

unpopular in Pergamos, the name of Jesus was the offence, the doctrine of the cross raised animosity. But when hell does its worst, heaven will do its best, and use these very adverse circumstances to strengthen and perfect those tried by them.

The world is perilous as a friend, not as a foe. Yet against this Church God "has a few things." It is not free from the temptation to serve two masters, the religion of Baalam who would have the good things of this world and those also of the world to come.

We see this religion in the present day, "Don't be irreligious," say its advocates, "Go to Church but don't carry religion too far, don't let religion come between you and your fellow men, be moderate, do as other people do." It was for religion such as this God censured the Church in Pergamos

*Rev. III.—7—13. Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia.*

The Christian church in its earlier days was regarded as a Jewish sect. The Philadelphian Christians were passing through a severe trial by their excommunication from the Jewish Synagogue. Under these circumstances, Christ reveals Himself to it as the one real thing in the world. "You have been shut out of the Synagogue on earth," He seems to say, "but I who hold the key of David have set before you the open door that no man can shut."

Christ's revelations of Himself are adapted to special circumstances of the moment.

Let us note :

1. The Christian's trial. Trial springs from fidelity. We can escape it by being false to God. We can keep our religion to ourselves, but the more we do keep it, the less we shall have to keep. If we bottle up Christianity there is soon nothing in the bottle, if we shrink from confession there is soon nothing to confess. Yet these trials are conditional on the highest spiritual enjoyment.

It is the Christ in us which the world hates and despises.

2. The Christian's revenge. There is a holy revenge the Christian may take on the world, and consists in benefiting it. Those who had cast out those Christians from the Synagogue were themselves to come to the little conventicle so to speak and humbly "worship before thy feet." And own the Lord of the persecuted Church as their Lord.

3. The Christian's reward. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience I also will keep thee."