that loved us.” We have many things to say; a whole life will not suffice for them; but first of all and forever must we sing, “Unto him that loved us.” We have one superscription to write, one inscription to make on our hearts, our homes, and all that is

ours; deep and broad be the letters graven,
“Unto him that loved us.”

PURIFICATION NEEDED.

“And washed us from our sins in his own blood.” Ah! here is the amazing proof of love. This gives intensity of meaning to the previous words, and let it be well pondered. We must contemplate our vileness, if we would know with what love the spotless Lamb has washed us from our sins in his own blood. And what stains there are to be cleansed! stains deep, direful, universal! A dark taint runs through man’s whole nature. So far as spiritual excellences are concerned, the unrenewed heart is a desert, with green spots here and there, and a few scattered flowers, but

“The trail of the serpent is over them all;”—

with springs here and there, but they prove to be mere ulcers of nature, whose streams are discolored and loathsome. The issues of life from such a source, can have no other character than their polluted origin.

If any one feels disposed to deny that the fountain itself is originally and absolutely corrupted, he must surely admit that when its products reach us, and become known, they are vitiated. Toward its sources in the Rocky Mountains, the Red River passes through a red soil, which gives color and name to the stream; and its waters are never healthful; they are often positively deleterious. So the stream of life, upon our first acquaintance, is charged with impurities; poisoning passions and defiling lusts intermingle; and it must be not only that the soil through which, and the strata over which, it flows make their noxious contributions, but that the very well-head is poisoned. "Even their mind and conscience is defiled." And must not the God of purity turn away from such, leaving them in the horrible pit, and miry clay, and finally cast them into outer darkness? We are by this defilement made legally and inherently unclean; but guilt brings inevitable condemnation and misery. How, then, shall the ruin be repaired? Say, ye wise men, ye men of research, ye who have experimented largely, who have read much, and

travelled far, have you found the remedy? Tell me, for my trembling spirit must have an answer. It is a question of life and death — “How should man be just with God?” How shall this unsightly soul become pure? Outward washings, or other mere ceremonies, avail nothing. The stains are deeply inward, and God’s displeasure is awfully and righteously intense. Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, the Jordan or the Ganges, will not do it. Not all the rain from the clouds, nor all the waters of the ocean will suffice for such baptism. “Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God.” A meritorious, not ceremonious, purifying is needed. No penances, mental or bodily, will do it. Anguish of soul does not atone or cleanse; neither the fires of pretended purgatory, nor the actual tortures of the sharp crucifix, can expiate. Yet, “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Whose blood, then, will appease and cleanse? Whose? Answer, who that answer can. Speak out, you that have found the remedy!

A FOUNTAIN OPENED.

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,”—in thy precious blood, O Saviour! No appliances and efforts of man at expiation and purification can avail: the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin. It is not Stephen’s, nor the blood of all the martyrs, but that of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which has this wondrous power. Who, then, need despair? Who shall ever dare to say, My sin is too great to be forgiven? There are no heights, no depths of guilt, for which Christ’s blood will not suffice.

Each disability under which man labors— one from without, and one from within— is met by the blood of Christ. It makes expiation. Divine Justice is thus appeased, and so the sinner’s danger is removed. That alone becomes a satisfaction, and so quenches the fire of enkindled wrath. “By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;” and thus is the first grand obstacle to the sinner’s salvation completely

removed. The foundation is thus laid, and way prepared for all the remaining parts and proceedings of salvation, — the meritorious ground of the whole being the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

THE APPLICATION.

The saving use made of Christ's blood is an official work of the Holy Spirit: "For we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." The conviction on the sinner's mind becomes deep and strong that he is full of leprosy; not having here and there a spot merely, but that he is diseased universally and incurably, save by the One to whom he cries, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" God in mercy commences "purifying their hearts by faith," — faith in the sacrifice of Christ. By that alone, does the work of renewal begin; and yet this very faith is not of ourselves — it is the gift of God.

Nor can there be any genuine growth in grace, apart from this great central truth of the system. Excellences, yes, high excellences of natural

character there may be ; but, having their root and nourishment elsewhere, they do not evince sanctification ; they are not plants of righteousness. Spiritual, holy cleansing goes forward only in proportion as there is a quickening apprehension of the fact that Christ came “to purify to himself a peculiar people.” The blood of Christ alone can cleanse from all sin, quenching the internal fires of passion, and withering the corrupt propensities. That alone which gives peace, gives purity. By the same method and power are the guilt and the stains removed—even by Christ’s washing us from our sins in his own blood. Hence the song of deliverance, the paean of praise — “Unto him that loved us.” Herein, herein is love. O, ye justified ones!—ye who are expecting a seat at the unending marriage supper of the Lamb, and to receive a crown, and palm-branch, and harp,—what is your present, what will be your everlasting acclamation but this: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”? Is it not because, passing under the cross, one of its all-healing drops has fallen upon you, you are

moving along that bright path on which beams the light of God's reconciled countenance,— the path that leads to perfected purity; and you “have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”?

THE HONORS BESTOWED.

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” Heightening wonder! From being enemies, we not only become friends to God, but kings; from being defiled, we are not only purified, but raised to an office implying highest sanctity. True, this dignity pertains to a kingdom not of this world, yet in a measure to the present life of every believer. True, in the world to come, saints are to have a most exalted and enduring regal rank: “To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne. And they shall reign for ever and ever.” Yet now also is it true — and when John addressed the persecuted saints of his day, was it true — that the disciples of Christ are made kings and priests unto God. Though this form one stanza in the song of

Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb; though specially appropriate to the future, it is a doxology of the present too. For successful resistance to Satan, for the subjugation of sin, for the conquest of nations to Christ, they are now made kings unto him. Truthful and beautiful was the remark, suggested by this passage, which the young Duke of Hamilton made on his death-bed to a brother still younger: "You, Douglass, will soon be a duke, but I shall be a king." Not less scriptural, and more striking, was the answer of an aged African, when weeping friends stood round his bed, and sobbed, "Poor Pompey! poor Pompey is dying!" — "Don't call me poor Pompey!" exclaimed the earnest old man; "I am king Pompey!"

But we are also made priests unto him. What was said to the literal, is said to the spiritual Israel of God: "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." In respect to the sacerdotal, no less than the regal dignity to which believers are raised, there is a resplendent future, of which the present is dimly

emblematic. Yet now also do saints stand before the altar, as well as sit upon a throne. They are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

This, then, is our position: Christ, in rescuing, ennobles us; from the depths of ruin he not merely raises us to the condition of safety and purity, but to the highest place of honor and service.

THE DOXOLOGY.

“To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” What would be man’s device for a monument to the greatest Benefactor? Let Christendom unite in an effort. It will, perhaps, be a memorial structure on some noble eminence, as goodly Lebanon. The genius of the civilized world combines for a worthy conception as to materials, magnitude, proportions, details, and decorations. All navies and merchantmen are employed as transports. Egypt sends her pyramids and obelisks, India all her treasures, Europe her palaces, and all the choicest stores of her museums and galleries;

all banking establishments, all commercial houses, all governments, empty their coffers in aid of the undertaking. There is constituted a college of architects and artisans out of all lands,—all the Bezaleels and Aholiabs, all the wise-hearted men, and the men cunning to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men. There rises a structure to which Solomon's temple would be an insignificant vestibule; a structure whose summit, gilded by the morning sun, catches the eye of dwellers in distant regions. Shall this be our offering? Oh, littleness! "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering." All nations before him, and all their works, are as nothing; and they are counted unto him less than nothing, and vanity. Something beats in the breast worth more than all the mountains, and all treasures of the sea. It is grateful, adoring hearts which our Saviour covets. And where grace and peace are experienced, praise will flow. "Unto him," therefore, "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in

his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father — to him be glory and dominion.” Here is our gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Not to the half of our kingdom merely do we give him, but the entire realm of our souls, with all their teeming thoughts, all their silver cords of affection.

Such an edifice as now imagined, would soon crumble. The smell of fire would ere long pass upon it, as upon the whole earth, and all the works that are therein. To him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and to the seven spirits which are before his throne, and to him who is the faithful witness and first-begotten of the dead, and Prince of the kings of the earth, is due an offering without limits in the range of its honoring testimony. To him, then, be glory and honor for ever and ever. Let the royal priesthood reiterate the same continually. Never let the lamps go out in the temple; and as in your courses ye pass to your throne and altar on high, still repeat it: “Unto him be glory and dominion.” Roll on, mighty anthem, for ever and ever, as the sound of many waters!

swelling higher and fuller, as hearts and voices expand, through everlasting ages! This shall be the hallelujah chorus of that world, in the light of which walk the nations of them that are saved, and into which these kings of earth do bring their glory and honor.

SELF-CONSECRATION.

Ye who are made kings unto God; ye who are of the seed royal, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,—elevated already to the highest honor that created beings can be in this world, and yet to be exalted to a dignity equal to that of angels,—what say you to him? What will you do for him whose precious blood, whose all-conquering grace has effected this, and who will ere long associate you with himself on his throne? Are ye kings otherwise or farther than ye are a royal priesthood, for the offering up of your whole selves a continued sacrifice?—the altar never cold, the incense of prayer and praise never wanting, the sweet-smelling savor of holy

affections and holy living never interrupted? Life should be one glad doxology. Existence through all ages, and all worlds, should be the one solemn, exulting eucharist: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Chapter Third.

THE ADVENT IN GLORY.

BEHOLD, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. *REV. 1:7—8.*

CHRIST ALL IN ALL.

The One who of old was to come, is still the desire of all nations. The Apocalypse, harmonizing with previous Scriptures, yet supplementing them, furnishes a glimpse of the royal Messiah's sway onward through the whole course of ages. It presents him as the great Executive of the universe, the Alpha and Omega in creation, redemption and retribution. All prophecies and all administrations are here seen to take their spirit and significance from him.

While no one can be too familiar with the history of his life on earth, his expiatory sufferings, his resurrection and ascension, do Christians of the present day generally turn their thoughts in due proportion to the future manifestations of Jesus Christ? Do they not rob themselves of the intended present benefits of a most animating occurrence, if they fail to meditate often upon the second coming of our glorious Redeemer?

The former dispensation was closed, and the new one ushered in by the most wonderful event which had ever taken place — the humiliation of Immanuel. The era now passing is to close in the consummation of all things, over which He will preside with surpassing majesty, and which is to mark the most memorable epoch in the annals of eternity. The beginning of that ending, the prefatory event which is to introduce that glorious dispensation, will be Christ's second coming. "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

This imagery calls to mind three previous passages of Scripture. One is in Daniel: "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came in the clouds of heaven." Another in Zechariah: "And they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." And the third in Matthew: "Then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." In uttering the last of these, our Saviour seems to have had the first two in mind, while the three have a correspondence with the impressive words occurring in this place.

The writer does not propose to dwell on the theme in a disputatious style; nor to dwell on the questions of chronology involved, of pre-millennial and post-millennial order, of a regenerated physical world; nor yet upon the judgment, and those retributory states which are to follow; but only on the simple fact, that our Lord is to come in the manner here described.

CHARACTER OF THE TIMES.

The period immediately preceding the epoch when Christ is to come with clouds, will be one of great sensuality and carnal security. Unemployed talents lie wrapped in napkins; the virgins all slumber and sleep. In the absence of the Nobleman, servants begin to smite fellow-servants, and to eat, and drink, and to be drunken. They put far off the evil day; or, hardened into utter skepticism, inquire, Where is the promise of his coming?

His coming will be sudden, at unawares, and to many in terror. Christ's own language is: "For as a snare shall it (that day) come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" — As a snare, suddenly and rapidly. Again: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night" — Unexpected, and not prepared for. And again: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." At what time, or where the flash will be seen, no one can tell; but when it comes,

it is to gleam instantaneously through the sky, dazzling and startling to all. The general deluge, and the storm upon Sodom and Gomorrah, are also referred to as analogous, in their unlooked-for coming to an ungodly generation.

MANNER OF THE ADVENT.

Our Lord's return from heaven will be like his departure from earth, real and sensible. As he stood upon Mount Olivet, after talking with his disciples of the approaching dispensation of the Spirit, "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." And while they were gazing steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, they were assured, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven." "From whence, also," — so Paul writes — "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;" "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." If any are disposed to raise difficulties upon astronomical or other grounds, we will abide by the testimony of Him

who made the heavens and the earth, and wait till the advent itself shows which is the more rational.

He does, indeed, come evermore by his providence. He comes also spiritually to individuals, when he reveals himself to the soul as Saviour, and, with the Father, makes his abode there ; or when, in accordance with precious promises, he vouchsafes a special presence, as to his ministering servants. But as in the transient theophanies of the Old Testament, and in his residence of more than thirty years on earth, he was sensibly present, and when he left the world, left by a visible withdrawment of his resurrection body, so will his return be a visible reëpearance : “ Every eye shall see him.” His identity will, of course, be unimpaired : “ This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” “ This same Jesus,” who has just commissioned you to be his witnesses ; who gave promise of the Spirit’s descent ; whose sacred hands and side thou, doubting Thomas, wast bidden to behold ; whom ye all were invited to handle and see that he had

veritable flesh and bones; with whom ye have eaten and conversed; this same Jesus who said, "Peace be unto you," in the upper room; yes, this same Jesus who was born at Bethlehem, who lived at Nazareth; whom ye saw betrayed, and saw upon the cross; — "this same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He will come visibly, and in all recognizable identity. No disciple of his will then ask, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

THE ATTENDANT GLORY.

But, as the Saviour is to come in the manner described, and every eye is to see him, the question arises: How will they behold him? with what sensible display will he come?

"Behold he cometh with clouds."

It will be with surpassing glory. When he was on earth, he taught: "The Son of man shall come in his own glory," — his own glory as God-man. His human form now in the heavens, and

as then to be exhibited, is the most glorious created object in the universe. And when he shall reappear, it will be under no eclipse, under no hinderance to the full display of his perfections. Humanity exalted to the highest possible excellence, crowned by all the attributes of Deity, will shine forth in undimmed effulgence. Personal beauty, and dignity, and regal majesty will be seen in utmost eminence. When the Ancient of Days doth sit, it will be with a garment white as snow, on a throne like the fiery flame; and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream shall issue and come forth from before him. The glory of his power as Creator and Preserver, the glory of his headship over the whole domain of creation, and over all ranks of creatures, the glory of his justice and compassion as atoning sufferer and fraternal intercessor, will gleam with combined and inconceivable splendor.

We read, also, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father." He is the brightness of the Father's glory. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. But when made

in the likeness of sinful flesh, and under all the humbling circumstances of his first advent, the manifested Deity, though sufficiently attested, was greatly veiled. Rightly had he been foretold as Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Beams from the Sun of Righteousness shone through the clouds on the banks of Jordan, on the mount of transfiguration, and at the grave of Lazarus. Yet those were mere straggling rays. The light shined in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not. But when Christ shall come again, it will be as the sun shineth in his strength—yea, as the meridian splendor of seven suns.

In his first manifestation, Christ was comparatively unattended. He came to his own, and his own received him not. Many a solitary hour—and oh, what solitude!—did he spend. In solitude was he assaulted by Satan, and agonized in the garden. But, “The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” “Thousand thousands shall minister unto him; ten thousand times ten thousand will stand before him.” Those sons of God who sang at

creation, and shouted for joy ; who ministered in pomp and terror at Sinai ; who joined in a chorus over the plains of Bethlehem ; who ministered to the exhausted sufferer after his temptation ; who gathered around the sepulchre at his resurrection ; who hailed, and heralded, and convoyed him back to glory, shall be with him, — all with him, in their chariots of fire, when he cometh in the clouds of heaven. Our Jesus shall not want for attendants then. Well did Paul style that “the glorious appearing.” Well did our Lord himself pronounce it his coming “with power and great glory.”

THE SAME TO BE PONDERED.

Should it not have a prominent place in the thoughts of all? Do not Scripture examples and its own importance demand this? Old Testament saints caught glimpses of this magnificent winding up of the last times. “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.”

The patriarch of Uz protested: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Was it not of the same event that the sweet psalmist of Israel sung: "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people"? Daniel saw in the night visions, and beheld one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven.

The New Testament abounds in appeals and declarations besides those already cited, relative to this august revelation. Our Lord speaks: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." Paul gives an exhortation in view of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Peter makes a similar appeal: "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." This book of the Apocalypse, and the entire holy

canon, closes with — “He that testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

If that stupendous scene were only a possibility; if it lay only in the regions of an inductive probability; or if, granting it to be certain, a few only were to be spectators, it might with greater propriety be dismissed from the thoughts. But when it is recollected that Christ will assuredly come, that every eye shall see him, that every child of Adam has interests of supreme moment which will be then definitely settled, and that every human soul will then be moved with emotions surpassing all former experience — is there not felt to be a propriety in frequent meditations upon the hour when Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven?

A TERROR TO THE WICKED.

The ulterior bearings of the advent have not now been dwelt upon. The retributions that will follow, the fearful catastrophes and sublime developments which will signalize the consumma-

tion of all things, have at most only been alluded to. No one, however, can, if he would, wholly separate the event from its design and consequences. No one can forget that while every eye shall see the Lord Jesus, multitudes will see him with dismay. The consciences of all will at once interpret the intent of that last apocalypse :

“Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.”

The eye of fallen angels shall see him. The prince of darkness, who assaulted him in the wilderness, and with all his hosts showed such special activity at the former advent, and has ever shown such firm hostility to him, will then, in raging but fruitless malignity, behold him.

Not merely the Roman executioners who drove the nails, and the soldier who thrust the spear ; but all of every age, Jew or Gentile, who have uttered hard speeches and adopted harsh measures against him or his followers. Persecuting ecclesiastics — Romish, Greek, or Armenian — and civil rulers who give their power and strength to the beast, shall then see the

sceptre of iron with which they are to be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. They who use Christ's name profanely, and they who teach another gospel, are also among those who pierce him. The author of any volume, any tract, any paragraph in the transient sheets of the day, designed to depreciate the high character and offices of Jesus Christ, should now, on his way to judgment, hear a voice : "Why persecutest thou me?" He will then see Him whom Saul of Tarsus saw in the way to Damascus.

Does this enumeration exhaust the classes who pierce the Saviour? Is the refusal to obey his voice, and trust his merits, any less a wound to him than the driving of the nails? It was not alone in the judgment-hall of Pilate that the cry was heard, Crucify him! crucify him! It echoes from every unreconciled heart in Christendom. Jesus told Caiaphas, and the chief priests and scribes, and the false witnesses who testified "This fellow said," — "Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven; then shall all the tribes of

the earth mourn." The enemies to his cross, in every age and every land, will then wail because of him.

If the eye of an impenitent person glances upon this page, I would ask, What will be your feelings when you behold "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"? If such trembling laid hold of Belshazzar, what will seize you? Will you not cry, "There is Jesus Christ, the Saviour of whom I read, of whom I heard! That is the Christ crucified, whom my pastor preached. That is he who I knew would come in the clouds. There are the angels; and there is the flaming fire. Mountains and rocks, fall on me, and hide me from the wrath of the Lamb!"

JOYFUL TO BELIEVERS.

"Even so. Amen!"

Such will then be the exclamation of all saints in Christ Jesus. Those of them who have already fallen asleep in him, and those who from

this up to the time of his second advent shall so depart, will continue to look forward with deep interest to that era. There is one, and only one, more great crisis for them to pass through. They have died, but they are not yet furnished with those resurrection tenements in which will be seen and enjoyed what cannot be realized before. Not till then will the utmost of grace be experienced in their souls, or of divine wisdom and power in their bodies.

Saints on earth are bidden to be looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ. And when he who is their life shall appear, then will their joyful exclamation be : “ Lo, this is our God ! we have waited for him ; he will save us ! This is the Lord ; we have waited for him ; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation ! ”

Luther used to say that no man could be a Christian who did not with his whole heart desire that coming of the Lord Jesus. “ Hasten, O Lord,” prays Richard Baxter,—“ Hasten, O Lord, this blessed day ! Stay not till faith have left the earth, and infidelity, and impiety, and tyranny

have conquered the rest of thine inheritance! Stay not till selfish, uncharitable pride hath vanquished love and self-denial, and planted its colonies of heresy, confusion, and cruelty in thy dominions, and earth and hell be turned into one! Stay not till the eyes of thy servants fail, and their hearts and hopes do faint and languish with looking and waiting for thy salvation! But if the day be not at hand, oh! keep faith, and hope, and love, till the Sun of perfect love arise, and time hath prepared us for eternity, and grace for glory!”

THE ADVENTS CONTRASTED.

That august era is styled, “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is to be his for the full and fitting vindication of regal rights. He will come with power to raise the dead, bind Satan forever, destroy the world, and reward the righteous. He will come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. It will be the grand jubilee,—his harvest-time of glory. He came once in humility; he will then come in majesty. Aforetime he came lowly, and

riding upon an ass. He had no form nor comeliness; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But ere long he shall come with clouds, on the throne of his glory; with many crowns upon his head; in all the transcendent manifestation of his deity.

The Jews, in their blindness, conceived the idea of a duplicate Messiah — one the son of Joseph, the other of David; one of the tribe of Ephraim, the other of Judah. We find, however, that while there is but one Messiah, a twofold advent has been appointed him. He of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, — Jesus of Nazareth, He of Gethsemane, He of Golgotha, He who cried “I thirst,” — is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, whom myriads of shining ones shall attend, and from whose face the heavens and earth shall flee away. “Even so, Amen.” O, heaving and trembling Earth! a period will come, ere long, to thy errors and thy follies! To thy feverish haste, to thy maddened wandering, to thy midnight revelries, debaucheries and murders; to the scourging of thy bond-servants, to the charge of thine armies, there is

an end at hand. In the Lord's own time let it be; and let not a tear be shed when the funeral-torch is applied. "He that testifieth these things, saith, "Surely, I come quickly!"

THE ALPHA AND OMEGA.

And who is this that cometh, not from Edom, but from heaven? It is the one whose "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." His attributes of eternity and independence are affirmed and reëffirmed by Christ in this chapter with noticeable distinctness.

"I am Alpha," "The Beginning," "The First."

"Before Abraham was, I am." When about to ascend to his home on high, while offering a val- edictory prayer, he asks to be reinstated in the glory which he had "before the world was." In that glory he shared, by community of existence, and by parity of power: "I and my Father are one."

"I am the Omega," "The Ending," "The Last,"

“saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come.”

A past eternity of being, involves, by necessity, one to come. Through all ages yet to be, through all the developments of immeasurable cycles, will the Lord Jesus live and reign. The close of the present dispensation will be an early date in the future existence of Messiah, to whom it was announced, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”

In view of our own future endless existence we are awed. We stand amazed at the thought of continuing conscious and active for thousands of years ; yea, for ever and ever. We can look, however, merely in one direction at a time. Our little tabernacle has only one front. But the Word, from everlasting to everlasting, is God. What grandeur is there in this attribute of the enthroned Jesus ! Uncaused and undecaying ; forever a stranger alike to the inexperience of youth, and the infirmities of age ; surveying in one perpetual glance the universe of infinite space and infinite duration, — he sits upon his throne, environed with all conceivable glories,

without a want, and without a shadow of turning, through all generations to come !

“The Almighty.” “All things were made by him ;” “By him all things consist.” Tremble, then, ye heathen who rage, and ye rulers who take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed ! tremble, thou Man of Sin, who exaltest thyself above all that is called God ! tremble, ye kings and emperors in league with the Roman Pontiff ! — the Lord will have you all in derision. One breath of his mouth is sufficient to consume you.

Ye downcast believers, take heart ! give to faith and joy their exulting scope. This divinely majestic Being, with such a volume of perfections, “having neither beginning of days nor end of life,” is your personal friend. He stooped and took our nature ; in it performed the mighty work of expiation ; with it ascended to glory, and with it now mediates between the two worlds. One hand he lays on us, and one on the throne above ; and thus comes reconciliation and communication between us and Heaven. With what calm confidence may we trust all to Him !

Here is a firm buttress for our hopes ; here is a solid arch thrown across an awful chasm. Ages will not weaken, convulsions cannot demolish it. When He shall come with clouds, when the heavens shall pass away, and the earth be burned up, our hiding-place will be secure.

Will any one at that time doubt Christ's supreme divinity ? That which books and arguments could not do, that which God's declarations and Christ's former miracles failed to effect, must surely be accomplished then. The universal creed, on that awful but welcome morning, will read, "Truly this is the Eternal Son ; this is the Almighty God."

Chapter Fourth.

THE VISION AND THE SEER.

I JOHN, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last ; and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and his eyes were

as a flame of fire ; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars ; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword ; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. REV. 1 : 9—16.

APOSTOLIC SYMPATHY.

Turning our eyes to Rome, we behold a man invested with the imperial purple, whose eminence in civil position is surpassed only by his eminent wickedness. Gloomy, suspicious, and stained by vices, Domitian became the most unscrupulous and cruel of tyrants. His government, supported only by spies and assassins, and by the bribery of a debased populace and soldiery, marked one of the most frightful periods of human history. Without one virtue to give moral force to his mandates, he held sway from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, and from the German Ocean to Mount Atlas.

Near the close of that monarch's reign, as we suppose, the last surviving apostle, sympathizing

deeply with fellow-christians who are persecuted by heathen Rome, is a prisoner, in "the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Which is the more enviable man? To which pertains most of true royalty? "The name of the wicked shall rot;" "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

"I John, who am your brother, and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Though an apostle, and though full ninety years of age, he does not here style himself their father, or instructor; but puts himself upon a level with his readers. He had labored among them; his heart is with them; and now that they are suffering under the same persecution that has sent him into exile, his sympathies are drawn out to them with peculiar warmth.

There is nothing like community in suffering to make Christian attachments firm, to cement the higher and holier bonds, and to make the feelings of brotherhood paramount to all others.

No one of the Lord's people lives or dies, suffers or triumphs, for himself alone. There is a quick sympathy pervading the great brotherhood, which distributes, and in some measure equalizes, the benefits of tribulation. Not only do we "take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience;" we claim kindred with them; we gratefully acknowledge ourselves their debtors. It was for me that the patriarch of Uz so endured under the hand of God. I claim a share in John the Baptist's imprisonment, in the shower of stones under which Stephen fell asleep, and in every pang of the glorious army of martyrs. The whole great family cry unto God with one voice, "Our Father who art in heaven," and unto the risen Saviour, "My Lord, and my God." All say to each, "Our brother;" each says to all, "I am your brother in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Blessed privilege of a share in the great loan-fund of sanctified sufferings, in the joint-stock fraternity of tribulation, and the patience of Jesus Christ! Let me not lose the benefits of the imprisonment,

bastinado and anathematizing of brethren and sisters in Christ, who now live for us amidst habitations of cruelty.

“In the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” Here is a fellowship not only of sufferings, but also of honor and privilege. The royal rank of true Christians is a reality of the present, as well as a prospective heirship. Believers are too nearly related to the only Potentate, not to stand as high as mortals can stand in this world. They are a commonwealth of royal priests and of sacerdotal kings; and with reference to them is Christ King of kings. But as Christ’s regal office was under an eclipse during his sojourn on earth, so is it with the whole family; and hence, in their present state there is large occasion for patience.

CHRIST’S SYMPATHY.

“In the kingdom and in the patience of Jesus Christ.”

So closely are Christ and Christians bound together, so lively and intimate is the sympathy

between them, that he suffers in their sufferings, and endures in their endurance. Neither can be touched in a way that the other does not feel it. All the patience exhibited in that kingdom which is not of this world, has its home and origin in one heart — even in his who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself—and who, as the Great Captain of Salvation, was made perfect through sufferings. To the Pharisee, on his way to Damascus in hot haste and a frenzy of wrath, Christ speaks: “Saul, Saul! why persecutest thou me?”

Do you wish sympathy? — You have it, and from One tempted in all points like as you are; you have it far more cordially, wisely, and effectively, than can be rendered by any fellow-sufferer who has not the experience and the heart of our Elder Brother. It falls, indeed, sweetly on the ear of persecuted saints in Proconsular Asia, and on ours, to hear the beloved disciple, the most honored of prophets, profess himself “your brother and companion in tribulation;” but our hearts dissolve, and withal soon grow triumphant also, as we hear him announcing a fellowship “in the

kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Assurance gathers strength. From the highest authority is the pledge given, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

Our suffering "brother and companion in tribulation, was in the isle that is called Patmos," — an island of small extent, one that the ancient geographers say little about; a barren spot, with few inhabitants, and perhaps the majority of them criminals. But, because this persecuted old man was banished there,—because there he had such visions of Christ's glory, and the church's later history, and final consummated blessedness, —that insignificant island has become memorable beyond any gem of the ocean. A few years more, and it will seldom be mentioned that St. Helena was once the abode of a distinguished exile; but Patmos will be a household word through eternity. And how many of the dreary, doleful places of earth — as Joseph's dungeon, Paul's prison, and Bunyan's cell in Bedford jail — will be subjects of resplendent pictures in the mansions of our Father's house!

THE CAUSE OF BANISHMENT.

How came John in penal confinement on Patmos? Of what crime had he been guilty? "For the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Because he obeyed and preached the word of God, — the God abhorring idolatry, and demanding spiritual worship, — because he testified that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and "that this is the true God and eternal life," — therefore is he at Patmos; that is the seditious occupation, the high crime and misdemeanor which has subjected him to banishment. Was he also an exile from the presence of the Comforter, or the joys of holy time?

THE DAY OF VISION.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

Honored day! appointed by the Lord, and for the Lord; the witness that Christ is the first-begotten from the dead; the grand memorial of the finished work of redemption; the seal set upon the great charter of blessings under the

new covenant. Queen of days! pearl of days! what a hallowed influence does it bring! What refreshing communications come from on high to the souls of believers at home and in exile, in the prison and on ship-board! How many thousands of God's children find a weekly banquet spread for them; and what other thousands, if they would but come, might find bread enough and to spare!

John was "in the Spirit." This denotes something more than ordinary spiritual influences. It was a peculiar, and supernatural state, which may be termed an ecstasy. It was, doubtless, the same, or a similar condition, to that when Peter fell "into a trance," "and in a trance saw a vision;" and when Paul, while praying in the temple, "was in a trance;"—the individual being raised above himself in a preternatural manner, the faculties divinely quickened and sustained, and under the immediate illumination of the Holy Spirit. Such was the state of prophetic inspiration experienced, for instance, by Ezekiel: "The heavens were opened, and I saw the visions of God;" "And the Spirit lifted me up between

the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem.”

THE COMMISSION.

“ And heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last ; and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”

It was by the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud that the people were summoned to receive the law at Sinai. And generally that was the signal for calling attention to divine appointments and announcements. So, too, “when the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet.” The introduction of this signal here betokens an occasion peculiarly august, and that something of special importance is to be communicated.

“What thou seest, write in a book.” The same is repeated in the nineteenth verse: “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” The subject-matter of the Apocalypse, therefore, and its form, are not the result of study, or of long preparation in any way; it was an immediate and direct revelation, being “the record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The order in which the seven churches are mentioned is not arbitrary. Ephesus was nearest Patmos, and in sight of it, the chief city of Proconsular Asia. Hence, naturally, it stands at the head of the list. It was also natural to proceed thence northward to Smyrna, the other maritime city, and thence to Pergamos — these three being the most important of the group. The remaining four are very nearly upon a line running south-east from Pergamos, and in the same order as they here stand: Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

THE OPENING VISION.

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.”

The signification of this symbol is given by the Lord himself in the twentieth verse: “The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” Among the temple furniture was a golden lamp-stand, with seven branches. It is not improbable that here seven distinct candlesticks were presented to view, because of an equal number of distinct churches symbolized, and to be addressed; while it is possible that by the material, gold, is betokened requisite purity — a pure membership, pure ministry, and pure ordinances. There follows — thirteenth verse to the sixteenth — a further description of what John saw; the one transcendent figure in the scene being the person of our Lord himself, with the most impressive majesty.

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”

The long robe was a symbol of high dignity in general, and not distinctively of priest or prince. To be girded about the loins, would indicate preparedness for travelling or labor; but the girdle, as here described, indicates rather the calmness of infinite majesty, the perfect ease of omnipotence.

“His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.”

Here is a form at once venerable and terrible. Wisdom and purity, omniscience and vindicatory justice beam forth. That is the voice which will once more shake not the earth only, but also heaven. That is the face before which heaven and earth will yet flee away. Those are the feet beneath which Satan and all enemies are to be bruised. Similar imagery is continued in the sixteenth verse.

“And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and

his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

The first symbol here is explained by the same divine Interpreter himself in the twentieth verse: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." The clause might properly be translated, He had on his right hand seven stars; and the image would then be that of a signet-ring or rings, embellished with brilliants. Reference may be made to Jeremiah, twenty-second chapter: "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence."

The sword is the symbol of executive justice; and the imagery here is quite consonant with what we find elsewhere in Holy Writ, respecting Messiah, who is also the Prince of the kings of the earth. Thus in Isaiah it is said: "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

How does the judicial and regal dignity of Jesus Christ now challenge our awe ! The Christ of the manger, of the wilderness, the synagogue, the Judgment-hall and Golgotha, is the Christ of history. Humiliation belongs wholly to the past. The spirit of prophecy has testified not only to his sufferings, but to the glory that should follow. With identity unimpaired, the Christ of this age is the one whose eyes are as a flame of fire ; whose feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; whose countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength. Would the spear pierce him now ? Could the soldiers drive those nails now ? What bold scoffer can now smite the cheek of the King of kings ? He who did not break a bruised reed, who did not lift up his voice in the streets, who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, now has a voice as the sound of many waters ; out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword ; and he will reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

SUFFERINGS HONORED.

Though exalted thus, and armed with all might, he precipitates nothing. He does not hasten prematurely to the rescue of his friends. For their individual good, and the general good, he sends a trial, and permits it to continue, but at the same time employs the sufferer in some high service. Special divine communications have usually been connected with the afflictions of God's people. It was in persecution and exile that famishing Elijah sat down to die; but an angel touched him, and said, "Arise and eat;" and soon remarkable demonstrations of the divine presence were made. It was immediately after receiving the mantle of the ascended prophet, that Elisha, having miraculously divided the waters of Jordan, and healed those of Jericho, was saluted with, "Go up, thou bald head!" From what high communion did Daniel go to the lions' den! In the midst of, and because of the messages from heaven announced by him, Jeremiah was scourged, "put into the stocks that are in the high gate of Benjamin," "and the priests

and the prophets, and all the people took him, saying, 'Thou shalt surely die;' and Zedekiah imprisoned him, and the princes thrust him into a dungeon. It was close upon the abundance of revelations enjoyed by Paul, when caught up into Paradise, that he received a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. So in banishment John beholds scenes such as were never granted to other eyes. It is in the depths of bitter experience, and an experience of sweetly sustaining grace, that he speaks. He speaks as a martyr; and this is the Holy Spirit's Book of Martyrs. A crimson hue pervades a large part of the scroll; it registers awful struggles and groans, but also the most enrapturing announcements that ever fell upon the ear of man. How ill could the militant church afford to do without the tribulation of Christ's prophets, apostles, and ministers! Suffering for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, is the highest style of preaching. Christ's more eminent servants specially need it; without it the church at large might become extinct.

Chapter Fifth.

THE LORD OF LIFE.

AND when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. REV. 1 : 17, 18.

STRENGTH AND COMFORT.

Holier men than perhaps any now living, have been overpowered by a sight of the Son of God. It was his glory that Isaiah saw when he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." More than once did Ezekiel fall on his face at a similar discovery; whilst John now swoons under the intensity of grandeur which he beholds. The man of ninety years, the bosom-friend of Christ when on earth,—who

travelled much with him, who saw him on the mount of transfiguration, who writes with so much affection of that "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life,"—falls as dead at the sight of his Lord! It was not strange that when Christ said to Judas and his company, "I am he," they went backward, and fell to the ground; though our Lord was then in his humiliation. It was not strange that Saul of Tarsus, when he saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, fell to the earth, trembling and astonished. But what means it that John should become as a dead man?

Surely the Lord will comfort this aged apostle. But how will he do it? Does he say to him, You have preached abundantly and acceptably; you have written an invaluable gospel, and epistles that breathe the very spirit of Heaven; your example, and your exhortations to love have had a wide and happy effect; you have presided well over the churches of Asia; you are deeply respected, tenderly beloved, by multi-

tudes in Judea and Syria, in Greece and Rome? No; John does not yet stand before Christ in judgment; the time has not yet come for the sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" there are still elements, even in that bosom, which render it not perfectly safe to deal in commendation. This venerable man of God, like ourselves, will suffer less from banishment than he would from compliments. It is only in solitude, and under the heavy hand of persecution, that there will be no risk in his witnessing what is about to be disclosed.

"And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not."

That touch! how gentle it was! what a sense of might did it convey! The hand that touched blind eyes, and they opened; that touched a lifeless form on the couch and another on the bier, and the dead stood up alive in the midst of rejoicing friends; the hand that holds high the mediatorial sceptre; that waves in this direction, and armies flee apace; in that, and the moun-

tains are moved,—is the right hand now laid on the seer in Patmos.

Disciple of the Lord! sinking at times under a sense of his glorious presence, at times in the deep waters of trial, faint-hearted now and then, and ready to slip in the narrow way—do you not find a right hand laid on you, gently yet firmly? What strength does it impart! How many thousands has it calmed and rescued! What would become of every believer, but for thy mighty hand, O Immanuel!

“And he said unto me, Fear not.” That voice sounds familiarly. It once spake, “When they persecute you, fear them not;” “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul;” “fear ye not, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” It once said to Simon, “Fear not,” and to Jairus, “Fear not.” On the mount of transfiguration Jesus touched them—touched this same John—and said, “Arise, and be not afraid.” On the stormy lake he came walking, and saying, “It is I; be not afraid.”

You have heard it, have you not? Did you not once listen to the words, “Daughter,

thy sins be forgiven thee"? Have you not often heard, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"? Have not these words many a time greeted your ears, "Let not your heart be troubled"?

Ye fainting and fearful; ye who see fiery darts flying thick; ye who cry, "All thy waves are gone over me;" ye who, on the way to Emmaus, are holding sad discourse about your buried master,—he is risen; his kind, mighty hand is upon you, and his voice is saying, "Fear not"! Aged disciple, it is the experience of one who has seen fourscore years and ten, that is here presented to you. And probably it was not surprise alone at the majesty of Christ's person, which overpowered him, but also a vivid conception of his own unworthiness. And when you lift up your eyes to the same glorified Saviour, you have a similar sense of your sins; a despairing apprehension comes over you; you fall as dead at his feet. Yet the exiled apostle, the holy prophet who had been more than threescore years maturing in grace, felt thus, and

more deeply, too, than you. But he felt also, what you may feel, the right hand of Jesus upon him; he heard, what you too may hear, the reässuring words, "Fear not."

THE ALPHA AND OMEGA.

"I am the first and the last."

The same declaration occurs in the eighth verse, and one similar in the eleventh. Thus repeatedly does our Lord claim supreme divinity. He thinks it no robbery to be on a level with the Most High; yea, one with Jehovah, whose own sublime assertion of infinite and everlasting independence is: "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." When, therefore, in this apocalyptic address, the glorified Redeemer announces himself as the first and the last, he proclaims his Deity; for what else is his possession of the highest attributes, his perpetual presence, and his rule over all things?

"I am the first;" there is none higher than I

in rank. No one preceded me in time ; “ Before Abraham was, I am.” No inquiry can run farther back than my being ; in me, then, let all retrospective thoughts centre. “ I am the first,” as cause of all things ; for without me was not anything made that was made.

“ I am the last.” — I Am that I Am, from everlasting to everlasting ; eternity is the measure of my being. In me let all aspirations terminate. How does this fortify our confidence ! John was addressed, and so is every believer now, by Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever ; who has undertaken nothing that he will not carry through to its full accomplishment. His word still is, “ Take ye no thought for the morrow ; fear not ; I am the first and the last.”

OUR RISEN LORD.

“ I am he that liveth and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore. Amen.”

“ Was dead ;” yes, he took a human, and therefore mortal form. Death was in the bond

under which he came into the world. Only by dying could he redeem from death, and from him that had the power of death. But that has been accomplished. All that could be achieved by an experience so dark, has been already effected; and whatever was mortal pertaining to him, belongs to the things that are past; he "was dead."

Now he lives. This Jesus hath God raised up; and, by so doing, has with his own right hand set upon him the decisive seal of Mediatorship. He raised him from the dead, and gave him glory. He is now alive, all the more glorious and efficacious for having died. By dying and rising, he has become the certain pledge of life. He is at once its giver, preserver, and arbiter. He was raised "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." "Because I live, ye shall live also." His was a meritorious dying; it was with a view to life for others; it was to the end that he might become the fountain and Lord of life for all given him by the Father, who therefore have eternal life, and shall never perish.

He is the living and the life-giving One. "Behold I am alive for evermore. Amen." His was not such a resurrection as that of Lazarus, or the young man of Nain, or the ruler's daughter, who soon died a second time. He died once for all; being raised from the dead, he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

CHRIST THE ARBITER OF HADES.

"And hath the keys of hell and of death."

By general consent, our English version, admirable as it is, fails in some instances to convey the meaning of the original, where words occur which, in part, are translated *hell*. For instance, a certain term, Sheol, occurring sixty-four times in the Hebrew Scriptures, is, by the translators of our English Bible, rendered *grave* in thirty instances; and it is plain that, in some at least of the remaining instances, it ought to have been translated, the *region of the dead*; because the place of torment distinctively is not intended, but the under-world in general, the world of spirits, without discriminating,

much less denying, a distinction of abode there between the righteous and the wicked. While the Old Testament reveals a separation after death between the good and the evil, and appropriate retributions to each of the two great classes, that particular word, Sheol, often denotes the region of the dead, in distinction from the living, without distinguishing the condition of the righteous and wicked when they leave this world. Since, then, the word *hell* now signifies only the place of future punishment, it is too restricted a term to represent, even in a majority of cases, that original word which covers the whole territory of the unseen world.

Opening the New Testament, we find a Greek word, *Gehenna*, denoting the place of future punishment, and properly translated; as in the passage, "Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." But we find another word, *Hades*, answering to Sheol, and which in one instance is rendered *grave*: "O grave! where is thy victory?" but more generally it signifies, as here, the world of the departed, and does not, of itself, direct thought to

the two great departments of that world. Thus, Christ entered the region of the dead; and we read in the Acts, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades;" *i. e.*, in the domain of death, in the world of disembodied spirits. The rendering, as we have it, hell, is there peculiarly unhappy, for that denotes but one section of the invisible regions, where only the incorrigibly wicked are sent, and where no one can imagine our Saviour to have gone when he gave up the ghost.

That clause of the text now considered, should read, "And hath the keys of Hades and of death," — the keys of the unseen world, the world into which all enter as they leave this, — the universe of intelligent creatures being divided between those here and those not here. Of that vast territory, and of death the entrance to it, Christ holds the keys — has complete authority over them. Having been himself into Hades, he came forth, and his return was his coronation over those realms. He "died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." That world whereof we now speak has a heavenly Hades, and a

Hades of outer darkness; a paradise of perfect blessedness, Abraham's bosom, and a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; a right hand and a left hand, — one leading to our Father's house, in which are many mansions, the other into outer darkness. He who is the Alpha and Omega, has supreme control over that vast domain. All spirits, on passing into that empire, are by him directed where to go, and by him are kept in their respective places of abode. "For there is a great gulf fixed" between the two, and those eyes which are as a flame of fire, guard sleeplessly on either hand. Never did, and never will, a soul pass from one to the other.

What a population is there in that empire of departed spirits! How suggestive are the cemeteries of earth! In the catacombs of Paris, closed long since, may be seen two millions of skulls, placed in order. In England alone, territorially so small, there are ten thousand churchyards, and each has a silent congregation far more numerous than can ever be gathered above ground. Our country receives an immigration of more than three hundred and sixty thousand

annually; but the world of spirits receives that immigration every five days. There have lived in former generations perhaps fifty times as many as are now living, or fifty thousand millions. And to the present abode, to the everlasting condition of all those hosts, Jesus Christ holds the key.

It is the Resurrection, however, that will furnish the most stupendous proof of Christ's authority over the regions of the departed. "If the dead rise not, then is Christ not risen; but now is Christ risen;" he is alive for evermore; at the appointed time will he descend from heaven with a shout, and all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

What a morning, what a spectacle, when, through the reversed gates of Hades, all the countless millions of the departed shall reappear once more! O Thou who art the first and the last; who art He that liveth, and wast dead, and art alive for evermore, and hast the keys of hell and of death — grant a blessed resurrection and everlasting life with thee!

CHRIST THE ARBITER OF DEATH.

He holds also the key of death. It rests with him to say when we shall pass the gate. Our times are in his hand. It rests with him to determine how and where we shall go. The earthquake supplies one door to the unseen world. At Lisbon, a century ago, in the course of six minutes, sixty thousand persons perished. The fortress and the battle-field are gates of death. At Arbela, three hundred thousand men marched through at one time. A few months since, Lombardy became one grand entrance to Hades. Another door is through the sea. "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee, or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" No, thou hast not; yet tens of thousands have passed through that lower gate, into the invisible world.

The more usual entrance, however, is found within each man's own dwelling. It is through disease that, slowly or rapidly, Christ opens the

door for millions every year ; and when he points the way, who may hesitate, who can withstand ? The wounded Marshal Lannes, the hero of many a battle, when told he must die, and that nothing could save him, “ Not save a marshal ! ” he exclaimed, “ and a Duke of Montebello ? ” No, marshal ; an order has come from one higher than the emperor, from the Prince of the kings of the earth. “ There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death ; and there is no discharge in that war. ” In the grave, in the world of disembodied spirits, the rich and the poor meet together : the Lord is the Maker of them all.

Equally vain is any attempt to return from those regions. Christ holds the key with an omnipotent hand : “ He shutteth, and no man openeth ; he openeth, and no man shutteth. ” True, he himself has but to say, “ Lazarus, come forth ! ” and the brother of Mary and Martha reappears through the opened gate ; he has merely to step to the door, and call, “ Talitha cumi ! ” and the departed soul of the maiden obeys. But

when an apostle would do the same, it is only in the name, and by the power, and at the instance of Him who holds the key of Hades and of death.

This brings a suggestion of fearful import to the perseveringly impenitent. He whose eyes are as a flame of fire never relents toward them, when once he has turned the key upon them. In the closing of this "testimony of Jesus Christ," it is recorded: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." You may have stood, as did the writer once, in the city of Venice, gazing at the covered bridge over the *Riva del Schiavoni*, which connects an upper story of the old Ducal Palace with the massive, grated, gloomy prison opposite. Remembering that no one, behind whom the door closed, and who crossed by the passage, called "The Bridge of Sighs," ever came back, did you not think of the throng moving on toward the other side of the great gulf, to the dungeon where are only sighs and endless despair? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment."

DEPARTURES CONTRASTED.

Do not departing believers find a friend at the gate of death? He who is the Living One is indeed there, and smiles upon them. He has himself been through that entrance to the realm of spirits, and come back again. His smile so lights up the passage, that it seems only an attractive avenue to glory. Often does he open the door a little while beforehand, and let the approaching saint look in upon the region whither he is going. So Stephen saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. So, on his death-bed, the godly man John Janeway testified: "Methinks I stand, as it were, with one foot in heaven, and the other upon the earth. Methinks I hear the melody of heaven, and by faith I see the angels waiting to carry my soul to the bosom of Jesus, and I shall be forever with the Lord in glory!" So, too, Edward Payson: "The celestial city is now full in my view. Its glories beam upon me; its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart."

Chapter Sixty.

THE EPISTLE TO EPHESUS.

UNTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write : These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ; I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil ; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars ; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that

overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. REV. 2: 1—7.

EPHESUS.

For a moment, we retrace the course of eighteen centuries. We visit the south-western coast of the Roman province of Proconsular Asia. We sail up one of the numerous bays of that region, and enter a harbor, into which a small river, called the Cayister, pours its waters. It is the harbor of Ephesus; and to the right, partly on alluvial land along the river, and partly on neighboring hills, lies that wealthy and populous city. It is the largest in Asia this side Mount Taurus—is the seat of a flourishing trade, and the convenient resort of merchants and others, from the three great continental portions of the Roman Empire.

The first object which attracts our eye is one of the Seven Wonders of the world, the temple of Diana, larger by far than the Parthenon at Athens, being four hundred and twenty-five feet in length, and two hundred and twenty in width; having one hundred and twenty-seven columns,

sixty feet in height, each the contribution of a different king. More than two centuries were consumed in its erection. This temple is the great treasure-house of the goddess, where immense wealth is deposited in the statues, paintings, and various munificent gifts of kings and princes. Other immense and costly edifices attract our gaze. But we find in the midst of all this magnificence, a gloomy superstition and an enthusiastic idolatry. It is the very focus of sorcery, a great university of magic, the metropolis of heathen spiritualism.

There is, however, to be an onset upon this stronghold of Satan. An earnest, fearless man, on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, visits the place, remains a few days, and then leaves. During his absence, there comes one Apollos from Alexandria, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures." But Paul returns at length, and plants himself for a vigorous and patient effort to introduce the new religion. He baptizes a number of disciples, who had previously been instructed, though very imperfectly. He enters the syna-

gogue, and there, for three months, speaks boldly concerning the kingdom of God; till, owing to the perverseness of certain Jews, he is constrained to withdraw, and to carry on labors at a different point, where Tyrannus opens his school for the purpose. Soon the "name of the Lord Jesus is magnified," so mightily grows the word of God, and prevails. Text-books of Magic to an enormous value are burnt, and the whole craft who manufacture shrines for Diana are filled with consternation. A tumult ensues, and Paul once more leaves the place. But Christianity has taken root, and a church has been gathered.

Some months later, in sailing along the coast, Paul touches at Miletus, between thirty and forty miles distant, and, not having time to go up to the city, he sends for the elders of the church at Ephesus to come down and meet him. The parting scene, and his address reviewing his three years' labor among them, are peculiarly touching. One prediction of his is particularly memorable: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing

the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." That sad announcement was fulfilled ; for, writing afterwards to Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus as spiritual teacher and guide, the apostle speaks of some who " concerning faith have made shipwreck."

It appears that, as an apostle, Paul resided longer at Ephesus than at any other place ; and there is evidence that, under the nurture of immediate apostolic labors, and subsequent prayers and exhortations, as indicated by his epistle to the saints at Ephesus, the church in that favorite field became a flourishing one. Little, however, is known with certainty in regard to it, till after the lapse of thirty years, when we hear Jesus Christ himself dictating this epistle. How easily understood it is ! How direct, how kind, yet how pointed ! Christ's recorded sermons, epistles, and prayers, are all short, earnest, weighty.

If the question is raised by any one, Was the threatening fulfilled which is here conveyed ? the answer is, Most certainly. The precise date at which the candlestick was removed from

Ephesus, we know not; but it was long since, and now there is only darkness in that once favored spot. The famous temple, and the church edifices, are alike demolished. As is well known, and as it came under the writer's eye, all is ruin and solitude. The place is a fearful monument of the desolation that follows the leaving of first love.

PRECEDENCE OF THIS EPISTLE.

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.”

“Unto the angel,” — the messenger; evidently not one of the heavenly host; but one sent and appointed by the Lord Jesus, to be the head, guide, and representative of the church, with messages from Him who is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and whose voice is as the sound of many waters.

This is a letter “to be communicated;” not designed exclusively, or even specially, for the presiding angel or pastor, but for the whole body, the one body of believers in that city. The salutation of the first chapter is “To the

seven churches which are in Asia;" but the angel of each church respectively is addressed, because, as Moderator, or President, he is the proper organ of communication.

Of the seven cities to which these epistles are sent, Ephesus stands first, because it is the largest, and is the metropolitan city, — the one nearest Patmos, and the one which the traveller and the seer, in the local progress of thought through the circle of the seven, would visit first. The probable circumstance, that in the order of time this too was the first church gathered in the province, and that — if the tradition has any value — John resided longest here, may have been among the reasons why He who is the Alpha and Omega should direct his first communication to the angel of the church of Ephesus.

Each of these several letters from the faithful and true Witness commences, as in the present instance, with one or more image from the drapery of that impressive vision portrayed in the previous chapter. Thus does the speaker establish his identity, and thus he keeps vividly

before the mind the elements of awe whereby he reveals himself.

CHRIST WITH HIS MINISTERS AND CHURCHES.

“These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”

We have already been told the mystery of the stars in his right hand: “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” Christ’s accredited ambassadors are stars, some of them of the first magnitude, some of the tenth; all, however, alike shining with borrowed light,—light from Him who is the glorious central sun.

He holdeth the seven stars in his right hand; and in good hands they are, — otherwise, alas for them! What would become of every sinking Peter, but for Christ’s outstretched hand? Strong is his right arm. How many, century after century, has it upheld, who have diffused the light of pure doctrine and a blameless life! How many has it thus upheld for scores of years, and some for half a century or more! Thus was it with the

apostle to the Indians, so-called, — John Eliot, — for nearly sixty years, and his immediate successor more than sixty, — two men ministering to the church for one hundred and twenty consecutive years! “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”

“Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;” and these are the seven churches. His presence among them is no less a reality now than then. Would that it were an habitual thought that the First-begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, is now in the midst of our churches! — that his eye scans the catalogue, creed, and conduct of each; that he is in the midst of our churches, to mark the style of living, to mark the subscription-list, to mark what difference in business transactions and social life there is between those called and those not called his people; that he is present in families, to observe whether children are trained for him, or for Mammon and the great Diana of fashion; that he is present at church-meetings, to observe

who are there, and who not there ; present always and everywhere, and, though unseen, seeing all !

EXCELLENCES RECOGNIZED.

“I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil ; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars ; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.”

He speaks in commendation, so far as may be done. Divine impartiality ! divine condescension ! — to speak of excellences in any of his servants ; to commend them for that which they have received from him ! Behold the goodness and severity of God, — goodness first, goodness predominant.

“I know thy works.” There was not then, there is not now, one labor of love ; not one step taken for the love of Jesus, and the love of souls ; not one cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple ; not one instance of meek endur-

ance under misrepresentation or persecution, of which there is not a mindful spectator. Mistress of a family! your quiet, persevering efforts for the spiritual good of an ignorant, bigoted domestic, are not unheeded; and when, without saying aught to any one, you go down the street, with some little delicacy in your hand, and with kind thoughts in your heart and kind words on your lips, to the room of sickness; or turn the corner to where there was a funeral not long ago, and then pass with a loving welcome to some family lately come to your neighborhood,—“for ye know the heart of a stranger,”—your movements are observed by Him in whose steps you follow. And so are yours who, for his name’s sake, engage in the thankless work of securing subscriptions to Foreign Missions, Home Missions, or any kindred cause. There is One who seeth in secret, and will openly reward you who kneel with the Holy Scriptures before you, as you prepare for the Sabbath-school, or Bible-class, and who study, pray, and speak with an earnest desire for the everlasting welfare of precious souls. When, in these Christian endeavors, you meet with rebuffs,

with impertinence or abuse, it is noted by Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.

“Thou canst not bear them which are evil.” The patience just commended, is quite consistent with the impatience also here approved. One may endure hardships and trials without murmuring, yea, with entire Christian meekness, and at the same time feel the strongest dislike to wrong doing. There is as truly a sanctified impatience as patience; and it is not a different face, nor a double face, but the same countenance looking in opposite directions. A holy complacency in good men, and a holy aversion to the bad, are mutual tests of each other. He who came to save sinners, the chiefest of them, who was called a friend of publicans and sinners, was at the same time “undefiled, and separate from sinners.” He who says, “Come unto me,” is preparing to say, “Depart ye cursed.”

“And hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” John himself, a few years before, writing his first epistle at Ephesus, gives the injunction: “Be-

loved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God : and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come ; and even now already is it in the world." Every individual and every church is bound to exercise discrimination in regard to religious teachers. It is not enough that we reject the false prophets of Mormonism and Spiritualism ; there are more dangerous forms of error, and those having abler advocates. The lax, the lukewarm, may cry out against intolerance and heresy-hunting, but the Head of the church has an encomium for such as try them which say they are apostles, and are not, and prove them liars. There can be no enlightened, consistent piety, without a zeal for sound doctrine and a pure ministry.

“ And hast borne, and had patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.”

This shows that it was from no captious and unreasonably complaining spirit that the Ephesian church could not endure the pseudo-apostles, — those teaching unsound doctrines, and sanctioning unscriptural practices, — but that theirs was as well a spirit of forbearance and persevering endurance, as of uncompromising aversion to heresy and immorality.

THE GREAT DELINQUENCY.

“Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Can a church with such excellences have any grave defects requiring correction? “Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee.” And what is it? Is there schism at Ephesus? Are they split into parties? Have they been running wild in new measures, or in theoretical ultraisms? Have corruptions touching the ordinances crept in? What is it? — “Thou hast left thy first love.” Not less worthy of warning than departure from fundamental doctrine, or

from scriptural morality, is the leaving of first love. The charge here is not that of falling from grace, nor that love is extinguished, but diminished. No zeal, no suffering can atone for the want of first love. Such an attachment was shown by the one who washed our Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, — loving much, because she was much forgiven. Such was the attachment generally shown by the first disciples under apostolic preaching, who “gladly received” the word, and who therefore abounded in works of faith and labors of love. The Ephesian Christians did at one time realize in some measure the fulfilment of the prayer of Paul in their behalf: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” But they had declined; and the Lord now says to them, as to Israel of old, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy

youth, the love of thine espousals." Such waning of attachment to God, is a grievous offence.

Do you observe tokens of abated regard on the part of a friend? Do you notice proofs of growing coldness in the one between whom and yourself there are sacred vows, — vows sealed, it may be, in the solemnities of marriage? What agitating fears arise! What poignancy of grief! Oh, what a weight presses upon your heart! And is the Lord Jesus less alive to the fidelity of his espoused church? In deep, sad earnestness he chides: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Shall there not be a prayerful, searching inquiry relative to this leaving of first love? Be sure of this, that if you see less of Christ now than formerly in his word and ordinances; if less disposed to daily cross-bearing; if, with equal or increased means, you are less ready to give to his cause; if there is a disposition to quiet yourself by thinking that you and some others were once too strict, and that too much has been made of differences in doctrine and practice be-

tween evangelical and unevangelical denominations; if you find it easier to let business, or a secular lecture, take you from a church prayer-meeting; if, on the score of position among Christ's people, you grow more select in your social habits and feelings,—then, surely, have you left your first love.

A WARNING AND A COMMENDATION.

“Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”

Remember,—call to mind an earlier period of comparative spiritual activity, comfort, and growth. Take time for it. Be as careful as you would if scrutinizing accounts in the fear of bankruptcy. Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent. Humble yourself before an offended God, and do the first works. Return

to a prompt, prayerful, scrupulous discharge of all known duties, "or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." Does the threatening seem severe for the offence? We will allow the faithful and true Witness to estimate the demerit of sins, and graduate the penalty. In his esteem, it is no slight thing to leave one's first love. Notwithstanding, however, their abated attachment to Christ, mark the tenderness of Christ's love to them: "But this thou hast." How much more anxious to commend than to reprove! How prompt to pour balm into the wound that needed to be opened!

Who the Nicolaitanes were, or what they held, we can only conjecture. It is of no special importance to us to know. Enough, that their deeds were hateful to the Lord Jesus, and to his church at Ephesus. We may have a deep scriptural aversion to false doctrines and wicked deeds, consistently with the love of benevolence to the persons of those who hold and practice them.

The great fault of the Ephesian church was

that, in the midst of their commendable zeal against heresy and immorality, their love to Christ and the souls of men had waxed cold. They had come to be a one-idea church. But a solitary virtue cannot long stand alone; it is dangerous having only one excellence. In the zeal of modern reform, in the overheated anxiety to do away with abuses, it is no unusual thing for professed benevolence to exhibit itself as real malignity. To hate well, it is necessary to love much.

A PROMISE TO THE VICTOR.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Listen, every one who would not go on contentedly in disloyal remissness, every one willing to be aroused from lethargy, and for whom heaven has any real charms!—“To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life

which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Refreshing promise! animating close to this epistle! The inward and the outward life of the believer is a warfare. There is a contest to be maintained with indwelling sin, with an opposing world, and with its malignant prince. We are to fight the good fight of faith. But how joyful this assurance! how invigorating the foretaste to a saint, as, weary and way-worn, he approaches the marriage supper of the Lamb! "I feed on angel's food," said Rutherford. Was that the first time he had tasted it? No; it had been his nourishment, as it is every true Christian's, from the hour of new birth, onward through eternity. The children of God do from day to day taste the hidden manna of life while on earth, and are strengthened by it. Still it seems foreign in this world. Fragrant it is, and its flavor is celestial; still it is not like partaking of the same in paradise. And in that blest abode there is to be no forbidden fruit. Through everlasting ages its freshness will be found gladdening and vivifying. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life that is in

the midst of the paradise of God." And never again will the petition be heard, "Give us this day our daily bread;" for "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more."

Chapter Seventh.

THE EPISTLE TO SMYRNA.

AND unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write : These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive ; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried : and ye shall have tribulation ten days ; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches : He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death. *REV. 2 : 8—11.*

SMYRNA.

Sailing up a beautiful gulf for thirty miles, our eyes caught sight at length of the busy empo-

rium that crowns its head. And this is Smyrna! — still the great mart of the Levant, numerous ships in her harbor, and gayly painted boats darting hither and thither; the town stretching two miles or more along a narrow plain that intervenes between the water and a hill, against whose base the city presses. This is Smyrna, the crown of Ionia, the ornament of Asia, as the ancients called her; and yet not the same now, for ten times has she risen anew from the ruins of war or earthquakes. With what sagacity and taste did the Greeks of old select the sites of their cities — so often fronting upon the fine sheet of water, and resting in the rear upon a mountain that supplied at once marble for building, and a natural ornament and defence!

This, then, is Smyrna, in classic times one of the most flourishing and magnificent cities of Asia, and famous not only for her commerce, but for her schools of rhetoric and philosophy. We hasten to the shore. We thread our way through crowded bazaars, and streets so narrow that over some of them the eaves of opposite houses almost meet, though all of them have but

one story above the basement, and from none is a chimney seen to rise. What a variety of nations and costumes is there among the one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, who occupy different quarters of the town according to their faith,—here Armenians, there Greeks; the Turk in a more commanding section, and the Jew in the most obscure.

We climb to the summit of Mount Pagus, once the Acropolis, and where still stands a ruined castle. We look down upon the city with its barn-like churches, its mosques and minarets; upon the extensive cemeteries, with their sombre cypresses, and in some of which the turbaned tombstones indicate the standing and office of each turbaned Moslem who sleeps beneath. Along the approaches to the city we observe caravans of laden camels, the only vehicle of the country. We look off upon mountains and plains rich in historic memories. Our eye lingers around the spot where the Haemus discharges its bright waters, and we watch the silvery course of the Meles, which gave a name to Homer; for Smyrna claims to have given birth to the patriarch of

uninspired poets, and to his name she built a splendid temple and statue.

At a little distance from where we stand was the Stadium ; and here, upon this immediate spot, stood the amphitheatre. Yes, on that side were the seats for spectators, and on this side you see remains of the dens where wild beasts were kept ; and here, with a solitary cypress beside it, is the reputed tomb of Polycarp, the martyr Bishop of the place, who on this high altar sealed with his blood his loyalty to Christ. From the summit thus hallowed, our eye at once glances to the village of Boujah, distant a league or two, where sleep, beneath a more luxuriant cypress, the remains of the well-known Sarah Lanman Smith.

At the memory of these, and of all faithful witnesses for Jesus, our hearts rejoice.

“ Sing to the Lord ! let harp and lute and voice
Up to the expanding gates of Heaven rejoice,
While the bright martyrs to their rest are borne :
Sing to the Lord ! their blood-stained course is run,
And every head its diadem hath won,
Rich as the purple of the Summer’s morn :
Sing the triumphant champions of their God,
While burn their mounting feet along their sky-ward road.”

THE LIVING ONE.

In dwelling on Christ's epistle to Ephesus, it was remarked that he introduces each of these letters with some one or more of his characteristics, as disclosed by the opening vision. In the present instance we have :

“ These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive.”

It is also to be borne in mind, that the church at Smyrna is one of the only two out of the whole seven which receive no censure, and to whom all that is addressed by the enthroned Saviour wears the aspect of commendation and encouragement. If, now, we may suppose there is a designed correspondence between the title selected and the character of each particular church — and is there not ground for such a supposition? — then may we derive a comforting consideration from the words in their connection. It is his own eternity, his complete and glorious independence, which our Lord would bring particularly to the view of faithful yet suffering

disciples at Smyrna. About to speak of their tribulations, he introduces himself as “the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;” and he thus intimates to us under what character we are to look to him in our deeper trials. It is no recent friend who spake of old, and who speaks to-day to distressed disciples,—no inexperienced, though well-meaning acquaintance, who proffers a doubtful ability for our succor,—but one who has summered and wintered with the family from the first; who stood by our brethren under the persecuting Roman emperors; who stood by the three confessors in the burning fiery furnace; who was with the church in the wilderness, with her in the ark, and before the deluge; the same yesterday, to-day and forever. All that is soul-quieting and elevating, all of strength and incitement that resides in the attributes of eternity and unborrowed, infinite fulness, belong to Him from whom comes the message.

This, too, is enhanced and brought down within the reach of our sinking souls and feeble arms, by a community of experience. These high qualities of Him who dictates the epistle, are

presented in connection with his suffering manhood, and the atonement.

THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF ADDRESS.

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty.”

Ah! how did that thrill the hearts of brethren and sisters in Christ at Smyrna! How does it thrill ours! It is not a letter of inquiry that is handed to us,—a note from some kind-hearted stranger, who has had an intimation that we are in circumstances of want and peculiar trial, and who wishes to be informed in what way he can aid us. We have nothing to tell him; he is perfectly apprised of all that is done, and all that is suffered. “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; my thoughts are not all occupied with these adoring seraphim round about me here in glory, with the jubilant songs of David and Isaiah; my eye is upon you too, little flock; my ear catches every sigh, and every supplication.”

The heart of Christ is with us. The Elder Brother stands confessed as truly and closely as when an agitated company heard the words, “I

am Joseph, your brother!" You who are striving, amidst many domestic disadvantages, to serve your Lord and Master; you whose efforts after a more strict conformity to him, and a more active discharge of Christian duties, are not seconded as they should be; you whose public acts or private proceedings are misconstrued, and on whom reckless tongues open a fusilade; you who often meet rebuffs and vexations in your noiseless home missionary work; and you who feel the force of a vertical sun, and of heathen jibes, or Mohammedan execrations, — all ye saints in Christ Jesus, who are suffering aught for his sake, — rejoice and be exceeding glad. He who is the first and the last, who was dead and is alive, knows it all. There is a telegraph from each throbbing heart to the throne on high. Every tremor of fear, every pang of grief, every throb of holy joy, is registered. Oh, how soothing the thought! With what consoling power does it come, that One on high is all the while thinking of us and looking upon us!

"I know thy poverty; but thou art rich." Strange paradox, is it not? Nay, only to those

who have never learned to judge aright. The political economy of the Bible has faith for its fundamental principle, — that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; which silently carries on its foreign commerce, laying up treasures where moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. One may be — we see it every day — poor in temporalities, but wealthy in things spiritual. In a literal sense, who is the rich man? The man whose desires and means measure each other; who has no need to borrow, and has no temptation to flatter; who does not envy the possessions of others, and cheerfully foregoes what he cannot suitably obtain; he who is least covetous, and most contented, must be pronounced the true millionaire. But the poor man, the really poor one, and ever growing poorer and poorer, is he who desires and dreams of that which he has not; who hoards and doats on the coin not current in heaven; the man who is verging nearer and nearer to that awful bankruptcy, which makes

the victim cry, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years!"

A widow lady, with a very small income, was remarkable for her generous liberality, especially for religious objects. In process of time, she came in possession of an ample fortune. But it was with deep regret that her pastor observed she no longer gave spontaneously to aid the cause of Christ, and when applied to, gave grudgingly, and sometimes not at all. On one occasion, having presented a shilling, where she had formerly given a guinea, her minister felt it his duty to expostulate with her. "Ah, sir," she replied, "then I had the shilling means, but the guinea heart; now I have the guinea means, but only the shilling heart. Then, I received from my heavenly Father's hand, day by day, my daily bread, and I had enough, and to spare; now, I have to look to my ample income; but I live in constant apprehension that I may come to want." And generally, who are those harassed by the fear of poverty? Who are they that have most of corroding cares about property? Not those in moderate, or

in straitened worldly circumstances. A distinguished physician states, that the patients in our lunatic asylums who are and have been goaded by the fear of want, are persons of wealth, and that the dread of poverty seldom, if ever, brings insanity to the truly poor. There is many a rich poor man, and many a poor rich man.

At the date of this epistle before us, who really held all the wealth in the world? Not the Emperor Domitian, counting his revenue by millions of sestertii; not an oriental prince, whose vaults were filled to overflow with gold and diamonds; but the banished old man on Patmos, and such as he; the disinherited, outcast believer at Smyrna, and such as he. For this historical statement, we have the authority of no Tacitus or Gibbon, but of Him who is the first and the last: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; but thou art rich." The indigent Christians of Smyrna were rich toward God — rich in faith, rich in the fruits of the Spirit, with a reversionary title to an inheritance inestimable and incorruptible. "Having

nothing, they possessed all things;" they alone were lifted above all fear of want.

SATAN'S SYNAGOGUE.

"And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

The solution of this is probably to be found in such passages as these: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

A citizenship, with its immunities, in God's spiritual kingdom, is not indicated by natural

descent or outward ordinance, but by inward transformation, and invisible naturalization. For any company of persons, therefore, destitute of the seal of the Holy Spirit, to get together and cry: "The temple of the Lord — The temple of the Lord are we!" is by the Lord himself pronounced blasphemy. Are there no modern parallels? The mild and judicious Henry says: "As Christ has a church in the world, the spiritual Israel of God, so the devil has his synagogue; those assemblies that are set up in opposition to the truths of the gospel, and that promote and propagate damnable errors; those which are set up in opposition to the purity and spirituality of gospel-worship, and promote and propagate the vain inventions of men, and rites and ceremonies which never entered the thoughts of God; and those assemblies which are set up to revile and persecute the true worship and worshippers of God, — these are all synagogues of Satan. He presides over them, he works in them, his interests are served by them, and he receives a horrid homage and honor from them."

Touching that most obvious right, religious freedom, the present Pope says: "The absurd and erroneous doctrines or ravings in defence of conscience, is a pestilential error,—a pest of all others most to be dreaded in the State." One Roman Catholic journal of this country makes use of the following language: "When, we ask, did we profess to be tolerant of Protestantism, or to favor the doctrine that Protestantism ought to be tolerated? On the contrary, we hate Protestantism,—we detest it with our whole heart and soul, and pray our aversion to it may never decrease." Another says: "There can be no religion without an Inquisition, which is wisely designed for the promotion and protection of the faith." To whose synagogue do such belong?

HOLY COURAGE ENJOINED.

"Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer."

Excellence is no safeguard against persecution; it rather provokes it, and, in turn, is promoted by it. The comparatively blameless

church at Smyrna, as well as others, had a prophetic perspective of sufferings opened up before them. To have said then, to say now, Strange that so good a man, so good a woman, should suffer so much, would betray forgetfulness of the example, the pledges and the proceedings of the Great Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings; whose declaration is, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," but whose word still is, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." The great Apostle of the Gentiles, taking pleasure himself in his infirmities, distresses, persecutions, writes to the Philippian Christians: "Unto you it is given"—as one of the good and perfect gifts coming down from the Father of lights—"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." There is generally something wanting about those who have never been severely tried.

Those wholly strangers to the dungeon, and the fiery furnace, must also be strangers to certain depths of import in this inspiring message,

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.”

A word of encouragement from human lips, especially if it send the thoughts to the Great Source of support, is most welcome. Just as Martin Luther was about to appear in the presence of his judges at the Diet of Worms, the venerable and valiant knight George Freundsberg said to him: “My poor monk, my poor monk! thou hast a march and a struggle to go through, such as neither I nor many other captains have seen the like in our most bloody battles. But if thy cause be just, and thou art sure of it, go forward in God’s name, and fear nothing! He will not forsake thee.” But how is the whole soul calmed, and girded for contest and suffering, when we hear the voice of Him who is the first and the last, which was dead and is alive, saying, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer!” And is not he who has promised, faithful? Has his grace been found insufficient by any sufferer in any exigency?

“Behold the devil shall cast some of you into

prison, that ye may be tried. And ye shall have tribulation for ten days.”

The incarceration of Christ's people, and every form in which they are persecuted, are by the instigation of the devil. If prophetic days are here meant, then is the definite period of ten years signified. It is a noticeable fact, that the last and bloodiest persecution, under Diocletian, continued ten years,—from the year of our Lord 302 to 312,—during which the Asiatic churches suffered extremely.

A CORONATION PROMISED.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

The Christians of Smyrna are not bidden to make an urgent representation of their case to the proconsul; to carry an appeal before the emperor, and seek redress; not to flee from the city, nor to gird on sword and buckler, and make a valiant stand for liberty of conscience; but they are bidden to be faithful to the doc-

trines and duties of their religion, faithful unto death.

There is a promise: "And I will give thee a crown of life." Those poor, despised disciples of Smyrna, candidates for the wreath of victory, and that, too, from the hand of the King of kings! Yes, and you too, followers of the Lord Jesus, struggling with poverty, oppressed with loneliness, ready to sink in the deep waters of trial, "now are ye sons of God;" ye are of the seed royal; be ye faithful unto death, and ye shall have a crown of life. Paul the aged caught a glimpse of that victor's wreath which was laid up for him, and not for him only, but for all them also that love Christ's appearing. Poverty-stricken disciple, in the midst of great tribulations! thou art a prince of the blood, yea, crown-prince. Be thou faithful unto death; then Christ's appearing will be thy coronation day. And when, ere long, you pass on to the world of spirits, let flowers be strown, let men clap their hands, let lingering heirs-apparent here look up with half-jealous joy as angels escort you to hear the welcome, "Well done,

good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

THE MARTYR POLYCARP.

That salutation, we have no doubt, awaited the venerable Polycarp, who was angel of the church in Smyrna. He has been apprehended. The Irenarch, Herod, and his father Nicetes meet him. They take him into their chariot, and begin to advise him, asking, "What harm is it to say, Lord Cæsar? and to sacrifice, and be safe?" He is silent; but, being pressed, replies: "I will not follow your advice." Unable to persuade him, they treat him abusively, and thrust him out of the chariot, so that in falling he bruises his thigh. Still unmoved, as if nothing had occurred, he goes on cheerfully, under the conduct of his guards, to the Stadium. The proconsul urges him: "Swear, and I will release thee;" "Reproach Christ." Polycarp rejoins: "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me; and how can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me?" The proconsul still

urges: "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar." Polycarp replies: "If you still vainly contend to make me swear by the fortune of Cæsar, as you speak, affecting an ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am; I am a Christian."—"I have wild beasts," says the proconsul; "I will expose you to them, unless you repent."—"Call them," replies the martyr. "I will tame your spirit by fire," says the other, "since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent."—"You threaten," answers Polycarp, "with fire which burns for a moment, and will be soon extinct; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you please." Saying this, and more, he is filled with confidence and joy, and grace shines in his countenance. He is faithful unto death. Just before his soul goes up amidst the flames of martyrdom, he pours forth this prayer:

"O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have attained the knowledge of thee! O God of angels and

principalities, and of all creation, and of all the just who live in thy sight! I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost; among whom may I be received before thee this day, as a sacrifice well-savored and acceptable, which thou the faithful and true God hast prepared, promised beforehand, and fulfilled accordingly. Wherefore I praise thee for all those things. I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son; through whom, with him, in the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee, both now and forever. Amen."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Whose ear is not open? Who can close the ear to such a message? The first death is of small moment; but the second—that death in

“the blackness of darkness forever,” that “wrath to come,” that “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord”—whose soul does not quake at the sound?

“’T is not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.

“There is a death whose pang
· Outlasts the fleeting breath;
Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around ‘the second death!’”

Chapter Eighth.

THE EPISTLE TO PERGAMOS.

AND to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges, I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and

will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. *REV. 2 : 12—17.*

PERGAMOS.

The first of the seven messages is to Ephesus, the nearest of the churches, and almost within sight of the apostle's island-prison. That epistle is one of mingled commendation and censure. The next, to the church at Smyrna, is characterized by the absence of all censure. There now follows one similar to the first in the series. These messages occur in the geographical order of the cities named; Smyrna lying at a moderate distance to the north of Ephesus, upon the coast, and Pergamos about the same distance beyond the latter, though retired somewhat from the sea. A right line from this, the most northern of the seven cities, to Patmos, would not run far from either of the other two just mentioned.

Making an excursion to Pergamos, we find it twenty miles from the coast, on the north side of the river Caicus, partly on a hill-side, but chiefly on a plain of great beauty and fertility,

stretching westward to the Ægean Sea, and bounded, apparently, by the blue mountains of Mitylene. We approach the modern city, called Bergamo, through avenues lined with Turkish cemeteries, abounding here, as elsewhere, with poplars and cypresses.

But, how changed from what it was! Fourteen thousand inhabitants are sheltered in rude cabin-like houses, amidst the massive ruins of former magnificence. A river still runs through the ancient amphitheatre. One of the bridges across the main stream is of such width as to form a tunnel underneath, a furlong in length, while on the bridge may still be seen the foundations of an immense palace.

Here, then, was once the capital of a kingdom, that of the wealthy Attali. Here was born the celebrated Galen; here was an unrivalled temple of Æsculapius; here may still be found earliest samples of tessellated pavements; here tapestries first adorned the halls of royalty. This city gave name to parchments; and from here Mark Antony carried away a library of two hundred thousand volumes, as a present to Queen Cleo-

patra. It was a metropolis of literature, splendor, and immorality. But we are more interested to know the state of the first Christian church in Pergamos.

THE IRRESISTIBLE WORD.

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.”

From the symbols under which the Lord Jesus reveals himself in the vision, he here selects a startling representative of one attribute of his—the sharp sword with two edges. By this is indicated the fearful efficiency of his sentence. His is a sword that cuts deep. How shall it be parried? Who has an effective shield? By the breath of his mouth was the fig-tree withered; and is not his word quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit? Will not the Lord, at the appointed time, consume the wicked one, with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of

his coming? Has not the breath of his mouth kindled a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell?

What terrific energy there is in Christ's voice! That breath which once breathed peace in the ear of agitated disciples; which spoke so soothingly the words, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee; which sent forth the sweetest invitation ever uttered in human hearing, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," — that voice will, ere long, speak in trumpet-tones, pronouncing a word at which millions will quake, "Depart, ye cursed!" As the sound of many waters, may it reverberate in the soul of every one now at ease in Zion!

CHRIST'S COGNIZANCE OF THE CHURCH.

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is."

The church at Pergamos need not fear that the Lord will forget them in their tribulations, nor dream that he will overlook them in their declensions. "I know thy works," — I know the

daily deportment of every member; I know your business dealings; I know the character of your recreations; I know the tone of your social intercourse; I know the neglect or performance of private duties; I know who is punctual at the sanctuary, and I mark those who sometimes slip away to a place of heathen worship; I know who of you are never at the assembly for conference and prayer, and who merely drop in now and then; I know who of you silently debate the question of contracting marriage with a known unbeliever, and I know who proceed openly to the same. Thy works — all thy works, private and public, from first to last — I know.

“And where thou dwellest.” All the peculiarities of Pergamos are familiar to me. Whatever allowance should be made or not be made on their account, I am able to decide; and impartiality will govern the decision.

“Where Satan’s seat is.” But is not Satan the God of this world? Do we not read of his working in the children — all the children of disobedience; and that he hath blinded the minds of them — all of them that believe not? Indeed,

we do, yet consistently with the fact that he also has a special home in particular places, and particular hearts. In one of the very earliest records extant, we read: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Amidst his general movements and operations, he manifested himself especially in that gathering at that time. Does not his presence, and that of subordinate spirits, seem to be only less than ubiquitous?

There is nothing, however, to require an equal distribution of his malicious efficiency. He is allowed to discriminate and concentrate. Hence, in all lands, certain localities are his strongholds, and certain individuals his select agents. The city of Benares, in Hindostan, is now one of Satan's heathen seats, where he holds, and for centuries has held, his court. But whoever has inspected a heathen idol-car, or witnessed a heathen

festival, with its insane and abominable orgies; whoever has looked into a Brahminic temple, with its hideous images, its dark, filthy apartments and passages, must have pronounced each to be one of Satan's seats.

Papal Rome is another. There is the central residence of the Man of Sin, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders. Every court of Inquisition, every Jesuit college, is one of Satan's chosen seats and pleasure-houses. So is every infidel press; the study of every pantheist, and of many a novelist; and it would seem that every circle of spiritualists and table-turners is a place of diabolical gymnastics.

He who hath the sharp sword with two edges is particularly observant of all such centres of special infernal agency, and of his own disciples, when residents in their neighborhood. The church of Pergamos came specially within his penetrating glance. Full well did he know that there was Satan's seat. The city was wholly given to idolatry. Nowhere else did the god Æsculapius receive such distinguished honors.

There Asiatic effeminacy at that time attained its lowest degradation; wantonness and debauchery were triumphant.

THEIR FIDELITY ACKNOWLEDGED.

“And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

They avowed themselves Christians; they had not become ashamed of bearing a title which invited the scorn and enmity of all around. To profess Christianity at that time was to incur the loss of goods, the loss of position, and the loss of affection. It was to incur the sneers of the populace, and the suspicion of the magistrate. Confessing Christ then, was often to receive the seal of martyrdom. Nobly did many a disciple of our Lord, under examination before the civil tribunal, reply to every question, “I am a Christian.”—“What are you?” said a Roman governor of Cilicia to the first of three men brought before him at Tarsus,—“What are you?” The

prisoner replied, "A Christian." He was scourged, chained, and thrown into a dismal dungeon. The second of them was asked, "What is your name?" He answered, "The most valuable name I can boast is that of a Christian." Scourged till every part of his body flowed with blood, he too was cast into prison. The third, brought up and interrogated in the same manner, replied, "I am a Christian," and then suffered the same torture. Similar scenes were doubtless witnessed at Pergamos, for there, too, had been martyrdom.

"Where Satan dwelleth." Persecution is eminently a Satanic work. In the iniquitous trials of Christ's faithful witnesses — the hatred, the perjury, the mockery of justice exhibited, and in the punishments inflicted upon them — how do all the passions of the pit inflame the human actors and spectators! Their fiendish shouts are incense most acceptable to the Prince of darkness. The fact of a Christian martyrdom at Pergamos, was one proof of the presence of Satan's seat there. Who Antipas was, we know not; enough that his record is on high.

We would pause here, and look back on Christ's commendation of his people in that wicked city. Our hearts rejoice while we see him going just as far in that commendation as the facts would warrant. Impressive, terrific even, as is the outward form under which he reveals himself in Patmos, there beats beneath that a heart of fathomless love for his true disciples. And though faithfulness to them requires the plainest reproof and warning, yet will he first make mention of their trials and the peculiar disadvantages of their residence. Behold the goodness and severity of God! O thou Alpha and Omega! thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast the sharp sword with two edges, what tenderness to thy ransomed people dwells in thy bosom! How art thou evermore the Good Shepherd to thy little flock!

FALSE DOCTRINES REPROBATED.

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the

children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”

It here attracts notice, that our Lord does not regard disadvantages of location as an apology for unfaithfulness. To be where Satan’s seat is, whether in Pergamos or in the pit, is no valid excuse for sin. It holds good in every house, in every city, in every world, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, mind, and strength.”

There is a great deal of mere local virtue, of geographical piety. It is painful to find how much of sobriety and outward correctness appears to be owing to the simple matter of latitude and longitude; how removal from one’s native atmosphere, from the restraints of a wholesome public sentiment, from the customary observation of watchful eyes, seems often to be the signal of an equally wide remove from previous proprieties of behavior. Not a few professors at the East, when going to our western country, conceal their church membership; and some, when

going to Europe, act worse than merely to conceal the same. The adage, "With the Romans, do as the Romans do," has in reality more force than the most positive command of the Lord Almighty. Practically, many a one acts upon the maxim, While in Satan's seat, let us do as Satan would have us. Would that it might be kept in mind, that a godless family, a wicked neighborhood, a dissolute city, a foreign country, do not take one beyond the domain of God's holy law, or the reach of his omniscient eye!

If, then, He whose eyes are as a flame of fire, shows the church in Pergamos no leniency on the score of their residing, though providentially, where Satan's seat is, how must he look upon the delinquencies of his professed people in this land? Under our vine and fig-tree, none to make us afraid; the bounties of God's providence flowing in upon us abundantly; the means and the offers of his grace, if possible, yet more abundant; no heathen around to beguile or annoy; in our heritage, which has come to us bathed in the tears and hallowed by the prayers of men who walked with God; — with what an

eye must the Lord Jesus look upon us! What apology have we to offer for supineness, for worldliness, for withholding our substance from his treasury, and our children from the most self-denying branches and places of his service? If an easy Christianity be ours, if the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes be held by us, better had we lived in Bethsaida or Capernaum, — better in Sodom or Gomorrah.

What are the “few things” which our Lord has against the Pergamean church? “Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,” — them whose spirit is the same with his, and whose teaching leads to the same results. It was at the suggestion of that money-loving prophet that the King of Moab seduced the children of Israel into those licentious practices which usually attend heathen worship and festivals. He “taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.”

The chief fault of the church at Pergamos was their tolerating among them men whose teachings had a corrupting tendency. There was

guilty remissness on their part, in not arousing to the discipline, and, if need be, to the expulsion, of those who were vitiating the doctrines and practices of the church. No body of believers that does not maintain scriptural discipline, may look for the favor of him who is Head of the church, and is jealous for the purity of its faith and order. Stumbling-blocks must be removed, be they persons or customs, incompatible with the peace, purity, and growth of Christ's church.

“So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.” The church at Ephesus, as we have seen, was culpable also, but not to the same degree, or in the same way, as this at Pergamos. They had, indeed, left, but only left, their first love. In the matter of false teachers, and unsound doctrines, they received commendation: “Thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” “This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.” What the Nicolaitanes held, or what their practices were, we are not informed. This we know, that Christ hated their doctrines and their

deeds. It is not in a private conversation that our Lord drops these remarks, but in all the dignity and solemnity of official utterance, and with the intent that they go down to the end of time, a warning to every disciple and every Christian church. It is not wicked practice alone, but false doctrine, which awakens the deep dislike, the detestation of Jesus Christ: "Which thing I hate." And herein are we to follow him, "abhorring that which is evil." A distinguished poet, who wrote many a line that might well have been blotted, never succeeded in condensing more of flippant falsehood into few words than the distich so often quoted, —

"For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

Quite consistent and natural is the sentiment in an author who vibrated between Romanism and Protestantism, and was true to nothing but bitterness. The chief misfortune about these lines, which are in the mouth of every apologist for lax sentiments, and every adherent to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, is, that it brands as a

“graceless zealot,” the heroic apostle who bids us contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; that it puts into the same category of “graceless zealots,” the whole noble army of martyrs, from Stephen to the present hour.

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

Here is a challenge and a threatening. Repent; humble yourselves in penitence for criminal toleration of dangerous errorists, and their corrupt practices. Look to it, that offenders are reformed or expelled, lest I, who dictate this epistle, quickly, with the sharp sword, avenge me of my adversaries.

From the commendation in the fourteenth verse, it would seem that the major part of the church were still sound in the faith; but their orthodoxy could not sanctify their practical defects. It is not enough that professing Christians hold fast the name of Christ, and show laudable zeal in defending their creed, or possess even the martyr spirit in maintaining one class of duties, while

another class is neglected ; consistency of practice, and symmetry of character, are also demanded.

HIDDEN MANNA AND THE WHITE STONE.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.”

A censure and a warning have been communicated. The tenderness of the Saviour's love shows itself once more, in its more obvious form. All between the thirteenth and seventeenth verses is a fearful parenthesis, — startling undertones in the anthem of Immanuel's good-will to men.

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” After victory comes the feast. How are believers allured to heaven ! By what imagery of reserved blessedness are their souls animated for present struggles ! With what refreshing supplies are they furnished after each

successive victory this side the final distribution of crowns! The hidden manna has healing as well as nutritive power. It is the balm of Gilead for every wounded soldier of the Great King. The Emperor Caracalla, like many another, once repaired to Pergamos to try the virtues of its vaunted drugs; but he went away as much an invalid as he came. Not so with his Christian subjects, or with any who have fought the good fight of faith. Amid contests with principalities of darkness, they have angels' food, bread from heaven, of which, if a man eat, he shall never die. Not so indispensable, not so lasting, not so gladdening was the manna of old, whereof was preserved a memorial specimen in the holy of holies; on which, however, the high-priest alone might look, but of which even he might not taste. The food here promised, and now furnished, is the free portion of every saint whose life is hid with Christ in God, and is thus quickened and invigorated.

“And I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.” To him

that overcometh there is pledged not only supplies for lasting spiritual refreshment, but also a token, which is a proof of friendship, and of a right to peculiar privileges. It is not necessary to enlarge upon the estimate we place on anything so well known, whose value is not so much intrinsic, as that it represents the donor's heart, whose fond memory calls to mind many such delicate and beautiful pledges —

“ All the token-flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well.”

You are thinking of one precious ring, and of the hour when it was received. You know what initials are traced within that more than golden heart's treasure. Connected with it is an enshrined history known to no one but the giver, and you who hold the sacred gift. To the faithful at Pergamos, and to all the faithful in Christ Jesus, there is given a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Various ancient customs might be referred to as an explanation here, but the most satisfactory

appears to be this: Among the usages of hospitality, it was the case that when a host and a guest contracted friendship for each other, they would take some small article appropriate to the purpose, often a stone, and breaking it in two, each would write his name upon the piece he held. These pieces were then exchanged, and were called *tessaræ hospitales*. They were proofs respectively of private friendship, and of a claim to the privileges of hospitality, if preserved and presented even by descendants of the parties.

Christian pilgrim! you call to mind the hour of your first successful contest with spiritual enemies, and how the one who was passing there, and who enabled you to overcome, kindly took you home with him, and gave you such bread as you never tasted before. And did he not give you a white stone with a new name in it? As you now look at the precious memento, does not that seem a name above every other? And when you have since presented yourself from time to time at his table, and have shown your token, has he not shown its counterpart with the name you wrote when you subscribed that pri-

vate compact? Does not a wayfarer come often to your door and knock, and you open the door, and he shows the well-known token; and you bid him come in, and he sups with you, and you with him?

Be careful of that treasure; you will one day want it still more. It will be your passport at the threshold of another world. And when at length you come to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the Master will draw near, and you must have the white stone with the new name upon it ready; and if it tallies with the one he holds, he will say, "Welcome! sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in my kingdom, and go no more out forever."

Chapter Ninth.

THE EPISTLE TO THYATIRA.

AND unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you

I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father; and I will give him the morning-star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. REV. 2:18—29.

THYATIRA.

There was anciently a Roman road, running from Pergamos seventy-five miles in a southeasterly direction, near the northern line of the kingdom of Lydia, to Sardis its capital. Not far from two-thirds of the way to Sardis, was Thyatira. It was a city of no very high antiquity, nor does it hold a conspicuous place in secular history. It is said to have been founded by a Macedonian colony. This may stand connected with the circumstance, that when Paul

preached in the chief city of Macedonia, there was present a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

There is no record of the time or manner of the introduction of Christianity to Thyatira; but it is not improbable that the pious woman who received baptism at Philippi had the first, or at least an important though humble and quiet agency, in making known the name of Christ to her native city. It was a female, Anna, the aged prophetess, who first spake of the joyful appearance of our Lord to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem; and it was a woman of Samaria who, after a conversation at Jacob's Well, hastened to invite the inhabitants of Sychar to come and see the one who had told her all things that ever she did, adding, "Is not this the Christ?" The agency of woman in making known the gospel, fills no narrow space in the history of the church.

A wearisome, but most interesting day's ride

from Sardis, brought us to Thyatira just as the shadows of Saturday evening lengthened over the plain. That plain, surrounded by elevated hills, and between ten and twenty miles in breadth, is well watered and fertile. Grain and cotton are its chief productions. The city, having a low and almost marshy situation, is in a measure hid from the approaching traveller by the luxuriant growth of willows, poplars, and cypresses. More than half a dozen minarets proclaim Mohammedan ascendancy in a population of seven thousand souls. As is general in Turkish towns, the houses are low and mean, and the streets narrow and dirty. Indeed, were it not for a fine supply of pure water from a neighboring hill, they would be intolerable. Although a place of some trade, neither it nor its environs present very much to please the eye of a stranger. The Turk is an architect of ruin. He has no reverence for antiquity, and little regard for perpetuity.

On the hill referred to, are two windmills in ruins. The curb-stones of neighboring wells are the fine wrought capitals of Corinthian columns,

which have been perforated, and through which play leaking buckets, suspended from rudest well-sweeps. The gravestones in the cemeteries are chiefly fragments from antique columns. Fragments of carved stones may everywhere be seen in the pavement of the streets, and in the half-mud walls of houses; but the foundations, and chief remains of former magnificence, are for the most part buried out of sight by the accumulated debris of successive centuries. A deep feeling of sadness, not to say disgust, is inevitable.

It serves, however, to withdraw thoughts from the past, and from an outwardly unattractive aspect of the present, to know that there are souls in Thyatira now passing their probation — souls for whom our common Saviour died. And how does it shed even a radiance upon that otherwise uninteresting city; how does the thought of its dingy streets, and dismal abodes, and ignorant populace, quicken the pulse, because there are now a few there, in the judgment of charity, whose minds the Holy Spirit has enlightened and brought into the family of Christ!

Thyatira is an out-station of the American Board's mission at Smyrna. Through the agency of laborers from this country, a small church has, within the last few years, been gathered there, and is probably the only true church which has existed in that place since its original candlestick was removed.

A Lydia of the present time, the wife of one Constantine, a Greek, "besought us," as Lydia of old did the Apostles, "saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there; and she constrained us." In her little court-yard was a flower-bed; and I noticed flowers growing in other houses of Protestant Christians. They are emblematic of those Christian families in that spiritual wilderness. The attentive hostess poured fresh water upon our hands. After oriental usage, we seated ourselves upon the carpet, leaning upon cushions. Supper was then "set before us" upon the floor; and after our repast, the family, according to the custom of the country, said, with great heartiness, "You are welcome." The prayer of her guest then, and now is, "The Lord give mercy unto

the house of Onisephorus, for he truly refreshed me.”

I will not detail the interesting religious services of the next day, which was the Sabbath. During one of them, held in the house of an Armenian, “the doors being shut for fear” of the bigoted Greeks, stones were thrown at us by rude boys and others in the street. At the afternoon service, held in a different house, where the small congregation seemed very attentive and devout, the native preacher had no other pulpit than a large basket, covered by a large copper dish, with a tablecloth thrown over the whole.

It was my privilege to call at the houses of all the Protestants in the city, and to give a word of private exhortation and sympathy, in addition to what had been addressed to them more publicly and collectively. The last of those visits was at the house of one Demetrius, a Greek. During conversation with him, I noticed a pile of paving-stones in the court, under the flight of stairs leading to the top of the house. Upon inquiry, I learned that they were thrown in by

a mob, three years before, when Demetrius was entertaining a Protestant preacher from Constantinople. The doors and windows still show with what violence the house was assaulted. An impressive monument, that rude pile of stones! None of the sculptured sarcophagi, none of the fluted columns, or highly-wrought entablatures belonging to ancient edifices, and still visible in Thyatira, so moved my admiration as that heap of rough paving-stones, the witness of heroic attachment to truth.

The Lord be your defence, ye Protestants of Thyatira! The Lord be praised for the candlestick restored, and the light rekindled! May it burn more and more brightly, till the whole dark region is illumined! The Lord give your Stephen the grace of martyrdom, if occasion require! The Lord's own message to thee is, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and I will give him the morning-star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

CHRIST'S SEARCHING SCRUTINY.

“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.”

In addition to the title, “Son of God,” there are here again symbols selected from the introductory vision. They are well suited to fix attention, and even to awaken alarm, for the church at Thyatira is about to receive a sharp censure. “These things saith the Son of God, who hath eyes like unto a flame of fire.” Eyes like unto a flame of fire! How startling! How had those addressed by this message doubtless grown insensible to the fact of such piercing scrutiny. How, it may be, has the one reading these lines grown oblivious to the same! Is it so that you are habitually more thoughtful about the observation of men, than of the Son of God? When tempted to use the tongue or the pen wrongfully, to lay a hand wrongfully upon property, to do some indiscreet or wicked act, do you not look cautiously around to see if any

human spectator is in sight, unmindful of the presence of the Son of God? Do you not sometimes say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me"? not thinking of his eyes, which are as a flame of fire, and to whom the darkness and the light are both alike; who compasseth thy path, and thy lying down, and is acquainted with all thy ways; yea, understandeth thy thought afar off.

We talk of secret thoughts, of keeping our own counsels. We imagine that in having turned the key upon private documents, they are safe from every one; or, as a last resort of effectual suppression, we commit them to the flames. Eyes like unto a flame of fire trace every word, even in the evanescent ashes scattered to the winds. Not a feeling, not a purpose arises in the mind that does not, though unuttered, indelibly daguerreotype itself there under the great Eye of Heaven. He who said to Nathaniel, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee;" he who so often replied to the unexpressed thoughts of those about him, and "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," — "his eyes be-

hold," — keep it in mind, — "his eyelids try the children of men." You have no secret thoughts, no hidden purposes.

"And his feet are like fine brass." He moves amidst his churches in might and majesty; with purity and power; his step firm and awful. He comes for inquest. Careless ones, beware! You may hear his approaching footfalls. With resistless energy will he trample upon all the unrepenting, and none the less because they bear his name.

EXCELLENCES RECOGNIZED.

"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."

How marked the commendation! It is not merely general, and condensed into a single word of compliment; nor do these varied excellences simply belong to them at the time, but their virtues are on the increase; at least their religious labors are more abundant: "And the last to be more than the first." They were more industrious than ever in their Christian efforts, such as

they were. What a lovely picture! What an enviable portraiture! Surely no dark shade will be thrown upon it. Yes, darker than upon the escutcheon of Ephesus, or even Pergamos.

NEGLECT OF DISCIPLINE CENSURED.

“Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

The Jezebel of Old Testament history, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, a gifted, artful, and unscrupulous woman, married Ahab. Reared in idolatry, she became an earnest and successful patroness of the same in Israel. Through her influence the king “went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him.” “There was none

like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.”

We are not to understand that there was at Thyatira a particular person bearing that name, nor perhaps that any individual woman was indicated under the name Jezebel, so much as a class, a faction, whose spirit and tendency were similar to those of that ancient propagandist of heathenism. It is not improbable that in the censured portion of the church, a majority were females; or, at least, that some one or more conspicuous and active individual of the same was a woman. A party appears to be personified under the name Jezebel, and for the same reason that the rampant error at Pergamos was called the doctrine of Balaam. It would, indeed, be quite analogous to the circumstances of after-times, if there had been at Thyatira some strong-minded woman, insinuating, and influential in giving currency to pernicious sentiments and practices. It has been no uncommon thing, in different periods of church history, for a female zealot of error and mischief to figure as

heresiarch. "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Such an offence against evident propriety and apostolical command, existed at Thyatira: "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach." They were inefficient in discipline; they were weakly and criminally tolerant. Their acknowledged virtues, their great zeal in kind offices did by no means atone for the flagrant mischief of tolerating such a pest as that self-styled prophetess, who was seducing Christ's servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

As in the case of the church at Pergamos, their orthodoxy did not screen them from censure and threatening for failure to eject the Balaamites, so now at Thyatira, the praiseworthy charity, and service, and faith, and patience, and works of the church, do not avert the righteous visitation of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire.

RETRIBUTION THREATENED.

“ And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not. Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death ; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts ; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

Apostasy in doctrine or practice is very often, particularly in the Old Testament, and with noticeable frequency in Ezekiel, spoken of under the figure of this crime. By children we are to understand the disciples, the dupes, of that corrupt and corrupting faction whose iniquity is denominated spiritual fornication. They, with their seducers, were to be cast — continuing the figure — into a bed, not of roses, but of thorns. If an apostle could say, “ I am jealous over you with godly jealousy ; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,” how much more may Christ himself be jealous for the honor and purity of

the church, which he has won to himself at such an infinite cost, including his own precious blood, — the church, the bride who has given the warmest pledges of affection and fidelity ! The Lord of glory has no sentimental delicacy in dealing with bold offenders. Is not the denunciation here recorded most just ?

Shall not he whose feet are like fine brass assert his judicial rights, his vindicatory purpose ? He will have the churches understand and feel their responsibilities touching the creed they adopt, the teachings to which they listen, and the practices they tolerate. Latitudinarianism in belief or morals is treason — is a domestic infidelity to Him whose eyes are like unto a flame of fire.

A CHARGE TO THE FAITHFUL.

“But unto you, I say, and unto the rest, even unto the rest, — or, as some editors read, rightly throwing out the conjunction altogether — ‘Unto you I say, unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will put upon you none other burden.’”

Having denounced just judgments upon the Jezebel of Thyatira, and her adherents, should they continue impenitent, our Lord now turns to address, as at the commencement, those not implicated in apostasy from the marriage covenant: "As many as have not this doctrine, and have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak." The manner in which that faction talked and lived, enticing the professed Christians of Thyatira "to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols," revealed the deep things of the Arch-adversary. Such a pernicious subtlety could be attributed to no intellect and no heart of less capacity than Satan's.

It is worse than supercilious, it is impudent infidelity, for men boasting of philosophical enlightenment to talk about the superstition of former belief in a personal devil, and make themselves merry over the narrowmindedness of those who cannot quite emancipate themselves from the old notion of a real, busy, powerful prince of darkness. For our own part, we are disposed to think that He who is Alpha and Omega, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who

searches all hearts and all worlds, knows best about it. We are willing to be a good way behind the so-called liberal philosophy, and the vaunted spirit of the age, if we are left in company with the Lord Jesus Christ. Most fully do we believe that Satan — an active, sagacious, malignant spirit, the god of this world — has to do largely with Mormonism, Jesuitism, Spiritualism, and a good deal that passes under the name of Christianity.

“I will put upon you none other burden.” It was enough for them to throw off the enormity of that Jezebel. There is seldom a case of required discipline in which the whole church is not practically on trial, and which from family, business, or other connections, does not give rise to a party, and prove an entangled, burdensome affair. But is that a sufficient reason why the ear should be closed to the Saviour’s summons? Nay, let all the churches know assuredly that it is he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and that he will give to every one of us according to our works.

STEADFASTNESS ENJOINED.

“But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.”

“Hold fast,” come what may of perplexity, of inconvenience, of suffering: “Hold fast,” happen what may, swerve who may. Sound doctrine and practical godliness are all that is worth caring for. Let goods be spoiled, your name cast out as evil, “Hold fast that which ye have till I come.”

It calls for careful consideration, that in the New Testament those appeals to believers which derive their force from revelations yet future, turn, very often, upon the grand event of Christ's second coming. That is to be the stupendous, all-consummating crisis; then will come the resurrection and judgment, and the new and more glorious developments of his kingdom. Till then nothing in the spiritual world receives its final form and status. The creation of all things by Jesus Christ, his incarnation as our atoning Saviour, his second coming in triumph and great glory, are the three grand epochs of all duration. The sons of God shouted for joy at the first; a

multitude of the heavenly host sung a pæan at the second ; the whole ransomed church will lift up their heads with an exultant song at the last. Not till then will be fulfilled, in its more blessed import, Christ's promise : "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

Due prominence has not been given by the general Christian mind of our country to this momentous truth, while the event of the individual deaths of believers has held relatively too high a place. Our Lord and his apostles spake less of Christians dying than of Christ's coming again. It is with great detriment to the scriptural breadth of our conceptions, and the stable peace of our souls, that we erect ourselves into such disproportionate egotistical prominence, and fail to get a comprehensive view of Christ's church in its sympathetic unity with itself, and its vital union with him.

It was not alone the company of believers at Thyatira to whom Christ said, "That which ye have already, hold fast till I come." He said it to

the Waldensian church of Piedmont; he said it to the reformed churches of the sixteenth century; he said it to the church on Plymouth Rock, and to the entire community of militant saints onward. How have Christ's people of former generations been longing, and how should we still patiently long for his appearing! Said that vigorous reformer, Martin Luther: "The world has grown very stubborn and headstrong since the revelation of the word of the gospel. it begins to crack sorely, and I hope will soon break and fall on a heap, through the coming of the day of judgment, for which we wait with yearnings and sighs of heart." Said Archbishop Usher: "We should always live in expectation of the Lord Jesus in the clouds, with oil in our lamps, prepared for his coming."

That saintly man Joseph Alleine, testifies: "But we shall lift up our heads, because the day of our redemption draweth nigh. This is the day I look for, and wait for, and have laid up all my hopes in. If the Lord return not, I profess myself undone; my preaching is vain, and my suffering is vain." "The thing you see is estab-

lished, and every circumstance is determined. How sweet are the words that dropped from the precious lips of our departing Lord! What generous cordials hath he left us in his parting sermons and his last prayer! And yet, of all the rest, these are the sweetest: 'I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.' What need you any further witness?"

THE VICTORS TO BE CROWNED.

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father."

To him — whether an individual saint, a particular church, or the whole collective household of faith — to them, to him that holds fast till Christ reappears; to him who perseveres in fidelity, and comes off victor at last, will the Prince of the kings of the earth grant a most exalted station; he will associate him with himself in

ruling over the ungodly. During his humble sojourn on earth he said, while acting as a servant to his disciples — and there was something grandly sublime in it — “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.” In assured expectation of that, Paul inquires: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” “It is a faithful saying, If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”

The union of Christians with Christ, begun here, does not end with the present life; nor is it a union merely for maintaining the believer's spiritual life; it is also for securing to him outward honor and immense social advancement. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;” “To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” They are made, and are to be made, kings and priests unto God and his Father; are to be associated with the Lord Jesus in high functions of his kingly office; are to be raised to a share in the glories and joys of Him who has been set as King upon

the holy hill of Zion. In a measure that will exalt to participation in judgment, "To him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken in shivers; even as I received of my Father." No pride, no revengeful feelings will attend that exaltation; yet, sure as is the word of Heaven, the Ancient of Days will come, and the saints of the Most High will rank side by side with Him, on whose vesture and on whose thigh is written a name "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Oh, marvellous change! Oh, surpassing contrast! That little flock — those poor, despised men, women and children, called evangelical Christians, on a throne with the Lord of heaven, radiant with his glory, and with him wielding a sceptre over all his enemies and theirs! The universe has witnessed nothing like that, save the supreme coronation of Him who once had not where to lay his head.

Joy to you, ye associates of the enthroned Son of David and Son of God! All hail to you, ye Old Testament saints, who had trial of cruel mocking and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds

and imprisonments! ye who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth;—ye have different clothing now, very different accommodations to-day. With your Redeemer ye now judge the world. Look up, ye unrepenting men who stoned Stephen! ye Jews of Thessalonica, and lewd fellows of the baser sort, who dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers, saying, “These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also,”—look up! ye now stand at the bar of the Son of God, and as ye persecuted him in his saints, so now does he judge you in the persons of the same.

Papal Rome, thou scarlet-clad Jezebel, “drunken with the blood of the saints”! those martyrs of Jesus hold a rod of iron over you. Aye, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen! “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her!”

There are limitations to sympathy for the

persecuted disciples of Christ. Wait a little; those defamed and reviled as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things unto this day, will presently shine forth as the brightness of the firmament, and will sit upon a throne infinitely higher than that of the Cæsars. "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Bide your time; the day for a distribution of crowns and sceptres is not far off.

"And I will give him the morning-star."

The blessed condition of believers between death and the resurrection is a sweet harbinger of the far more blissful state that will follow. It is the morning-star to the sun shining in his glory. That star of mild and beautiful radiance, the symbol of purity, the herald of full-orbed day, shall be the victor's prize. Let any one be faithful till the close of his earthly campaign, and his shall be an immediate inheritance of light. Till the great epoch of coronation, the whole church of the departed wears a brilliant gem on her forehead; but when that mar-

riage morning comes, she will be presented a glorious church, the pure and resplendent bride of Him who covereth himself with light as with a garment. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Chapter Tenth.

THE EPISTLE TO SARDIS.

AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis write : These things saith he who hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars ; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die ; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white : for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. *REV. 1 : 3—6.*

SARDIS.

“O Solon!” exclaimed the last king of Sardis, as he lay in chains on the funeral pile. His army had been routed, his capital was in the hands of victorious Persians, and in a moment more the captive monarch himself will be wrapped in flames. “O Solon, Solon, Solon!” cries the wretched man. Pressed to tell why he repeats the philosopher’s name so earnestly, he narrates the visit of that celebrated Athenian to his court, who remained unmoved by all the display of wealth and luxuries. Solon could not be betrayed into any flattery of his royal guest, but spoke to him plainly of the vicissitudes of life, of the dangers and reverses to which royalty is subject; and bade him wait till the hour of death, before claiming to be pronounced a happy man.

O Croesus! Croesus! was the irrepressible exclamation, as the writer stood amidst the ruins of that monarch’s palace. In proceeding to Thyatira, we made a detour of one day, in order to visit this ancient capital of Lydia, situated

between fifty and sixty miles east of Smyrna. But how shall I describe the emotions awakened, upon reaching the site of that once thronged metropolis, now levelled, and its ruins nearly buried by debris from the neighboring mountain! Here stands a wall of great thickness; there, the remains of an arch. Our horses now leaped a prostrate Roman column, and now stumbled against a Grecian cornice. At the foot of the hill we explored a roofless and more than half-demolished church, and on the slope above traced the foundations of a vast amphitheatre.

But, how silent now! Oh, what desolation! The wars, earthquakes, and storms of centuries have done their work upon the once proud and populous city. Two insignificant mills, one small shop, and a wretched *cafenet*, far inferior to our stables, make up the present village of Sart. There is not a family, not a woman there. The Pactolus, that used to roll down golden sands, now turns a grist-mill; and amidst the streets and gardens of what was once the most wealthy and magnificent city of Asia Minor, there are

to-day fields of that most abused of all weeds, which the lazy Turk — and, alas! not the Turk only — is perpetually smoking.

I climbed to the almost inaccessible summit of the ancient Acropolis, once crowned by a palace, temple, and citadel, and around which lay the enterprising and luxurious city of Sardis. That eminence, worn by the elements, and rent by earthquakes, resembles the Acropolis of Athens, and the Castle Hill of Edinburgh, though more lofty and precipitous than either of them. It is a projecting spur from the classical Mount Tmolus. In the distance stands the abruptly terminating Sipylus, of which Homer sings, and on a vertical rock of which you may still see the rudely sculptured Niobe, while a hot spring at the base still sends forth her fabled tears.

Fronting the Acropolis is the plain of Sardis, — one of the most magnificent and fertile in the world, — from five to fifteen miles in width, stretching away to Philadelphia on the east and Magnesia on the west, and through which the Hermus still winds its silvery way, receiving still

the Pactolus, which flowed through the ancient city.

What an historic panorama presents itself to the mind! Across that plain come the destructive hordes of Turks and Saracens; the Roman eagles are seen gleaming in the sun; then the tents of Xerxes' millions stud the plain; the troops of Alexander, flushed with victory at the Granicus, march to the gates, demanding and receiving surrender; while the hosts of Cyrus and Croesus, six hundred thousand strong, engage in the battle of Thymbria. The Lydian cavalry come flying over the plain, and the defeated monarch makes a last stand on the Acropolis. I looked down the precipice where the bold Mardian soldier, as a thief in the night, scaled the defences at an unsuspected spot, and Sardis fell.

On the opposite side of the plain, is a long, moderately elevated hill, covered with mounds, called by the Turks Bin Tepéh, or "The Thousand Hills." That is the Necropolis, the royal cemetery of Sardis, where kings and princes have lain entombed nearly three thousand years.

We visited those tumuli, and found them to resemble the mounds of our Western country, and the pyramids of ancient Mexico. One of them, half a mile in circumference, had recently been excavated to its centre, under the direction of a learned society in Europe. We entered by a lateral opening, and, with torches, penetrated along the narrow gallery to the immense marble tomb. It is the mound and tomb of Alyattes, the father of Croesus, who flourished six hundred years before Christ.

I need not say that it awakened peculiar feelings to be standing there, so far from the light of day, by the resting-place of one who lived as long before the writing of the Apocalypse as twice the period since the discovery of America,—a monarch who reigned when ancient Rome was yet in its cradle; whose kingdom was opulent and flourishing when Tyre fell, and the temple at Jerusalem was burned; who was a contemporary of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Nebuchadnezzar.

O Sardis! where are thy kings, and thy teeming hosts? Where are the sages drawn to thy

court; where the wealthy strangers who swelled thy luxuries, and shared thy debaucheries; where thy purple-clad princes and curious artificers, thy tributary troops, and thine own Lydian cavalry that wheeled and charged so gallantly on the plain? O Croesus! thy name long the proverb of wealth,—where are thy treasures? Of what avail were the millions sent to Grecian oracles? Thou didst cross the Halys, and didst indeed ruin a great empire. “Howl, O gate! cry, O city!” “Woe to her that was filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord. Her princes within her were roaring lions; her judges evening wolves.” “Therefore God made of a city a heap; of a defenced city a ruin; a palace of strangers to be no city.” The Pactolus has ceased to bring down golden sands; the stork builds her nest on deserted walls, and the black tents of roving Turcomans alone are seen on the broad, silent plain.

Sitting amidst the ruins, on a fallen, but once beautiful column, I read these words: “And unto

the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

SPIRITUAL DEATH.

When, and by whom, Christianity was planted at Sardis, we know not. Of the church gathered there we hear nothing, till He who "hath

the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars," bids John write to it this epistle. It is the supreme Alpha and Omega — the God of ministers and churches, sending his messengers, now scrutinizing, and ere long to judge them — who speaks here.

“He who hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

That is, the Holy Spirit — in person one, in efficiency manifold; He to whom the Spirit hath been given not by measure; who, by virtue of his mediatorial prerogative, sends the Spirit to renew and educate souls for heaven — now sends a message to Sardis. Here is directness and comparative abruptness. Other epistles have commenced with commendation; there is none for this church. “Art dead!” What a knell is sounded from Patmos! He who needeth not that any should testify of man, whose province it is to give life to as many as he will, who once said, “She is not dead, but sleepeth,” now speaks to the Sardian church: “Thou hast a name that

thou liveth, and art dead." Yes; she that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth. The seductions of Satan, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, have eaten out spirituality at Sardis. Nothing is said about divisions or heresies; not a word about Nicolaitanes, or the doctrine of Balaam. For aught that appears, the ordinances are maintained; there is liberality, and courtesy, and refinement; but there is death. Exact they may be in forms, but they are dead. Their meetings are cheerless, their prayers lifeless. They dare not offend cultivated and wealthy neighbors, by making a stand on principle. They have kept conforming and conforming, running down and running down, till they are dead. They probably thought Paul very strict, and that, although disciples in Palestine could not well escape persecution, there was no need of it in a place of so much urbanity as Sardis; that as they were charged with preciseness and bigotry, it was well to show they knew how to enjoy life as well as others — quieting conscience by the plea, that in this way they hoped to win over many to their ranks.

The result is, they have themselves become dead. They have lost all spiritual comfort, all spiritual power. They are a withered branch, bearing no fruit, ready to be cut off and cast into the fire.

A dead professor, one spiritually a corpse, what an object! We have seen such a one. He lost his hearing first. His pastor seemed to him to be growing dull, and not to preach half so well as formerly. There was no music in the praises of the sanctuary, unless performed with highest artistic excellence; and his ears waxed heavier and heavier, till he ceased to catch one word of the still, small voice. So with his sight and taste of things spiritual; and so with all the senses, till nothing but faint respiration and a sluggish circulation seemed to remain. A deadly stupor was stealing over him; and finally an unseen hand appeared to press down the last valve of life, and he is dead. Go to him — repeat the name that is above every name in his ear — does it awaken any emotion? Present the sacramental bread — does he discern the Lord's body? Let an angel bring a coal from off the altar — does he feel any

glow? He is dead! But go to him and whisper of a pleasure-party, of a political meeting, of a witty lecturer, of a splendid bargain to be made, and he is on his feet; no one more active than he. "He has a name that he liveth." Are there not at the present time many such living dead men — many whose epitaphs might be written to-day?

VIGILANCE ENJOINED.

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent."

The majority, but not all, at Sardis are dead. There is a little vitality remaining; enough religious consciousness to heed an alarm. The plants of righteousness are dying out; and if the little life that is left be not fostered, a total extinction of the church must ensue. "Be watchful;" it is by remissness in covenant engagements to one another, and to me your

Redeemer, by remissness in private duties and public deportment, that you have come to this criminal and most deplorable condition. Be watchful, then, as to social entanglements, and in business transactions ; be watchful over heart, lip, and life ; watchful against spiritual torpor, and all the depths of Satan. Bethink thee of the grace bestowed in giving thee the word of life, and how thine ear was opened to hear the joyful sound ; bethink thee how much has been done for Sardis, and that the little thou hast is of more value than all the treasures ever accumulated in the city, and hold fast. If there be any authority in my name, any value in my rewards, hold fast, and repent. Repent of backslidings ; repent of present decays and coldness ; mourn that my cause ever made so little progress, and has been so dishonored in Sardis ; and turn, turn at once unto Me, with humiliation and weeping.

THE WARNING.

“ If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

Before his ascension, our Lord had said, "Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." The apostle Peter takes up the figure: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night;" and the apostle Paul the same: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

As the Persian, at a time, by a way, and in a manner not thought of, scaled the castle of Sardis, so will the coming of the Son of man be to the church of Sardis, if they be not "watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, and that are ready to die."

So, too, will be his coming at the end of the

world, an advent of alarm and confusion of face to all slumbering virgins, whose lamps are gone out, and who are destitute of oil to fill them. "Behold, I come as a thief," he reiterates; "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments."

COMPANIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

By "names," we are to understand persons; as in the first chapter of Acts: "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said (the number of names together were about one hundred and twenty.)"

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis," — even in luxurious, dissolute Sardis, for centuries proverbial as a city of effeminacy, where the stream of life flows on with the accumulated infections of ages, and where all associations and traditional influences tend to unnerve and debauch, — even in Sardis hast thou a few names

which have not defiled their garments. They have kept themselves unspotted from the world, and great shall be their reward in heaven; "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

Take heart, ye faithful few in Sardis! ye are not overlooked by your Lord. He launches a merited threatening against the church as a whole, but is at the same time tenderly mindful of his true disciples. Not that they deserve this by their good deeds, yet are they — by union to their Lord, and not having with the rest sunk into spiritual death — fitted and appointed for the rewards of heaven. It is in the blood of the Lamb that they have washed their robes and made them white.

"And they shall walk with me in white," — in white, the emblem of purity and joy. What a blessed promise! The priests and Levites, when they ministered before the Lord were clothed in white; we are made kings and priests unto God and his Father. All the faithful in Christ Jesus belong to that church which he loves, and for which he gave himself, that he might sanctify

and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. "To the bride, the Lamb's wife, is it granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

There is nothing to soil those pure and spotless robes. They will remain untarnished, yea more and more resplendent, for ever and ever. Such is the livery of heaven, and thus are saints clad appropriately for the presence of Him with whom they are to walk. When, on the mount, he was transfigured into a temporary and partial anticipation of his glorified form, "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."

Was it ever your privilege to walk familiarly with a person of high distinction, a nobleman, it may be? As he took you leisurely through his ample grounds, with here a wide-spreading elm and there a tuft of evergreens, now by a fountain and now to a hill-top, a velvet lawn stretch-

ing far on the one side, and a charming grove on the other—did he converse in the freest manner, and make you feel perfectly at home with him? And were those among the most favored hours of your life, and has character, or at least the course of thought, taken a decided direction from that interview? The Lord of glory makes the believing wayfarers welcome to his broad pleasure-grounds, and they shall walk with him—walk with him along the shaded avenues, and amidst the enchanting bowers of Paradise, where amaranths and all things beautiful greet the eye; where the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley shed their fragrance: shall walk with him along the banks of the river of life, and beneath the tree of life, in high and leisurely fellowship. That is a walk with royalty; unabashed, with profound admiration, and with a ceaseless elevating and assimilating power will the quiet, sublime converse go on through everlasting ages. Christ's presence will shed divine beauty and lustre on every object.

THE PRESENTATION IN GLORY.

“And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

The Book of Life — what a volume that must be! How vast, how ponderous! None but a divine hand may turn its leaves. How fair, how resplendent the pages of that great Register for New Jerusalem, wherein names were written from the foundation of the world; wherein is reference to all the mansions prepared before the foundation of the world! In it are no erasures, no doubtful entries. By deaths, by removals, by excommunication, our catalogues are constantly changing; but in the Lamb's book of life are no alterations, except, perhaps, as the saints one after another fall asleep in Jesus, the recording angel may write against the name, “Reached home to-day in safety.”

Each of the names in that company which no man can number, will Christ confess before his Father and before his angels. There is ere long to be a grand review of the great army in the

presence of the King of kings, and of the elect angels. There will be a distribution of honors then. A great cloud of ancient witnesses, from righteous Abel onwards, having waxed valiant in fight, and obtained a good report through faith, will pass under the approving eye of the Lord of Sabaoth. So, too, the early Christians and martyrs, each band with its standard-bearer whose dying testimony on the field of battle was, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

As the heroes and the hosts of each century, all clothed in white, all having crowns and harps of gold, move in their shining ranks with solemn step before the throne, He who hath the seven stars in his right hand, whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength, and his voice as the sound of many waters, will pronounce every name before the Father, and before his angels; and to the whole collective multitude will say, Well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord! What a shout of rapturous jubilee will go up to Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb

for ever and ever! How will they cast their crowns at his feet! How will they harp upon their harps, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!" "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Chapter Eleventh.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILADELPHIA.

AND to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth: I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will

write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. REV. 3 : 7—13.

PHILADELPHIA.

There is little of the ancient city of Philadelphia now remaining. The modern town bears the imposing name of Allah Sheher, City of God, and, like the one which by divine appointment was so called, is “beautiful for situation;” but otherwise presents little to attract the tourist. Portions of the old walls remain upright; immense fragments of buildings, huge square stone pillars, supporting brick arches, are also standing, and are called the ruins of an ancient church.

From the Acropolis there is a magnificent view, diversified by gardens, vineyards, and fields of luxuriant poppies, white, lilac and purple, which present a rich and beautiful appearance. Looking down immediately upon the walls and

roofs, you see the stately stork, and the turtle-dove, whose tender affection is still a symbol of brotherly love, and recall to your mind the signification of the ancient name, Philadelphia.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPEAKER.

“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”

All the elements that can command deepest respect — perfect purity, perfect veracity, and supreme authority — meet in him. The whole drapery of the vision, as presented in the first chapter, is symbolic of those qualities.

“These things saith he that is holy.” It was his glory that Isaiah saw, and of him that he spake, when he had the vision of the enthroned King, and the adoring Seraphim, who cried one unto another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.” And with what profound reverence do the victorious hosts “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, sav-

ing, Thou only art holy!" Who shall not fear him? What earthly potentate shall be named when we speak of him?

"These things saith he that is true." When "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, it was the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He himself proclaimed, I am the truth; and his disciples are able to respond, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life." Not only is he truthful and trustworthy as man, but he is the true Messiah. For this purpose came he into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth, in its highest forms. As opposed to all false gods, and all refuges of lies for salvation, as the great antagonist of the father of lies, and of all human deceit and perversity, he came the divine embodiment, the appointed revealer of everlasting truth. And now that he is enthroned amidst the radiance of celestial verities, how should his

message be heeded by us who still tabernacle where vain show, hypocrisies, and treacheries have their home ?

“These things saith he that hath the key of David ; he that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” He hath the regal key, the key to that kingdom on the throne of which sits David’s greater Son according to the flesh, — sits as the Prince of the kings of the earth, girded with all power in heaven and in earth.

All the avenues of earth, and from earth to other worlds, are under his control. He openeth the eyes, ears, and hearts of men. He openeth the doors of providence, the ways of deliverance from danger, temptation and destruction, for his people. He openeth the doors of opportunity for usefulness, yea, for effective obedience to his command, to evangelize all nations, — a great door and effectual being opened to his preachers, — the Sublime Porte, for instance, at the present time, and the Flowery Kingdom, and the island-world eastward of Asia, hitherto closed to the truth. In his own time will he open the graves of all his

saints, and call them forth in their immortal resurrection bodies.

He, too, shutteth. He shut the gate of terrestrial Paradise, guarding it with a flaming sword; he shut up the door of the Ark, for protection to its inmates, and for a bar to those who afterwards would fain have entered. How often has he shut the mouths of lions, and shut up the sea with gates! And the hour cometh when He who holds the keys of death and of Hades will close forever the door of the prison-house upon the devil and his angels, and all the finally impenitent.

What hand ever reversed a bolt turned by that key? What combination of human skill and strength ever closed one entrance, or opened one closed door, on which was the hand of the Lord Jesus? Pilate had no power except what was given him. The Emperor Domitian had power only for a brief period, and over a small portion of the earth's surface. Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doth he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in the deep places. Yes; he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the

key of David, doing according to his will in all worlds, through all ages to come, is the one who sends a message to the angel of the church in Philadelphia.

FIDELITY REWARDED.

“I know thy works ; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it ; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”

Not the smallest degree of fidelity is unnoticed or forgotten by the Lord. Though his be the sharp sword with two edges, and his the eyes that are as a flame of fire, and his voice as the sound of many waters, yet does he kindly mark and graciously reward every item of faithfulness on the part of his people. Though possessing but a little strength, believers at Philadelphia find that little recognized. The church at Smyrna received no censure ; and this is the only other one of the seven similarly honored. There is allegiance here ; they have kept Christ's word, and have not denied him, and hence

receive commendation, and the assurance of divine intervention in their behalf. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it;" an open door for testifying to the truth as it is in Jesus; such as Paul had found, a little to the north of them, in Troas, where a door was opened unto him of the Lord. They were not to be hampered by Jewish exclusiveness, nor cast into prison, or otherwise forcibly hindered from bearing witness to the truth and grace of God. They would also find an open door of escape from the machinations of their enemies. And before them stands an open door, to all the interior privileges of the kingdom. No fee is exacted, and no entrance difficult to find introduces to its enchanting entertainments. On the lofty and beautiful arch beneath which they pass, is inscribed, Free grace. Reaching at length the city of their destination, they find "the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, and there shall be no night there."

Disciple of the Lord! be not discouraged, though you have but little faith; it is a great thing to have that little. Genuineness does not

depend upon amount. Keeping Christ's word, you will presently hear the plaudit, "Well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." There stands before you an open door from this period in your pilgrimage onward, till your feet are fairly within some one of the twelve gates of pearl, and "no man can shut it."

THE DOOM OF HYPOCRITES.

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

There is ample evidence that the early Christians suffered greatly from the malice of Jews. Thus at Antioch, "When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which are spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming;" and "The Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution

against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." There had been similar demonstrations at Thessalonica, and similar too, probably, at Philadelphia; while those engaged in such violent proceedings would claim, in the blindness of their bigotry, to be doing God service, as his chosen synagogue. But all are not Israel that are of Israel, and these lying Jews will the Lord put down as the synagogue of Satan; yea more, he will reduce them to a humiliating deference to his faithful ones in that city.

The time and mode of fulfilment, we know not; but the fulfilment came; and it was only one of the many instances of retribution which He who loves and leads his own people is often bringing about — mere earnest of what will be witnessed when "the sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

DELIVERANCE CERTAIN AND NEAR.

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

The gospel largely illustrates the long-suffering of Christ, and enforces the same virtue upon his followers. They that received seed on good ground are declared in the parable to be those who “in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” “In patience possess ye your souls,” is Christ’s bidding; whilst they only who “endure unto the end shall be saved.”

A pledge of deliverance accompanies the acknowledgment. Without pronouncing positively upon the period of accomplishment, it should be stated as a noteworthy fact, that Philadelphia, though only about twenty-five miles east of Sardis, escaped wonderfully the sacking by Roman armies which the other six cities experienced; nor was it captured by the Turks till a century before Columbus discovered this New World. Even the

infidel Gibbon bears unintended testimony to the faithfulness of Him who cannot lie. "At a distance from the sea," he remarks, "forgotten by the emperor, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above four-score years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans, in 1390. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect — a column in a scene of ruins."

"Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

This patient waiting, this watch and struggle, will not last always. Events hasten to their accomplishment. Individual life runs on apace ; and the end of all things, too, is at hand. Hold fast, then, for it is only a short time that you have to hold at all. Hold fast to your profession of faith, to your Scripture doctrines and ordinances, vilified though they may be ; hold fast to your cross-bearing, and adherence to Christ's precepts and examples, amidst surrounding declension ; lest thou fail of thine award of victory,

hold fast. It is for a little while: "Behold I come quickly."

In the future review, how short will the struggle seem! How faint, in after-years, the recollection of perils and discomforts experienced during a voyage! Who would not renew the purpose and effort to hold fast to secret prayer, to circumspect living, to active benevolence, and so fail not of the crown? Before we know it, Christ will be here, and the victory won.

THE VICTOR REWARDED.

"Him that overcometh, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

There is something more specific than a general intimation of deliverance from pending dangers, and of an open door into a place of security and triumph. There is here presented to the view of Philadelphian saints, and of believers to-day, a vista most attractive and animating.

Let the eye be raised to Mount Zion, a

mountain lofty, broad and beautiful, as is no terrestrial height, surmounted by the temple of God. How insignificant are all edifices of earth — St. Paul's, St. Peter's, the Duomo of Milan, or Solomon's temple, in comparison! It stretches far away, for many a furlong; it towers story above story, hundreds of cubits, according to the measure of the angel. The light thereof is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. The wall thereof hath twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. That magnificent, glorious edifice is built up of lively stones quarried here. As the several States of our confederacy, and many cities and foreign States too, send their tributary blocks to the monument now rising at the seat of our national government to the Father of his Country, so does that structure at the metropolis of the Great King, draw its materials from every land and city and neighborhood of earth. How symmetrically does it rise! With what strange beauty do materials, so diverse here, blend in their appropriate places,

under the hand of the all-wise Architect, every one of them polished after the similitude of a palace!

Perhaps the most impressive edifice now standing is the Cathedral of St. Marks, at Venice. In its decoration, without and within, five hundred pillars are employed, which were brought chiefly from Greece and the Levant, many of them bearing Armenian, Syrian, or other inscriptions. While in progress, every vessel that sailed from Venice for the East was obliged to bring back pillars or materials of some kind for that stupendous work. What columns of Verd-antique, and porphyry, and serpentine meet the eye! What a pavement of tessellated marble! What a magnificent vaulting, with mosaics in golden grounds! What strange variety of richest and rarest marbles, oriental alabaster and other stones, some almost transparent, the light of a taper shining through! That unique edifice is made up of the rarest spoils, purchases, and contributions of the civilized world, so far as known when it was erected. Yet it shows signs of age. There

are rents, indicating that it is not founded on a rock. It is a dingy and gloomy pile. But the temple of our God stands on the chief Corner-stone. Its gold and pearls do not tarnish. Its sapphires, amethysts, and emeralds, never lose their lustre.

Him that overcometh will I make "a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." Earth is covered with fallen memorials of magnificence. In its older regions, you stumble upon their fragments everywhere. At almost any point on the coast of the Mediterranean, as you leap ashore, you step upon prostrate columns. They strew the mountain sides; they lie buried in the sands of the desert. But will earthquakes ever displace those pillars in the temple of our God? Will the lightning rend them? Will engines of war disfigure them? No pressure, no heat, no frosts, no artillery, will ever warp or discolor, or cause a flaw to appear in one of them. There is no leaning tower, no rubbish-heap in New Jerusalem. "Walk about Zion, and go round about

her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye her bulwarks; consider her palaces.”

THE NEW NAME.

“And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.”

How honored, how resplendent each one in the temple! The name of my God, and the name of the city of my God; and my new name,—not the former name of Lamb of God, that suggested suffering and humiliation, but the new one of triumph and everlasting dominion,—“King of kings, and Lord of lords!”

Was it an honor to wear the insignia of Napoleon's Old Guard, or Cæsar's Tenth Legion? Is it grateful to surviving officers of the Crimean campaign to wear medals with conspicuous inscriptions, “Inkermann,” “Balaklava”? And will it be no honor to wear such names as are written by Christ's own hand in heaven?

Those who have visited the French capital,

never forget the triumphal pillar in the Place Vendome, with its spiral band of bas-reliefs, more than eight hundred feet in length, presenting two thousand human figures, and exhibiting in chronological order the principal events in the famous campaign of 1805, from the departure of the troops from Boulogne to the achievements of Austerlitz.

It pleases the Great Captain of our salvation to have the heroism of the church militant commemorated at his capital. Each individual campaign, with all its victories over internal enemies, and the hosts of darkness, and the general warfare, wherein all bear arms, are to be depicted and immortalized. There will be seen the spiritual heroes "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." There will be the great battles with Judaism, Heathenism, and Moham-medanism. There Athanasius will lead forth his

band against Arianism. The great generals of the sixteenth and of later centuries will put to flight the Man of Sin; and many a hero will stand forth as champion for Truth against Socinianism, Universalism, Infidelity, and Formality. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Chapter Twelfth.

THE EPISTLE TO LAODICEA.

AND unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will

come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. REV. 3:14—22.

LAODICEA.

The present chapter completes our circuit of the seven churches. Climbing the lonely and rocky island, Patmos, we heard on the Lord's day "a great voice, as of a trumpet." With the hoary-headed apostle, we turned and saw the seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of them one like unto the Son of man, resplendent and awful. Directing our way across the gulf to the mainland, we visited Ephesus, and listened while the church there was receiving a message from him who spake as never man spake. Going northward, we paused for the same purpose at Smyrna and Pergamos. Thence, in a generally south-eastern direction, and at intervals of a day's journey apart, we find Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea,—the

latter not far from seventy miles to the east of Ephesus, and about the same distance that Pergamos lies to the north of that city. We thus complete a triangle, two sides being equal, and the base somewhat longer.

Laodicea, the city farthest east, is on the confines of ancient Lydia and Phrygia Major, and about a mile south of the small river Lycus. Like Rome, it was built on several hills; but neither they nor the surrounding region present much that is picturesque, or specially attractive. Former fertility no longer exists, and many barren knolls of sand may be seen in the vicinity. Like Philadelphia and its neighborhood, this region has suffered much from earthquakes.

Approaching the spot, we find no houses, churches, or mosques; but, as at Sardis, complete desolation. The two cities of which the churches were most corrupt, are now the most desolate. We find, however, extensive ruins, indicating the wealth of the place when it was a residence of Roman governors. Excavations show that the city, once opulent and

populous, is now chiefly buried. Above ground may still be seen an arched entrance, with a portion of the city wall; also the massive remains of a bridge, an aqueduct, and of theatres. On the north of the town are scattered sarcophagi, long since rifled of their contents; but living residents in Laodicea there are none, save foxes, wolves, and jackals, and, when a passing camel or other beast falls, a flock of vultures and eagles. Physical convulsions, and the ravages of Turks and Mongols, have made a desolation like that of Nineveh and Babylon.

Strolling amidst the ruins, we find a profusion of broken columns, scattered pedestals, and other fragments. We enter the silent enclosure of the amphitheatre, capable, when entire, of seating more than twenty thousand spectators. We find an arch with an inscription purporting that the edifice was twelve years in building, was dedicated to Vespasian, and was completed during the consulate of Trajan, in the eighty-second year of the Christian era. By a singular coincidence, the same year that witnessed the commencement of this building devoted to savage

exhibitions, saw also the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, which had been forty and eight years in building, whereof not one stone was left upon another; and that abomination of desolation was accomplished by the same commander to whom the amphitheatre of Laodicea, a structure still standing in part, was dedicated.

We pass on to the capacious theatre on the hill-side, fronting to the north; and as we walk around the rows of marble seats, rising in successive tiers, our eyes are attracted by a name, *Zenonos*, "Of Zenon," "The seat of Zenon." Here, then, Zenon used to sit. Yes; the right to occupy this particular spot he purchased. No one else might sit here. He could come at any time, and be sure of a place, and could gloat to his heart's content on the savage exhibitions below. That was towards two thousand years ago. If Zenon were to come back from the unseen world, would he buy a seat at the theatre? Would he not rather find his way to the conference-room and the church of the despised Christians? What is Dives' answer?

With respect to the introduction of Christianity into Laodicea, we have no knowledge; though it is not improbable that Paul preached there. He certainly felt an affectionate interest for the Christians of that city. Writing to the saints at Colosse, distant only a few miles, he says: "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;" and "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. And when the epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." He also bears record that Epaphras had a great zeal for them in Laodicea and them in Hieropolis, a city distant only five miles, and plainly visible from the theatre just referred to.

Having surveyed the silent ruins, we open an epistle dictated one-third of a century later than that of Paul. It is at once alarming and winning.

May He who speaketh to the churches, grant an open ear and an open heart! May the dread of Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, fall upon us! May every one be effectually taught by the address of Him who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, to whom be glory in the church universal, world without end. Amen.

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS.

“Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the Amen: the faithful and true Witness.”

Was not Paul, too, and were not all authors of epistles in the New Testament, true witnesses? Indeed they were; but their messages are infallible only because penned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit sent by Him who here speaks in his own name, who is himself infinite truth, its fountain, its embodiment and revealer; who, in the sublime consciousness of his own character, without arrogance could say, “Though I bear record of myself, my record is

true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go.”

Was there a real meaning in the numerous symbols of the Old Testament? Jesus Christ is their Antitype. To the whole costly and complicated ritual system, to the many and varied messianic prophecies, he is the responsive Amen. Every divine purpose and proceeding from eternity has centred in him. At Immanuel's first advent, all holy beings cried Amen; at his second coming, a mightier host will shout, as the sound of many waters, Amen.

CHRIST'S SUPREMACY.

“These things saith the Beginning of the creation of God.”

He who so wonderfully reveals himself in the first apocalyptic vision, and who now sends a message to the church in Laodicea, is at the head of created things—is Lord paramount of Asia Minor, of the Roman Empire, of the whole earth. He taketh up the isles, as a very little thing. If he but touch the hills, they smoke.

To him belongs the primacy over every world, and all things therein, great or small, near or afar off, in the wide universe. When on the eve of being apprehended, and put to death, Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh." On the eve of ascension to glory, he declares: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Inspired apostles take up the testimony: "For he hath put all things under him." But will he ever have that preëminence visibly, and by the acknowledgment of all? "Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

THE LUKEWARM REJECTED.

“I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

As this church is the last, so it is the worst of the seven. Here is no commendation, no encouraging reference even to the past. Far gone as Sardis was, still “things that remain” could be mentioned. Not so here. Without exception, and without qualification, the Laodiceans are pronounced lukewarm. The whole church is lifeless.

For aught that appears, they have kept themselves free from the doctrines of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitanes; they have no Jezebel, and no synagogues of Satan; their creed is still sound, and their modes of worship unexceptionable. What, then, can be wanting? Heart is wanting; earnestness is wanting. There is no self-denial that costs anything; no cross-bearing that they feel; no determined witnessing for Christ; no valiant aggression, that keeps sinews strained,

that brings wounds and martyrdom. Genuine spirituality, and all religious geniality of soul, are gone. The realities of a world to come have sunk into semi-fictions. And the most ominous feature of their state is contentedness with this statue-like religion, tolerably faultless, except that it has no life. They are not Jews, to be sure; they are not heathens; they are nominal Christians; a class of respectable dissenters from surrounding idolatry, experimenting upon a compromise between God and Satan. Most offensive is this to Him who is the faithful and true witness.

“I would thou wert cold or hot.” We do not understand that there are three degrees of spiritual affections, ranging from fervor down to freezing-point; but two comparatively commendable phases of inner life, both of which stand in contrast with a third, which is altogether censurable. Our Lord does not place lukewarmness as a state intermediate between the other two, — one through which a believer must pass, in rising from the cold to the hot. A mere difference in degree, and yet something less desirable than a lower degree, does not answer to the descrip-

tion. There is a difference in kind from both the other states. One cannot ascend from the cold to the ardent, through a yet more dangerous temperature. There is an invincible harshness in supposing Christ to employ such a representation. By cold, he seems to designate a spiritual condition not usually so designated, but ordinarily indicated rather by desertion, or the absence of light ; as in the familiar case of Job : “ Oh that I knew where I might find him ! ” In that state, though very unlike the one of ardent and joyous affections, there is not indifference, nor is there content ; but a sense of its unfitness and discomfort, and a longing and groping after something better. Now, it is far more hopeful to be thus discontentedly devoid of comfort, than to be lukewarm, which, as the verse following shows, is to be highly self-satisfied. Of all spiritual symptoms that is the least auspicious, and with that our Lord is highly displeased.

“ So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” To be tepid, is to be nauseous ; and hereby is expressed the feeling of deep disgust,

of intense loathing. To be thus listless and slothful, thus without the power though with the form of godliness, is to be a living blot upon Christianity — to be a virtual antichrist. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” The whole genius, all the truths, conditions, and considerations of spiritual Christianity, require earnestness and action.

The first great fact, patent to all, undeniable and universal, is that of human depravity; a moral corruption, deep and all-pervading, which no lapse of time ameliorates, and no skill and no effort of man can eradicate or arrest; an apostasy from God, carrying irreparable disorder through the individual soul, and ruin through the race; an apostasy which awakened the holy displeasure of God, and called down his curse. The moment men awake to their situation, there goes up a deep wail; they try to rescue themselves. One cries, Lo, here! and another, Lo, there! — but to no purpose. On they go, still in the broad road to destruction.

The other great fact, the only one more wonderful than the former, — and these two stand

out before the universe as incomparably the most mysterious and far-reaching that mortal man can know, a truth of strange, sublime immensity,— is that of atonement — the coming hither of the adorable Son of God, made under the law, maltreated, rejected, yet standing in the sinner's place, and suffering for him. Thus in the greatness of his strength he makes expiation and propitiation, reconciles heaven and earth, reöpens the closed gate to the favor and the paradise of God, and invites all who will to come and freely receive pardon and the blessedness of heaven.

Now, what may be expected of such ransomed sinners? what but that, roused from the torpor of sin, they remain through life and through eternity awake with intensest gratitude and love? Lukewarm! Shall the man snatched from the surging caldron of a volcano, turn listlessly away from his benefactor, as if nothing had happened? Lukewarm! “Every drop of my blood thanks you,” said a condemned criminal to Dr. Doddridge, who brought a pardon for him,— “Every drop of my blood thanks you: I will be your servant as long as I live!” What shall a

justified sinner say to his Saviour? Let young plighted hearts grow lukewarm, let a mother's love grow lukewarm, but not the soul of a sinner saved from wrath, and made a joint heir with Christ.

SPIRITUAL POVERTY.

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Such self-righteous conceitedness is contempt of Christ's whole work on earth — his law-magnifying obedience and sufferings, his amazing self-denial, his soul-conflicts with the powers of darkness, his bloody sweat, his agony when bereft of the Father's countenance — all which was to procure for his people the wealth of peace with God and life everlasting.

A self-satisfied spirit always characterizes religious declension. It is only in the dark that fireflies sport themselves. When a man feels that, touching the righteousness which is of the law, he is blameless, and gives pharisaic thanks that

he is not as other men are, then look for the displeasure of the Holy One. An invariable and a most unpromising feature of that state is self-ignorance. But there is no such ignorance as that which exists in the midst of profuse means of knowledge; no such want of vision as that which exists at noon-day. It is not from a defect of light, but a defect in the eye itself.

There would be some hope, indeed all hope, for the Laodiceans, if they only felt their true condition. It was an auspicious hour when Ezra, in behalf of himself and the people, cried, "O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." And so was it when David confessed, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." But the church at Laodicea have no such feelings; they look upon these, no doubt, as extreme statements; they regard themselves as well-off in the world — well to do in the spiritual kingdom; they have won golden opinions from the public and from themselves; they have decked one another with titles.

They, however, mistake gifts for graces. They are smitten with spiritual lunacy; their treasures are all imaginary; and He who once spake a parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, now speaketh plainly, and speaketh no parable, when he declares, "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

TRUE RICHES.

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Strange traffic this! The poor challenged to buy — to buy refined gold, and costly raiment! Such, however, is the usage in that kingdom over which He presides who is the beginning of the creation of God, and whose munificence is more than royal. Merchantmen go thither and buy, without money and without price. They find gold such as the Pactolus never carried amidst its sands; they gather up ingots of in-

estimable worth, and pearls of great price; and they store them where thieves do not break through nor steal.

All are invited to visit that land, more orient, more wonderful than the Indies, with their palm-groves, and diamond mines, and mountains and plains of teeming wealth. The poor, the halt, the maimed, those deepest sunk in misery, are invited to resort, free of cost, to Immanuel. He welcomes them; the fatted calf is killed; the costly wardrobe thrown open, and beautiful garments are put on.

The sick of all descriptions, the leprous, the paralytic, and those possessed of devils, throng there, and are healed. And when the Great Physician has condescendingly anointed the eyes of the blind, they wash, and come seeing. Not one highway beggar cries, "Have mercy on me!" to whom the Lord does not say, "Be of good comfort: go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." Though blind before, now he sees — sees Jesus the Lamb of God; sees what he had no idea of before, in the world around him; sees the blackness of darkness beneath, and the con-

suming fire ; beholds the high altar, the bleeding victim, and justice appeased ; looks into the unseen world, and discovers glories unutterably attractive. He is humbled ; his self-conceit is gone ; he cries, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Did the once famous school of medicine at Laodicea, or any modern seat of science, ever effect such wonders of healing? Proud philosophy does not indeed admit dependence for virtue. "That we live," says Seneca, "is the gift of God ; but that we live well, is owing to philosophy." But the Lord counsels us to come at once to him for supplies, such as no one else can give, and without which we sink in perpetual bankruptcy.

DISCIPLINE A TOKEN OF LOVE.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten ; be zealous, therefore, and repent."

Here comes out the heart of Jesus. Desperate as is the case of the Laodicean church, and deeply as they have wounded the Lord that

bought them, by turning away self-satisfied in their poverty from the wealth which he acquired so expensively, and offers so freely, yet are they not apostate beyond all hope. Sharp and merited rebuke has been administered ; but it had its root in love to the remnant of believers, despite of prevailing self-righteousness. Christ's heart yearns still toward any real disciple, however backslidden: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" If Christ were an enemy to the Laodiceans, he would leave them to themselves, undisturbed by a friendly alarm.

A general law of his gracious economy is here set forth: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." As all need chastisement in some measure, they in some measure receive it, and thus have proof of the Saviour's attachment. This is a hard lesson to learn, and believers are dull scholars ; yet here and throughout God's word and providence it stands, that trials are his benedictions, and that no child escapes the rod. The incorrigibly misshapen and coarse-grained blocks are rejected, whilst those chosen for the glorious structure are subjected to the chisel and

the hammer. There is no cluster on the true vine but must pass through the wine-press. "For myself," said an old divine under affliction — "for myself, I bless God, I have observed and felt so much mercy in this angry dispensation of God, that I am almost transported. I am sure highly pleased with thinking how infinitely sweet his mercies are, when his judgments are so gracious."

In view, then, of the origin and design of the chastisements you receive, "Be zealous and repent." Lose no time; lose not a blow of the rod, but repent at once. Be fervent in spirit. Such is the first appliance of encouragement.

CHRIST KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Here is the heart of hearts. Notwithstanding their offensive attitude, their unlovely character, such is his love to their souls, that he humbles himself to solicit the privilege of making them blessed.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” Why does he? Not because he is without home elsewhere. There are hearts open to him at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Philadelphia. At many a door, far and near, he finds welcome. Among the mansions in his Father’s house there is not one entrance closed to him. He is the life of every heart, the light in every eye, the song on every tongue in glory. But he goes round from door to door in Laodicea. He stands at each and knocks, because he came to seek and to save that which is lost; because he cannot give up the purpose of communicating eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him; and because he cannot become known to the inmate unless the door be opened, and a welcome given him.

Have you bought a piece of ground; have you bought five yoke of oxen; is your hat in hand, and do you pray to be excused? He knocks and knocks. But you cannot receive company at present; you are worn out with labor; you have wheeled round the sofa; you are making yourself comfortable, and you send

word you are engaged. He knocks and knocks. But it would spoil the game to have Him come in. Besides, there must needs be a little slander, and a little scandal, and, as the shutters are closed, and the young people wish it, a little dancing, perhaps, before breaking up; and to unbolt the door would spoil the whole. He knocks and knocks. It is the hour for church prayer-meeting, or for monthly concert; there is opportunity to pay a Christian visit to an individual or a family; but you move not.

To be frank, you deem it the pastor's business to attend to these things; you help support him, and that is your part; it is not every one's duty to do everything. As for so many meetings, you think them rather injurious than otherwise; at least, uncalled for. You do not like a noisy, officious religion. There is a handsome bound Bible on the centre-table, and a Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation on the side-table, and a Baxter's Saint's Rest somewhere about the house—and you have need of nothing.

Oh, nauseous lukewarmness! Oh, fatal worldliness! The Lord of glory comes all the way

from his celestial palace — comes in poverty, in sweat, in blood — comes to the door of a professed friend, who owes all to him, and cannot get in! — comes to rescue a man whose house is on fire, and he will not admit him! Oh, the height, the depth of Jesus Christ's forbearance! Even the heathen Publius received Paul, and lodged him three days courteously. Shall nominal Christians tell the Lord of apostles they have no room for Him?

THE VICTOR TO BE EXALTED.

“To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

If Laodicean carnality is not broken up by such an appeal, what can avail? If the prospect of advancement like this does not enkindle a holy ambition, what sensibility to heavenly things remains?

The precise form and manner of the saint's future exaltation we know not. Enough for us, that the redeemed are to be superlatively hon-

ored, by being intimately associated with the Prince of the kings of the earth. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

A LAODICEAN SPIRIT NOW.

Is there not similar declension now? Is there no floating on the current of worldliness? Is there no unchristian, no antichristian deference to fashion? Has not public sentiment often more weight than the oracles of God? Plunging into business, to the neglect of the soul and of the family; mingling daily with men who are going direct to destruction, without a word of warning to them; treating one's self to comforts and luxuries, but doling out a mere pittance, or nothing at all, for the spread of the gospel,—what is all this but an attempt at a decent denial of the Lord that bought us?

In amusements there is alacrity, in business there is earnestness, in travelling there is hot haste, in politics the public mind keeps up to the boiling-point,—why this lukewarmness in religious duties and affections? So long as that

lasts, all other zeal is apostasy, and the heart of Jesus is grieved by such behavior.

It is awful mockery to be dallying with the Christian name—merely to think well of Christ's person, Christ's work, Christ's ordinances. If such be our character, He who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears; who, amidst groans, amidst rending rocks, a quaking earth, a sun veiled in sackcloth, offered up himself a vicarious sacrifice, will spue us out of his mouth, except we repent.

THE CLOSING LESSON.

The Book of Revelation is, in some sense, one great epistle. It winds up most appropriately the series of inspired communications to man; and to no other does it yield in the scope, grandeur, and importance of its contents. But these seven epistles have peculiar practicalness and weight. They are our Lord's only direct and specific messages from heaven, to the church at large, since he left the earth; they are his last words, that will be so addressed, till he shall

come again, and by his mighty voice shake not the earth only but also heaven.

These words are as truly catholic and permanent in their design and adaptation as any part of the New Testament; not less truly so than Paul's epistles to Ephesus, Colosse, or Corinth. They were for all churches and all ages, as well as for those immediately addressed. Along the tide of centuries has come the challenge —

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

To-day it becomes audible to every one who does not close the ear and heart to Him who speaketh from heaven. By the waning love at Ephesus, by neglected discipline at Pergamos and Thyatira, by the far-gone decay of Sardis and Laodicea, is every church now warned. The same eyes, as a flame of fire, pierce through our disguises; the same feet, like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, walk still amidst the golden candlesticks; and from those lips, mingling kindness and severity, still flow gracious promises to every victorious soldier of the

Great King. Oh! by the fruit of the tree of life, and by the crown of life; by the hidden manna and the white stone; by the white raiment and the lasting record in heaven's register; by the high titles of honor and a place in the temple of our God; yea, by a share in the victories and on the throne of the King of Zion, are we incited to fight the good fight of faith, to do the first works, to be zealous, to hold fast, and at length to overcome. The Lord grant us to be conquerors, and more than conquerors, through the blood of the Lamb! AND NOW, UNTO HIM THAT LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER, TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

THE END.

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