

“THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.”

(REVELATION II. AND III.)

A PROPHETIC PICTURE OF THIS DIS-
PENSATION, FROM THE APOSTLES'
DAYS UNTIL THE LORD COMES.

A SERIES OF LECTURES
GIVEN IN THE
GOSPEL HALL, PARNELL, AUCKLAND, N.Z.,
NOV. 25TH TILL DEC. 5TH, 1906.

BY
W. J. McCLURE.

Auckland, N.Z.:
Wilson & Horton, Printers, Queen and Wyndham Streets.

1907.

PREFACE.

The following lectures are part of a course on "The Lord's Coming," given in the Gospel Hall, Parnell, Auckland, N.Z. In revising the notes taken then, little change has been made beyond omitting some redundancies.

They are put in the present form with the hope that they may afford help to some of the Lord's people on this important section of the Book of Revelation. May the Lord thus bless and use them for His own glory.

W. J. McCLURE,
119, Tweed Street,
Invercargill, N.Z.

LECTURE I.

REVELATION I.

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John :

2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3. 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.

4. 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;

5. 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,

6. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7. Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced

Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11. 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.

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

13. 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.

14. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

15. And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.

16. 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.

17. 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:

18. 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.

19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches.

Our subject is the seven churches of Asia as a prophetic picture of the entire dispensation, from the Apostles' days until the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again.

To-night we shall not do more than introduce the subject.

The Book of Revelation is one that seems, by common consent, to be regarded as a book from which the believer should very carefully abstain. Now, I hope, by the grace

of God, that if there is anything like this lingering in the minds of any of the Lord's people, it may be removed to-night. I do not know how it has been with you, but I know, in my earlier Christian life, these were just the feelings that I entertained. Doubtless, I had got that from my surroundings; but I need not tell you how much it was to the detriment of my own soul—how much I was the loser by maintaining such an attitude to this blessed book.

In looking at our subject, it was necessary to read the first chapter; but from to-night onward we shall be concerned with the second and third chapters.

First, about the book itself. On the top of your page you will see "The Revelation of St. John the Divine." I do not see why the first line of the opening chapter was not taken as the title; for the first line certainly is the title of the book—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Now, let me say, the word "Revelation" is the proper word for the coming of the Lord to the earth. The coming of the Lord—when His glory is unveiled, when His glory shines forth—but that is not what this word "Revelation"

means here. There is a great deal more than that meant. It means the revelation of God's purposes in relation to the earth, and the revelation of God's purposes made known through His blessed Son. Now, as of course you know, the word revelation means disclosure, manifestation, or unveiling. It is strange that almost everybody says, "Oh, it is a very great mystery," whereas, God in the very title declares that it is a disclosure. The things that are therein would have been a mystery had not God disclosed them. The title, let us remember, is not a misnomer; it is the REVELATION of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him.

Now, a word about the value of the book. As the closing book of the Word of God, it is of special value. Genesis gives us the beginnings: Revelation, the endings. In Genesis you get how sin entered, and in Revelation you get the evil that developed in the course of the world traced to the end. Has it ever occurred to you to compare the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis with the closing chapters of the New Testament? The Word of God is just like a

circle. Put the end of Revelation to the beginning of Genesis and see how it fits. In the last three chapters of Revelation you get what naturally recalls the first three chapters of Genesis. In Genesis you have man in Paradise; in Revelation you have man in Paradise again. In Genesis you have the river of life; in Revelation you have the river of life. You have the river going through that Paradise in Genesis; you have the river of life going through Paradise in Revelation. You have man in innocence in the opening chapters of Genesis; you have man in holiness in the closing chapters of Revelation. In the third chapter from the beginning of Genesis you have the Devil coming on the scene; you have the Devil going out of the scene for ever in the third chapter from the end of Revelation (Chap. xx.)

As to the number of the books, and the arrangement of the books, we do not believe that aught was left to man. Certainly, the very things we are pointing out to you now ought to draw out the admiration even of an unconverted man for the Word of God. Thank God for this Book.

HELPS TO UNDERSTAND REVELATION.

There are four things I would point out that will help to the understanding of Revelation. The first verse—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass." ("Servants," that is, bond slaves). Revelation is the book for the *servant*. What does that mean? It just means this. Unless the claims of Christ to me are real, and unless in some measure we are yielded up to those claims; unless we have, in some degree, the obedient heart; there is little in that book we shall ever get. If we realise our proper relationship to Christ as our Lord and if we have an inclination to do His blessed will, we have gone far towards getting the blessed things we have in Revelation.

Second verse: "Who (John) bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

Ninth verse: "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." John was suffering at the hands of the world, and he could speak of himself in reference to all sufferers, as "your companion in tribulation." John was a *sufferer*. Did you ever see a Christian who sought to sail as close as possible to the world in order not to provoke its enmity—he will know but little of this book. Did you ever see a "Lot" Christian who got right into Sodom? Let me tell you that that man or that woman will learn nothing about Revelation. Lot knew nothing about what was to come upon Sodom till just as it was going to be accomplished; and then, God in His mercy dragged him out of it. There are believers who know nothing of the trend of events and cannot see the course of things, and the reason they are in such ignorance is because they are heart and hand with the World. To be in companionship with the World is not to understand the Book of Revelation. John was a companion of sufferers.

Third: John "was in the isle that is called Patmos;" he was separated, he was shut up

in that rocky little isle. Beloved, we shall never cease to praise God, that John was shut up in Patmos. We shall never cease to praise God, that John Bunyan was shut up in Bedford jail, and we thereby have that inimitable book, "The Pilgrim's Progress." The work of an uneducated tinker, shut up in Bedford jail for the sake of Christ, has maintained its power over our hearts for many many years. Here is John in the Isle of Patmos for the Word of God—a *separated* one. The world has cast him out; but Jesus gives him this glorious revelation.

Notice a fourth thing, verse 10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." There he was on that precious day when he was wont to gather with the Lord's dear people, a fitting time and a fitting preparation for him to receive this revelation. Now, we have the servant, the separated, the suffering, and the *spiritually minded* one, and when, in some degree, these things are seen in us, we are able to enter upon this Book.

CHRIST WALKING AMONG THE CHURCHES.

Verse 13: "In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (lampstands) one like unto

the Son of Man." Now, I suppose I am speaking to Christians in this meeting to-night who have learned to distinguish the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seen the appropriateness of His titles on different occasions. "Son of Man" is divinely appropriate here. You say, "Son of Man is not a title used in relation to the Church of Christ." Well, no, not in the sense in which the Church is spoken of in Paul's epistles. But this is the Church. It is the Church, looked upon in the capacity of a public witness for God, standing in the place that Israel stood in as God's witness on the earth. Now it is a fallen witness, and thus we see Christ looking at the Church—not as the Bride, not as the Body, not as the ministering High Priest; but He is there in His judicial character, therefore, as SON OF MAN.

He is girt with a golden girdle—that means love restrained. He is dealing with that which has been His witness on the earth. But alas, it has failed, hence it is not the time for love to go out unrestrained, so He must exercise righteous judgment. Next, His head and hair "white like wool, as white

as snow"—fullness of wisdom. His eyes were as a flame of fire—penetrating judgment, discriminating judgment. Verse 15: "His feet like until fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"—impending judgment. Now, what we shall look at throughout the course of these seven epistles will bear out in the most ample way what we have already said of the appearance of Christ.

As to the Seven Churches, it is right that at the beginning of these meetings we should state why we take these churches as pictures of the entire dispensation. Hitherto in our meetings we have sought, when dealing with the Church, to point out the Church as the Body of Christ, the Spouse of Christ, and destined to be the sharer of His glory. But to-night and the following nights, we trace the Church upon earth as the Witness of Christ, and we are to look upon these seven churches as giving us step by step the history of the Church from the Church of Ephesus in the Apostles' days to the Church of Laodicea, when the Lord comes. It may be said, Do you not believe those epistles were addressed to seven churches in those

days? Of course we do, and so would anyone who understands in a faint degree the precious truth of God. We believe there was a church at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and so on; and we believe the conditions of these churches were just the conditions that we have here, and that is why God has taken them up to make them pictures of the course of the whole Church. Ephesus gives us the church in the Apostles' days, and rather the close of those days. Smyrna gives us the martyr days of the Church, ending with the close of Diocletian's reign—313. Pergamos gives from the beginning of the reign of Constantine, 313, to 590. Thyatira—Romanism, gives us from 590 until the present hour. Sardis—Protestantism from the sixteenth century to the present hour.

The first three are like steps, the last four run on together till the Lord comes. Thus Thyatira—Romanism, came on the scene and it still lasts. Sardis—Protestantism, came on the scene and it still lasts. Philadelphia came, we believe, in the early part of the 19th century, about 1827.

Laodicea comes last of all, and we believe we have entered upon Laodicean days now. We would like to make this point very clear, for there are many of God's people who look upon Revelation II. and III. as not being prophetic, but as written to seven churches which actually existed in those days. We say it is true that these epistles were sent to the seven churches, but the great application is the *prophetic* application.

REASONS FOR SO REGARDING THEM.

First there were seven churches ; not 6 or 8, but 7. These seven churches were situated in Asia. Asia of Revelation is not the Continent of Asia, not Asia Minor ; but the proconsular province of Asia. In that little proconsular province those seven churches were situated. There might have been many others ; but the Lord takes seven, and He makes these seven churches the picture. Why ? Seven is completeness. Seven speaks of perfection, whether of good or bad. There are many of the Lord's people here who see this, and they are quite ready to own that when we have the number seven we have a complete series.

The next word we would like you to notice is the little word "mystery." It occurs in the twentieth verse, "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest." Tell me, if God, by the Holy Spirit, was writing an epistle, say, to Ephesus, or to Smyrna, and that epistle was simply a direct epistle; without any prophetic teaching, would there be any mystery about it? There is no mystery about Ephesians or Colossians. They are plain letters with no mystery about them. So when we read that word "mystery," we are to understand that while there is a practical application, behind that application there is a long-drawn out application in which these epistles stretch from the Apostles' days right on till Jesus comes. The very word "mystery" would prepare us for understanding this. He says, "the seven stars," "the seven candlesticks," "the mystery of them;" the mystery of them is that they have a prophetic teaching.

Again, do they fit? Suppose I take a photo. of someone you know very well. I say, "Do you know him?" "Yes, it is Mr. So-and-So." "How do you know?" "It is a perfect likeness of him." Now, we hope,

by the grace of God, during the week upon which we have entered, to hold up to you the picture, and, let me say, we have not merely the Lord's people in mind; but we believe that any intelligent unconverted man who observes things will own how true the picture is. He will see it is a picture and a life-like one.

We cannot say much about the individual churches to-night, for the simple reason that we shall be dealing with them in their order. But we would say this much: Suppose you take the first name, and the third, and the last. We only touch these—not because they are any more plainly the pictures of stages than the others. Now, the first name—Ephesus; it means “desirable,” or “a throwing,” or “a hurling.” The appropriateness of the definition we shall look at to-morrow night. In this first church we have God's people walking in some of the primitive power and holiness that marked them in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. We have the Church keeping its garments clean from contact with the world that has shed the blood of God's dear Son. But when we come to Pergamos, we have the marriage

of the Church with the World. The word "per" is a word which serves to call attention to something which is objected to, and "gamos" is the ordinary word for marriage. Here, God in His wondrous over-ruling wisdom takes up a church that was situated in a city, the name of which means "Marriage." This is not something preachers have made up and are giving out because it is plausible. What we state in these meetings we trust will bear criticism. The third church speaks of marriage. The whole internal evidence of that epistle proves the truth that we should be prepared for from the name; that Church has linked itself with the World. We read in it of "the doctrine of Balaam." Balaam linked together God's people, Israel, and the people of the land they were passing through. They should have been separate, and God desired that; but through Balaam's evil cunning the two were linked together, and the judgment of God fell upon them. Now, that is in the epistle of Pergamos. We have the fruit of that to-day, in that we see the Church and the World hopelessly mixed together. The last name is Laodicea. Laodicea, amongst

other things, means the "Judgment of the people." In that epistle it is that Christ says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Think of the Master, the Lord of the Church, the one who bought the Church with His own blood, standing outside the door and knocking. You do not knock at the door when you are inside your own house, or when the door of your house is open. This church professes to be Christ's house, and also professes that Christ is Lord and Master; but He cannot be inside, or He would not be knocking at the door. We are brought to the last stage, yet He comes in grace, knocks, and says, "If any man:" there is no longer an ear on the part of the mass—the mass is hopeless. But, "If any man." Now, we say, if we get that in Laodicea, that which so corresponds to its name, do we not make out a strong case? What corresponds with its name? "Because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." A mixture of hot and cold makes what the Lord complains of—a mixture of the church and the world from which He will turn in utter loathing. Now, men are glorying in numbers, in getting

in the unconverted. If one raises a question about these things, and asks, "Are they converted?" we are told, "No, but they will get good." Christ regards this as an abominable mixture, and says, "Because you are neither the Church, nor the World, you are a most noxious thing."

This very partial glance cannot be convincing to some of you. I do not expect that what I have said will remove all doubts from the minds of those who have been accustomed to think on another line. But I do believe that if you were to come to the meetings every night this week, I think I can promise you, that you will be thoroughly one with us if you are open to proof. I think that you will see that this is the proper line of interpretation, and that each church represents the different stages of the professing church, from the primitive purity and separation of the Apostles' days to the awful corruption that closes this dispensation.

DIVISIONS OF REVELATION.

The last thing I notice to-night is the divisions of the Book. This, to my mind, is

the strongest reason of all ; but in the nature of things it can only appeal with most force to those who have some intelligence in the Book of Revelation.

Verse 19 : "Write the things which thou hast seen," division I. ; "The things which are," division II ; "The things which shall be hereafter," division III.

First: "Write the things which thou hast seen." What had he seen? The first chapter gives us that; the vision of the Son of Man in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

Second: "The things which are"—those things which are now in course, that is, the second and third chapters. The things which are going on now. Those seven epistles bringing out the present course of the Church.

Third: "The things which shall be hereafter," or the things which shall be "after these," that is, after the second and third chapters. Look at the first verse of the fourth chapter. "After this," that is precisely the same word as "hereafter," of chapter i. 19. Immediately you have done with the third chapter, the present things, God

rings out the words "after this." Now we have entered upon the things which shall be hereafter.

All Revelation, after chapter three, is future. We are now in chapter three. In the fourth and fifth the Church is seen in Heaven. In the nineteenth chapter the Church is seen coming *with* Christ. Between chapters six and nineteen, we have the events which transpire on earth during the interval between the coming of the Lord *for* and His coming *with* His saints.

The rapture is not seen in Revelation save in chapter twelve, verse five, where we get the rapture of the "Man Child" (the mystic Christ of Eph. iv. 13: Christ the Head—the Church, His Body), and Rev. xii. 5 is retrospective. May we have grace to learn the mind of God in this important portion of His word.

LECTURE II.

EPHESUS.

REVELATION II.

1. 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;

2. I know thy works, and thy labour, 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:

3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (It is better to leave the word "somewhat" out.)

5. 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.

6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7. 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.

To-night we come to the first church. We will look at this church: First, as giving us the planting of an assembly; second, an assembly in being; third, the use of an assembly.

Can you tell me of how many of these seven churches has God told us about their planting—when they were planted, who planted them, and some facts about their planting? There is only one of the seven of which we read a single line about its planting, and that one is the first one. Suppose God had given us that information about any of the others, it would have destroyed the teaching that I believe He had specially in view. Why? Because if these seven churches are a picture of the history of *the* Church, the Church only had one beginning—only one birthday. Doubtless, it is of the utmost importance that there should be only one whose beginning is given, and that the first one. I am not saying that the

others did not have a planting, and that some servant of the Lord was not used in their planting. No doubt that was so, but God has not told us anything about that. All the history of the Church of God grows from the Day of Pentecost. All that we shall look at in these seven churches is the outgrowth of the first one—Ephesus. Now, if this is rightly apprehended, it will do much to prepare us for what comes before us as we look at the stages of the Epistles.

I would remind you that the church that has the greatest wealth of truth communicated to it, bringing out its heavenly character, is the Church of Ephesus. In every respect the Church of Ephesus is divinely fitted to represent the first stage—or the Church in the Apostles' days.

THE PLANTING OF THIS CHURCH.

If you turn to the Acts of the Apostles and the eighteenth chapter, you will find that there is a young Jew called Apollos. He is really a believer in Christ, but has never got beyond where John's teaching left him. He had been converted through someone who only knew about John's ministry.

He did not know about accomplished redemption, and the truth of the Holy Spirit coming down from Heaven. He goes to Ephesus. What he knows, he is determined shall have a widespread circulation, and so he publishes it. Some believe, and they are baptized according to John's baptism. In the nineteenth chapter, Paul comes to Ephesus, and he finds the fruit of the work of Apollos. He finds twelve men there, and he asks them, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" (A question that could not be put to believers now, because believers receive the Holy Ghost as soon as they are converted. But these are Jews, and a Jew never received the Holy Ghost until he was baptized, so long as God publicly owned the Jewish nation as His people.) They said, "We have not heard whether the Holy Ghost be given." (R.V.)

"And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

"Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

“And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came on them.”

Thus commenced the assembly at Ephesus. For a little while they continued in the synagogue; but as the new life manifested itself, the inevitable cleavage took place. In this nineteenth chapter of Acts we have the Apostle Paul separating the disciples. Here we have the start. It is so like the beginning of the church in the early chapters of Acts, with its members almost wholly Jewish, continuing daily in the Temple. Paul is raised up; then the differences between Judaism and Christianity become manifest. Paul was the special vessel through whom the truth of the Church of God was given. For about two years the Apostle Paul makes Ephesus his centre, and the work spreads all round, and souls are saved.

Now there was at Ephesus a man named Sceva. He had seven sons, who tried if they could not do the same as Paul. We see how early in the dispensation Satan began to counterfeit. The hollowness of this counterfeit work was most effectually ex-

posed. They tried to cast out evil spirits by using the name of Jesus in the same way as Paul did. But the evil spirit answered, "Jesus, I know ; and Paul I know ; but who are ye ? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and overcame them."

And now, as the work goes on, numbers of men come together and bring their magical books which they have been studying, and by which they have been trying to perform miracles by Satanic power. They make a pile, put a light to it, and up in smoke it goes—£1,875 worth of bad books. The Word of God did that, and the next thing we read is that the Word of God grew and multiplied. This was something that ought to have characterised the Church all the way down—no room for anything opposed to Christ.

The work went on, and Paul sent his fellow-labourers away to other fields, while he remained at Ephesus. A man named Demetrius, who made silver shrines for Diana, called together his fellow craftsmen and pointed out how Paul was turning away much people from the worship of Diana.

(We see the power of the gospel in this.) But it was for himself that Demetrius was concerned, for he goes on to say, "Ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." So it always is—man's selfishness opposing God's grace. They raised a great tumult. Paul had to leave the city. But, thank God, he left behind him a number of believers. We see the gospel preached in the power of the Holy Ghost, and men and women gathered together around the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the church at Ephesus.

In the twentieth chapter we see the Apostle Paul, passing by way of Troas, comes to Miletus, from which place he sends to Ephesus and calls the elders of the church. Here we get the Church in being. A company of saved ones gathered out from the World as the word "Church" implies. Verse 17: "Called the elders of the Church." Who are the elders? Now see the 28th verse: "And take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

Verse 32: "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

33: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34: "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35: "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Eph. iv. 8: "Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Verses 11, 12: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Here we get how an assembly is cared for. In every assembly there is a need for elders, and God will raise up the right ones to

care for it. We see from the Word of God that the Church knows who the elders are. The sheep know who feeds them. So it ought to be in the Church of God. Now the Apostle calls the elders, and tells them to feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers.

There are three words you might notice. An "*elder*" (that is, he is not a young Christian), an "*overseer*," or "*bishop*" (that is, one who has a godly oversight over the church, one who keeps his eye on the saints, who notes the backslidden and worldly ones, and seeks to win them back to the Lord), and a *pastor*. "Feed" means to tend as a pastor. These are three words that apply to the same person, as we see also in I. Pet. v. 1 and 2. You speak of some men as bishops, and they would be highly offended if you called them elders or pastors—they desire to be higher than that. But the Word of God gives no room for such pretensions. "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak." They followed their worldly occupations—some might be merchants, some gentlemen of leisure, and some mechanics.

Some were suited for labouring in the word and doctrine, and others ruled. Each had his gifts. We do not find one solitary scripture where one man had charge of a local assembly as *the* minister, and received in return a salary. But there is, in this assembly at Ephesus, a number of men who give themselves to the work of that assembly. They had gifts, and their gifts came from God, and they were put over the flock by the Holy Spirit.

I trust this much is clear to you. First, the Church, or assembly, owed its existence to the conversion of people. The Church is not composed of converted and unconverted people, because "assembly" means "called out." We see it is a company of Christians gathered together to break bread on the first day of the week, thus to remember the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in dying on the Cross; gathered together for their mutual edification, and gathered together to send out the gospel. Now, that is the assembly. To keep this assembly in being and keep it healthy, we have those different gifts given by Christ which are to be perpetuated until the mystic body of Christ is complete. This will be when the Lord comes.

THE USE OF THE ASSEMBLY.

Turn with me to the portion I read in Revelation: "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 labour, 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 laboured, 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."

Candlestick means lampstand. A lampstand is for holding up a light. Now, what is the use of an assembly? That is the use of an assembly. That is what the Church

was responsible to do. The Church was responsible to witness for Him who said, "I am the Light of the world." How the Church has failed in this. The causes of the failure, and the result of it, are all clearly brought out in the seven epistles to the seven churches.

The Lord keep us as assemblies from losing sight of the special object for which we exist as assemblies (Philippians ii. 15, 16), to be light-bearers. If the Church is not doing that, we see here that there is a danger that Christ will remove the lampstand. Some have thought that this means that if a believer does not hold up the light, he will lose his soul. It means that if the assembly is no longer holding up the light, Christ will remove the lampstand out of its place—the assembly will be allowed to break up, as He cannot tolerate a sham.

Look just where the Church begins to fail in being a light-bearer. Verse 2: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." Now compare this with I. Thess. i. 3: "Remembering without ceasing your work of *faith*, and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ."

In Revelation we have works, labour, and patience; but we do not find love, faith, and hope. Love, faith, and hope seem to have dropped out. What does this mean? It means that the Epistle to the Thessalonians was written forty-two years before the Epistle to the Church of Ephesus. It means that that forty-two years had witnessed the first steps in the saddest decline that ever the eyes of God witnessed. We are to go down a ladder of seven steps, which is the saddest declension ever beheld. And the saddest step was the first, because without the first step the second could never have been taken. We must remember the Epistle to the Church at Ephesus does not give us the very earliest of the Church's history; but the Church in the closing apostolic days. Here is something going on which the eye of man cannot see; but Christ sees. It is the Church occupied with works, labour, and patience. But the Lord Jesus misses that which gives Him most joy—works of *faith*, labour of *love*, patience of *hope*. There is much done in our days like this. Work is done which is not the outcome of the real devotion to

Christ. Man can see works, labour, and patience. Man cannot see faith, love, and hope. You can put works, labour, and patience into a scale; but you cannot do that with love, faith, and hope. The first can be appreciated by man; but the second must be appreciated by the heart of God. Let me ask you if, as far as you are concerned with the Sunday School work, for instance, is it done out of love to the Lord? What you do for the Lord, would it be done if there was not another soul to see you do it? God wants you to do it for love to His Son. While our main business is the prophetic application of these epistles, we would not pass over their direct application to our hearts.

“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.” “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen.” Notice, the first stage of the Church is a fallen one. How had she fallen? Christ said, “Thou hast left thy first love.” There are many who talk of their first love, and mean an emotion. If you have left your

first love, you have left Christ. Christ is your first love—the One to Whom you gave all your heart's affection at first. Consequently, if you are looking back to the World, you are like the Ephesian church. That is the state it is seen in in verse four. And that is the saddest state, because it is the first step down. The eyes looking to the World, but the feet not yet gone. Now, Christ says, You have left your first love, you have fallen. Oh, beloved, ask yourself: Are you as true to Christ as you were when He first saved you?

Now let us look at what the Lord commends in them. We read in the second verse, "Thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not." In Ephesians iv. 11, we read of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Apostles and prophets are in the foundation (Eph. ii. 20). Hence, the gifts that remain are evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The evangelist quarries out the stones for the house, the pastor gathers these stones together, and the teacher comes along and opens up the Word of God to the Church.

But some men came along to the Church of Ephesus and said they were apostles. But the saints at Ephesus tried them, and found that they were not. There are some Christians nowadays who are so gullible that if a man comes along and states he is anything, they just believe him, because he says it, and they take him at face value. How many frauds would have been exposed and much dishonour to the Name of Christ prevented by some Ephesian faithfulness. A false charity allows error to go unchallenged, or it may be indifferent as to how it dishonours Christ. These Ephesians had not gone so far as that. When these men said they were apostles, these Ephesians said, "If you are apostles, we have a book by which we will try you." So the Lord Jesus could say to them, "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." When those men came along and announced that they were apostles, the Ephesians showed that they had taken heed to the Apostle's warning (Acts xx. 29), "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you." They tried them, and found them liars, and the Lord Jesus was pleased with them for so doing.

Ere we close, a word as to the name "Ephesus." It is given as "desirable," or "a throwing or hurling." In connection with the first word, turn to Luke xxii. 31. Here we see Satan desired Peter. What for? To spoil, if possible, a witness for Christ. This also he desired to do with the Church. How did he succeed in doing this? Look at Psalm lxii. 4, "They only consult to cast him down from his excellency." The Church, as is brought out so clearly in the teaching given to the Church at Ephesus, is an *heavenly* outcalling, looked at as raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Its power to witness for Christ lay in its preserving this heavenly character on the earth. But she soon loses that character.

In our next lecture we shall see how Satan, through Judaising teachers, succeeded in casting her down from her excellency, so that the professing Church is now just an institution of the world—more Jewish than Christian.

LECTURE III.

SMYRNA.

REVELATION II.

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

Turn also to Matthew xiii.

24. Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29. But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.

Our subject to-night is the Church in Smyrna; or, the Martyr Age of the Church.

The portion we have been reading in the Book of Revelation must strike the most casual reader as one pre-eminently full of suffering. We are naturally struck with this fact—suffering, suffering, suffering. This describes that portion of the Church's history that closed with the Diocletian persecution, and Constantine ascending the throne of Rome.

There are two things I would like to point out. The first is the reason, from God's standpoint, for allowing this; second, the

Devil's object in bringing on such a period of suffering ; for it was his work.

We will consider God's part in it first. Assuredly in grace, by that awful period of suffering, He was seeking to accomplish for His people the greatest good ; seeking to maintain the testimony in its purity by arresting the decay which they had not perceived, but which His eyes had beheld, and which, if unchecked, would have ended in disaster. Therefore, the first thing we will look at is God's work : the reason, from God's standpoint, for the persecution.

It will help us to remember that the seven parables of the thirteenth of Matthew, and the seven epistles in the second and third chapters of Revelation, teach similar truths. Mark, we do not say that they are identically the same. In the epistles to the seven churches the Church is looked upon as the Church ; in Matthew xiii. it is looked upon in its *kingdom* aspect. The one point we wish to fix upon your memories is that the seven parables of Matthew trace the same period of time as the seven epistles to the churches.

Let us compare the first parable with the

first church. To-night we read the second parable because it is parallel with the Church of Smyrna. In the first parable we have the sower going forth to sow. You remember the four different grounds on which he laboured. Out of the four only one was fruitful. And you remember that we have the fruit in a decreasing ratio—one hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold. In this parable there is nothing said about tares amongst the wheat.

The second parable begins where the first one ends. The first ends with a field of wheat—that is the result of the Word of God. Let me say, the wheat represents God's people. The result of the preaching of the early Christians was that wherever they laboured there were companies of God's people gathered together, and no unconverted ones with them. Of the earliest companies we read, "And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them." Well might they stay away; the power and presence of God was so real that the unconverted shrank from it. It was blessed for the saved thus to gather together. The unsaved cared not.

to venture into those companies, and if they got there, they soon went out. We read in I. John ii. 19, "They went out from us for they were not of us." The early Christian assemblies had no bother with the unconverted, for the Spirit's power kept them out.

We come now to the second parable. It tells us there was a field of wheat, and that one night, while the servants slept, came one and scattered tares (darnel) all over the field. When the servants discovered this, they came and said to the Master, "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?" "Yes." "From whence then hath it tares?" "An enemy hath done this." "Shall we gather them up?" "No; you cannot do that. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Why? Because the two are so alike that you will make the mistake of plucking up the wheat instead of the darnel. You must let them alone until the angels at the end of the age will be able to discriminate. The two are so alike, though wholly different in

nature. The one nutritious ; the other poisonous. Just like the false professor and the child of God.

What does it mean that they grow together? They grow together in the World, (ver. 38), not in the Church. In the World the unconverted are side by side with the true believers. God gives us specific instructions as to fellowship. We are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. But, while we may separate ourselves from fellowship with unsaved professors, the sad results of the failure of the Church will be seen in the World, right on until the close. The servants cannot undo the mischief their want of watchfulness caused. All this began when the servants were asleep.

In the first parable, with the wheat that had been sown decreasing from one hundred-fold to thirtyfold, we get the first church, the Church of Ephesus, beginning to let go their hold of their blessed Lord ; turning from Him—already a fallen church.

In the second, we get unsaved professors coming in. We get that in the ninth verse of this second chapter of Revelation, the last part of the verse, “I know the blasphemy

of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.” I suppose there are some of the Lord’s people in this meeting who think that perhaps someone there had been saying he was a Jew when he was not a Jew. Suppose a man that was of the race of Abraham had been saying so, there would be nothing you could condemn in that. It is a most unlikely thing that any Gentiles had been saying that they were Jews. The Temple, once the pride of the Jew, lay in ruins, utterly demolished; their city destroyed, and they themselves carried to the four corners of the earth. This was the state of things when we get to the epistle to Smyrna. So there are two things we cannot take as the meaning of this verse. First, that these people were Jews and were asserting it, for that would not be blasphemy. Second, we do not think they were Gentiles asserting that they were Jews, for nobody cared to own that name then. What does it mean? We ask you to bear in mind that all these epistles, and all through this book, it is pre-eminently symbolical in character. Now here are people of whom God says, “I

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

A very slight acquaintance with much that the Apostle Paul was called to meet will help us. What was the one evil that the Apostle Paul was called to meet everywhere? It was Judaism. It dogged the steps of Paul; wherever the gospel of God's grace was preached, Judaism was on the ground to oppose that grace. There is one epistle that especially deals with it, and that is the Epistle to Galatians. If there was anything that stirred the blood of that old warrior, it was the presence of Judaism and Judaising teachers. Wherever he went men came, who as good as said, “Paul is a very good fellow, he tells you many good things; but not all. He has told you about the gospel of Christ; but that is not enough. You must be circumcised, and you must keep the Sabbath,” etc., etc. (So we have those in our day who impose Sabbath-keeping and the law upon believers). This nullified the Word of God, and made the Cross of Christ practically of no effect. It said that while Christ had died, it is not sufficient unless you add thereto the

works of the law ; and so thousands who never really entered into the grace of God could adopt a system of doing and believing together. There can be no possible combination of two such contrary systems. Whenever man mixes the two it is a death-dealing mixture. It must be grace alone or the law in its purity. Nothing suits the unregenerate mind like a little of both. They know they cannot meet the full demands of the law, and so they must have Christ as a make-weight. The dear apostle had to warn the saints about this.

Christianity is so pure—it is not an earthly religion. It is spiritual. Judaism appealed to the senses—to the eyes and the ears. Christianity is simplicity itself. Judaism had its forms and ceremonies that called for an ornate temple. Christianity is unearthly ; too unearthly for man unless he walks with God. But the Church of God early showed the tendency to take up Judaism and mingle it with Christianity, and thereby make Christianity a religion of the earth. When Paul was off the scene the attempts of the enemy to undo the grace of God through Judaism succeeded with amazing rapidity. And what

characterises Christendom to-day is not Christianity, but a compound of Christianity and Judaism, and a good deal of heathenism, too. Christianity had no place for vestments, no place for gorgeous rituals, no place for painted panes and sculptured pillars, no place for incense or candles, and no place for names and titles. These things have been brought in.

It is the unsaved professors the Lord Jesus refers to when He says, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." They are not now glorying in the Church as a heavenly outcalling, glorying in the High Priest up yonder and all believers a holy priesthood in Him. They are not now glorying in One who is coming back. In Revelation we see God's blessed Son looking upon His Church, and He says of Ephesus that it has lost its first love and is asleep. He sees the Church at Smyrna is receiving in its bosom unsaved professors—unsaved professors who have no faith, and to whom pure Christianity is nothing but grasping at a shadow. They can, without the new birth, appreciate beautiful music, an elaborate ritual,

and an ornate service. Many a bad man with an emotional disposition sits and listens to beautiful music, and thinks the stirring of his emotional nature is worship to God. It is simply mere nature, root and branch. Worship? It is nothing of the kind. Unconverted men cannot enter into the simple, pure order of things of the first Church. This is what we get in the second chapter, and God says, "Now, it will never do for you to go on. I see if I do not allow Satan to raise a storm and blow away the chaff, it will soon be all chaff and no wheat. I will allow Satan to rage against you. I will allow the Lion to roar, and so the sheep will fly back to the Shepherd, and the unconverted will make haste to get out of that which invites the persecution of the world, and calls down upon them the wrath of man." It was one of the most merciful things that could have happened—Satan to be allowed to raise the wrath of man and move that vast engine of the Roman Empire against the infant Church.

Now, before we look at Satan's object in the trial, let us look at the Church itself. First, look at verse 8: "Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; these things

saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.” We shall notice that in every church the Lord adapts Himself to their condition, and speaks words suitable to them. No two churches are addressed alike. “These things saith He that was dead and is alive.” He is speaking to the suffering saints that have before them the awful thought of death in the most cruel ways that the ingenuity of man could invent. He says, “I was dead—man did his worst to Me; but I am alive again. They may put you to death, but there is a glorious resurrection. Your body may be burned or devoured by the beasts, but man’s worst will only send your spirits into My presence.”

Look at the close of this epistle. Verse 11: “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.” I want you to see how blessedly appropriate these words would be to those dear sufferers. I want you to think of a little picture. The scene, I believe, is the first of these Smyrnan days. It is in the garden of the Emperor Nero. The games have been going on all day, but there is something that

will delight that poor blinded populace more than anything that has gone before. It is by and by, when the shades of night fall, and the games must be carried on, all around the garden are the saints of God, sewn in coarse sackcloth, and thickly smeared with pitch, and a stick put under the chin to keep them upright. When it is dark, they set a light to them, and in the light of those burning believers those games go on. If one of those saints could have turned and spoken to the other, he would have said, "Thank God, for us there is no Lake of Fire. The flames will soon die and then the welcome for us up yonder." Thank God, it was true; and very soon the little heaps of ashes marked the spot where they suffered for Christ. Their fire went out; Nero's will burn for ever. When those sufferers testified unto death, the Lord who caused these words to be penned later on would know how to whisper them to their hearts as they suffered there.

Now, take what we have in the body of the epistle, "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." Notice—tribulation, prison, suffering, death. They shall have tribulation *ten* days. These words are very significant.. There were ten general governmental persecutions under just as many emperors between Nero and Diocletian, or between 65 and 313 A.D. What is most remarkable, the last persecution was the most awful, and it just lasted ten years. It began in 303 and it ended in 313. We would not press the point, but we believe that in the mind of the Spirit of God, to whom all was known, this period of the Church's history, and especially the end of it, is indicated in these words.

Another thing about the last and first persecution. The first persecution grew out of the burning of Rome. It is generally believed that Nero was the perpetrator of that deed himself. But in order to shift the blame from himself, he, who watched from a tower of his palace the burning of Rome, and amused himself with his guitar and singing "The fall of Troy," unheeding the suffering of his subjects, had the story circulated that it was the Christians who did it. And so the dear

believers suffered—part of the sufferings we have already given you in that incident of the garden.

Then the last persecution, as you know, was really brought about like this. Diocletian, the Emperor, who had, amongst other associates with him in the government of the Empire, his son-in-law, Galerius, was not violently opposed to God's people; but Galerius was. Galerius, incited by his mother, did his best to get Diocletian to issue edicts against the people of God. A fire broke out in his palace that almost reached to his chamber—it was the Christians who did it, was once more falsely reported. Fourteen days after another fire broke out. This is believed to have been the work of Galerius himself. Then Galerius left the city, pretending he could not consider himself safe in it. This was too much for the old heathen emperor, Diocletian. Thus Galerius obtained his object, and that awful persecution was started, and the Church passed through the fiercest time she has ever passed through.

This was *the martyr age*. There have been persecutions and suffering since, but never a time when the whole Church suffered perse-

cution from the World. The persecution did its work ; it arrested the decay.

Did the Devil succeed? He wished to quench the light. That was the task he set himself to perform. He had remarkable tools with which to accomplish the work. He had the greatest empire of history fully alive to and fully in sympathy with him as to the work to be done. All that vast engine was hurled against weakness ; but weakness linked with God. It was impossible for him to secure a victory. They did not fight. The victory was really on the side of the vanquished. The man who could come calmly forth to the stake or face the lion ; the men and women who could leave wealth and station and step down amongst the lowly sufferers of that day ; they were the victors.

What did it come to. The very thing the Devil sought to accomplish was the very thing he did not accomplish. He wished to stamp the thing out, but, as we read of the Children of Israel in Egypt, the more they were oppressed the more they grew. And the more they killed God's saints the more they grew. If a man occupying an exalted position came

in contact with a child of God, heard the story of the Cross, and accepted it, then the instant he confessed himself a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ he became a marked man. The fact of his position, his wealth, his learning, all went for nothing. He was dragged into the amphitheatre and given to the lions. He might be a soldier, and accustomed to lead his men into the thick of the battle without the least suspicion of fear. He was not less brave then ; he never faced danger more calmly or walked with a firmer step than he did into that amphitheatre. As men looked on they said, "That man has something we have not."

Perhaps it was a noble lady who had numerous friends and worldly companions ; but having heard the story of Christ, her heart was won and she confessed Christ. She might be a weak, delicate woman, and accustomed to be waited on at every step. Such would be cast into a noxious dungeon, and subjected to every privation. But she would know what it is to face the lion or the stake without a tremor. Then men would look on and say, "We know that man, that woman ; they could have wealth and station, as we

have ; but they are giving it all up for something we have not got." They were led to inquire, and for every one that went to the stake and went to the lions, ten were raised up to take their places. This went on until men became weary of slaughtering the saints of God. And the Devil, baffled and beaten, had to give up the unequal contest. Yes, he was not equal to it. Rome was not equal to it. All the power was on the side of those who stood for God and the Cross of Christ.

LECTURE IV.

PERGAMOS.

REVELATION II.

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

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

17. 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.

Now let us also read Matt. xiii.

31. Another parable put He forth unto them saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field :

32. Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

We believe the parable which we have read to-night lines with the epistle to Pergamos. Notice the change between the second parable (the field of wheat) and the third parable (the great tree). If you turn to Daniel iv., which you can do at your leisure, you will find that God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream. In that dream he saw a tree, and under it the beasts were able to graze, and in its branches the fowls were able to lodge. Its height was great, and the sight of it was unto the ends of the earth. The interpretation was: The tree was the king himself, or more correctly, his kingdom. The tree is the symbol of a great world-power. The Lord

Jesus, in this chapter in Matthew, says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a tree." We must remember that when God uses figures in His Word, we shall find the meaning of His figures in His Word. So we consider that the fourth chapter of Daniel gives us the meaning of tree. What a change! From a field of wheat to a great tree. I do not know any more pretty suggestion or symbol for the Church of God than a field of wheat. There is the field of wheat, and each stalk stands for itself and draws nutriment from the earth for itself. They all grow together; we do not see one stalk away far above the others. This reminds me of the words, "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren."

We see the field of wheat is God's own picture of what the Church ought to be. The tree is not, but it is what the Church has developed into. Look how this comes about. We read: It "is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree." Something abnormal here! You will see this perfectly if you compare the beginning of this dispensation with the present state of things. As to

the beginning, was there ever anything so small? Just think of this dispensation beginning with its Founder crucified, and the early preachers mostly simple men—not educated or distinguished men; such men that, humanly speaking, it would be jeopardising any cause to commit it into their hands to perpetuate. Yes, with the Founder crucified, and the early preachers men such as I have described, this dispensation began—it was the least of all seeds. No great religion has been launched upon the world in such a way. Look on that which began with One who was a homeless wanderer, and with the preaching of men with no certain dwelling place—men who were regarded as the off-scouring of all things, the filth of the world. Look at it to-day. It is a great world-power. What gives such princely positions and princely salaries as the Church does? The army, navy, or civil service do not compare with it. The successors of our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles are among the princes of the earth. It has surely become a very great tree!

There is something very significant in this parable; it is the fowls. Twice in these parables we read of fowls. Any right interpretation must conserve unity of thought. You

cannot interpret the fowls in the first parable as wicked spirits, and in the third parable as good spirits. In the first, we find the fowls picking up the seed and preventing the Word of God getting a place in the human heart. That is Satan and his satellites seeking to hinder God, and trying to prevent God having a Church upon the earth. In the third parable they are sitting, quite at home, in the branches of the tree. If we were saying this against one section of the Church, you might be justly indignant; but we are making no such application. We are speaking of Christianity as a whole, and you can make your own application.

Christianity, as a whole, has become just what the third parable pictures it—a great world-power—and the Devil has no animosity towards the greater part of it. Very little is more in harmony with the Devil than a gospel which is not God's gospel. Much of what is preached as the gospel of God is another gospel. The Apostle Paul was so jealous as to the gospel of the grace of God being preached in its purity, that he said, "If an angel preach another gospel, let him be accursed." In much of the preaching of

to-day, Christ is dragged from His position as God and is made a mere man; human works are unblushingly presented as part of the salvation for poor sinners. We say that Satan is quite at home in such things. We have no question whatever that our parable sets forth this, and, if you quarrel with it, then I am certain you quarrel with the Divine Author

Now turn to our chapter in Revelation. The first thing we notice is the name of the Church. In looking at this name we must go back over the previous two. Ephesus means "desirable," or "a throwing or hurling." So we have seen that Satan's desire was to spoil the Church as God's witness upon the earth. The second church, Smyrna, means "myrrh." Myrrh was the principal spice used for embalming the dead. This reminds us of that time when all the powers of earth and hell were engaged in deadly conflict against the Church of God; Satan's object being to oppose, and, if possible, bring to nothing, God's Church. But we saw what a failure that was. Instead of succeeding, those terrible times were made a great blessing to the Church. He did not

succeed by might, so next he tried cunning. In Smyrna, Satan was a roaring lion. In Pergamos, we see Satan as a subtle serpent. Pergamos means "marriage." Last night we saw where Satan failed, but to-night we have to mourn over his success.

Marriage. Please connect that with one of the things Christ blames them for: "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 stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Now, before we seek to put before you what we believe God teaches in this verse, allow me to tell you we do not think anybody in the church at Pergamos talked favourably about the doctrine of Balaam. Balaam's name was held in abhorrence by the Hebrew, and not held in less bad repute by the Gentile Christians. We cannot for a moment imagine that anybody in that assembly at Pergamos ever said, "I believe in the doctrine of Balaam; I believe in what Balaam taught." But God uses the name in a symbolical way. Balaam brought a sin upon Israel which God takes as a picture of a spiritual sin.

What did Balaam do? Israel came out of Egypt, and Balak, the king of Moab, beheld with terror the coming of that host. He thought: What shall I do? Shall I fight them? He remembered others tried that to their cost, so he gave up the idea of fighting them. He could not fight them, for Israel was invincible so long as they walked with God. He had heard of the fame of a certain soothsayer, so he sent some of his men along to get Balaam to come and curse Israel. Balaam came. He began with enchantments against Israel, but Israel was as proof against Balaam's curses as against Balak's sword. Balak said: "I have called thee to curse mine enemies; you have blessed them altogether." Balaam was going away with an aching heart because he could not get the gold that Balak offered him, when a thought came to him. It was Satanic. He said to Balak: "You cannot fight Israel, and I cannot prevail against them with my enchantments. I will tell you what to do. Send your young men and young women to invite the Israelites to come and join you in a feast. If they will come, you will succeed against them!" Balaam

knew God would be angry with such a mixture. Balak fell in with his suggestion. It was done. A feast was got up, and they ensnared Israel. The people of Israel and the people of Moab had a good time. But the hand of God came down in judgment, and 24,000 were smitten in death.

Twenty-four thousand of a blood-redeemed people. Oh, the sword of Balak could never have prevailed like that! Balaam's curses could never have prevailed like that! Let me say, the doctrine of Balaam and the name of that city, Pergamos, agree perfectly. We shall see in other instances that the name agrees with the subject of the epistles.

Now, the name means "marriage." We need not tell you that the word Pergamos is made up of two words—"per" and "gamos." Gamos means "marriage." God, in His infinite wisdom, chose that assembly in that city because it made such a perfect type of that part of the Church's history which we have to speak about to-night. Do you know that if any marriage takes place with the Church now, it cannot be with the Lord Jesus Christ, because that marriage will take place after the Church is caught up in the air.

I ask you, dear friends, Is not the doctrine of Balaam very popular now? Do you not find it everywhere? The unconverted are invited amongst the people of God, and the specious reasons that are given justifying this makes one feel sad. Here is an unconverted man, and he is persuaded to identify himself with the Church, and if anyone protests against it, they are told, "We will do him good, you know." Let us put it another way. Here is a man raising apples for the market. The men who are employed to pack these apples are very careful to do their work correctly. Here is a thoroughly bad apple. It is not merely rotten at the core, but the rot has come through to the surface, so the men decide to throw it away. But as the men are about to throw it away, imagine the man coming and saying, "What are you going to do? Put that apple in with the others; the other apples will cure it." Imagine such a thing! No, the bad apple would make the others bad, and the employer would see that they did not put it with the sound ones. Do not let us be led away by such reasons. God's people should, as far as their ability enables them, take

care of the assembly. The assembly ought to be the Lord's own, and not a solitary unconverted man should be allowed to be in fellowship.

Perhaps you say, "What would you do for the unconverted then? If possible, get the largest hall in the city, advertise the meetings, invite them seven nights in the week, and tell them the gospel. When they are saved, then bring them into the assembly, where they should be cared for.

Now, Pergamos means marriage—the marriage of the Church and the World. The doctrine of Balaam is the same thing. The mixing of the people of God with the unconverted brings disaster on the people of God; as it brought disaster on the nation of Israel in the days of Balaam. Who can tell how much infidelity is due to Christless professors having a religious standing? May the Lord in His grace awaken us. There is not a child of God in this meeting but has a responsibility in this. It is not mine to tickle your ears, but to exercise your hearts. You say, "That makes me feel very serious." The blessing is great in proportion to the exercise of heart you get. You go to a

meeting and you say, "It is very nice." When the meeting is over, your nice feelings will be over too. God desires that His word should exercise our consciences.

The word Pergamos is related to a word that means a tower. Turn to Genesis xi. 1: "And the whole earth was of one language; and of one speech.

2. "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3. "And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

I want you to notice that second verse: "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they *dwelt* there."

I want you to turn back to our chapter in Revelation, and read a little word there. Verse 13 (R.V.): "I know thy works, and

where thou *dwest*, even where Satan's throne is." We shall presently link these two together.

Just a word about this City of Pergamos being a place where Satan's throne especially was. Do we mean that Pergamos was worse than Rome, Athens, Ephesus, or any of the other cities of the past. We do not believe it was. We do not believe that Pergamos was in any special sense the place where Satan had his throne. The meaning lies in understanding God's use of symbols in this book of Revelation. The Church here ceased to be a pilgrim, and settled down in the world. We believe the emphasis should be on the word "*dwest*." "*Dwest* even where Satan's throne is." God knows His people must be in the world, but they can have His smile upon them as they live in it. But God never meant His people to become dwellers; rather would He have us to be pilgrims and strangers. Our path lies through the world, like Israel desiring to go through Edom. Like Israel we should say, "We will pass right through, we will not turn to the right hand or to the left." (Num. xx. 17.) That is how the

Church started. The Church could say, "Heaven is my Fatherland: Heaven is my Home." But the Church soon lost that character. It soon settled down on the earth, and that is where Satan's throne is.

By and by Satan will be in Hell, but that is not where he is now. Satan's throne is here. (See Jno. xiv. 30.) He will be in Hell, not to reign; he will be the most miserable of all who are there. Therefore, when God's people begin to settle down on the earth, where they ought to be strangers and pilgrims, they settle down where Satan's throne is.

Now compare our little picture in Genesis: "They journeyed till they found a plain." Strange to say, that plain was where Babylon was afterwards built. The plain is very significant. Now, what did they do? They said, Let us build a tower. See the connection between Pergamos and what we have here. A tower is too solid to represent a pilgrim church. The Tabernacle is a better picture of how we ought to live—the Tabernacle could be taken down at once. The Temple speaks of the glory to come. Until Jesus comes, and the Church finds its rest

in glory, the Tabernacle in its wanderings should picture its course.

"Let us build a tower." They could not build it of stone, because they were away from the hills; they were in the plain. So they made bricks, and burned them thoroughly, and thus they had brick for stone and slime for mortar. We see the Church start at Ephesus in purity; we see it in its Smyrnan days, the second period, and in that period God wrought blessedly. But now the Church has emerged out of that time of persecution. Constantine the Great has ascended the throne. Constantine affected to be the head of the Church, though he was the high priest of the heathen till the day of his death. Constantine made it very easy for the Church, and so they came to the plain and dwelt there. No more toilsome marches over a rough, uneven road for them then.

What happened? If you read the history of that period, the history of the days of Constantine, you will find that thousands made the profession of the Christian religion who had no exercise of heart about sin, and no exercise about their true state before God. Becoming Christians was a very easy

matter. Thousands were baptized, and the poor got a white garment and twenty pieces of gold, while to the rich the profession of Christianity was a way to honour. Men looked upon baptism as something to wash away sin. Constantine himself delayed being baptized till shortly before his death, doubtless as most likely to be effectual.

In those days they were building, but not of stone; God's work, but of brick; man-made Christians—made by the rite of baptism. Sad to say, this work still goes on, and unsaved men and women are regarded members of the Church with no better title than baptism.

NICOLAITANISM.

We have something else in the 15th verse: "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate." In the second chapter and the sixth verse you will get an expression similar to this: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." In the epistle to Ephesus, God says, "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes;" and in the epistle to Pergamos, "Thou hast

them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes." In the time of Ephesus some men came forward who practised the works of the Nicolaitanes. By and by things went further, and men began to teach these things. You know a man will practice things he dare not teach.

Who were the Nicolaitanes? What did they hold? If you try to find out, as we have tried, you will find yourself in a fog. Nobody can tell us who they were, nor what were the peculiar tenets they held. You ask, Do you think they were a sect? It may be. But we do not believe it would be like the Lord to hold up an obscure sect and say, "Which thing I hate."

Let me remind you the word is made up of two words—"Nico" and "laos." It means "conquerors of the people." We believe it marks the rise of a priestly class in the Church who, because of what is called ordination, claim the exclusive right to preach, baptise, etc., and are known by special titles. Suppose I were to take up my Bible and read to you, "To the very Rev. Timothy;" or, "His Holiness Peter; His Eminence Cardinal Apollos; His Grace Archbishop Titus,"

and so on. You would be surprised. Why? Because these things are not in the Bible. I know that; but they are around us. When did they begin? Certainly, you will not find these things among the preachers of the Apostles' days. No, no, beloved child of God.

In the church of the New Testament there were all manner of gifts necessary for the upbuilding of the Church of God. There were evangelists, men gifted to preach the gospel; pastors, men gifted in looking after the flock; there were men given to open up the truths of the Bible; but none of them were called anything else but Paul, Peter, Timothy, etc. No such thing in the early days as clergy and laity; the clergy, because of having taken "holy orders," having the right to minister in holy things; and the layman, who might be just as gifted and holy, not allowed to teach. Who can measure the loss sustained by the Church of God through this thing?

We are going to look at Romanism to-morrow night. Romanism for over one thousand years, with its man-made priesthood, shut the mouth of everyone else. Do you wonder, as Christ marks the rise of that

thing. He says, "Which *thing* I hate." Not which people, but which thing—the principle of a special caste or priesthood in the Church of God that takes to itself the sole right of preaching the word of God, administering baptism, and the Lord's supper.

Two things ere we close. Look at how the Lord addresses Pergamos. Verse 12: "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." He does not present Himself in the tender way He did at Smyrna. Here an unholy bond must be cut, the sword must be used.

And as to the close; see verse seventeen. Perhaps no stage so tests devotion to the person of Christ as Pergamos does. Satan has succeeded in seducing the great mass from faithfulness to Christ, and they are hand in hand with the world; no doubt, believing the world is changed, and that it is not the same world as crucified their Lord. How precious to His heart is the devotion which overcomes this Satanic deception. He will reward that with the white stone in which the new name is written, which no man knows save he who receives it—a special mark of favour and pledge of love, a secret between the heart and Christ.

LECTURE V.

THYATIRA.

REVELATION II.

18. 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;

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22. Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23. 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.

24. But to you I say, to the rest in Thyatira [R.V.], 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.

25. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. (This is the first mention of the coming of the Lord).

26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth My words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27. 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.

28. And I will give him the morning star.

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

I want you to remember what we have already remarked, that the three stages—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos—were stages leading up to a permanent state. That is to say, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos are past; but Thyatira and the other churches come on the scene and run on alongside each other. That is to say, Thyatira, when it came upon the scene, came to remain till the Lord comes. There is no mention of the coming of the Lord in Ephesus, Smyrna, or Pergamos, because those were stages that

would be passed before He came. Immediately we come to Thyatira, we get the coming; because the truth is, that something has come upon the scene that is going to remain till Jesus comes. So it is with each of the others as they come.

Notice how very significant these names are. Ephesus means "a throwing or hurling," and it also means "desirable." The Lord Jesus Christ, when speaking to Peter, spoke of Satan "desiring" to have him. Just in the same way that Satan desired to have Peter, so he desires to have the Church of God—that he may ruin it for being a witness for God. In the second church, Smyrna, he thought by persecution to stamp out God's testimony. Pergamos tells us of his success in the marriage of the Church and the World. In March, 313, the banns of this unholy matrimony were published when Constantine took his place as the head of the Church, when at the same time he was Pontifex Maximus, and the Church—no longer a stranger—settled down to be an *earth dweller*.

That went on from 313 to 590, the date of the Pontificate of Gregory the Great, and

then Romanism became a temporal sovereignty. We do not say it was the beginning of the papacy; but it was the beginning of that which figured so largely in the Middle Ages.

Thyatira gives us from 590 right on to the Sixteenth Century, and, speaking more correctly, right up to the present. Look at the meaning of this name. Thyatira comes from a word which means "to sacrifice." "Well," you say, "what is the significance of that?" If you will think of the mass as a sacrifice, you will see how appropriate it is. At the beginning of these lectures we gave some figures which might be revised, but which are approximately correct, and amongst others were, one hundred and ninety million Roman Catholics. These all believe in transubstantiation. What does transubstantiation mean? Pope Pius IV. put it: "I profess that in the mass there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that, in the most holy sacrifice of the Eucharist, there is truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus

Christ; and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation."

Blasphemy could not well go beyond this, when God, in the Hebrews, declares that Jesus offered Himself *once for all*. When Jesus said, "It is finished," it dares to deny that. Again and again God says Jesus put away sin once and for ever, and yet this vast section of Christendom says that every time the priest officiates at the mass, and utters some words in Latin, he converts the bread and the wine into the literal body and blood of the Lord Jesus. It means that on ten thousand altars there are ten thousand sacrifices being offered at one time. That means, that man has the power to create at will the Christ of God. You say, "Do they really believe this?" It is so that men profess to believe this. But it is a blasphemous lie, without a particle of truth in it. We do not believe that it would be for the glory of God for us to speak in any other terms of it. This we believe was in the mind of God when He

took up the Church of Thyatira, and made that church a picture of Romanism. Thank God, every sinner who has not yet trusted Christ may do so unreservedly. It is a finished work, once for all, and it needs no additional touches, for it is finished. Christ has declared it finished, and we prefer to stand by what Christ says.

Mark how Christ introduces Himself. "These things saith"—Who? "The SON OF GOD." That is a peculiar expression. You notice that in no two instances does the Lord speak in the same way to these churches. In each case He speaks in a different manner, and we learn much from that as to the character of the church which He is addressing. This expression, if my memory serves me rightly, only occurs once in the Book of Revelation, and that is right here—"These things saith the Son of God." Now, is it not apt that in addressing this church he chooses that name which the Roman Catholics prefer should be kept out of the way? They prefer to speak of Him as "Son of Mary." Well, thank God, He was the son of a woman. We know He was sinless, but

she was a sinner. We thank God for her words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Rome tells us she was sinless. She confesses she was sinful, but saved by grace. But while He was the seed of a woman, we bow before Him as the Son of God.

That "*Son of Mary, Son of Mary*" is an artful way of taking away the Lord and putting a creature before you. It is a play upon sentiment, and perverted sentiment at that. They teach that woman is kinder than man. But, while this is true, it is a dishonour to Christ in the way I am pointing out now. They say that a woman is more tender than a man, and so the broken-hearted sinner may go to Mary and she will intercede with her son. Thus they rob Christ of His glory as the "one mediator" (I. Tim. ii. 5.) When He was on earth, where was the broken-hearted sinner that could not go to Him? They found in the Christ of God one who met them in purest grace. And He is the same loving One yet. Dear friends, we scorn the use of the name in the way in which it is used, and we

see a divine rebuke to it when God causes to be written, "These things saith the Son of God." Let us keep it ever in mind that, though He was a man, and, blessed be God, ever will be, we bow before Him as the Son of God.

In the twentieth verse we have a woman brought in who is anything but a savoury character in the Old Testament, the woman Jezebel. I take this opportunity of impressing upon you the things we took up last night. There are so many who refuse to see in the seven churches a panoramic delineation of the whole Church's career. They have no other use for these seven epistles than simply letters to the seven churches, as they were. But it is the duty of those to whom God has given light to keep the other and most solemn side to the front. We do not believe, as we pointed out before, that there were people in the assembly at Pergamos who said, "We believe the doctrine of Balaam!" Here is another name, the name of one whose history we get in the Old Testament, but used symbolically here: "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel."

Do you remember that the doctrine of infallibility was published in 1870. This means that when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra* it is tantamount to what God says. Here is that woman, that claims to speak by divine inspiration and calls herself a prophetess, teaching things diametrically opposed to what God Himself taught. God had already taught, and this woman, by professing inspiration, gives the lie to it. So it is with Rome. How many things Rome claims to teach by divine authority which are opposed to what God has already taught.

With Rome it is not, "Thus saith the Lord;" but, "Hear the Church." What the Pope, the Councils, and the Fathers say must be regarded as divine. Doubtless, there are very few Christians here who are much disturbed by all the edicts promulgated by the Fathers until now. When we hear talk about the Fathers, the *Fathers*, we feel like saying with C. H. Spurgeon, "Give us the grandfathers"—the men of this Book. We hope that God will give you a disregard for whatever comes from man; but whatever is in this Book, may God give you a very tender conscience about it. Of teaching, no

matter by whom it is given, the test is, Is it according to the Book, or is it not?

Now, there is something about this woman in which she is very like the one she portrays. Turn with me to I. Kings xxi. Perhaps, having regard to the flight of time, I had better epitomise this story, so that we may get the gist of it. In this chapter, Ahab comes to a man whose name is Naboth, and he says: "You have a garden. It is very near my house, and I want it for a garden of herbs. Give it to me, and I will give thee a better vineyard for it, or the worth of it in money." Naboth says: "No, I cannot part with it; it is the inheritance of my fathers." Ahab goes home like a spoilt child, and when Jezebel sees it, she says: "What is the matter?" Ahab says: "I asked Naboth for a garden that I wanted for a garden of herbs, and he will not give it to me." Jezebel replies: "Rise and eat. Do you not rule Israel? You shall have the vineyard. I will give it to thee." Then she writes letters in the king's name, and seals them with the king's signet, and sends them to the elders of the city, saying: "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high; and

then set two men, sons of Belial, to say he blasphemed God and the king. Then carry him out and stone him that he may die." The elders do this. They proclaim a fast, set Naboth on high, as if he were the most honoured man in the town. Oh, the hypocrisy! Then they get two men who come and say, "You blasphemed God and the king." He gets no trial, but they carry him straight out and stone him. Then they send letters to Jezebel, telling her that her orders have been carried out. She goes to the king and says, "Now you can have the vineyard." Does any one not see that this is a true picture of what was done to God's dear saints.

Rome is throwing dust in the eyes of Protestantism, and Protestants are drivelling about Rome not being so bad. Have Protestants forgotten history? Have they forgotten the martyrs? It seems as if it was informing Protestants in these days to tell them that Papal Rome has more blood of God's saints to account for than Pagan Rome. In his "Coming Prince," Sir Robert Anderson asserts that Rome—papal, not pagan, the Church of Rome—is guilty of the

blood of fifty millions, and he is a very careful and painstaking author.

Jezebel kept herself out of sight; she wrote in the king's name, and sealed it with the king's ring. It was not a woman who slew Naboth; oh, no, it was done in the king's name. We are told it was not Rome who slew the Protestants, but the civil powers! But who was the power behind the civil powers? Who was it stirred up the kings of France and Spain to lay waste the fairest portions of God's earth? Who was responsible for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, and who struck a medal in memory of that awful day? Rome cannot clear herself of this. Jezebel's doom was an awful doom. The dogs ate her. And dark, dark is the doom of that awful system she pictures.

What was it Naboth would not give up? His father's inheritance. Why would he not give it up? Because the Word of God forbade it. (Num. xxxvi. 7.) What was the prime cause for which Rome burnt our fathers? Because they would not give up this Book. They said: "It is the inheritance of our Father."

This is the thing Rome will not have. It would expose the sham of the confessional; it would expose the sham of transubstantiation; and it would take away, the fear of purgatory, that has been a mine of wealth to that system. And many a Naboth who would not give up this Book—his Father's inheritance—knew what the rack and the stake were. But, thank God, their's was the better part.

Now, I want you to notice the concluding address by the Lord Jesus: "To him that overcometh . . . will I give power over the nations." Dull indeed must be the perception of Christians who cannot see the crowning sin of Rome—desire for "power over the nations." The Lord Jesus said: To him that overcometh . . . will I give power over the nations; but you are not to have it now. The Apostle Paul could say in holy sarcasm to the Corinthians (I. Corinthians iv. 8): "Ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." As if he said, "You dear Christians are making a mistake. This is not the reigning time, this is the suffering time;" for "even

to this present hour we both hunger and thirst." And then all that wonderful list of things he brings in. And then in II. Cor. xi., he seeks to shame the Christians who desire to reign now. It has ever been the mistake of Christians—seeking to reign, and not suffer. They do not want the Cross; they want to make the world a grand place to live in. But the Lord says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." It is the suffering time now; but, thank God, the reigning time is coming. So God rebukes the lust for power that is seen in Rome. God says, "I will give;" but Rome has grasped at it.

I want to put before you two or three historical incidents in which you will see that which professes to be the Church of God; that which professes to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ; that which was enjoined to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; that which was to be subject to the powers that be—lording it over the nations.

In the Eleventh Century a quarrel sprang up between Gregory and Henry IV., Emperor of Germany. Into the nature and character of the quarrel we have not time to

enter now: What was the result? Henry was deposed from the throne. His subjects were absolved from the oath of allegiance, and that by one who called himself the vice-regent of the meek and lowly Jesus, who said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." And if Henry did not yield in a year and a day, and obtain absolution, he was to forfeit his crown and his kingdom for ever. You can understand that when he who represents God upon earth says, "You need no longer obey that man; you are no longer sinning when you break your oath of allegiance"—you can understand a little of what this would mean. Henry knew it was no use fighting against it; so he undertook a journey—one of the most perilous ever undertaken. Himself, wife, and child went over the Alps in the middle of winter, and arrived at the castle where Gregory was staying. And there, for three days, the Emperor stood inside two of the three walls that surrounded the castle. There, clad in the thin white garment of a penitent, he waited till that proud priest was prepared to receive him. On the third day the priest deigned to receive him; and the heir of a

long line of emperors, a noble-looking man, stood before that shrivelled-up old priest, and had imposed upon him most shameful and humiliating conditions.

You remember John, one of the most worthless princes that ever sat upon the throne of England, because of a quarrel with Innocent over appointing an archbishop, his kingdom was placed under an interdict. An interdict means that all the churches were closed, the images were draped with mourning, the priest only gave extreme unction to the dying, and the dead were buried in unconsecrated graves. To the bulk this meant that the very doors of Heaven were shut against them, and whoever died then was cast into perdition. (Whoever could have thought that that which commenced at Pentecost could have come to this? Who could have thought that man could have made it like that?) The murmurings of the people brought John at last to his senses, and on the 15th May, in the House of the Templars, not far from Dover, John handed over the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland to the Pope as his liege lord. In proof of this John paid 1,000 marks to the Pope—

700 for England and 300 for Ireland. That was the church, mark you. And, notwithstanding all this, there are now numbers of Protestants who are breaking their hearts to get back into the bosom of Rome. Assuredly they will get there, but the trouble is that they will wait until they get the mass with them.

Power over the nations now. That is what Christ gives His rebuke to when He says, "To him that *overcometh*, I will give power over the nations." Beloved, if two paths open up to you, and the one leads to suffering and the other to honour and popularity, distrust the path that makes the world think better of you. If you have God's Word, and rigid obedience to that Word leads to reproach, that is the path for you. But when the path leads to popularity or honour in this present world, distrust it; call a halt, examine the path, and may God give you grace to walk with Christ whatever the path may be. Let me tell you, there is scarcely a denomination (I am speaking of those that are fundamentally sound) that has commenced without suffering reproach at the beginning. They suffered reproach at first, but

they are now getting into honour—receptions by royalty, and flattery from the men of the world. Beware! he who will live godly in the world shall suffer persecution.

One word more. I would not like the meeting to close without giving expression to this: "But unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan." Is not that very gracious? It means that Christ looks upon that vast system that has done so much to drag His glory into the mud and filth of the earth; that has crept into the place of earth rulers in the world; that has long enslaved man by its unholy unscriptural teaching; and He sees there Children of God. Far be it from God to disown His children wherever they are. So Christ marks off those in Thyatira "who have not known the depths of Satan." I am quite certain that there are many dear children of God in Rome now, just as there were many in the past. I thank God for those words of Faber's:

"How Thou canst think so well of me
 Yet be the God Thou art,
 Is darkness to my intellect,
 But sunshine to my heart."

And also the words of Bernard of Clairvaux :—

“Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast.
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.”

These are sentiments that I hope never to outgrow, and sentiments I fear many Christians have never entered very deeply into. We thank God for such as these. Although in a system so unutterably corrupt, God marks them off, as if He said, “I will not lay that awful responsibility upon you. I know you are not in sympathy with the villainy that has filled Europe with wars and shed the blood of My saints.” We thank God that to this present hour there are those in that system who are very dear to the heart of God.

LECTURE VI.

SARDIS.

Before we read the Epistle to Sardis, I should like to read a few verses in the second chapter of Revelation:—

20. 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.

21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not.

22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23. 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.

Now let us turn to the third chapter, and commence at the first verse:—

1. 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.

2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

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

Let us turn for a moment to the thirteenth chapter of Matthew and the thirty-third verse: "Another parable spake He unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Now, in connection with leaven, turn to I. Cor. v. 6-8:

6. "Your glorying is not good. Know ye

not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

8. "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

We have been looking just briefly at those seven parables in the 13th Matthew as parallel to the seven epistles of the second and third chapters of Revelation. We see that in these parables the Lord Jesus traces the declension of the Church—the Church looked upon under the aspect of the Kingdom. The first parable, you remember, is the parable of the sower. Here the Lord Jesus is the sower, and we read that, as He sowed, some of the seed, indeed, seventy-five per cent. of it, was unprofitable—the ground did not yield. But in the case of the ground that did yield, you remember that it brought forth fruit in a decreasing ratio, dropping from one hundredfold down to thirtyfold. In this, indeed, we have the suggestion of

failure which is written so largely over the history of the Church.

The second parable is a field of wheat—the result of the sowing. But into the field of wheat the enemy introduced tares. Now, we saw this was Satan's work, consequent on the failure that is indicated in the first parable. Satan does his work while men sleep. While man slept the enemy sowed the tares.

The third parable speaks of a tree. The tree, as we pointed out from the fourth of Daniel, is the emblem of world-power. So we have that which began in a very small way—the preaching of the Gospel by the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles, the Lord crucified between two thieves, the apostles for the greater part unlettered men. What a small beginning! But it develops into something very great. But this is not good, this becoming a tree: it is not the growth of true, pure Christianity, but it is the growth of an abnormal thing. That the fowls are safely lodged in the branches is significant.

Now, what about the fourth parable. We sometimes wonder why God's people who

know so much do not know a little more. We have listened to men, godly men, men whom you could not fail to respect, and they take up this parable of the leaven, and they make it reverse all the teaching that has gone before; they make it go contrary to our experience of the whole trend of the professing Church. They make the leaven good and the meal bad. They make the meal signify the world, and the leaven the gospel introduced into the world; and the gospel introduced into the world is going to work like leaven until the whole world is converted. Now, we trust, by the grace of God, to-night to point out that this parable simply teaches the progress of the Church of God away from God. Instead of the Church converting the whole world, we have here the corrupting of the truth of God.

You may have noticed that we have this woman brought before us three times in different aspects, viz., Matt. xiii., Rev. ii., and Rev. xvii. It is the same woman—at different times, it is true—but it is the professing church in each of these scriptures. Notice what she does. She takes leaven, and hides it in three measures of meal. Do

you not see how close is the connection between that and "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants"? Leaven never means good; never. Let me say that of all the uses of leaven in the Bible, there are only two instances in which a child of God might get misled, and in those two instances there is no necessity whatever for the child of God misunderstanding the point.

Now the two instances in which leaven might seem to mean good are in the seventh and twenty-third chapters of Leviticus; in the seventh chapter, in connection with the peace offering, leavened-wafers might be eaten. Here we find fellowship with God taught in the peace offering. When God has fellowship with His creatures, it is certainly not because His creatures are sinless. The peace offering is the only offering that God, the offerer, and the priest share. This blessedly brings before us fellowship; the believer in fellowship with God the Father and God the Son through the power of the Holy Ghost. In that which speaks of fellowship, God allows leaven to be used. Here the leaven is the recognition of sin in the offerer.

Although there is sin *in* the offerer, God can have fellowship with him. But God cannot have fellowship with the offerer if there is sin *on* him. Though God knows that there is sin in me, and sin in you, God gives us the joy of His smile ; but He cannot do so if there is sin *on* us. If you have been guilty of a sin against God, there is no fellowship till it has been confessed and put away.

Now, the other instance is in the twenty-third of Leviticus, and the seventeenth verse. There we have two loaves baken with leaven. This was on the Day of Pentecost. The offerings that were offered in connection with those loaves represent Christ. They tell us of the blessed Son of God and His work on the Cross. The two loaves speak of the Church of God. They were offered on the very day the Church was formed by the Holy Ghost descending from Heaven. The two loaves represent Jew and Gentile in one body ; and baken with leaven simply tells us that that church which God is gathering out for His Son is composed of believers with sin *in* them. You only need to go back to the fifth chapter of the Acts of

the Apostles and you come to two in the Church lying to God. In the sixth chapter you have the Grecian-speaking Jews murmuring against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, which is all proof that, though God's Church is formed of sinners saved by grace, they are still saved sinners with the flesh in them—they are not angels. So, in both these cases, the leaven typifies evil, not good. But in every offering that typifies Christ only, leaven is most carefully excluded. Before the Passover, every bit of leaven had to be put out of their houses. Leaven speaks of sin—sin in active operation against God.

We have three kinds of leaven mentioned by Christ:—

The leaven of the Pharisees—hypocrisy, Christless profession.

The leaven of the Sadducees—unscriptural doctrine, unsound teaching.

The leaven of Herod—going in for the politics of the world that is under judgment.

Of all three we hear Christ say, Beware!

In Corinthians we read of the “old leaven of malice and wickedness” which was to be purged out, “for ye are an unleavened lump.” God says, “Keep the feast, not with

leavened bread. (God never gives His people leavened bread). Keep the feast with unleavened bread."

Now, what about the woman? The woman is the figure of the professing church. She is putting leaven into the dough. What is she doing that for? To make it suit the natural taste. God's precious truth is the unleavened bread, and it does not taste very good to the natural man. An unregenerate man has not much appetite for the truth of God. Before he can enter into God's precious Word he must be born of the Spirit. Introducing leaven into the meal is making the truth palatable without the Spirit. Introduce a little leaven, and how it puffs it up—makes it big. Apart from the leaven, to the man of the world there is something contemptible about the things of God; but let the false church act and you will have something great. The truth of God is like the manna of old—round, small, sweet, and white. Those who gathered that manna had to go down on their knees to gather that little, round, sweet, precious manna. God's truth is like that; but in the hands of man it is made to be something great—but it is corrupted.

Another thing, this woman takes the three measures, which is the whole revealed truth of God about Christ. Three is the number of manifestation, just as we say that God is fully manifested in the triune God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The meal speaks of the truth about Christ, and hence is the whole revealed truth about God's beloved Son. The woman takes this, mixes it with leaven, kneads it, and gives it the form she wants (as if it emanated from her), as if she had the right to make it and mould it to suit her.

Compare this with what we have read in Revelation, "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." What is this? Affecting to speak by divine inspiration; taking the place of speaking by divine authority. How like the Church to which this epistle undoubtedly refers! Look how her teaching contradicts God's Word. The Word of God says one thing, and she says something entirely different, and insists on what she says being received as coming from God. As if

God could teach one thing through the Bible and give a contrary revelation to man subsequently. She teaches the mixing up of God's people with the world—that is spiritual fornication.

There is another thing I would like you to notice here. It is the *woman* teaching. The true Church of God is represented by a woman. Christ is the man; the Church is the woman. Man is looked upon as the one who teaches. The Church (the woman) does not teach, but is taught. Now, this woman says she is a prophetess. She insists upon being heard. Are we not all familiar with that perverted scripture, "Hear the Church?" When you hear any person say, "Our Church teaches this, and our Church teaches that," let me say they are using a phrase which perpetuates a false thought. Who does your Church teach? The world does not need teaching, it needs preaching; the Church does not teach, it needs teaching. The Lord Jesus teaches the Church through His gifts in the Church. When you have, "Our Church teaches so and so," you have men on the wrong track, and the way opened up for departure from the truth of God.

We read, "I will kill her children"—"her children." You remember the common expression, "son of the Church." This applies to Rome. God uses her own words—"I will kill her children." They are the sons of the Church; but not real children of God. Let me ask you, Are you really born of God? Or are you merely a member of some Church? The Lord save you from finding out at last that you are only regarded as one of her children.

THE RISE OF THE PAPACY.

As we look at that vast system which professes to be the Church of God, and yet is so contrary to anything that we find in the Acts of the Apostles or the Epistles, we might wonder however this change came about.

Now, in the New Testament Church there were men gifted by God for the building up and care of the assembly. These men took no official place—that is, they were known by their work, not by their dress or the title they assumed. But, little by little, as the Church drifted from Christ, men came to the front who, instead of being content to

be lowly servants of the lowly Master, began to be what God had forbidden, "lords over God's heritage." These men began to lord it. They claimed that only one is to be recognised in the church as the Bishop.

You can go back close to the days of the Apostles and find much that will justify things as they now exist; but, let me tell you, you cannot go back to the Book and find them justified. Do you understand me? I do not believe in an every man ministry. I believe in a distinct gift from God. If God needs a Paul, He can find a Paul. On the other hand, for every Paul He needs ten Peters. But whether Paul or Peter, God is competent to raise up those He wants, and will do so if the Church will let Him.

Back in the New Testament days this kind of thing existed; but, as the Church got further and further away, things changed until one man in one city came to be regarded as *the Bishop*. Still God's power was there in a wonderful way. Men carried the gospel to districts around and churches were formed.

The city man who was known as the Bishop claimed the right to appoint the men

to be over these churches. Presently we have a diocese—we have the city Bishop exercising authority over these country churches. Then, as time went on, troubles arose and meetings had to be held, and the bishops from the various cities came together. They appointed one of their number, under the title of Metropolitan, to preside. This was generally the Bishop of the chief city. This was only a temporary honour; but though only temporary, was soon claimed as permanent, and the Bishop of the chief city became the Archbishop.

In the time of Constantine there were four Patriarchs appointed, one at Constantinople, one at Antioch, one at Alexandria, and one at Rome. Then the rule that had given precedence to the bishops applied in their case. The Patriarch of the Imperial City very naturally thought he should be the bishop of bishops, the chief pastor of the Church. The Bishop of Rome claimed that place. Now, Constantinople would not yield to Rome, and so a division came in that is perpetuated to-day in the Greek and Latin Churches.

The action of Constantine in moving his

court to Byzantium encouraged the hopes of the Bishop of Constantinople. Rome, deserted by the Emperor, was still revered as the capital of the world, and the claims of the Bishop of Rome made headway and finally gained acceptance over the greater part of Christendom.

The Roman Catholics will say, That is not the reason why the Bishop of Rome is regarded as the Chief Pastor of the Faithful, it is because Peter was the first Pope of Rome.

In A.D. 60, Paul wrote an epistle to Rome. In that epistle he sends greetings to high and low ; but as you read down the list of the saints at Rome, there is a very significant omission—the Pope! The Pope is not even mentioned. Not only is the letter not addressed to His Holiness ; but there is not even a mention made of him. Now, Paul was not lacking in courtesy, and if such a person as a Pope had been reigning, the Chief Bishop there in Rome, Paul is the last man, even on the ground of courtesy, who would have failed to recognise him. As a servant of the Lord he never could have been guilty of such a thing as ignoring a God-appointed Pope.

However many may say that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, with the Word of God in our hands we deny it. If there is anything that ought to make you willing to stand for the truth, even when few stand with you, it is that the overwhelming majority of Christendom believe that Peter was the first Pope of Rome, and each other holding that office is simply the direct successor of Peter. If we believed with the majority, we would believe that; but we prefer to hold God's truth about anything, no matter how few there are to hold it with us.

Will you turn with me to the epistle to Sardis, and we will make at least a beginning to-night.

Notice the style of the Lord's address here: "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits and the seven stars." It is very like the beginning of the epistle to Ephesus, but not exactly similar. In the beginning, we see Christ with the power in His hands—the One who has the seven Stars, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

We have traced the career of the Church in these four epistles, down, down, down,

till what have we come to?—the sad state seen at Thyatira. Last evening we pointed out things that well might have made us weep. The awful apostasy of God's Church, the ruin of that which began at Pentecost. Instead of men preaching the full free gospel of justification by faith, through the precious blood of Christ, men were hawking about bits of wood from the real cross (?), making long pilgrimages to the shrines of saints, exhibiting the bones of saints, and saying, "These relics are invested with wonderful power." Forgiveness of sins was no longer obtained through the Man at God's right hand. Instead of Christ being preached, it was saints. It was a vast system of Judaised Christianity, having substituted human merits for the pure grace of God.

All this was the outcome of that which began on the Day of Pentecost. What wrought all this? It was wrought through Christ being displaced, and man daring to put himself in the place of Christ. All gifts were to come through the man who sits by the Tiber.

Now man has had his day, look at the ruin he has produced, The Lord Jesus now

steps in at Sardis. Sardis applies to that blessed period (the 16th century) when the Word of God wrought so mightily. The first word He speaks to this church is to raise the eye off man to Himself, "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." He who has never given up His place as the Head of the Church, and has the competence to give the gifts. (It was the lack of recognizing this that brought all the ruin that we have traced in these epistles. It was because Christ was displaced, and man took His place, that all these things came in.) Now the eye is directed to Him, "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars."

Sardis is given as meaning "those escaping" or "things remaining." Both names suit beautifully, if we look at it as the deliverance of precious souls from the bondage of Rome, or if we look at it as the time when God raised up His own instruments. Those precious truths remaining from the threshing then, are like the wheat. We say, "Thank God for the things remaining." How precious for the heart to dwell upon these things!

Yet in this very epistle there is the suggestion of gross unfaithfulness. Look at the first word, "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." If there is anything clear in that verse, it is the implied thought that Protestantism has not been faithful—"Remember how thou hast heard, and hold fast." Then the threat, "If thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief in the night!" As we look at the Protestant world, has there been the remembrance, the holding fast? We cannot say that there has. For instance, Rome shut the Bible up and would not allow God's dear people to read it.

In the wonderful work of the Sixteenth Century, God gave us back this precious Bible. One of the precious heritages that are ours is this precious book in our mother tongue, and liberty to read it. But many who profess the Protestant name do not read it at all. Look at the number of families where it is never opened. Many men and women who have this book as a blood-

bought heritage, if asked to find a portion, are in a quandary as to where they should look for it—whether in the Old or the New Testament. It means that this precious book, purchased with the blood of countless martyrs, this Bible, is a neglected book, and as years pass there is less and less use for it. Rome locked it up, Rome burnt it, and even to-day a little contact with those of that faith will tell you there is no love lost between them and the Bible Societies.

But, dear friends, there is one thing Rome has not done. She has not produced a crop of higher critics who have gone on clipping and clipping till there is practically nothing left. She did shut it up and overlay it with Romish rubbish. But the very land that was first in pioneering back to the old path, and raised up those splendid reformers, has produced a crop of men who are now taking the Bible from us. These men are only too readily imitated by others, and instead of holding fast, the Book is being let go. The Devil is succeeding by men coming in and saying, "This is not inspired; that is not inspired," and then, by and by,

they see that what they let pass as inspired is not inspired. Thus they go on till God's Word will be very small when they have finished with it. I say that wherever you go, it is more and more clear that, while God in His grace gave back this precious book and the precious truths that emancipated souls in those Reformation days, Protestants are not holding them, but they are letting them go.

I have only just entered upon this epistle. God helping us, we shall take up the epistle to Sardis on Sunday night. May we who are saved cling to God's precious Word, and become more versed in it. May we sound out faithfully and *lovingly* its messages of warning, and its offers of peace and pardon to sinners, through the finished work of Christ.

LECTURE VII.

SARDIS (Continued).

1. 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.

2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

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

I think almost every believer, who has attentively sought to study the Word of God in reference to the lessons presented by Israel, has been able to see a very great resemblance in the book of Judges to the history of the Church. Indeed, we might say, in a very extended way—far beyond the book of Judges, Israel presents a very, very plain picture of the Church.

Israel brought out of Egypt, and God's presence continually with them, reminds us of the early apostolic days. Sin getting in, in the case of Achan, reminds us of the fifth chapter of Acts—the case of Ananias and Sapphira. But as we go on, the history of the Judges and the Kings is just a history of revival and declension. It seems as if God would gather out a nation to be a testimony to His own Godhead, so all the power of Satan is put forth to lead that nation into idolatry. Now, God did not allow it to go without an effort to save it. Thus we have revivals, great and small; but, alas, it seemed that nothing would stave off the evil day. So in the Church, God has put forth again and again the energy of His Spirit; but the Church, like Israël, seems

bent on apostasy. We have had revivals, great and small, but all too evanescent; none will stave off the evil day; the dispensation will end in failure.

We read the names of the men God used to restore Israel, and, if possible, to prevent the nation drifting to the state it eventually did. The names of God's worthies that He has used in a similar work in the Church have not yet been published; but we doubt not that if we knew them, as we shall by and by, we should find a very close resemblance between the saviours of Israel and the Church. For instance, let us take three of Israel's saviours.

In the tenth chapter of Judges we find Tola raised up to be a saviour. Tola means "a worm." Jair was the next one, and Jair means, "He will enlighten." The third one, Jephthah, means "He will open." This gives a little epitome of the Reformation. First, a worm. Oh, the man that was made to feel that, and to whom we should give a little prominence, was Martin Luther. Surely the word "worm" is very significant. What do you mean? Do you remember God said to Jacob: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and

ye men of Israel ; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth : thou shalt thresh the mountains." (Isa. xli., 14-15.) Anything more ridiculous, perhaps, you never heard—a worm to thresh the mountains. But it is God's almightiness and the creature's nothingness. And that man of absolute weakness was the one God used to thresh that mighty system, and, thank God, some of the precious wheat has not been lost to the Church.

Jair—"He will enlighten." And it was this precious Bible being once more allowed to speak that brought the light. "The entrance of Thy word giveth light."

Jephthah means, "He will open." What does that mean? Open a way of escape. Thus we are brought to the second meaning of Sardis (those escaping). Thus God opened up a way to groaning souls out of the spiritual darkness and tyranny of Rome. God granted some deliverance to Israel through these three of the Judges that succeeded each other, which gives us just a little glimpse of God's goodness in the Reformation.

Speaking of instruments, if we were to look into God's armoury we should see some rather strange weapons. We will remind you of a few. God's people are in bondage. Egypt is a mighty nation. They had a grip of these people, and they did not mean to let them go, any more than any other nation would let their slaves go. God is going to redeem that nation from under Pharaoh, a nation of about one and a-half million persons. This was an undertaking requiring power, and God sends His expedition. Who did God send? A man, his wife, two boys, and an ass. That was God's expedition. (See Ex. iv., 20.) If we had said to Moses, "Where are you going?" Moses would have said, "To Egypt." "What for?" "To deliver Israel." Well! Well! Surely if anything could have excited the contempt of worldly men, such an undertaking as Moses going to Egypt with his wife, two boys, and an ass, to deliver Israel from that powerful nation, would do so. But he did it.

Suppose we look at Shamgar. Shamgar is one of Israel's saviours. "What have you got?" "An ox's goad." And he delivered Israel. (Judges iii., 31.)

Look at Samson. "What is that, Samson?" "The jawbone of an ass." He was another of God's deliverers for Israel. (Judges xv., 15-16.)

"David, what is that you have got?" "A sling." A sling? Yes, just a sling, but when all the trained soldiers failed, and they stood shaking with fear, David comes forward, and with that sling and five stones he lays low that mighty giant.

But need I go on to point out what will occur to every Christian—that God seems to pour contempt upon the might of man, and seems to delight in linking His might with human weakness.

Now, the Church of Sardis becomes a matter of history, we believe, in the sixteenth century.

For the sake of those not at our previous meetings, we may remark that Ephesus speaks of the apostolic days—the close of those days; Smyrna, the martyr age of the Church, ending with the Diocletian persecution of 313; Pergamos, from 313 to 590, the establishment of the papacy; Thyatira is God's graphic portrayal of the papacy; Sardis, the Reformation, and the work which God accomplished and its results.

Now, if ever there was a time when it would seem utterly hopeless to expect deliverance from that spiritual tyranny, which was also a political tyranny (for the Church ruled over the kings of the earth), if ever there was a time when things looked hopeless, it was just at that time. There she sits, having established her dominion over man. All is hers: and where is anyone who will dare to deny her the place she claims? Where is anyone who dares to dispute her right to lord it over the consciences of men? Some tried; but she stamped out in blood those who sought to dispute her impious claims. Everything seems to be going her way. What power could possibly bring deliverance?

If "those escaping," which is given as one of the meanings of Sardis, is to be made good, then by what means shall a path be opened up and deliverance come to these souls in bondage. The strongest nation on earth would not have tried it. Did she not have as her dutiful son, Charles the Fifth, Emperor of Germany? Did she not have behind her monarchs whose firm belief was that the best use to which to put their swords

was to defend the Pope against any who should dispute his authority? Where was deliverance to come from? Deliverance comes in the way we saw in the Book of Judges in the history of Israel.

In 1483 there was a son born to a miner, and by begging and singing this boy gets his early education. Had anybody watched his early struggles for a living and for education, and said, "This is the man that is going to shake Rome from its centre to its circumference, this is the man who is going to thresh the mountain of papacy," no one would have believed it. It is good to notice how God fitted His instrument. For I believe, in Luther, God teaches us to admire His ways, which are ever consistent and never change. Men may change—God changes not. The character of His works may change; but His principles are eternal, and through all dispensations the same.

In 1501, Martin Luther entered the University of Urfurt. His object, of course, was to make a name for himself, and to reward his father for the way he had worked for him. The law was his object. About this time a close comrade of Luther's was killed. This

appealed to Luther. The thought suggested itself to him, "Martin Luther, if that had been you, where would your soul be?" After this, he was one day caught in an exceedingly violent thunderstorm. He thought his end had come. He prayed to Mary, in his ignorance, and vowed that if his life was spared he would give up his intention of becoming a lawyer, and enter the monastery. The monastery in those dark days was the way of salvation. God's Gospel had perished from the earth almost as much as if a Gospel had never been sent from heaven. All those years Rome had everything her own way; she had a fair field, and men knew next to nothing about God's Gospel. So Luther got back in safety. Then he gathered his friends around him, and bade them farewell, and, late at night, he left his lodging and went to the monastery. Then when the door of the monastery was opened, he presented his request that he might be received amongst the number, and he explained his reason in words tantamount to this, "that he might obtain salvation." He was admitted.

What a wonderful thing it seemed to the other monks; how flattering to their pride.

Here is a man an M.A. and Doctor of Philosophy entering the monastery ; what a wonderful thing ! So they sent him out to beg such things as the people might like to give him, and bring them back to the monastery. This was thought by some of his former friends too great a degradation, and so representation was made to the higher authorities of the monastery, and he was delivered from that. But he did it. Why ? That he might get salvation. It would be a good thing if those that were saved were as willing to work for Christ as he was to work for salvation.

As Martin Luther was in that monastery, his one thought was how he could get saved. There was a copy of the Bible there. Fancy, he was 20 years old before he ever saw a Bible ! The Vicar-General, John Staupitz, visiting the monastery, observed Luther's earnestness, and gave him a copy. What a boon for Luther ! There he was reading that Bible, and working, working for salvation, until his body was wasted with fasting, and he frequently fainted from exhaustion.

One day, as he was repeating the Apostle's

Creed, when he came to the words "I believe," an old monk said, "You believe in what?" "The forgiveness of sins." "Whose sins?" "Peter's sins," etc., and the old monk applied it personally. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." There are hundreds who say that creed, who would think it presumption to say "I believe in the forgiveness of MY SINS." One feels inclined to say, "Whose sins?" Luther could not say HIS sins were forgiven until this dear old man put it before him. Then Luther grasped it; deliverance had come. Deliverance from sin—not from Roman Catholicism. He was a saved soul, but a saved soul in bondage. The joy of salvation was practically not his. He had salvation, and if he had died then he would have gone to glory. But though he had salvation, he was not in the enjoyment of it.

Some time after this, Luther had to go to Rome. As he neared Rome, he thought, Here is Rome, and everything that is pure, and all that will bring to remembrance the lowly Saviour. One day, while at Rome, he was celebrating mass. While he went through one, a priest, who had gone through

several at an adjoining altar, shouts, "Quick, quick, send our Lady back her Son"—an impious allusion to the Host. This shocked Luther, but the subtle bands of papacy were so well bound round him that he was not then delivered.

An indulgence was given by the Pope to any who would climb Pilate's staircase on their hands and knees. Luther was anxious to obtain this indulgence for his father and mother, so he started off to do this. A child of God, for that he undoubtedly was, he climbed, labouring painfully up those stone steps. When he was half-way up there came to his soul the words, "The just shall live by faith." Thank God, this is Jair ("He will enlighten."). Here is a little word flashed by the power of the Holy Spirit into the soul of one who is saved, but who is in bondage. This opened up his mind; he jumped up, walked down the stairs, transacted his business, and then left Rome. He left Rome with the words, "Let all who would lead a holy life depart from Rome. Everything is permitted in Rome, except to be an honest man." What a difference from his entrance!

God opened his eyes to see the downright

fraud of men pretending to be following in the steps of the rejected Lord, and yet living like princes, keeping up the state of kings. Luther had had enough ; but if that had been all, Luther would not have been out of it. You think it would have been enough for you. I question it. I know how hard it is to point out things to believers. However, the end was to come. Leo X. wished to complete St. Peter's, and money was required, so it was money, money, money. Every source of revenue was taxed, so now indulgences must be pushed.

WHAT ARE INDULGENCES? You know when a man is arraigned before a court, he sometimes gets a sentence of this kind : Six days' hard labour, or a fine of £3. Sin, according to the Roman Catholic teaching, required either so long in purgatory or so much money. Money would either shorten the time or do away with purgatory altogether. And so indulgences had been dealt with in a moderate way, but now that all this money was required they were to be sold wholesale.

So an impious wretch named John Tetzel was sent to Germany. He rode in a chariot, and sent a messenger before him to announce

to the city, "The grace of God and the Pope is at your gates." Then all the city went out to escort him. He takes up his place in a principal part of the city, and begins to sell his wares. He proclaims that by his indulgences he has saved more souls than Peter did at Pentecost. Then he appealed to the people to buy these indulgences, signed by Léo X., by which the sins they had committed, and might commit, would be forgiven. They could also buy indulgences for those who were dead—those in purgatory. So money flowed in, a golden river, by this most God-dishonouring and diabolical system of damning souls. This brought Luther out, and from that time on the breach between Luther and Roman Catholicism became very pronounced.

There are two points only I wish to bring out. Of course, all that we have been saying as to church history might be read by any of you. It is only that the grace of God might stand out in bold relief, that we bring it out to-night, and only so much as suits our purpose. The two points I would like to compare are, that unknown monk in that monastery and that same monk at the Diet

of Worms. It has been given to few to have the honour that he had there. They promised to escort him there in safety and honour; but when they got him there, might they not burn him as they did Huss? His friends said, "Do not go." But to Worms he went.

As he was going into the assembly hall, a knight in gleaming armour touched him and said, "Pluck up thy spirit, little monk; some of us here have seen warm work in our time, but neither I nor any knight here ever needed a stouter heart than thou dost need it now. If thou hast confidence in those doctrines of thine, in the name of God go on." Think of that lone man standing before that assembly—Charles the Fifth, the ruler of half the world; kings, electors, counts, noblemen, bishops, and archbishops—what an assemblage. But thank God, there he stood, God's witness to His blessed truth. But I tell you, if you have access to the prayer that was wrung from his poor anxious heart the night before that wonderful meeting, you will see how he is made to realise he is a Tola, a worm. That man, even though possessed of an indomitable spirit,

that intrepid warrior, is made to feel the utter helplessness of man. He is in the power of the enemy, if God does not protect him. But calmed by that wonderful night of wrestling with God, he stands in the presence of earthly greatness, a worm; but God stood with him, and, thank God, from that flowed the blessings which we believe God has vouchsafed to us. But we warn you against thinking that what God did then has staved off the awful end that is nearer now than it ever was. But it did give deliverance to many, and deliverance to us, and glory to God. And though this dispensation, as a whole, is going fast to utter apostasy, thank God, the work accomplished then has not been entirely lost.

Now turn to the epistle, and notice a few things. The first verse of this epistle: "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." This is a recall back to the beginning. The Church of God being brought back to where she had departed from. She had been putting Christ out of His place, and allowing a man to assume it. And for over 1,000 years a man had taken upon himself the

responsibility of giving the gifts. If a man had all the knowledge of Paul, and he had dared to preach without licence from the Pope, he was worthy to be burned. We say the daring sin of a man coming in to stop the mouths of men whom God has raised up is what God only can appreciate. The daring sin of man giving licence to men (sometimes wicked men) to minister in holy things: God only can appreciate that rightly. Rome did that. It not only stopped the mouths of proper ministers, but put into the position of ministers men whose lives were bad. It is as if Christ said, "See where you have drifted to in allowing man to get into My place. Look at Christendom. It is more revolting than pure heathenism." Now He calls them back to Himself. But, alas, men did not come back to Him, and the churches of the Reformation made the fatal mistake of setting up a not greatly modified order of clergy, a man-made priesthood.

Another thing we would look at: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Along with that, look at another word in the fifth verse: "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." This has been a perplexing verse to many Christians. What does it mean? Put the two verses together, and I fancy you will find the solution is quite simple. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Here is Protestantism freed from Romanism and having a chance to act for God. Rome claims all who own the system, whole nations; Protestantism looks upon membership in the Church as being on the basis of regeneration. The Church is supposed to be a congregation of regenerate people. Is it true? Is it not rather in many cases simply a name to live, but dead.

It may be I speak to someone, and your name is on a communion roll; you have a name to live, but you are dead. Now, what does He say, "Him that overcometh, I will not blot his name out of the book of life." Does that mean that anyone's name that has ever been written in that book will ever be blotted out? What does it mean?

In the beginning, the number of the names on earth and the number in heaven corresponded. But when man had the book placed

in his hands, he began to be very liberal in inscribing names ; he writes on his church roll names of many not born of God. So between the book of life on earth and the book of life in heaven—what a discrepancy. What will the Lord do? Let me remind you that He says that He will “Send His angel and gather out of His kingdom all things that offend.” “Every plant which My Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” Looking at His kingdom as a garden, it is as if He had left His servants to plant the right kind of plants, and He will come and say, “What have you here? Root this up; root that up.” He will gather out all that He has not planted Himself. So He will deal with man’s church roll, and say, “You have been writing names here, have you? Show Me the book.” And the book will be made to correspond with that other book, and every name not written up yonder will be blotted out of the book. The real will never be blotted out, but every professor will be blotted out of that book, and not a name will survive His expunging, except the names written in heaven.

There is also another thing. This epistle

of Sardis is the epistle written to those Rome designated heretics, obstinate heretics, who refused to return to the bosom of the mother church; to those who dared to leave that system. She could no longer burn them. She burned them as long as she could. After that she could do another thing. She could, with awe-inspiring ceremony, cast the poor heretic to the regions of the lost by blotting out the name. And to a poor soul who had been nurtured in Rome, that would be an awful thing.

I fancy if some of you had been twenty or thirty years in Rome, and you dared to dispute her authority, and dared to become an obstinate heretic, and you heard that the priest had blotted out your name, you would have an awful feeling. You would think, perhaps, "After all there is power in it, and I may have been wrong. Perhaps they have this awful power after all." No, no, the whole thing is a mere sham, a miserable lying sham, and no power behind it. But Jesus speaks to those who have been thus treated, "Him that overcometh I will not blot out his name." What does it matter what the priest does? What does it matter

though there was an awfully solemn service, and then the contumacious heretic was thrown, as it were, amongst the lost and damned—shut out of the pale of God's Church, nothing before him but hell? For that is what they profess to do. The believer could smile at the whole performance, and thank God there was nothing in it. But to those believers there would be very much in these words, "Him that overcometh I will not blot his name out." Thank God, beloved child of God, wherever there are those true to God, they will have the consolation of His grace to strengthen them.

Two more things about this epistle. "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." Is it too severe a criticism of Protestantism to say they have not held fast? Has not liberty to read God's Word ended in misapplying and misinterpreting it, so that almost every error that has defaced Christianity is sought to be justified by it? Has the great truth of "Justification by Faith," brought out so prominently in the Reformation, been held? "Justification by Faith" needs another Luther. Why, dear friends, is it so rare to find

a man stand up and announce God's blessed Gospel? Again and again we are told that we ought to hear such and such a one; he preaches just like the Brethren. But every child of God ought to do that. What else has God given His preachers to preach but the Gospel that makes nothing of men, and presents the fulness of God? All that Christ accomplished on the Cross is a man's the moment he believes.

But this is not common preaching. The impression one would get is that justification by faith seems to have been forgotten, and you can speak as clearly and as forcibly as you like, and at the close of the meeting how many will say, "Yes, yes, we will get to heaven if we work for it." Man is legal by nature, and it is just like him to get back into the legal bondage that Rome systematized.

Again, God gave deliverance from the false system of Romanism. But what a picture Protestantism presents: a multitude of systems, many of them as to foundation truth, more corrupt than Rome, and the older bodies once sound now honeycombed with error.

Another thing, and this is the last, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments." What does that mean, defiling the garments? It is not moral, but spiritual. The many are defiled; but those who keep clear of the many errors are they who are not defiled. There is one most deadly error in Protestantism, and it is growing rapidly; it is the denial of the Deity of God's Son. A noted professor differed with the Lord Jesus Christ as to what value we are to put on the law and the prophets. The question was put as to whether the professor would know better than the Lord about this. "Yes," was the answer, "he has access to sources of information that Jesus had not"—thus giving the Lord Jesus no better place than one of limited knowledge. The inspiration of the Word of God is denied; eternal punishment is denied. Many are linked up with these errors, and God holds you responsible not to be.

May we be kept walking apart from all these Christ-dishonouring errors. How precious the reward: "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." They

hated defilement by error here: no danger
up with Christ in glory. They loved purity:
they have it there where nothing which de-
fileth can ever enter.

LECTURE VIII.

PHILADELPHIA.

REVELATION III.

7. 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 ;

8. I know thy works : behold, I have set thee before 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

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

12. 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.

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

PHILADELPHIA.

Now, the name Philadelphia is very precious, and it is as thoroughly in harmony with what follows in this epistle as any of the previous names were consistent with what followed in those epistles. Just as in each case there is divine wisdom seen in the selection of the name, so here. Philadelphia means "brotherly love." Now we can easily understand that God is putting before us here a very precious truth as to the assembly which was largely lost sight of, and that is, that an assembly of God's people is gathered together and held together by a common life, rather than by agreement in doctrine. We do not say this to lead you to undervalue doctrine, nor for a moment to give any suggestion that certain doctrines could be tolerated, or that fellowship could

be held with those holding them. No true believer could have any fellowship with anything that touches the person of Christ or the foundation of Christianity. The child of God must keep clear of these things. But the Church of God is not a company banded together because of agreement in certain tenets: the Church of God is composed of those who have been linked to Christ by faith in Him, and any company of God's people should illustrate this. They are together because they are members of one body. They have the same life. They are linked with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we see how this very word suggests relationship with those who are gathered together according to the mind of God; are gathered together, because they are linked with Christ, and therefore with one another.

There is something in this epistle which I want you very particularly to notice, and it is found in the tenth and eleventh verses of this chapter:—

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

In this "*dwell* upon the earth," there is a reference to what we have in Pergamos. In Pergamos, we have the Lord saying, "I know thy works, and where thou *dwest*," i.e., the church, which had been a pilgrim and a stranger upon the earth, had settled down to be an earth dweller; and this well suits the great mass of unconverted people. They profess to be part of the Church, but they are just earth dwellers. They never knew what it was to be taken out of the World, and then sent back because Jesus sent them; but they are in it and of it. They never knew what it was to be able to say, "Heaven is my Fatherland, Heaven is my Home." For these there is a dreadful time coming; for all unconverted professors. Far better for them that they had never made the Christian profession, when they never knew the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we read, "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."

Next verse: "Behold, I come quickly." I want you to think of all these epistles.

If you remember what we have sought to bring before you, you will remember that we have had but two mentions of the coming of the Lord previous to this. The first is Thyatira, and the second, Sardis. One very striking feature, in which Philadelphia differs from either Thyatira or Sardis, is this: that the coming of the Lord is seen with a clearness that is not seen in those other epistles.

Let me compare what we have in Thyatira, and what we have in Sardis, with what we have in this epistle. In chapter 2, verse 25, in the epistle to Thyatira, we read, "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come;" nothing but the mere mention of the coming. Now look at what we have in Sardis, chapter 3, and the last part of the third verse, "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." In the first instance, we have the bare mention of His coming. In Sardis we have His coming mentioned, but in such a way that you could not distinguish whether it is His coming to the air for His people, or His coming to the earth with His

people. Now the Lord does not come for His people as a thief; but we read, after He has come for His people, and Christendom has settled down, and they say, "Peace and safety," then shall sudden destruction come upon them like a thief in the night, and poor Christendom will get one dreadful alarm, and that will be the coming in judgment of the Son of Man. In Thyatira (Romanism) and Sardis (Protestantism) the coming of the Lord is mentioned; but just in the way in which it was known in those places, if known at all.

I know there are those of you who have been studying the coming of the Lord, and you are beginning to see that the subject that occupies one in every twenty-five verses of the New Testament has not had justice done to it. What are numbers in Protestantism looking for? A coming at the end of this world's history, when everything shall be burnt up, and there shall be an end of time; but not a coming like that in Philadelphia. Thank God for the ever-widening circle who are receiving the truth of His coming; but all the same, they are but a small minority of the professing Christians.

Now take Philadelphia, and see how blessedly the coming is distinguished. "I also will keep them from [out of] the hour of temptation." It is here we get the clear teaching that the Church is not to be in the tribulation. Here we have the blessed hope shining out, that the Church is to be raptured out of this scene, leaving Christless professors to await that awful hour. This is the hope restored, which had been lost in the Ephesian time. Again, "Behold, I come quickly." I say it is just grand to ponder those two references to that blessed coming. You get first the fact that there is to be, what many are now sneering at, a secret rapture. We believe that the Church of God is going to be taken up; that the really saved that are living will be silently and swiftly taken out of this scene, and the dead in Christ will be raised, and we shall all be caught up in the air, and leave behind the mere professors. Yes, that is the teaching of the Word of God, notwithstanding man's scoffing. Secondly, the teaching on the coming of the Lord in the Philadelphian epistle is its imminence: "Behold, I come *quickly*." I want to make this point clear,

as it has very much to do with our locating the Philadelphian period.

Another thing, in the epistle to Philadelphia we get the person of Christ standing out. Look at the seventh verse: "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."

If you will mark, as I have, those precious pronouns, you will find I, ME, and MY occurring with wondrous frequency all through the Philadelphian epistle. The person of Christ stands out before the believer in His beauty and glory, as if He would step forward and fill the whole vision of the believer; and as He steps forward to fill the eye and heart of the Christian, He would say, "These things saith He that is holy." I am afraid we lose some of the meaning of the word "holy." Holy is the same word as sanctified or separated; it has the idea of being kept from pollution or defilement, and kept apart from what is contrary to the mind of God. Now, all the awful mixture of Thyatira and Sardis is, as it were, before the mind of Christ, and He would have all

His people walk apart from the evils of that which is called by His name. And He says, "These things saith He that is *holy*, He that is *true*." He will never be false to His Word ; He will always be what His Word has proclaimed Him to be. There is no failure in Him. The presence of Christ is the great thing in the epistle to Philadelphia, and if we get weakness (a little strength) in Philadelphia, we see power and authority in the One who has gathered them around Himself.

Now, the next thing, the Name of Christ: "Thou hast not denied My name." Could believers deny the name of Christ? Not as Saviour, not as Jesus. How many of the Lord's people are glad of His name as Jesus ; but that is only a part of His name. His name is the Lord Jesus. He has bought us with His blood, and as Lord we should consider ourselves as bound to Him, to carry out His will, no matter where it may lead us. The moment you enter into the blessedness of this thought you will see that it is yours to stand for Him, though you stand alone. Many a child of God, who blesses God for the name JESUS, has very little use for the name LORD.

So the blessings in the epistle to Philadelphia are not to those who would not deny His name, Jesus ; but to those who do not deny His full title, Lord Jesus. If we say "Lord," from the heart, we say it meaning, "I am Thy servant, and Thine alone ; and I bow to Thy will, and Thine alone ; and Thy will, my Lord, is my law. I cannot deny Thy Name." Shall we own that name and do His will ?

Again, "Thou hast kept My word." What does it mean to keep the word ? Philadelphia is distinguished not by extracting a faith out of the Book, and holding it. Faiths that were taken, or presumably taken, from God's Word in days gone by, are regarded by many as like the clothes of their fathers—they have outgrown them, and they must be changed. While we thank God for creeds and confessions of the past which were sound (we have more confidence in the old faiths than in the new faiths), it is not for the Philadelphians to form a creed out of the Book, but to hold the Book. You say, "What is your faith ?" I say, "This Book, from Genesis to Revelation." God saw we needed a whole Bible ; less would not do.

He has given us that, and the Holy Spirit to lead us into its teachings: may we thankfully use His gift.

Philadelphia is the Church that suggests the living linked with Christ, holding Him as the Head, and they the members. A Church in which the coming of the Lord Jesus is held as the hope of the believer. There it is, the Church with the person of Christ as everything. Around Him they seek to gather. It is the Church that holds His name. It is the Church that is satisfied with His Word. The thing is to find that which corresponds with this, and when we have found it, may the Lord give us grace to be loyal to His Word.

Let us turn now to Nehemiah viii. 13-17:—

“And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law.

“And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month:

“And that they should publish and pro-

claim in all their cities, and in Jesusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.

“So the people went forth, and brought them; and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

“And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.”

This portion of the Word of God refers to the time just after the return from Babylon, when those captives came back to the city of their fathers. The first thing they did was to tell Ezra to bring the Book of the Law. Why? All their troubles grew out of the neglect of that book, for if that book had been allowed to speak, and its voice had been heard, they would have had

nothing but peace and prosperity. That book was allowed to remain unread, and if read, unpractised, and the result was desolation, judgment, scattering. Now they are a feeble remnant, and they say, "Bring the Book." So they brought the book, and it is very refreshing to turn back to that people reading that book. They were not sitting in a comfortable hall; but they were in the street. And as they stood there the reading continued, hour after hour (not interspersed with telling anecdotes); and as they read, they came to what we now know as the 23rd Leviticus, and they read of a feast called the Feast of Tabernacles, and that in that feast in the seventh month Israel was to go into the mountains and hills, and bring branches of trees and construct temporary shelters on the tops of their houses; and if they had not sufficient room on the tops of their houses, then after that in the streets, and under these booths they were to sit for seven days. They found they had neglected that feast—for how long? Just a matter of about one thousand years that feast had remained without being observed in that way. Suppose someone had said,

“David did not do this; Solomon did not do this.” They would have said, “But we will do it. If David did not do it, he was wrong: we will do it.” And they did, and God gave them great joy.

In the winter of 1826-27, a number of children of God belonging to different denominations used to meet together to read God’s Word. These dear men were all in good social positions, some belonged to the aristocracy—one of them the Hon. John Parnell, afterward Lord Congleton. These men of like mind, all children of God, used to gather around their Bibles. It was after a long, dreary waste of years, stretching away back to the apostles; not a line had been written on the coming of the Lord, as many believers are now, thank God, looking for it—His coming to the air for His people. That precious truth so early lost by the Church was recovered at the Bible readings, and has been to many thousands of God’s people since then a source of comfort. It reminds one of the wells which Abraham digged, which the Philistines stopped with earth, but which Isaac digged again. (Genesis xxvi. 18.)

Many of us can tell you from memory a great number of books on that subject. All that literature has grown up since 1826-27. I say that away back through all those years there was simply no reference to it. Godly men, like Samuel Rutherford, whose name comes down to us with a fragrance, while he loved his Lord, yet his works may be searched in vain for anything about the Lord's coming.

When the hope of the coming was revived, it began to stir up their hearts, and right along with it they found that the Lord's people in apostolic days assembled together for breaking of bread; and they gathered as members of one body, not as Presbyterians, Baptists, or any other sect, but as believers. And when they were gathered together, they found that they were there gathered around the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus said, "I am in the midst," and the Holy Spirit was present to guide. So they needed no programme, no liturgy, but simple dependence on an unseen Lord and the power of the Holy Ghost. And so these dear men's hearts were opened to the precious truth, the blessed truth of Jesus' coming, and of being

gathered in His blessed name to shew forth His death in the breaking of bread. So they began to do it in Fitzwilliam Square, in the City of Dublin (the first time we know of it in the British Isles). In the Sixteenth Century we find something similar in Wm. Farell's life.

After a little while they thought they might meet in a more public place, so that others of God's people might join them. It was suggested that the poorer ones might not like coming to Mr. Hutchinson's house in Fitzwilliam Square, so they took a room, used by an auctioneer during the week, and on a Saturday evening some of those dear men would get that room in order, and spread the table for the Lord's day morning.

So the truth spread all over Great Britain, and to India and other places, until now in no part of the earth will you go but there you will find companies of simple Christians—misunderstood, it is true, often maligned, and much about them that one would have different; but with all their failure they are seeking to know something of what the epistle to Philadelphia teaches. In their weak-

ness they are seeking to cling to the Word of God. It may be there are some of you here, and you have been in this way the victim of misrepresentation. You have heard such things as, "Oh, those people, take care of them." When you come into closer contact, you say, "Certainly they are not angels; but they love the Lord, and seek to carry out His truth."

A friend of mine, who was a bandsman of the — regiment of infantry, had his precious soul saved by God. He had formerly been a Roman Catholic, and after his conversion he made a grand resolve. He said: "I shall join nothing until I know from the Word of God what I should join, until I find it in this Book; then I will identify myself with it." In the regiment there were some men who were professors, and they said to him, "You take care of those people called the 'Plymouth Brethren;' they are a dangerous people; you take care of them." And my friend, just as really and as simply as a young believer could, began to pray, "Lord, deliver me from the 'Plymouth Brethren.'" And he kept on praying until his regiment was drafted to —,

where I met him. As he was walking round —, he noticed a sign, "The Gospel of the Grace of God will be preached in this hall on Lord's Day," etc. He went and heard the gospel preached. It was like the gospel he had heard preached by the Major of his regiment when he was converted, and my friend turned up again and again. Then he heard that they had a morning meeting. They did not advertise it. Why? Because they did not want just to get in numbers; they were satisfied with whom the Lord was leading out. He came, and sat back. "There," he said, "that is the thing; I have read of it in the Word of God." There were the people, and on the table was the bread and wine, and they were gathered around the table, the rich and the poor, and you could not tell which was which. One gave out a hymn, another led in prayer, and the thing moved as though going according to a pre-arranged programme—beautiful harmony, but no programme. He thought, "That is what I have read; that is what I have been waiting for." He asked could he be received. "Yes, if you are a believer, walking godly, and holding no fundamentally evil doctrine."

The day he was received, my friend, Mr. —, asked him to dinner with him. He was still praying to be delivered from the "Plymouth Brethren." At the dinner-table he learned that he was now among the very people he had been praying to be delivered from. But, thank God, God gave him what he required, not what he asked. The Lord knew what he wanted.

I was not long enough in Plymouth to meet the "Plymouth Brethren," or I should have been pleased to have met them as I am to meet Auckland brethren; and if I met a company of "Plymouth Brethren" in any other sense I should say, "I do not belong to them." A "Plymouth Brother" was not crucified for us, nor were we baptised in the name of "Plymouth Brethren," and I do not know why they should persist in calling us by that name, which grew out of an historical error.

When God brought His dear people together, these men belonged to the Church of England and various dissenting Churches, and they saw how good and blessed it was for them to meet just as brethren (not Brethren, with a big B). That was in Dublin.

This was infectious ; it made way. Oh, how blessedly it seemed to run in those days ! Now, it happened that in Plymouth many were thus gathered, some men of great ability, and these men began to teach and to preach, and God blessed them. Many of the brethren with some gift in the Gospel, seeing that all who have the gift are responsible to God to use that gift, went hither and thither preaching in the towns and villages round about. So when they came on Sundays to preach, people would say, "Who are these?" "Oh, these are the brethren from Plymouth." (The so-called Christian world says, "Oh, you must have a name, a name to distinguish you.") So, of course, the "brethren from Plymouth" resolved itself into the "Plymouth Brethren." Thus a name got currency, which, to the greater part of the Christian world, stands as a synonym for all that is to be avoided.

I am very glad indeed to be able to tell you that, as a simple believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I believe it is enough to be a Christian, and I am going to take my name to heaven with me. I believe that, as believers, we should be gathered on the first

day of the week to shew forth the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't you think that is good? And I believe that when so gathered there must be the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. Thy Holy Spirit must be the Leader to lead in praise or worship. We cannot have a man or a programme, we cast ourselves on the Spirit of God, and we would rather fail in having His leading than succeed in having a way of our own. And we believe that God's people so gathered are bound to send the Gospel to high, to low, to the remotest bounds of creation.

Get to God's precious book, and make a resolve, "I will do nothing that I have not got a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' for." Then you will be able to say, "I have sought to carry out the Lord's mind, I have not followed any man."

I must now stop, but there are some more precious things we hope to speak about concerning this Church which we must leave till to-morrow night.

LECTURE IX.

PHILADELPHIA (Continued).

REVELATION III.

7. 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 ;

8. I know thy works : behold, I have set thee before 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

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

12. 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.

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

Now turn to Matthew xxv. :

1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them.

4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him.

I wish you especially to notice the sixth verse : " Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him." You see that had been done in the first verse, " and went forth [or out] to meet him." But it is repeated in the sixth verse, " Go ye out to meet him." In the epistle to Sardis we were occupied

with God's grace in the Reformation. I believe it is the duty of every Christian to know as much as possible of the history of the Church. It does not say much for a Christian if he is not occupied with the history of that with which he is connected. Not that we would suggest that a knowledge of history is necessary for the interpretation of the Word of God. If that were the case, we should have to change the words of Matthew xi. 25: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." We cheerfully own that many whose reading has never gone beyond the Word of God itself know much more and are of much more use in the Church than very many who have read a great deal more. Those who have read may have observed this—that just as God put forth His power and tried to recover Israel to Himself, and if possible to prevent their utter apostasy, so God has, again and again, put forth His power to recover the Church and preserve the testimony on the earth.

In the Reformation, God put forth His

power. Alas, we see failure written large over the work of the Reformation. Not that God failed; but man failed. So that precious movement was stopped; instead of being led on in the opening up of God's Word, creeds were formulated which served to shut the mind against more light from God's Word, as the tendency was to regard them as the sum of Christian doctrine and refuse what they did not contain. One important mistake was made, and that was—ministry was never understood. With the exception perhaps of removing the Pope, the rest of the machinery was kept as it had been. Now, where this was the case, you have that which bid fair to undo much that was done in the Reformation. As long as you have an unscriptural ministry, as long as the Spirit of God is not allowed His freedom to act in the assembly, then, I say, the thing is bound to go wrong. That was the mistake in the Reformation. Not that Luther did not see further—I believe Luther saw much further—but it became such a political movement; as many were ready to embrace it because it gave them deliverance from priestly tyranny, who could not

enter into, or enjoy, God's order of ministry. But God continued His work. We have no doubt that in the raising up of such men as the Wesleys and the Haldanes, God was continuing His gracious work.

The work of the Reformation was so far lost, even in England, that at first dear Wesley could scarcely get a place to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Better abused men it would be difficult to find than those men who preached the gospel in a country that had not so long before enjoyed the light of the Reformation. But God did not stop there. The same blessed Spirit that gave us the open Bible, that Spirit was not to be fettered by man. God's purpose of grace must be carried out. So, as we remarked last night, in the winter of 1826-7, a number of believers belonging to various denominations discovered what ought to have been simple and plain enough. They discovered that a true representation of the Church of God should be a company of believers, known only as believers, gathered together in no name but Christ's, and their object should be to remember their Lord in the breaking of bread. And when believers

are thus gathered, no man should be president. They discovered that to have a programme was to ignore the Spirit of God. So in their simplicity and in their weakness they sought to revive what had been the practice of the early believers in the Acts of the Apostles, meeting for the weekly remembrance of the Lord in the breaking of bread, and gathered together simply as believers, to be led by the Spirit as He choose, with no man known as *the* minister. Why? The truth was discovered, or recovered, that such would have been an unscriptural thing, and would have been contrary to the mind of the Lord.

This precious epistle of Philadelphia gives us this very clearly. You notice the seventh verse—HE, HE, HE. It is the *person* of Christ Himself. Notice how this epistle gives us the *Name* of Christ, "Thou hast not denied My name." You notice also the *word* of Christ, "Thou hast kept My word." The person, the name, the word.

Now you will notice something for which we went back to the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. First, I will ask you to read I. Thess i. 9-10: "For they themselves shew

of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God: and to wait for His Son from Heaven." Saved to serve and to look for the coming of Christ. The parable of the ten virgins illustrates this, they "went out to meet the bridegroom." But it would seem as if they go back again, for in verse six we read, "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; *go ye out* to meet him." This is like a revival of the truth of the Lord's coming, and companies seeking to take the place of separation from the world the early companies of believers occupied. This is what we get in Philadelphia.

Romanism has no teaching about the coming of the Lord. The Reformation did not revive the truth of the Lord's coming. We say, then, that it is in Philadelphia that we get the clear truth of the Lord's coming. We have it stated that it is to take us out of the tribulation.

The next thing in that epistle is that the coming is imminent: "Behold, I come quickly." When an assembly was gathered out,

it was "to wait for the Son from Heaven." When those ten virgins went forth (and they figure the Church), they went forth to meet the bridegroom. The Thessalonian assembly was gathered out to wait for the Lord from Heaven, and that precious feast that believers observed weekly in those days, linked together two things—the cross and the coming of the Lord: "Ye do shew forth the Lord's death *till He come.*" We need not tell you that for over one thousand years, yes, for almost fifteen hundred years, that hope was utterly lost—lost so far as believers entering into it and understanding it. It might just as well have not been in the Book of the Lord. Any believer whose heart God has stirred up to study the truth of the coming of Christ, will own what we are saying,—that for a long stretch of centuries there was nothing said about Christ coming to the air to catch away His people.

When that hope was let go, the Church, that was an outcalling, became an institution of the earth. Rome was such an institution, and at the Reformation the true character of the Church was not understood, because

the truth of the Lord's coming had not been recovered; but when we come to 1826-7 we find God linking these two things most blessedly together. With the discovery of the hope of the Lord's coming, they discovered that the Church is simply a stranger upon the earth, and waiting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. So, linked up with the blessed feast is the thought that He is coming again—"Ye do shew forth the Lord's death until He come."

Last night we also referred to the marvelous spread of this precious truth. Those dear men whom God honoured to be the pioneers of this precious truth, to whom God gave grace to find in the Word of God what all believers should find there, scattered this blessed truth in their lifetime. And now, all up and down the continents of America, Europe, Africa; go where you will, you will find believers seeking to carry out this simple scriptural order.

Perhaps some of us, who for years were connected with those systems which do not seek to carry out this precious order, when God brought it before us, experienced the feelings of those men to whom the

apostles brought the gospel. "Certain strange things" were brought to our ears, and we were ready to challenge it, and denounce it as something that was indeed very much against the Word of God, and very much against the glory of Christ. But as God led us on we found it was His blessed Spirit beckoning us into a path new to us, but really the old path.

When we got it from God's Word, we were prepared to go on with it, yes, even though we knew it never was to be very great. There is that intimation here, "A little strength" (verse 8). The intimation is clear; it is never to become a popular thing. It is to be weakness, weakness to the end. But there is another blessed thing, which is, that no matter how much of weakness, it is abiding.

We hear some say that the day for collective testimony is passed, and that it is the day for individual testimony. Do they mean that the day is coming when there will be no companies of God's people gathered in that simple scriptural way we have pointed out? We do not believe that. Why? Because the Lord Jesus says, "I have set

before you an open door, and no man can shut it." And we believe that the door that God opened in the early quarter of the nineteenth century will remain open till He comes. It cannot fail. Why? "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David." In that I read a very blessed suggestion that He has power, and if in our weakness we cling to Him, then how can there be failure? Someone said to a very dear friend of mine, one of the most holy men I ever knew, a very peculiar, very quiet man, "Mr. —, I am afraid we shall break up." "Well," he said, "if we break up, what can we do but come together again." How can you break up a thing like that?

As long as believers see that it is Christ only, as long as they see that it is not scriptural to have a clergyman officiating at the Lord's table; so long will there continue to be companies of the Lord's people meeting in this way. Those who seek to serve there are. We do not need to reiterate that until the Lord Jesus comes, God will continue to raise up such to minister to the Church. But if

you put men, even most godly men, in that place to bless the emblems as if there was some special value in their blessing, I will say, "Excuse me, I left that sort of thing many years ago, and I am not going to join myself to it again." Do not imagine that the Head has lost His competency to guide. One Head for "the one body" is sufficient. The Head in heaven is able to guide.

Here we see that those who gather around the Lord Jesus have all the strength of the Lord Jesus, the One they are clinging to. It is no longer a question of their numbers, their learning, their gifts, or their social standing. The question is, Will they be satisfied with the One around whom they are gathered. If they cling to Him, they have all the power of that One.

We have never known a little company of Christians failing through want of gift. We have known them fail through want of godliness. But the little company that clings to the Lord Jesus has His power, and is simply invincible. It may not have appearances, it may not impress the unconverted. We have no wish to impress the unconverted. If you

wish to do that, you must have a gorgeous temple, a ritual, etc., and a very accomplished gentleman who can give the people intellectual treats, but starve the believers.

What does the Philadelphian Church point out? It points out a small company; for, while we thank God for the marvellous spread of the precious truth, and that wherever we have gone we have seen companies gathered in His Name, let us not forget that this epistle gives us a feeble folk. But they are clinging to Christ.

"Thou hast not denied My Name" (verse 8). When asked, "What are you?" "I am a Wesleyan," "I am a Baptist," "I, a Presbyterian," that, dear friends, is practically denying the Name. "Oh," you say, "what is in a name?" If there is anything I regret it is the time I fought against the truth, when I used to say, "What is in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." I am sorry that my heart should have ever been so out of touch with Christ that I could have defended a thing so unscriptural in such a way. Would you like to give the Man yonder at God's right hand the name of Socrates? No, no, we love that precious name,

“Jesus.” So there is something in a name. Be consistent.

Remember who gave you the name “Christian.” It is a misinterpretation of scripture to say that the World called God’s people “Christians.” The word rendered “called” is used about eight times in the New Testament, and then it means “divinely called.” They were called Christians at Antioch, the new centre. Jerusalem is set aside, and Antioch became the new centre. From Antioch the apostles went forth, and at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers, and one of the prophets got the message from God, “Call my people Christians.” It was not the World.

It may be rather a surprise to tell some that when believers were first called Christians, the people thought it was a very similar word which means “useful people,” while “Christian” set forth the unity of the believer with Christ. The unconverted did not understand that, much less call them the name. God called it them. You spell Christ, and for your name you add three more letters, ian—Christian. Now, God gave you that name. Is it a light thing that

you should allow yourself to be called by any other name. Let me say that as the Lord Jesus linked you with Himself, by the grace of God, you should not have any other name.

You say, "Do you not make too much of that point?" Perhaps, for some, we do; because of the unspirituality of such. Turn to I. Peter iv. 14-16: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (R.V.)—"But let him glorify God in this name." In that precious passage you have enough to rebuke the common practice of allowing man-invented names to keep in the background that precious Name. A man says, "What are you?" "I am a Christian." "Oh, yes, we are all Christians, if we are born again; but we need a name to distinguish us." "From whom?" "From one another." That is the very thing we should

not want. We all belong to one family, and should feel ashamed of the names that proclaim family differences.

Christians in those early days doubtless did not take the appellation of Christians in a denominational sense. Before putting up the name of "the Christian Church," I would as soon put up any other name. If you say, "The Christian Church," you are doing what they did at Corinth, when they said, "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, and I of Christ." They were wrong. A company of believers, gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, who know the Word of God, would never say, "We are the Christian Church." We are a company of believers gathered in His name.

Now, in the 18th chapter of Matthew there is another use of "In His Name;" in verse twenty we read, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name." While we are individual Christians, as gathered together we glory still in that Name. If you pass by the door of a company of believers gathered together in His Name, and ask who is there? They are a company of believers. What are they gathered as? Just gathered

as believers. Therefore, you cannot say, the Baptist Church, the Church of England, etc. Every time these names go up over a door, it is a practical denial of the Name. In those buildings are saints as dear to God as you and I. We are not discussing those believers individually, but the principle. When we are gathered together, we must be gathered simply as God's children, and gathered in His Name to Himself. Some will meet us with, "We know what you mean ; but do they not fail?"

In San Francisco some years ago a gentleman gave me a pamphlet entitled, "The Failure of Brethren," by —. I happened to know the author, and he was a most splendid failure in almost everything. This gentleman, who was such a failure, undertook to write the "Failure of Brethren." When I got the pamphlet I said, "Oh, he is too late ; God wrote the failures of brethren when He wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians. I am sure Mr. —'s book is not so scathing as that." The failures unveiled in that epistle were to lead brethren to humble themselves, own their own sin, and seek to avoid those things. But this is no

justification for a believer seeking to evade God's Word. You might as well bring the Bible back to Jesus, and say, "Here is the Bible: others have made such a failure in carrying it out, I am not going to try, so here is the Bible." The failures will not excuse us for not carrying out God's orders.

Next Sunday morning there will be a number gathering in this Hall, seeking to carry out God's order, although others have failed in trying to do it.

You find people who speak of the failures of brethren are people who have an inkling of the truth they should be trying to carry out. You see a man finding something in God's Word that he is not willing to carry out; what will that man do? Will he take the truth and say, "It is all false: it is not true?" Never. He will look at the people, and he will try to discourage others from carrying out the truth because these have failed. That is not a noble attitude.

Brethren have failed. "Brethrenism," I have nothing to do with. I want to know the truth of God. If people say, "Oh, it has failed; it has been such a failure, we will not try to keep on meeting in Jesus'

name." Well, be consistent. What do you mean? Let me put a question to you. Is Sardis a failure? Who would stand forth to be an apologist for the awful evils that are in Protestantism. Who would declare that Protestantism is a success. God delivered souls from Rome, and they have multiplied sects and gone into all the errors that could possibly be enumerated that have ever afflicted the Church of God. Denying the divinity of Christ, denying eternal punishment, denying the inspiration of this Book—these are some of the failures.

As Protestantism is such a failure, shall we go back to Rome? Oh, no, we will not go back to Rome. We thank God for bringing us out of it, and, by His grace, we will not go back. Well, anyone who would discourage simple souls from carrying out the truth of God because of the failure of those who try, to be consistent in regard to Protestantism, should give it all up and get back to Rome.

No, dear believer, amid the failure that is all around, God marks the path for His dear people. It is perfectly plain and clear that we only need the eye on Christ. If the

eye is on Christ, it is all right. There is not a believer in this meeting to-night, if content to be guided by the simple Word of God, but what would be in this Hall next Sunday morning, or in some similar place, to show forth His death (I. Cor. xi. 26). Not gathered to brethren. Oh, no. If gathered to brethren, you had better stay away. But if you see that is what God wants you to do, then you will be gathered *with* brethren, but not *to* brethren.

Ere we close, just a word on verse 12, "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 My new name." To some, carrying out God's Word may mean losing a place in some denomination, a position of honour and supposed usefulness. Such will not be the losers by their faithfulness to Christ. He will give such a place of honour by and by, and He will also see that obedience to His Word will not hinder their real usefulness now.

"Shall go no more out." The days of going "outside the camp bearing His reproach" will then have passed forever. To

“*go out*,” to some caused very real suffering; turning from associations where God’s Word could not be carried out, yet where there were many which were held dear as God’s children. All that separation will then be over.

“I will write upon him—mine own *new name*” (v. 12. R.V.). It was for His *name’s sake* they suffered misunderstanding and reproach. Now He will give them what they loved so well upon earth, His “Name,” answering to chapter ii. 17, “a new name.”

What a fulness of manifestation of all He is awaits the believer. Like the queen of Sheba, they will exclaim, “The half was not told me.” Thank God, that name is dear to our hearts now. How blessed to know the day is coming when “His name shall be on their [our] foreheads.” Rev. xxii. 4.

LECTURE X.

LAODICEA.

REVELATION III.

14. 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 ;

15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot.

16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.

17. 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 :

18. 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.

19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent.

20. 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.

21. 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.

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

I wish you to turn to the eleventh chapter of Romans for a verse:—

19. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

21. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.

22. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.



To many of the Lord's dear people this portion of Romans presents somewhat of a difficulty, and I well remember when it was that to myself. When I believed that it taught the possibility of a truly regenerate soul being ultimately lost, I thought, "Well, it looks very clear; the natural branch, Israel, was broken off, how much

more likely I, who am like a wild olive branch, should be broken off." I thought, "It is clear. However much other Scriptures may teach the security of believers, Romans xi. indicates there is a possibility of the believer being lost." No, it does not teach that.

The eleventh chapter of Romans is not individual: it deals with the subject dispensationally. It is looking at the whole Church. Israel occupied a place of witness on the earth for God, and because of unfaithfulness they were broken off—not finally. As they were broken off, then you take care; be not high-minded, but fear, otherwise if you do not continue in the goodness of God, you will be cut off. That simply means that the sentence has been pronounced against the Church, and just as Israel lost her position in the earth because of unfaithfulness, the professing church will lose its position. The sentence has been passed. We have only to open our eyes, and we shall see all around us evidences that the Church has not continued in the goodness of God. This is what we have been looking at in the seven epistles. The cutting off

comes in this last epistle. But the salvation of the individual believer is not in the question at all.

In this epistle we find the name and character in close harmony. All through the epistles we find that the name of the city where the church was located gave us a clue to the meaning of the message, and that the message understood simply brought out what we were lead to expect from the name. Look at this name. It is made up of two words; Laos, "the people," and Di-ke, which has three meanings. (By reference to a lexicon you can verify these meanings.) First, "manners, customs, or usage,"; secondly, "right"; thirdly, "requirement or vengeance."

First we have "manners, customs, usage." Is it too much to say that in everything to-day connected with the Church, it is not the divine model that is in the mind of man? It is not what the Lord in His blessed Word would have the Church to be, but just modelling it after the scene around. It is not necessary to waste the time of this meeting on something which must be so self-evident. Alas! alas! wherever the eye turns, you

will find in the professing church things are done according to the manners of the people, the customs of the people, the usage of the people, and the Church has lost its true heavenly character.

Do you think the professing church could present the shameful spectacle it does, if the Word of God was that by which they were seeking to go. From time to time you see in the daily papers, things are done for the good of the Church in order to raise money to carry on what is professedly the work of God, that ought to make one blush. When one thinks of all the things that are done—theatricals, bazaars, lotteries, etc.—one can only say that this is not like the heavenly model, but is like the people of the world through which the Church should pass as a heavenly pilgrim.

Now, “right,” or may we put it, “the people’s rights.”

In the beginning, the Church of God was governed by the Word; and the Spirit of God was everything. We find the Spirit of God saying, “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul.” We find the Spirit telling those early preachers where to preach, and forbidding

them to preach in certain places. The Spirit of God ruled, and settled everything in the assemblies. We pass those days in our progress through these epistles, and we come to the time when the priest is everything, when men simply had to bow to the word of the priest. The question was no longer, What does the Word of God teach? But, What do the Councils teach? What do the Cardinals teach? What does the Pope teach? If the Word of God is contrary to this, so much the worse for it, for the word of man must stand; it must be the word of the priest! But we have reached different days from these. It is no more being subject to the Word of God, nor being subject to the word of the priest; but it is the people now. So put these words together; Laos, "the people," Dike, "right." We have reached the time when it is the "people's rights." God's Word tells us to expect such a thing, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." These words could not have been true when the power and authority of the Lord Jesus was owned, for

He gave shepherds after His own heart, and raised up the men qualified and fitted to help His dear people. Again, they could not have been true when the Pope and the priest ruled, for men had to be satisfied with whoever was set over them, and the thought of a congregation saying ought, never would have occurred to anyone. When do these words find their full application? We believe in the present time. It is the people's rights now; their voice must be heard now. "They shall heap up to themselves teachers." You find real believers so far forgetting the truth as to talk about "calling the minister." Did you ever see a flock of sheep going together, and electing a shepherd? Who is to say who the shepherd shall be? The One to whom the sheep belongs, He who died for them. Certainly, many of the sheep in Paul's day never would have had Paul, and yet who ever was such a shepherd as Paul? Still they did not want him. And as the days go on it will be seen more and more that the men with a message from God, the men with the truth, are not wanted.

Another mark of the end is the self-satisfaction we find in this epistle, "I am rich

and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Is it not painful at times to find people, who are professing to be the Lord's, who are so easily satisfied? One of the things that led me to question, as a young believer, the scripturalness of my position, was the satisfaction over financial prosperity, which was so evident. If the finances were right, they were thankful; but the thought of mourning over the lack of power, and that souls were not saved, did not seem to occur to them. Wherever you look you will find this spirit. I feel that we ourselves need to take care lest the Laodicean spirit, the spirit of thinking things are right when they are wrong, should come upon us.

The third meaning—"Requirement, vengeance, punitive judgment." It is significant that it is in this epistle we get, "I will spue thee out of My mouth." In this we get the judgment of the professing church—its rejection with utter loathing by the Lord.

Let us look at the style of address the Lord adopts to this church: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness." What is the point in this? Perhaps

by reference to Israel again we can make our point clear. In the fifteenth chapter of John we have our Lord Jesus Christ saying, "I am the true vine." The emphasis should be upon "true," "I am the *true* vine." Away back in the 80th Psalm we have God telling how He went down into Egypt and brought out a vine. He planted that vine, and took pains to make that vine bear fruit. But what a disappointment! that vine became a wholly degenerate plant. That vine, instead of bringing forth fruit to God, brought forth fruit to itself; and when Christ came, such was the fruit it rendered, that it nailed Him to the tree. The Lord Jesus steps forward and says, "I am the true vine." Poor Israel was the false one.

In the Word of God we find Israel called a witness, "Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord." The very same word is used in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." The Church, so far as *testimony* is concerned, has the place occupied in the past by Israel. Israel was God's witness then, and the Church is God's witness now. Israel failed in its witness; the Church has failed also.

Now, after the Church has described that sorrowful path, we have Christ standing forth and saying, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness." The Church has failed; He has not. Blessed be God, He could not. A witness is one who has to tell what he knows. The formula that I suppose is used in this country is, "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Now, that is what a witness is supposed to do—to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

As to the Church, that was precisely its work from God—to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But we find Rome, instead of keeping to God's precious truth, brought forward her numerous fables; and instead of the truth of God, it was human error. Protestantism has also failed.

When we think of how the present state of things began—we mean the present revolt against the plain simple truth of God about man's lost condition, about the eternal punishment of every sinner who shall reject Christ—it is exceedingly sad; it was keeping back what was half believed at least. Hell:

it would not do to speak on that terrible subject. And the silence begat in the hearts of the hearers doubts as to whether it was true, so men got bold enough to preach what many would like to believe; and as time has gone on, it has become more and more pronounced, till it is unusual now to find a man who is bold enough to preach on that subject, "The wicked shall be turned into hell." We would have you not to keep silent, but would have you only speak of it when you are in touch with Christ. Do not, dear friends, seek to keep back that solemn truth. If God has laid it upon your hearts, He will bless it.

I have a great deal of admiration for Mr. North. On one occasion he was speaking at Edinburgh. A young student came up to him at the close of the meeting, and said to him, "Mr. North, I would like to ask you a question. Why did God allow sin?" Mr. North replied, "Because He chose to." The young man was just going away, thinking that he had put a poser to Mr. North, when Mr. North said: "Just a moment, young man; allow me to tell you something else that God will choose to do. God will

choose to put you into hell, unless you receive His beloved Son." It had never dawned upon him that God would act without consulting him on the matter. He went home and thought about this, and about midnight he was an awakened soul. And after Mr. North had retired to rest, there came a ring at his door, and it was the young man waiting to see him. "Oh, the terrible thought; God will choose to put me into hell if I do not receive His Son. Then I had better receive that Son."

Oh, beloved friends, it is a time for bringing out a truth about which one might almost say on the part of many good men, there has been a "conspiracy of silence." We have heard of the old Methodist preacher, who was one of a school that was then fast passing away. He was appointed to preach in a city chapel. The morning service was to be taken by a young man, who was one of the coming school. He took the text (I do not know why he took that text): "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be"—here he cleared his throat and coughed, giving unmistakable evidence that he had struck a

word that nearly choked him. But at last he got it out, "damned." In the evening the old man took the service, and he took the same text. And he read, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," "and I begs no pardons."

The Church of God was responsible not to invent anything, and not to keep anything back. It is responsible to find in the Book the message, and to give it to the people; not "I think," "It may be," or "Perhaps," but "God's Word says so." It was to bear witness in an unflinching way. Man, a sinner, since Eden's fall a lost sinner, having there by his own hand cut the link between himself and God, therefore must be dealt with on the ground of grace. Man, unable to help himself: God coming in in grace, and giving His own Son, and that Son having accomplished salvation once for all. The one who believes on Him shall be saved; and then the solemn truth, "He that believeth not shall be damned." How the Church stands convicted, professing Christianity, stands convicted of gross failure in being God's witness upon the earth.

Next, "These things saith the Amen." What does it mean? What does He mean when He says, "These things saith the Amen?" Turn to II. Cor. i. 18-20: "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay [yes and no]. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay [yes and no], but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen." One little word in the Gospel of Luke i. 4: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed." Now, that little word (if we take the guidance that II. Cor. i. gives us), that little word speaks of certainty—not, *it may* or *may not be*, but certainty. And is there not here, shall I say, an inspired hit at the very thing that is so sadly prevalent to-day? Ask those who take the lead in the religious world, many of them, "What of this precious Word can we believe?" You will be surprised at the answers you will get from many quarters: "You simply can be certain of nothing." "This Bible contains the Word of God?" "Yes, *contains* it."

“But how shall we know which is the Word of God then?” “Oh, that is for your own judgment.” My judgment might say, “This is not the Word of God, but this is.” Another might say, “That is not the Word of God, but this is.” And thus, dear friends, all certainty is destroyed. Let me say that we have the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ, before all the scholars that ever stood upon this earth. We take the words of the Lord Jesus Christ about this precious Book as the revelation of God from cover to cover, and we have certainty, certainty, the Amen.

But there is something else. How very often, instead of speaking of certainties, even from those who have no sympathy with the higher critics, how very often it is suppositions, and “it may be so.” When the Lord Jesus taught, the one great thing that struck the people was that He spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees; but with certainty. It is within the province of every saved sinner, who attempts to deal with the Word of God, to deal with certainties. If you are not certain, keep it back. If you have to say, “I suppose; I think; I hope, possibly,” may the people

go to sleep till you have done supposing and thinking! Bring the Book to bear on the consciences of the people, and then you are dealing with certainties.

How unsatisfying the yes and no business is! You are very interested in the day, expecting to go somewhere or do something. You say to someone, "Do you think it is going to rain to-day?" "I do not know; it may, but it may not." That is not very comforting, is it? Suppose you were to go to someone and say, "Does this road take me to such and such a place?" "It may, I think so—but it may not." Would you not say, "I think I had better stand still till I know certainly." We are certain the Lord Jesus Christ spoke the Word of God. Isaiah was the Word of God, Deuteronomy was the Word of God, Genesis was the Word of God. This is what we will do; we will preach the Word of God.

"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." Why is this? "Thou art lukewarm," that is, "neither cold nor hot." It is neither the World out-and-out nor the Church; but a mixture of both. How unspeakably solemn is this! How many Christians never seem to think that the greatest sin, the sin of sins that is going to bring down the judgment of God upon professing Christianity, is this mixture. The name of God's beloved Son linked up with so much that is abominable. The Church and the World so hopelessly mixed, that if you look for the Church you must go into the World; and if you look for the World you must go into the Church. The line, once so clear, is not to be seen, and so many Christians are quite happy in this state of things; and yet, for this, the Lord takes up the strongest term of loathing. I know of nothing that gives us such an impression of the hatefulness of this mixture to Christ as this, "I will spue thee out of My mouth!" It is time believers awoke; so many are proud of this state of things.

Let me ask you to consider another picture. It is a little further on. The difference between the third chapter and the seventeenth chapter is, that in the third chapter

we have the last words of the Lord before He takes away the dear believers out of the professing mass, and in the seventeenth chapter you have the professing mass after the rapture. This is called Great Babylon. The stroke falls upon Great Babylon in the seventeenth chapter because of her sin. What sin? Fornication—the spiritual kind. She seems to have intoxicated the people of the earth with that sin. That sin means those Christless principles, those principles so in antagonism to the Word of God—mixing the World and God's people together. Preachers taking part in the World's doings and taking their people with them—this is bringing the World into the Church. It is not considered very bad; it is not looked upon with loathing. Why? Because they are under the deluding power of the wine of Babylon.

God uses this figure, "drunk with the wine," simply to typify people drunk with the spirit of the thing. I believe it is because some of God's people are so under the influence of these things that that is what makes it so difficult for them to understand God's word about separation from this evil.

Some of you believers have no idea how far it is possible to come under the power of this thing. God calls it the wine of Babylon. The evil principles that she is responsible for sending forth have gone beyond the confines of the Roman system, and have brought many under their power. Still we do not see the heinousness of it.

The reason Christ has to turn from the mass is not because of unmentionable sins, but because of the awful mixture. Let the World be as pleasing as it will, it is still the World. It is the World whose hands are stained with the blood of Christ. The World is part of that trinity—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. For Christians to go hand in hand with the World is really going hand in hand with the Devil. When people talk of a *Christian World*, it is just as nonsensical to well-taught believers as talking of a *Christian Devil*.

The Lord grant you may see that—whether in the third chapter position, the Lord disowning the whole thing; or in the seventeenth chapter position, the Lord allowing the stroke of vengeance to fall on the mass of Christless profession—the one thing that

causes that stroke is the mixture of the World and the Church. The Lord give you to feel the beat of His own heart, to be so close to Him that you will be pleased to stand where He stands, do as He did. Men may misunderstand you, you must expect that, for even believers come under the influence of that wine, and you will go scarce anywhere where you will not find it. The Lord help you to be true to Him, come what may.

Let us look at the last word before the coming judgment, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." It is sad to consider this epistle, because it is the last epistle; but it is exceedingly sad to consider the last words of this epistle. Now, here we have words that should rank in the forefront of last words: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will open unto Me, I will come in." One's heart despairs of doing justice to these words. We despair of putting them before you even as they come upon one's own heart. As if Christendom would be helped to evade these words, they are nearly always addressed to sinners. If when you take up these words you begin by telling the people they were first addressed to a

church, then, I say, go on, God help you to tell sinners that Christ is standing knocking at the door of their hearts. But it would seem as if the general use of this word has helped to hinder the application of it to the Church.

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.” When a person stands at the door, and knocks, is the door open or shut? Is he inside or outside? Here is a Church, and the Lord Jesus Christ is outside, and is knocking to get into that which professes to be His Church. Here is the Master: a feast going on inside, with the Master shut outside, and the Master comes at last to accept the conditions, and He says, “*If any man.*” No more hope for the mass. The mass have no ears, no heart; the mass know Him not. But amongst that heartless mass there may be one—“If any man will hear My voice, I will come in and sup with him.” Oh, the grace of Christ; no fellowship with that thing, but He will never disown His own. And while outside that thing, He loves His own. “If any man will open.”

I wonder if the people who looked at Holman Hunt's picture, “The Light of the

World," ever thought that they were looking at the guilt of Christendom. The World-Church has shut Christ outside; and listen to what they are saying. They are most eulogistic over themselves. They are praising their methods, and thanking God for their machinery, and are talking as if all that our fathers and grandfathers knew was of little account.

One hears the boast that the Church never had such splendid machinery as at present, which we fully admit; but never so little of the Master and so much self-satisfaction, and the Lord outside. They are glorying in their organisations, and their institutions, and the producing of their preachers; in fact, in everything but the Son of God. Tell me, beloved brethren, if the Lord was inside and someone said, "Shall we get up this theatrical entertainment, and charge so much admission in order that we may raise funds for propagating the Gospel?" would He not condemn such a thing? But He is not consulted; He is outside, so the thing goes on.

How long will you believers go on with that thing. Perhaps you say the one who

is speaking is too severe. We are a long way from stating the case as it ought to be stated without colouring anything. Think of these words, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; and if any man will hear My voice." Beloved, it is no pleasant picture we can paint to you of the end of Christendom. It is worse than the end of Israel, and the end of Israel is a picture of the end of Christendom. The reason it is worse than Israel is because it is the better thing of the two. The failure of the best thing is the worst failure.

He now says, "I will spue thee out of My mouth." How does He do it? Blessed be God, some of these days the cry of our blessed Lord will sound upon our ears; the World may or may not be conscious of it. The Word of God affords a great deal of help. The Father spoke to the Son, and the people said "it thundered." Paul saw His blessed form in glory; the men with him saw light, no form. Now, if the coming of the Lord Jesus to the air will in any way strike the World, it will be nothing more intelligible than this. Men thought it thundered when God spoke to His Son; no more

distinct form than the men with Paul saw, when Christ appeared to him. Whether the World will hear and see that much or not, it will not be more ; for they will not have time to understand till every child of God is taken away—the dead raised, and the living caught up in less time than you can wink. The mass will be left. There will be enough left to carry on the so-called Church. There will be the men to ring the bell, preachers to conduct the worship, the choir to sing, and the organist to give beautiful music to that Christless congregation. But the Lord turns away as if it were too filthy to look at, and a very little while after, we find the judgment of God comes down on it, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation.

But does not the seventeenth of Revelation give you the Church of Rome? It gives you *all false* profession. The seventeenth of Revelation, which most interpreters weave around Rome, does not only include Rome, it is all false profession. Perhaps you sit at the Lord's table and you have never been born of God ; if so, when the Lord comes

He will leave you behind, and you will go to swell that great mass which God calls Babylon.

THE COMING UNIFICATION OF CHRISTENDOM.

At the present moment there are efforts being put forth to unify Christendom. We have looming up in the distance the consummation of this plan. What has been the reproach of Christendom, especially in the mission field? The lack of unity. When the Church sends missionaries, the heathen say, "Go and heal the differences among yourselves." When the Church appeals to the infidels, the infidels say, "Look at the divisions among yourselves." The Church is beginning to feel this. Hence there are all kinds of attempts on the part of the churches to find a way by which a reunion can be effected. There is one thing which hinders this. The saved people will not go in for bartering away the truth of God for uniformity. These people are the brakes on the wheel, and prevent it going too fast. But when the true believers are taken up, and

leave nothing but the false professors behind, they will say, "Why should we be divided? You do not believe in the divinity of Christ, and we do ; but we all desire to do good, and it does not matter so much what a man believes if he is seeking to do good."

So, such trifles (?) as belief in the divinity of Christ, the Inspiration of the Bible, the Fall of Man, Eternal Punishment, etc., will no longer be considered necessary as a basis of union. Possibly many of the old terms may be then retained, but, as in many cases now, such a liberal interpretation given to them as to make them suit all shades of unbelief and open denial of the truth. This unification of Christendom will be hailed as the crowning triumph of Christian charity.

The Laodicean spirit will have much to feed upon then. So, just as the judgment is about to fall in chapter xviii, 7, we have that spirit in perfection. The false church is seen in chapter seventeen "sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast" (Imperial Rome under the Antichrist), and enjoying wondrous prosperity. But her end comes soon. (See verse 16). Weary of her, tired of paying princely salaries to men to carry on religion

of which they have become sick, the "Ten Kings" with their imperial master, Anti-christ, turn upon the woman, hate her, and confiscate her revenues.

What is now transpiring in France between the Government and the Roman Catholic Church is but a little picture of what will occur then. Her "reign" over, judgment will come by those who have supported her, like Jezebel's (II. Kings ix. 30-33), who was her type.

Now that the reign of the false church is seen to end in judgment, it is blessed to notice Christ's words to the overcomer in chapter iii. 21, "Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." Here is reigning, but reigning that follows suffering, as He himself knows it, so He can say, "Even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Rule with Christ is the portion of the believer; but how blessed to reach that rule by the very same path that He himself trod. The loyal heart would have no other path.

It may be urged that the blessings promised to the overcomer are the portion of all, as for instance chapter ii, 11, iii. 5 and 10. This is surely so in regard to these blessings

anyway. We have here something similar to Phil. iii. 11, where Paul speaks of the "resurrection from (R.V.) the dead" as a reward. It will be the portion of every believer; yet what is the portion of all, Paul takes as his guerdon, and in the power of it he would live, in view of it he was content to suffer.

May the cheering words to the overcomers stir our hearts to greater faithfulness to Christ as the end draws near. On all hands there is much to try us. Nothing will keep the child of God but having to do with God Himself, and testing everything by His Word. In Acts xx. 32, we have ample provision for the darkest day through which the Church will pass ere Jesus comes.



Wilson & Horton, Printers, "Herald" Works, Auckland.

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