

declared Himself God, they could have come to regard as such a being with whom, for three years, they had kept up such familiar relations? Question for question, the first appears easier to solve than the second.

F. GODET.

THE EPISTLES TO
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

I.—EPHESUS (*Revelation* ii. 1-7).

WITH the topography of the city of Ephesus, with its history prior to the formation of a Christian Church within its walls, we are not at present concerned. They have hardly the slightest appreciable bearing upon the interpretation of the words which now come before us. All that we need to remember is that its far-famed Temple of Artemis—visited by pilgrims from all quarters of the Empire, who carried away with them on their departure the silver shrines made by Demetrius and his craftsmen as memorials of their visit; surrounded by a population of priests, guides, artisans, who by that craft had their living—made it one of the great centres of Heathenism; and that when St. Paul and his companions, following in the footsteps of Apollos, planted the Church of Christ there, they must have felt that they were gaining a victory over one of the strongholds of the powers of darkness. Its religion was, however, Oriental rather than Hellenic in its character. The image of the many-breasted Artemis who was there worshipped, that was fabled to have fallen from heaven, looking to our eyes like an Indian

idol, would have offended the cultivated taste of an Athenian, accustomed to gaze on the works of Phidias and Praxiteles. As in all Eastern cities, its people dealt much in magic and charms and incantations, and the Ephesian talismans, or "books of curious arts" (the *γράμματα Ἐφέσια* of Greek writers), had a world-wide renown, and fetched an almost fabulous price (Acts xix. 19). There, as in most commercial cities, Jews had found their way in large numbers, and had their synagogues open to proselytes and inquirers. Not a few of them drifted more or less openly into connection with the superstitions against which they ought to have borne their witness. They were coppersmiths, like Alexander (2 Tim. iv. 14), and had apparently trade relations with the workmen of Demetrius (Acts xix. 38). They boasted of their powers in the cases commonly ascribed to demoniacal possession, and, like the seven sons of Sceva, who claimed to be in some sense a chief priest of the house of Aaron, sought gain and fame as exorcists. In spite of this decline from their true dignity, perhaps in proportion to it, they were conspicuous for their fanatic zeal for holy places and for holy customs, and were the first to raise their outcry against St. Paul when, as they thought, he had taken an uncircumcised Ephesian within the precincts of the temple, beyond the wall of partition, which it was death for any Gentile to pass.

The stages of progress in the Christian community at Ephesus may be traced with sufficient distinctness. First, there had been the preaching of some disciples of the Baptist, reviving the zeal of the Jews, calling them to repentance, imposing more rigid rules of life.

Then had come Apollos himself, as yet knowing only the baptism of John, but with wider thoughts, and teaching more fully than they had done the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ." Then had come Aquila and Priscilla, with their more perfect knowledge, teaching the way of the Lord as St. Paul taught it, though, we must believe, with less power and completeness. Then St. Paul himself appeared, preaching his Gospel, at first in the synagogues to his own people of the stock of Abraham, afterwards to the disciples and to Gentile inquirers as a separate body in the lecture-room (belonging, possibly, to a school of medicine) that was known as belonging to Tyrannus.¹ Wonders of a kind precisely adapted to meet the faith of the Ephesians in charms and talismans were wrought by his hands, and even by the handkerchiefs and aprons to which contact with his flesh had imparted a mysterious power. The result of this two-fold influence was the rapid conversion of a large number of the heathen, chiefly among those who had been practitioners in the arts of sorcery. They brought the books in which they had learnt to see the work of the enemy of God, and burnt them publicly in some open square or market-place. How full and thorough was the success of the Apostle in his mission-work among his new disciples, how rapid

¹ The name Tyrannus occurs in the "Columbarium" of Livia as belonging to a physician of the imperial household. Such occupations often descended, with the name, from father to son among the freedmen attached to the imperial household, and I venture to surmise that this Tyrannus also was of the same calling, and that the "beloved physician" who was St. Paul's friend and fellow-worker, may have been acquainted with him, and that it was through his influence that the use of the lecture-room was obtained.

the progress which they made in Christian thought and feeling, we find from his earnest desire to see the elders of the Ephesian Church, on his last journey to Jerusalem, even though he could not personally visit their city, and from the words of parting counsel which he addressed to them. He who spake to others as to carnal, as to babes in Christ, had not shunned to preach to them the whole counsel of God. In the midst of constant opposition, with the fear of frequent plots, amid tears and trials, he had done his work. But even then his eye saw signs of evils as yet half latent: "the grievous wolves not sparing the flock," Jewish persecutors from without, the "men from among their own selves speaking perverse things," who should draw away disciples after them,—these filled him with anxious and sad forebodings. And so they parted, as they both then thought never to meet again.

So far as we can gather from the Epistle to the Ephesians, no tidings had reached the Apostle in the interval to cause him fresh anxiety. Its tone is throughout free from the indignation or warning or reproof which we find in so many of his letters. He remembers his intercourse with them with thankfulness and joy. He has heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love towards all saints. He appeals to them as able to understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ. No messenger has come from them, as Epaphras had come from Colossæ, to tell him that false teachers had crept in and were subverting the Gospel which he had preached. He must have looked forward to his return to them—and we know from the letter to Philemon that he

was looking forward—with joy and hope. The Pastoral Epistles, if we accept them as St. Paul's and place them in their right relation to his life, shew us how bitterly he was disappointed. False teachers had come, claiming the authority of Rabbis, desiring to be teachers of the Law, and yet ignorant of its true scope and office. There were perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, having a form of godliness, but denying its power, creeping into houses and leading captive silly women laden with sins. His own followers and friends had not the courage to stand by him, and all men forsook him. It was necessary to leave Timotheus behind him to maintain purity of doctrine and completeness of organization. And even he, zealous and devoted as he was, seemed hardly equal to the burden that was thus laid upon him. He was too young to speak with the authority of a wide experience, younger than many of those whom he was called to control and to reprove. He was weak in health; and the overstrained asceticism which he had imposed on himself as a rule of life tended to want of promptness and of energy. He needed, even in the last parting words of counsel which St. Paul ever wrote to him, to be stirred to fresh activity, to be warned against the spirit of timidity that shrinks from hardship and from conflict, against the profane and vain babblings which, under the show of a mystical elevation that seemed to men as a rising from the death of sin, were denying that there was any other resurrection.

It was necessary to bring before our thoughts what we know of the Ephesian Church just as the

great Apostle of the Gentiles was about to pass from the scene of labour, that so we might the better enter into the spirit of the message sent to it through the pen of the beloved disciple. The shorter the interval between the two—and on the assumption which I have adopted as to the date of the Apocalypse, the interval must have been very short—the closer **must** have been the resemblance between the state of things described in the Pastoral Epistles and that pre-supposed in the message with which we are now dealing. But the facts lead us, if I mistake not, to a conclusion of deeper and more personal interest. Timotheus had been left in charge of that Church. That was the flock committed to him as one of the chief shepherds. If we think of the Angel of the Church of Ephesus as its personal ruler and representative, there is at least a strong presumption in favour of our thinking of the words before us as addressed to none other than to St. Paul's true son in the faith. It will be seen that a closer examination of the message confirms this conclusion.

It is noteworthy that each one of the messages opens with a description of him who speaks them, embodying one or more of the characteristic attributes given in the preceding Chapter. It is perhaps impossible to connect in each case the attribute thus selected with the wants or trials of each particular Church; but there can be little doubt that as Ephesus stands first in order of importance among the Seven Churches, so the fact that He who sends the message "holdeth the seven stars in his right hand" and "walketh in the midst of the seven golden

candlesticks," is that on which most stress is laid. He holds the stars as one who rejoices in their brightness so long as they shine clearly, who sustains, protects, and guides them, as He guides the stars of heaven in their courses, who can and will cast them away, even though they were as the signet on his right hand, should they cease to shine. He walks among the candlesticks as One who knows and judges all that makes the lamps burn brightly or dimly, who feeds the lamp with the oil of his grace, and trims it with the discipline of his love that it may burn more brightly, and who, if it cease to burn, though He will not quench the smoking flax while as yet there is a hope of revival, will yet remove the lamp out of its place, and give to another that work of giving light to those that are in his spiritual house, which it has failed to accomplish.

If I am right in my inference from the assumed early date of the Apocalypse, the words that follow ought to present some striking points of coincidence with the language addressed to Timothy in the Pastoral Epistles; and this, if I mistake not, they do in a measure which leaves hardly the shadow of a doubt. The work, the labour, the endurance—these are precisely what St. Paul acknowledges in his true son in the faith, and exhorts him to abound in them more and more. He reminds him that the husbandman that *laboureth* must be the first partaker of the fruits (2 Tim. ii. 6); calls on him to be "a *workman* that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Tim. ii. 15); to do "the *work* of an evangelist," and to "*endure* afflictions" (2 Tim. iv. 5). Still more definitely do we find in the words of praise that

follow that which corresponds to the Apostle's counsels. With reiterated earnestness we find him warning his true son in the faith against false teachers, such as Hymenæus, Alexander, Philetus; against those who gave heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons; against profane and vain babblings, whether they came from Judaizing teachers on the one hand or the fantastic dreams of Greek or Gnostic speculation on the other. One who had acted on these cautions might well have earned the commendation bestowed on the Angel of the Church of Ephesus: "Thou canst not bear them that are evil, and thou hast tried them which say that they are apostles and are not, but hast found them liars." To hate evil, to feel the presence of those who are persistent in it as an intolerable burden, to try the claims of those who used great names to cloke it, by some certain test, like that which St. Paul (1 Cor. xii. 3) and St. John himself, here also agreeing with his brother Apostle, had elsewhere suggested (1 John iv. 2, 3), by their agreement with the truth on which the faith of the Church rested, that Christ Jesus had come in the flesh; this was no small work to have done, no light praise to have deserved.

The question who these teachers were, who said they were apostles, is not one which can be answered with any certainty. Doubtless the leaders of every sect and heresy at the opposite poles of error were in the habit of putting forth such claims. The balance of probability inclines, I think, in favour of the view that they were *not* identical with those who are afterwards named as Nicolaitanes, and that they represent the leaders of the Judaizing, anti-Pauline, party in

the Asiatic Churches. These, we know, claimed to be apostles, either of Christ Himself or of the Church at Jerusalem, with special and extraordinary powers, the "very chiefest apostles" of 2 Cor. xii. 11. Of these St. Paul speaks as "false *apostles*, deceitful workers," doing the work of Satan, and yet disguised as angels of light (2 Cor. xi. 13, 14). Those who followed him with ceaseless hostility in Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, and Colossæ were hardly likely to leave Ephesus untouched; and it is noticeable that among the errors against which his warning is most earnest in the Pastoral Epistle, those which are Jewish and legal occupy the foremost place (1 Tim. i. 7; Tit. i. 14). Those who do not come to the study of the Apocalypse with a preconceived theory that it is an anti-Pauline polemic, will find a confirmation of this view in the corresponding words in the message to the Church of Smyrna against those "who say that they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. ii. 9).

The words that follow, though they seem for the most part to repeat the praise already given, present some special points of interest. Then the Angel of the Church had been praised because he could not *bear* the evil workers. Now he is commended because he has *borne* so much. To be intolerant of evil, and to be tolerant of all besides, to *bear* the burdens of other men (Gal. vi. 2), their weaknesses, or coldness, or inattention, to bear also the burden and heat of the day,—all this belongs to the true pastor. In this way he *bears* the cross which his Lord bore before him. And with this there is the renewed mention of "endurance," not simply the

passive resignation to suffering which we commonly associate with the word "patience," but the temper of calm heroic steadfastness which belongs to him "who endureth to the end," and therefore wins his ultimate and complete deliverance from evil. And this endurance has been for the name of Christ, and has shewn itself in many labours (note the use of the self-same word, as in 1 Tim. v. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 6) which have not, arduous as they were, led to weariness or sloth.¹

It was significant, as a token of the gentleness and tenderness of the Judge, that all that was good should be fully acknowledged first, and that not till then should the evil that threatened its completeness be noticed with words of warning. *That*, we may note, is ever the true method of those who enter, in any measure, into the mind of Christ. Every Epistle of St. Paul (with, perhaps, the solitary exception of that to the Galatians, where the need was urgent and the peril great) is a practical illustration of it. The thought that He with whom we have to do as at once Judge and Friend and Advocate, judges us after this manner, not closing his eyes to any evil that He discerns in us, but also not extreme to mark what is done amiss, and recognizing the good He has enabled us to do even more fully than we ourselves can recognize it, is one which may well come to the minister of Christ in times when his spirit

¹The various readings require a word of notice. The greater uncial manuscripts give "οὐκ ἔκοπιάσας, ἢ οὐ κεκοπίακας." "Thou hast not been weary of thy toil." The seeming difficulty of this use of the verb, as a word of blame, led (1) to the omission of the negative, and then (2) to the insertion of "thou hast not fainted," by way of expressing the original thought more clearly.

droops within him and he has misgivings as to his labours and their result, with a power to strengthen and ennoble.

The special nature of the fault reproved is, I believe, entirely in accordance with the view which I have taken as to the person who was thus addressed. No one can read the Epistles to Timothy without feeling that, in the midst of all St. Paul's love for his disciple, his recognition of his loyalty, purity, earnestness, there is a latent tone of anxiety. The nature with which he had to do was emotional even to tears, ascetic, devout; but there was in it a tendency to lack of energy and sustained enthusiasm. To supply this defect he exhorts him once and again to be strong, and to endure hardness; to stir up, *i.e.*, to rekindle (*ἀναζωπυρεῖν*, 2 Tim. i. 6), the grace of God; to continue in the things he had learnt, knowing of whom he had learnt them. Such an one falls easily into labours that are genuine as far as they go, and yet are not pervaded by the fervour and energy of love. Whether the "first love" is that which has God, or Christ, or man for its object, I am not careful to inquire; for the true temper of love or charity includes all three; but it is more important to insist that the defect spoken of was one which attached to the angel or bishop of the Church personally, and only to the Church at large so far as it was represented by him and influenced by his example. The "first love" which had been "left" was accordingly not that of the bride for the bridegroom of her espousals, as in Jeremiah ii. 2, but rather that of the friend of the bridegroom, loving and unselfish, whose work it was, the work which

St. Paul had claimed as his own in writing to the Corinthians, to bring the bride to her betrothed and, with loving care, to guard her from defilement (2 Cor. xi. 2, 3).

It has been urged, on the assumption that the words point only or chiefly to the shortcomings of the Church of Ephesus as distinct from its ruler, that they supply an almost decisive proof of the theory which assigns the Apocalypse to the time of Domitian.¹ The change, it is said, is too great; the falling away from the first love too complete to have taken place in any shorter interval. I cannot but think (1) that the personal reference for which I have contended is open to no such objection; and (2) that, even on the assumption of there being a reference, direct or indirect, to the condition of the Ephesian Church, those who lay stress on this objection have dwelt too much on the bright side of the picture presented in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and too little on those darker features which, as we have seen, were already coming into prominence before the ministry of St. Paul had reached its close. What we meet with here is certainly not otherwise than consistent with the warnings and the fears, the all but total desertion, and the thickening heresies which the Pastoral Epistles bring before us. If anything, it indicates something even of a revival, partial though not complete, from the state there portrayed; and we may legitimately connect that revival, both as regards the Church and its representative, with the parting counsels of the Apostle.

The warnings and the counsels which follow on

¹ Archbishop Trench, "Seven Churches," p. 73.

this reproof have a deep ethical significance. "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen ; and repent, and do the first works." The words bring before our thoughts one of the functions of the awful gift of memory in the spiritual education of the individual soul. As it is true,—

"That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things,"

so also is it true that the first step towards repentance is to call to mind, distinctly and vividly, the highest moments that we have known in our religious experience. There may come a time when that will be the sharpest pang of a sorrow almost or altogether hopeless ; when the recollection that we have been illumined, and tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come, will but make us feel more bitterly the difficulty or impossibility of renewal. But short of that, the memory of the past, however painful, is yet remedial. It tells us of the blessedness of which we once have been capable, what we have attained, and therefore may attain again, and so far is an element of encouragement as well as sorrow—of repentance and not of mere remorse. We can yet look back upon the height which we once had reached, and slowly and with painful steps begin to climb again. Out of that memory springs a true contrition and a stedfast effort. And the counsel which follows is precisely that which meets the exigencies of the case. It may not be possible to renew at once "the first love." The old fervour and enthusiasm of faith will not come back at our bidding or our wish. We must take that which, so long as we retain our power to choose, does lie

within our reach, and do the "first works"—in this case those very works on which the Lord of the Churches had already bestowed his praise; and then in due time the warmth will come back to the heart which, in spite of coldness, has persevered in duty. It is possible, though there is no virtue without faith, to gain faith by virtue. It is possible, in like manner, to gain the first love by doing the first works.

The call to repentance is followed by a warning,—
"Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." The words shew that the "coming of the Lord" had gained a wider and, in some sense, deeper meaning than that which we commonly attach to the second Advent. That to which the warning points is not the great far-off event fixed in the everlasting counsels, but the Judgment Day of Old Testament language, the "day of the Lord," whose coming may be averted or delayed by repentance, hastened by impenitence and defiance. Such days of the Lord come, in the course of the world's history, on all nations and churches that are faithless to their trust. The judgment lingers, the wheels of the Lord's chariot tarry, and men eat and drink, plant and build, marry and are given in marriage, as though all things would go on as they are for ever, and then He "comes quickly," in one or other of the sore judgments which are sent as the chastisement of their want of faith and their evil deeds. Here the judgment threatened was determined by the symbolism of the vision. The lamp was not burning brightly. If it were rekindled and trimmed and fed with oil, well! If not, there would come on it the

sentence which falls on all unfaithfulness, and the lamp should be removed. The Church which had not let its light shine before men, would lose even its outward form and polity, and be as though it had never been.

The Church and its ruler are here, in some measure at least, identified. Unless he repents and does the first works, the society over which he rules, and which is represented by him, will suffer the penalty which attaches to the failure of faith and love in which it has been a sharer. So it is always in the history of nations and of churches. But it would, I believe, be an error to think of the warning and the exhortations as addressed simply to the Church as such, and not to the angel or ruler individually. Much rather is it true that this is urged upon his conscience as a motive to lead him to repentance, that his sins, even though they are negative rather than positive in their character, tend to bring about that terrible result. One whose heart was in his work, who had learnt to look on the Church committed to him with a deep and anxious tenderness, would feel that to be a greater penalty than any personal chastisement. To have the blood of souls that perished required at his hand, to see his work destroyed, even though he himself should be saved, so as by fire, to lose that to which he had looked forward as his joy and crown of rejoicing,—this was and is the penalty of the shepherd who is even partially unfaithful, who has “left his first love.” For those who fill high places to see systems collapsing, an organization disorganized, polity giving way to anarchy ;—for those who have

a lower work to perceive that they are not gaining, but losing, ground, that worshippers are scattered and listeners few, and that their own want of love infects their people,—this is the penalty, as by an inevitable law, of their transgression. That over which they have not watched, is decaying and waxing old. The next stage of “vanishing away,” the removal of the candlestick, is not far distant.

I am not disposed to dwell, as most commentators have done, on the present desolate condition of the town of *Agio-solouk*, which represents by a few scattered huts what was once the *Ephesus* of world-wide fame, as shewing that the warning was neglected and that the penalty at last came. Doubtless that condition illustrates the working of the law which was proclaimed in the message as a prophecy, in the higher sense of that word; but the time which elapsed before the decay and ruin were brought about carries us too far beyond the horizon indicated by that “coming quickly” for us to look upon it as the distinct fulfilment of a prediction. Rather may we see such a fulfilment under its brighter aspects in the fact that when we next come across traces of the spiritual condition of the Church of *Ephesus*, it is to recognize a marked change for the better, a revival of the old energy of life and love. When *Ignatius* addressed his *Epistle* to that Church, about half a century after what we have assumed as the date of the *Apocalypse*, he found it under the care of an *Onesimus* (whether the runaway slave of *Colossæ* or another of the same name, we cannot say), and abounding in spiritual excellencies. It gives proof of a fulfilment of prophecy of

another kind than that commonly dwelt on to find that the message had done its work. The points on which the Martyr touches are in singular harmony with the counsel given in the message now before us. That in which he rejoiced was that the believers at Ephesus and their bishop "had *re-kindled* their life" (*ἀναζωπυρήσαντες*, the self-same word as in 2 Tim. i. 6) "in the blood of God,"—that no sect or heresy was found among them. They "had not suffered those who came bringing an evil doctrine to sow their tares among the wheat, but had closed their ears against them." They carried God and Christ in their hearts, and so became as temples; they were *θεοφόροι, χριστοφόροι, ναοφόροι*. And so the sentence was at least deferred, and for many a long year the candlestick was not removed, and the Church of Ephesus, which had thus been warned, took its place in the history of the Church Catholic as bearing its witness, in the third Œcumenical Council, to the great central truth that "God was manifested in the flesh."

And then once more, and as pointing to that which was a gleam of hope even amidst the symptoms of decay that had called for the word of warning, there came words of recognition and of praise. "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." The questions who these Nicolaitanes were, whence they took their name, what were their hateful deeds, are, I need scarcely say, among the vexed problems of the history of the Apostolic age, for the solution of which we have no satisfying data. On the one side there is the Patristic, but by no means primitive, tradition, that

the proselyte of Antioch, whose name appears in the list of the Seven in Acts vi. 5, had either himself fallen away from the faith, or had by unguarded words given occasion of offence to those that followed him; that he had taught men to abuse (*παραχρησθαι*) the flesh in the sense of punishing and afflicting it, and that men had taken the word as meaning that they might use it to the full, and conquer their appetites by indulging them till they ceased to stimulate, and that thus, in order to shew that lust had no power over them, they lived in what the conscience of true Christians condemned as hateful impurities.¹ On the other, we have the conjectures of modern critics that the very word was a play upon the name so prominent about this time both in these very messages and in other apostolic writings—the name of Balaam the son of Beor, after whom many had gone astray (2 Pet. ii. 15), and had run greedily (Jude, verse 11), who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication.² The mention of the two as distinct, though cognate in their corruptions and impurities, in the

¹ See the articles on "Nicolaos" and the "Nicolaitanes," in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible." The earliest writer who states that the sect so-called claimed Nicolaos the Proselyte as their founder is Irenæus. Clement of Alexandria accepts the story that his teaching had been perverted in the manner above described. Epiphanius imputes the corrupt practices of the sect to the actual example and direct teaching of their founder.

² Nicolaos is identified with Balaam, according to one etymology of the latter word, as the "lord," according to another as the "devourer," of the people. Both derivations are, however, uncertain, and the best Hebraists (Gesenius and Fürst, the latter admitting the possibility of "devourer") explain the name as meaning, "not of the people,"—an alien and foreigner.

message to the Church of Pergamos (Rev. ii. 14, 15), seems decisive against absolute identification; and I incline, with some doubt, to the old Patristic view, that the sect so described took their name, under some colourable plea, from Nicolaos the Proselyte, and reserve what has to be said as to the error of Balaam till we come to it in its own place. It is enough for the present to note the fact that any feeling of righteous hatred of evil, of loathing for that which corrupts and defiles, is welcomed by the Lord of the Churches as a sign of life. As long as there is the capacity for this indignation, there is hope. When this also fails, and men tolerate and accept impurity of words and acts,—when conscience is seared, as with a red-hot iron, then the last sign of life has passed away and decay and putrescence have set in.

Lastly, we have the promise of reward with which this, like all the other messages, ends. Attention is called to it in the self-same words that our Lord had so often used, almost, it might be said, as a formula of teaching in his earthly ministry: "Whoso hath ears to hear, let him hear;" "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." And the promise in this case carries us back, as so much of the recorded teaching of St. John does elsewhere, to the earliest records of the Bible,—to the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

We remember, as we read the words, that the Apostle had once before heard that promise of "paradise" from the lips of his Lord; so far as

his recorded teaching goes, once, and once only (Luke xxiii. 43). Both in the general absence of the word and in that solitary use of it, we may reverently recognize a profound wisdom, adapting the phases under which it presented the truth to the capacities and necessities of those who were to be recipients of it. In the popular speech of Judaism, in the legends alike of Pharisees and the multitude, the word "paradise," as now among the followers of Mahomet, brought with it the imagery of sensuous enjoyment, of a region of fair trees and pleasant fruits and clear streams, and the soft south-west wind blowing for evermore. He, the Teacher, was leading his disciples to a more spiritual idea of the blessedness of the life to come—say, rather, of the life eternal—and therefore brought it before them under the aspect of a kingdom in which the supreme blessedness was to gaze upon the face of the King and to be made glad with the joy of his countenance. But that thought of a kingdom required in its turn a preparatory training; without some such teaching as that of the Sermon on the Mount, it was likely to suggest such a restored monarchy, having its seat at Jerusalem, as that of which Jewish zealots had dreamt and were yet dreaming; and, therefore, to that poor sufferer on the cross,—the wild outlaw, whose one element of religious life had, we may believe, been the hope, in childish years long past, of a garden of delight in which he should wander at his will,—He spake the word which gave comfort and hope, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

And now the beloved disciple hears once more

the same word from the lips of the same Lord, in the highest moment of spiritual consciousness, as part of the apocalypse of eternal truths. So is it that extremes meet,—that the language of symbols meets the necessities of children and child-like souls, ceases often to attract or to edify those who are in an intermediate state of growth, and then, when the understanding is ripened and mere abstract ideas have done their work of formulating and defining, is found to be, after all, their best if not their only adequate exponent. The Christian of highest culture and most enlarged experience falls back upon the imagery of the Golden City and the Delectable Mountains, and the Paradise of God and the Tree of Life.

The revival of this last symbol in the pages of the Apocalypse is in many ways suggestive. Prominent as it had been in the primæval history, it had remained unnoticed in the teaching where we should most have looked for its presence,—in that of the Psalmist and Prophets of the Old Testament. Only in the Proverbs of Solomon had it been used in a sense half-allegorical and half-mystical. Wisdom was a “tree of life” to them that laid hold on her (Prov. iii. 18); and the same glorious predicate was affirmed of the fulfilment of the heart’s desire (Prov. xiii. 12); of the fruit of the righteous (Prov. xi. 30); of the wholesome and health-giving tongue (Prov. xv. 4). In connection with the revival of the symbol in the Apocalypse, it may be noted (1) that it was the natural sequel of the fresh prominence that had recently been given, as we have seen, to the thought of Paradise; and (2) that the writings of

Philo had specifically called attention to the tree of life as being the mystical type of the highest form of wisdom and of holiness—the fear of God (*θεοσεβεία*), by which the soul attains to immortality. We trace in other things at least the indirect influence of Philo's teaching on the thoughts and language of St. John; and as we must assume that all imagery is adapted, even in the words of the Divine Speaker, to the minds of those who hear, there seems no reason why we should not admit the working of that influence here.

It may be asked, however, What is the meaning of the symbol as thus used,—how are we to translate it into the language of mere abstract truth? And here, if I mistake not, the more developed form of the symbol at the close of the Apocalypse gives us the true answer: “The tree of life bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev. xxii. 2). The leaves and the fruit obviously represent, the one the full and direct, the other the partial and indirect, workings of that eternal life which St. John thought of as manifested in the Incarnate Word. The “healing of the nations,” the elevation of their standard of purity and holiness, of duty and of love,—this has been the work of that partial knowledge which the Church of Christ has been instrumental in diffusing. Its influence has counteracted the deadly working of the fruit of the other tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which we trace as due to a wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish. But to “eat of the fruit of the tree” implies a more complete fruition, a higher com-

munion and fellowship with the source of life. And here, therefore, I cannot but think that the promise of the Judge points to the truth that He is Himself, now as ever, the "exceeding great reward" of those that serve Him faithfully, that the symbol veils the truth that "this is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent" (John xvii. 3).

And that reward is promised "to him that overcometh." If anything were wanted to complete the evidence of a resemblance in thought and phrase in all the writings ascribed to the authorship of St. John, it would be the prominence of this word in all of them. Here it is the burden of every message. "I have overcome the world"—this was the assurance given to the disciples by their Master immediately before that prayer which, as the great High Priest of mankind, He offered up for them and all his people. The self-same word is echoed in the Epistles. To *overcome* the wicked one is the glory of the young men who are faithful to their calling (1 John ii. 13, 14),—"that which is born of God *overcometh* the world" (1 John v. 4). "This is the victory that *overcometh* the world, even our faith," the faith of him that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John v. 4, 5). In the other Gospels it occurs but once, and then with but little emphasis (Luke xi. 22). In the Epistles of St. Paul it meets us once only, and then in the simply ethical precept, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21). It was reserved for St. John at once to record, to echo, and to develop throughout his writings the words which he had heard from his

Master's lips ; and through him they have become part of the inheritance of Christendom, and have carried, and will carry to the end of time, strength and comfort to every faithful soldier in that great warfare against evil in which Christ is the Captain of our salvation.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER I. VERSE 18—CHAPTER II. VERSE 8.

It is scarcely necessary to discuss the question whether the authoritative command which Paul now gives to his "child Timothy" could be any other than that which immediately follows. The use of the middle voice demands some recognition in our translation of verse 18. *This is my command to thee, child Timothy, one in harmony with (κατὰ) the prophecies which, when uttered over thee, went on before thee.*

This is one of the numerous hints furnished by the New Testament that the Lord appointed "prophets" as well as "teachers," "apostles," and "evangelists," in his Church. Some of the Christians at Corinth had received the "gift (charism) of prophecy." Prophets at Antioch were the mouthpieces of the Holy Ghost, and directed the missionary energies of the Church (Acts xiii. 1, 2). Agabus and the daughters of Philip prophesied, and thus a living voice uttered the mind of the Spirit (Acts xxi. 8-11). This method of Divine direction was probably referred to on other occasions, when the will of the Spirit was indicated as to the personal activities of the Apostle (Acts xvi. 6, 7).