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*THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM.*

IN this letter, the intimate connexion between the Church and the city, and the appropriateness, in view of the rank and position of the city, of the opening address to the Church are even more obvious than in the two previous letters. "These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword." The writer is uttering the words of Him who wears the symbol of absolute authority, who is intrusted with the power of life and death. This is the aspect in which he addresses himself to the official capital of the Province, the seat of authority in the ancient kingdom and in the Roman administration. To no other of the Seven Cities could this exordium have been used appropriately. To Pergamum it is entirely suitable. He that hath the absolute and universal authority speaks to the Church situated in the city where authority dwells.

The writer knows well the history of the Church in Pergamum. Its fortunes had been mainly determined by the rank and character of the city as the seat of government and authority; and He who knows its history expresses the fulness of His knowledge in the striking words, "I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne is." In these remarkable words is compressed a world of meaning. "Satan" is a term here employed in a figurative sense to denote the power or influence that withstands the Church and its members. The usage is similar to that seen in

1 Thessalonians ii. 18 : in *St. Paul the Traveller* it is pointed out that in that passage "Satan" probably implies the clever device whereby, without any formal decree of expulsion or banishment (which was difficult to enforce or make permanent), the Apostle was prevented from returning to Thessalonica. Similarly, in the present case, "Satan" is the official authority and power which stands in opposition to the Church.

But the situation has now developed greatly. When St. Paul was writing that letter to the Thessalonians, the civil power that hindered him was the authority of the city magistrates. The imperial administration had not at that time declared itself in opposition to the new teaching, and was in practice so conducted as to give free scope to this or any other kind of philosophic or moral or religious movement. But before the Seven Letters were written, the imperial government had already set itself definitely in opposition to the Church of Christ. The procedure against the Christians was fixed and stereotyped. Their loyalty was now tested by the one criterion recognized alike by public opinion and by government policy, viz., their willingness to perform the ritual of the State religion, and make offering to the imperial god, the divine emperor. Those who refused to comply with this requirement were forthwith condemned to death as traitors and enemies of the State.

In this State religion of the Empire, the worship of the divine Emperors, organized on a regular system in Asia as in all other Provinces, Satan found his home and exercised his power in opposition to God and His Church. Pergamum, as being still the administrative capital of the Province, was also the chief seat of the State religion. Here was built the first Asian Temple of the divine Augustus, which for more than forty years was the one centre of the Imperial religion for the whole Province. A second Asian Temple

had afterwards been built at Smyrna, and a third at Ephesus; but they were still secondary to the original Temple at Pergamum.

In this Pergamenian Temple, then, Satan was enthroned. The whole authority of the State, as arrayed against the Church, was concentrated in that Temple. The history of the Church in Pergamum had been determined by its close proximity to the seat of State opposition, "where Satan's throne is."

Such, beyond all doubt, was the chief determining fact in prompting this remarkable expression. But it is probable that other thoughts in a secondary degree influenced the language here. The breadth of meaning in these letters is so great, that one suggestion is rarely sufficient; the language was prompted by the whole complex situation. In many cases we cannot hope to do more than describe some one side of the situation, which happens to be best known to us; but here we can see that the form of the expression was clearly determined in some degree by the historical associations and the natural features of the city. Pergamum had for centuries been the royal city first of the Attalid kings and afterwards of the viceroy who represented the Emperor in the Province. History marked it out as the royal city, and not less clearly has nature done so. No city of the whole of Asia Minor—so far as I have seen, and there are few of any importance which I have not seen—possesses the same imposing and dominating aspect. It is the one city of the land which forced from me the exclamation "a royal city!" I came to it after seeing the others, and that was the impression which I derived. There is something unique and overpowering in its effect, planted as it is on its magnificent hill, standing out boldly in the level plain, and dominating the valley and the mountains on the south. Other cities of the land have splendid hills which made them into powerful fortresses in ancient time; but in

them the hill is as a rule the acropolis, and the city lies beneath and around or before it. But here the hill was the city proper, and the great buildings, chiefly Roman, which lie below the city, were external ornaments, lending additional beauty and stateliness to it. It is not easy to analyse fully the influences which produce that impression of regal dignity; but these considerations partly explain it. In this case, again, the natural features of the city give a fuller meaning to the words of the letter.

Some confusion is caused by the peculiar relation between Ephesus (which we have previously styled the capital of the Province) and Pergamum. Each of the two was in a sense the metropolis of Asia. It is impossible, in the dearth of information, to define the limits of their circles of influence; and it was, in all probability, hardly possible to do so very exactly at the time when the Seven Letters were written. Pergamum was the historical capital, originally the one metropolis of Asia, and still the official capital. But Pergamum was badly situated for commerce and communication; it did not lie on any of the great natural lines of trade between Rome and the East (though it was situated on the Imperial Post-road to the East, as that route was organized by Augustus and lasted throughout the first century); and therefore it could not permanently maintain its premier rank in the Province. The sea-ends of the two great roads across Asia Minor were at Ephesus and Smyrna; one or other of those two cities must inevitably become the capital of the Roman Province; and circumstances had for the moment determined in favour of Ephesus. Smyrna, indeed, offered the better harbour, more accessible for ships, at the head of a gulf extending far up into the land, bringing sea-borne trade nearer the heart of the country; it had permanent vitality as the chief city of Asia; and the future was with it. But Ephesus commanded the most important land route; and this gave it a temporary advantage, though

the changing nature of its situation denied it permanent possession of the honour.

The Christian Church and its leaders had from the first seized on Ephesus as the centre of the Asian congregations, whether through a certain unerring instinct for the true value of natural facts, or because they were driven on in that direction by circumstances—but are not these merely two different aspects of one fact? Pergamum, however, and even Smyrna, had also a certain claim to the primacy of Asia; and it is interesting to observe how all these varied claims and characteristics are mirrored and expressed in these letters. To the unobservant eye Pergamum was, apparently, even yet the capital of the Province; Hadrian was probably the first Emperor to recognize formally the primacy of Ephesus over all Asia; and this was marked in the silver coinage which he struck for the Province, on which Artemis of Ephesus was named officially as the goddess who presided over the whole Province, and was regarded as sharing with the divine Emperors the presidency and guardianship of Asia. Already in the time of St. Paul the Ephesians had claimed that position for their goddess (Acts xix. 27), and in an inscription of Acmonia in Phrygia, dated A.D. 94, that position and honour for the Ephesian goddess is mentioned as an accepted fact;<sup>1</sup> but Hadrian probably was the first to grant official Roman recognition, making the worship of the goddess part of the State religion of the Province. Considering the close connexion in ancient times between religion, political organization, and the sentiment of patriotism, we must conclude that this wider acceptance of Ephesian religion over the whole of Asia, beginning from non-official action, and finally made official and imperial, marked and implied the rise of Ephesus to the primacy of the Province; but, at the time when the

<sup>1</sup> This inscription is published in an article *Deux Jours en Phrygie* in the *Revue des Études Anciennes*.

Seven Letters were written, the popular recognition of the goddess in the Asian cities had not been confirmed by Imperial act.

As being close to the enemy's centre, Pergamum had been most exposed to danger from State persecution. Here, for the first time in the Seven Letters, this topic comes up. The suffering which had characterized the lot of Smyrna proceeded chiefly from their fellow-citizens, and, above all, from the Jews; but the persecution that fell to the lot of Pergamum is clearly distinguished from that kind of suffering. In Pergamum it took the form of suffering for the Name, when Christians were tried in the proconsular court and confronted with the alternative of conforming to the State religion or immediate sentence of death. Naturally, that kind of persecution originated from Pergamum, and had there its centre. Prisoners were carried from all parts of the Province to Pergamum for trial and sentence before the one authority who possessed the right of the sword, *jus gladii*, the power of life and death, viz. the Roman Proconsul of Asia.

Two errors must here be guarded against. "Antipas, my witness, who was killed among you," is the only sufferer mentioned. But it would be utterly erroneous to infer (as some have done) that Antipas had been the only Christian executed as yet in Pergamum or in the Province. His name is mentioned and preserved only as the first in the already long series: the subsequent chapters of the Revelation, which tell of the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, show what were the real facts.

In the second place, it would be equally erroneous to argue that only members of the Church of Pergamum had as yet suffered death. It is not even certain that Antipas was a member of that congregation: the words are not inconsistent with the possibility that Antipas was brought up for trial from some other city, and "killed among the Perga-

menians." A wide-spread persecution had already occurred, and the processes of law had been fully developed in it. The Apocalypse places us in view of a procedure developed far beyond that which Tacitus describes as ruling in the reign of Nero ; and such a formed and stereotyped procedure was elaborated only through the practice and precedents established during later persecution.

The honourable history and the steadfast loyalty of the Pergamenian Church, however, had been tarnished by the error of a small part of the congregation, which had been convinced by the teaching of the Nicolaitans. This school of thought and conduct played an important part in the Church of the first century. Ephesus had tried and rejected it ; the Smyrnaean congregation, despised and ill-treated by their fellow-citizens, had not apparently been tempted or affected by it ; in Pergamum a minority of the Church had adopted its principles ; in Thyatira the majority were attracted by it, and it there found its chief seat, so far as Asia was concerned. Probably the controversy with regard to the Nicolaitan views was fought out and determined in Asia more decisively than in any other Province, though the same questions must have presented themselves and demanded an answer in every Province and city where the Graeco-Roman civilization was established. The character of this movement, obscure and almost unknown to us, because the questions which it raised were determined at so early a date, will be most conveniently treated under Thyatira ; but it is necessary here to point out that it was evidently an attempt to effect a reasonable compromise with the established usages of Graeco-Roman society and to retain as many as possible of those usages in the Christian system of life. It affected most of all the educated and cultured classes in the Church, those who had most temptation to retain as much as possible of the established social order and customs of the Graeco-Roman



world, and who by their more elaborate education had been most fitted to take a somewhat artificial view of life and to reconcile contradictory principles in practical conduct through subtle philosophical reasoning.

The historian who looks back over the past will find it impossible to condemn the Nicolaitan principles in so violent and even bigoted fashion as St. John condemned them. But the Apostle, while writing the Seven Letters, was not concerned to investigate all sides of the case, and to estimate with careful precision exactly how much could be reasonably argued on behalf of the Nicolaitans. He saw that they had gone wrong on the essential and critical alternative; and he cared for nothing more. To him, in the absorbing interest of practical life, no nice weighing of comparative right was possible; he divided all Christians into two categories, those who were right and those who were wrong. Those who were wrong he hated with his whole heart and soul; and he almost loved the Ephesians, as we have seen, because they also hated the Nicolaitans; they were to him almost worse than the open and declared enemies on the pagan side; and he would probably have entirely denied them the name of Christians.

But the historian must regard the Nicolaitans with intense interest, and must regret deeply that we know so little about them, and that only from their enemies. And yet at the same time he must feel that nothing could have saved the infant Church from melting away into one of those vague and ineffective schools of philosophic ethics except the stern and strict rule that is laid down here by St. John. An easy-going Christianity could never have survived; it could not have conquered and trained the world; only the most convinced, resolute, almost bigoted adherence to the most uncompromising interpretation of its own principles could have given the Christians the courage and self-reliance that were needed.

Especially, it is highly probable that the Nicolaitans either already had or soon would have reached the conclusion that they might justifiably comply with the current test of loyalty, and burn a little incense in honour of the Emperor. The Church was not disloyal; its most fanatical defenders claimed to be loyal; then why make any difficulty about burning a few grains of incense? A little incense was nothing; an excellent and convincing argument can readily be worked out; and then—the whole ritual of the State religion would have followed as a matter of course; Christ and Augustus would have been enthroned side by side as they were in the compromise attempted by the Emperor Alexander Severus more than a century later; and everything that was vital in Christianity would have been lost. St. John, like St. Paul in 1 Corinthians, saw the real issue that lay before the Church—it must conquer and destroy the Imperial Antichrist, or it must compromise with Antichrist, and in so doing be itself destroyed. Both St. Paul and St. John answered with the most hearty and unwavering, uncompromising decisiveness. Not the faintest shadow of acquiescence in idolatry must be permitted to the Christian. On this the Nicolaitans, with all good intention, went wrong; and to St. John the error was unpardonable. He compares the Nicolaitans to the Israelites who were led astray into pleasure and vice by the subtle plan of Balaam. No words of condemnation are too strong for him to use. Their teaching was earthly, sensual, devilish. In their philosophical refinements of argumentation he saw only “the deep things of Satan.”

It is clear also that the Nicolaitans rather pitied and contemned the humbler intelligence and humbler position of the opposite section in the Church; and hence we shall find that both in the Thyatiran and in the Pergamian letter St. John exalts the dignity, authority and power

that shall fall to the lot of the victorious Christian. Christ can and will give His true followers far more than the Nicolaitans promise. No power or rank in the world equals the lofty position that Christ will give; the imperial dignity and name of Augustus cannot be compared with the dignity and name of the glorified Christ which He will give to His own.

Further light is, as usual, thrown on the opening address of the letter by the promise at the end: "To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."

An explanation of the white pebble or tessera with the New Name has been sought in many different objects used in ancient times, or ideas current among ancient peoples, Greek, Roman, and Jewish. Some scholars quote the analogy of the tessera given to proved and successful gladiators inscribed with the new title *spectatus*;<sup>1</sup> but this analogy, though tempting in some ways, unfortunately depends on an antiquated interpretation. The letters on the gladiatorial *tesseræ* have been proved to stand, not for *spectatus*, but for *spectabat*.<sup>1</sup> No new name was given to the proved gladiator with the tessera: he was simply allowed to retire into private life after a proved and successful career, instead of being compelled to risk his reputation and life when his powers were failing. The analogy fails in the most essential points. Still more unsatisfactory is the comparison with the voting ballot used by jurors or political voters, the tessera that served as an entrance-ticket to distributions,

<sup>1</sup> The writer has been obliged to write this article on a journey across Europe, with no books at hand except Dieterich's *Mithrasliturgie*, Mr. Anderson Scott's edition in the *Century Bible*, and Alford's edition of the Greek Text, and must apologize for any defects or inaccuracies which may find their way into the article, only a small part of which has been seen in proof by the writer. It is unnecessary here to discuss the curious technical or slang use of *spectabat* as a neuter verb.

banquets, or other public occasions, and so on through all the various purposes served by such tesserae or stones. All are unsatisfactory and elusive; they do not make the reader feel that he has gained a clear and definite impression of the white pebble.

Yet, while none of these analogies is complete or satisfactory in itself, perhaps none is entirely wrong. The truth is that the white pebble with the New Name was not an exact reproduction of any custom or thing in the social usage of the time. It was a new conception, devised for this new purpose; but it was only a working up into a new form of familiar things and customs, and it was therefore completely intelligible to every reader in the Asian Churches. It had analogies with many things, though it was not an exact reproduction of any of them. Probably the fact is that the pebble in this letter has little special force in itself: it is simply an instrument to bear the Name, and all the stress of the passage is laid on the Name which is thus communicated.

The "white stone" was, doubtless, a tessera. It ought, strictly speaking, to be translated by that term, but *tessera* is not English and therefore unsuitable. There is no English word which gives an adequate rendering, for the thing is not used among us, and therefore we have no name for it. It was a little cube or rectangular block of bone, ivory or other substance, with words or symbols engraved on one or more faces. Such tesserae were used for a great variety of purposes. Here it is a sort of coupon or ticket bearing the name, but it is not to be given up: it is to remain secret, not to be shown to others, but to remain as the private possession of the owner.

Two facts, however, are to be noticed with regard to this "white pebble." In the first place, it is lasting and imperishable. Hence, such a translation as 'ticket' or 'coupon' would—apart from the modern associations—be

entirely unsuitable, a 'ticket' is for a temporary purpose; this pebble is eternal. Already in the first of these studies, and elsewhere, the present writer has described the close relation which according to the ancient view existed between permanent validity and record on some lasting imperishable material. The mere expression in writing of any idea or word or right or title gave it a new kind of existence and an added effectiveness, placed it in short on a higher plane in the universe. But this new existence was, of course, dependent on the permanence of the writing, i.e. on the lasting nature of the material. Horace plays with the popular idea, when he declares that his lyric poetry is a *monumentum aere perennius*. The laws, the permanent foundation of right, peace, and order in a city, were written on bronze; but poetry will outlast even bronze. The New Name, then, must be written, not simply left as a sound in the air; and it must be written on an imperishable material like this pebble.

In the second place the colour is important. It was white, the fortunate colour. Suitability of the material to the subject in writing seems to have been considered to some degree in ancient time. Dr. Wünsch, one of the leading authorities, lays great stress on the fact that curses and imprecations were usually written on lead, on the ground that lead was the deadly and ill-omened metal in Greece; and as many imprecations were found at Tel-Sandahannah in the South-West of Palestine engraved on limestone, he is inclined (according to a recent number of the Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund)<sup>1</sup> to regard limestone as selected for a similar reason, and to contrast its dark, ill-omened hue with the "white stone"

<sup>1</sup> For the reason already given, I cannot quote the exact reference; I am also uncertain whether the text correctly represents Dr. Wünsch's meaning. The words in the Quarterly Statement seem rather as if he considered the "White Stone" to be similar to the limestone, suitable for bearing an adjuration to the gods of the dead.

engraved with the New Name in this case. Some doubt however is cast on this theory of material by the fact that a letter, which would not be written on a material recognized as deadly and ill-omened, has recently been found incised on a leaden tablet: it is published as the oldest Greek letter in the latest number of the Austrian *Jahreshefte*.

The allusion to the "hidden manna" is one of the few touches in the Seven Letters derived purely and exclusively from the realm of Jewish belief and superstition. It is not even taken from the Old Testament; but is a witness that some current Jewish superstitions acquired a footing in the early Christian Church. The manna laid up "before the Testimony" in the Ark was hidden in a cave of Mount Sinai, and would be revealed when Messiah came. This superstition is used as a symbol to indicate the heavenly food that should impart strength to the Christian. It is, however, quite probable that there is some special suitability in this symbol, due to popular belief current in Asia, which we have failed to catch.

Far more obscure is the allusion to the new name. We take it as clear and certain that the "new name" is the name given to the conquering Christian; and the words are suggested by the already established custom of taking a new name at baptism.

The name acquired in popular belief a close connexion with the personality, both of a human being and of a god. The true name of a god was kept secret in certain kinds of Roman religion, lest the foreigner and the enemy, by knowing the name, should be able to gain an influence over the god. The name guaranteed, and even gave, existence, reality, life: a new name implied the entrance on a new life.

This old superstition takes a peculiar form among the modern Jews of Palestine. It is their custom to change a person's name in the case of a dangerous illness, as is

mentioned by Mr. Macalister in the Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund, April, 1904, p. 153. The new name, which is retained ever afterwards, if the patient survives, frequently has reference to life,<sup>1</sup> or is that of some Old Testament saint whose life was specially long.

Accordingly the New Name that is given to the victorious Christian marks his entrance on a new and higher stage of existence; he has become a new person. Yet this alone would make an inadequate and unsatisfying explanation. We miss the element of power, which is imperatively demanded to suit the case of Pergamum. To furnish this element the New Name must be the name of God. Here, again, we find ourselves brought close to the sphere of popular religion, superstition and magic. Knowledge of the compelling names of God, the names of God which influence nature and the mysterious forces of the universe, was one of the chief sources of the power which both the Mysteries and the ritual of magic claimed to give their votaries. The person that had been initiated into the Mysteries learned not merely the landmarks to guide him along the road to the home of the Blessed—the white poplar and the rest—he learned also the names of God which would open the gates and bars before him, and frighten away hostile spirits or transform them into friends. Mr. Anderson Scott gives an excellent note on this passage, which may be supplemented from Dieterich's *Mithrasliturgie*, pp. 32-39. He who knows the right name of a demon or divine being can become lord over all the power that the demonic being possesses, just as he who knows the name of a man was considered to possess some power over the man, because the name partakes of reality and not merely marks his personality, but is almost identified with it.

Probably no incompatibility between these two aspects of

<sup>1</sup> Examples of names such as Meyer are given: also Mercarda (Spanish), i.e. bought (with prayer).

the New Name was felt by the ancient readers of this letter. The name that was written on the white stone was at once the name of the victorious Christian and the name of God. These two points of view approximated towards one another and passed into one another. Personal names frequently were derived from, or even identical with, a Divine name. The ordinary thought of ancient Greek and Anatolian religion—that the heroized dead had merely returned to the Divine Mother who bore them and become once more identified with and merged in the divine nature—also helped to obliterate the difference which we in modern times feel between the two points of view. Here and in the Philadelphian letter the name of God is also the name of the victorious Christian, written on his forehead in the latter case, given him on a white tessera in the Pergamenian letter. Pergamum and Philadelphia are the two Churches which are praised because they “held fast my name,” and “did not deny it”; and they are rewarded with the New Name, at once the Name of God and their own, an eternal possession, known to the bearers only, the symbol and instrument of wider power; they shall not merely be “Christians,” the people of Christ; they shall be the people of His new personality as He is hereafter revealed in glory, bearing that New Name of His glorious revelation.

As to the spirit in which popular beliefs are here used, Mr. Anderson Scott in the note just quoted has said all that there is to say. Repeatedly in the Seven Letters the same form of expression occurs, which is to be understood as contrasting the ordinary popular custom with the better form in which that custom is offered to the true Christian. To the victorious Christian shall be given the possession of a far more powerful and efficacious name than any which he could learn about in the various kinds of popular ritual, a name which will transform his whole nature and recreate him in a new character.



The promises and the principles of Christianity had to be made intelligible to minds habituated to think in the customary forms of ancient popular thought; and they are therefore expressed in the Apocalypse according to the popular forms, but these forms must be understood as merely figurative, as mere attempts, necessarily imperfect, to reach and teach the popular mind. The words and thoughts in the Seven Letters, when taken singly and separately, are to a remarkable extent such as a pagan mystic of the second century might have used; and we shall probably find that soon some champion will appear to prove that the Seven Letters took their origin from no mere Christian, but from a pagan mystic circle tinged with semi-Gnostic developments of Christianity. The same view has already been advocated by influential scholars with regard to the epitaph of the Phrygian bishop, Avircius Marcellus—with equal unreason in both cases (unless perhaps the Seven Letters present a more startlingly pagan resemblance in many points than the bishop's epitaph). Those who advocate such theories fail to catch the spirit which lies in the Christian document as a whole. The whole, as Aristotle says, is more than the sum of the material parts: there is the soul, the life, the spirit that gives vitality and unity to the parts. To miss that character in such a document is to miss what makes it Christian. To miss that is to miss everything. All those mystic rites and popular cults were far from being mere imposture or delusion; they had many elements of truth and beauty; they were all trying to reach the same result as Christianity, to satisfy the wants of the popular mind, to guide it right in its groping after God. They all used many of the same facts and rites, insisted on many similar customs and methods, employed often the same words and symbols as Christianity used; and yet the result is so utterly different in character and spirit that one would have been inclined to say that not even a

single paragraph or sentence of the Christian document could have been mistaken for a product of one of those Mystic circles of devotees, had it not been for the treatment that the testament of Avircius Marcellus has recently received from some high authorities—discussed point by point, detail after detail, without regard to the spirit of the whole, and thus proved to be non-Christian by ignoring all that is Christian in it.

There is, however, a certain obscurity, which must evidently be intentional, in this passage; more is meant than lies on the surface. Now the earlier part of the letter is characterized by an unmistakable and yet carefully veiled opposition to the State religion and to the government which had provoked that opposition; and this quality in the letter guides us to the proper understanding of the conclusion, which is one of the most remarkable passages in the Seven Letters. The readers of this letter, who possessed the key to its comprehension, hidden from the common world, could not fail to be struck with the analogy between this New Name and the imperial title Augustus. That also had been a new name, deliberately devised by the Senate to designate the founder, and to mark the foundation of the new Empire: it was an old sacred word,<sup>1</sup> used previously only in the language of the priests, and never applied to any human being. It was now appropriated to the one man who had been the saviour of Rome, and whom already the popular belief had begun to regard as an incarnation of the divine nature in human form, sent down to earth to end the period of war and introduce the age of peace. This sacred, divine name, marked out the man to whom it was applied as one apart from the world, standing on a higher level, possessor of superhuman power in virtue of this new name and transmitting that power through the name to his descendants.

<sup>1</sup> "Sancta vocant *augusta* patres," Ovid, *Fasts*, i.

The analogy was striking; and the points of difference were only to the advantage of the Christian. His new name was secret, but all the more efficacious on that account. The readers for whom this letter was written—the Christians of Pergamum, of all Asia, of the whole world—would catch with certainty the hidden meaning. They were to be placed in the same position as, or rather higher than, Augustus, when they were victorious, with a New Name, the Name of God, their own secret possession, which no man would know and therefore no man could tamper with by acquiring control through knowledge. As Augustus had been set above the Roman world by his new name, so they would be set above the world by theirs.

This is the answer which the Church made to the persecuting Emperor, who beyond all his predecessors prided himself on his divine nature and his divine name. To insult, proscription, a shameful death, it returns a triumphant defiance: the Emperor is powerless: the supreme power and authority remain with the victorious Christian, who defeats the Emperor by virtue of the death which the Emperor inflicts. Here for the first time in the Seven Letters the absolute and inexorable opposition between the Church and the imperial government is clearly expressed. It is not merely that the State persecutes the Church. The Church proscribes and sets itself above the Augustan government and the Augusti themselves. And this is done in the letter to the Church in that city where the imperial government with the imperial religion had placed its capital and its throne.

The taking of a new name and the meaning attached to this in the usage of the time was illustrated from the case of Aelius Aristides, the famous orator of Hadrianoi and Smyrna, by the late Dr. Hort. I am informed by a correspondent, whose name, for the reason already stated, I cannot at present mention with the gratitude which I feel,

that Dr. Hort in his lectures stated that Aristides tells his readers how in a vision he received from the god a white stone with his new name inscribed on it. My informant had not heard the lecture personally; but only received a report of it verbally from an auditor. I suspect that some slight inaccuracy has crept into the report, and that insensibly the facts regarding the new name of Aristides have been tinged by heightened resemblance to the words of this letter. It may however be taken as certain that whatever Dr. Hort actually said was exactly correct; and if he used the illustration precisely as reported, then some passage of Aristides unknown to me lay before him as he spoke. Dr. Hort was one of the few scholars who could not be inaccurate in any detail however slight. The facts, however, as known to me from various passages of Aristides, chiefly in the *Lalia* (Hymn) to Aesculapius and in the Sacred Discourses, come very near justifying the report of Dr. Hort's lecture.

The case of Aristides, who was born probably in 117 A.D., may be taken as applicable to the period of the Apocalypse. Aristides had a new name, given him by the god, especially Aesculapius, his chief protector and adviser and helper, though the mother of the god also regarded him as her *protégé* and favourite. Aesculapius cured him of his disease, guided him in his life by ordering him to devote himself to oratory, revealed himself to his favoured servant, and gave him the name Theodorus.<sup>1</sup> There is much probability that the name was given in a way not dissimilar to that described in the Pergamenian letter, though the evidence is not quite clear.

There is a remarkable passage at the end of Aristides's Hymn to Aesculapius, which Reiske declares himself unable to understand, though he suggests that it refers to some prophecy vouchsafed to Aristides by Aesculapius in a dream.

<sup>1</sup> See Aristides, vol. i., pp. 505, 518, 522 (Dindorf).

Words which Reiske could not understand must be very obscure; and hence the passage has attracted little attention.

It is rather bold to offer an explanation where that excellent scholar says "*non intelligo*"; but the words of Aristides seem to illustrate the passage before us so well, that an interpretation may be offered. The words and the situation are as follows. Aristides has just related how through the aid and orders of Aesculapius he had appeared in Rome and given a successful display of oratory before the two Emperors, before the ladies of the Imperial family and the whole Imperial court, just as Ulysses had been enabled by Athena to display his eloquence in the hall of Alcinous before the Phaeacian audience. "And not only were these things carried out in this way, but also the Symbol or Synthêma was with me encouraging me, as you showed in fact that there were many reasons why you brought me before the public as a speaker,—that I might be conspicuous in oratory, and that the most perfect (the highest circles and educated persons) might hear with their own ears the better things (i.e. the teaching of a true philosophy and morality)." <sup>1</sup>

The nature of the *σύνθημα* which Aristides received from the god he does not explain. The obscurity in which he leaves it is obviously intentional. It was a secret between the god and himself; he had been, and he alone, initiated by the god into this ministry, and it was not to be published for every one to know. Only they should understand who might be initiated into the same mystery: the word and the sign would be enough for them: others who were outside should remain ignorant.

But Aristides adds one word which gives a hint as to the purpose and effect of the Synthêma: the Synthêma was

<sup>1</sup> Καὶ ταῦτα τε οὕτως ἐπέπρακτο καὶ τὸ σύνθημα παρῆν ἀνακαλοῦν, ἔργῳ σου δείξαντος ὅτι πολλῶν ἕνεκα προήγαγες εἰς μέσον ὡς φανεῖται ἐν τοῖς λόγοις, καὶ γένοιτο αὐτῆσσι τῶν κρειττόνων οἱ τελεώτατοι.

something *ἀνακαλοῦν*, something that addressed him with earnest, rousing voice, a practical sign and proof that the god for various reasons brought him before the assembled world in order that he should gain distinction as an orator and that the noblest should hear with their own ears good counsel on good subjects.

The Synthêma then was a symbol always with him which spoke direct to him; it was a pledge of success from the god who gave it, and thus filled him with god-given confidence. Hence it served for a call to action as an orator; for it recalled the orders and assurances and promises that the god had given him in the past, and was a pledge that there still subsisted between the god and his votary that same bond of connexion and mutual confidence.

In a way not unlike this, the term Synthemata was used to indicate the signs or words of a symbolic code, which two persons arranged with one another in order that their letters might convey more meaning to the intended recipient than to any chance reader who was not aware of the secret.

It is to be observed that, though Aristides regarded Aesculapius as his special protector and guide in life, the name which was given him was not Asclepiodoros, but Theodoros. The "gift of god" (and not "the gift of Aesculapius") was doubtless the Synthêma that was always with him, whether inscribed on a stone or in some other form. This new name, given him by the god, was an encouragement to effort, and a pledge of success. Aesculapius, who gave him the name (probably, as Reiske thought, in a dream), was merely the form in which the ultimate divine power envisaged itself to Aristides; but it was "the god," and not Aesculapius, whose name he bore.

Orators of that period seem commonly to have regarded themselves as sent by divine mission, and as charged with a message of divine truth. So Dion Chrysostom several times claims divine mission; and in one of his speeches at

Tarsus he explains that all that happens to us in an unexpected, unintended, self-originated way, ought to be regarded by us as sent to us by the god, and therefore, as he has appeared in such a way before the Tarsian audience, they should regard him as speaking with authority as the divine messenger.<sup>1</sup> The speech was delivered probably in the third period of Dion's career, which began when he received news of the death of Domitian, and thus his case illustrates strictly contemporary belief about those travelling orators and teachers, who in many ways show so close analogy to the Christian Apostles and travelling preachers.

W. M. RAMSAY.

### THE DEATH OF JUDAS.

THE two brief accounts, seemingly independent of each other, given in St. Matthew's Gospel (xxvii. 3-10), and in the Acts (i. 18, 19) respectively, of the fate which overtook Judas are not easy to reconcile, and offer a brief study of them to the readers of the EXPOSITOR.

The earliest extant account, i.e. St. Mark's (followed also by St. Luke), of the bargain made with Judas simply says that the chief priests "promised to give him money" (Mark xiv. 11; Luke xxii. 5). Nothing is told in this narrative either of the amount of the bribe, or of the way in which it was ultimately expended, or of the fate of the traitor. The writer of the First Gospel has a good deal to tell on these points. He says that the price paid was "thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. xxvi. 15), and it is to be noted that he uses here the words of Zechariah xi. 12, *ἔστησαν τριάκοντα ἀργύρια*. He tells also that Judas, driven by remorse, brought the money back to the priests, and that

<sup>1</sup> I quote from memory, and must apologize for possible inaccuracy in the quotation.