

The Church.

"HER FOUNDATIONS ARE UPON THE HOLY HILLS."

THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER 1, 12.

VOLUME II.]

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Poetry.

ORDERS.

I'll wash my hands in waters that are innocent as snow,
And thus unto thine altars, my Redeemer, will I go.
I'll stand within thy temples, in garments pure and white,
And take thy yoke upon me, for 'tis easy and 'tis light.

But, give me in the beauty of thy holiness to shine,
And to sound upon the mountains that cheery trump of thine;
And to ope the gushing fountains in the desert's dreary ways,
And to herald joyful tidings, and the holy cross to raise.

And with a soul that trembles on the laurel and the gem,
May I strive, in Godlike meekness, for a brighter diadem;
And run my race with glory, and fight a noble fight,
Till I join the victor-pean of the conquerors in light.

Now clothe me in mine armor, ye fathers of the host,
And give my hand the banner of the dove-like HOLY GHOST;
While swells around the war-song of my Redeemer King,
And all the warrior-anthems that the noble armies sing.

Then bless me for the onset that I may battle well,
For the Captain of salvation, 'gainst the lagged hosts of hell,
Nor shun the hottest conflict, where the spoiler is abroad,
But breast his fiercest phalanx, in the panoply of God.

Oh, glorious is the warfare and the triumph-cry shall sound,
Not sweeter to the victors, than the vanquished heathen sound:
Messiah's armies ever, to their foemen faint in strife,
Bend down the laden branches of the healing tree of life.

Yet, Saviour, not with boasting would I gird me for the fight,
And take thy yoke upon me, though so easy and so light!
Who putteth on his harness, and striveth for a crown,
Oh, let him never glory till he lays his armour down.
—New York Churchman. A. C. C.

THE STUDY OF THE FATHERS.*

The study of this field has been too much and too long depreciated, and by many has been regarded with a look of jealousy as if it were a rival to that of Scripture and not a minister to it. Yet surely the more excellent the ministration the more should the minister be had in honour, and if the ministry of the letters by which we read, and of the pulses of the air by which we hear the divine word be not despised, the commentary upon its spirit which is afforded by the writings and lives of holy and learned men, who spoke the same language, were familiar with the same manners, lived almost in the same age, cannot but be highly appreciated; especially when we consider that the great majority of readers of Scripture are compelled either by want of learning, or deficiency of comprehension, or by both, to read it with an eye constantly and servilely directed upon some uninspired guide. Why then should they grudge to others the use of these guides, whose testimony is the only legitimate and therefore safe guide? These venerable teachers have been most rudely assailed from two opposite quarters. One party, which has read Scripture under a timid submission to modern theology, and has therefore used it but as the text-book to the positions of some particular system, has charged them with laxity of doctrine, because they do not deliver themselves in the set terms to which the scrutiny and strict definitions of succeeding controversies have now compelled us; or, it may be, even because they do not find in them the identical phraseology which themselves have been in the habit of connecting with religious feeling. Another, again, which has read Scripture with no great deference to any authority whatever, seated in the easy chair of the luxurious indulgence of a vain, a petulant, and a superficial age, has endeavoured to throw ridicule both on the words, the thoughts, and the deeds of those men, all of whom suffered shameful injustice, and many laid down their lives for the sake of the name of Christ. The notes of the trumpet of defamation thus blown, have been eagerly caught up by the great multitude that is always glad of a shadow of reason to despise what is too difficult for its indolence, or too excellent for its attainment, and a general sentence of condemnation had consigning these valuable authors to the dusty shelves of neglect, until the late revival of a better spirit and deeper knowledge.

To such views the right reading of Scripture can never lead. He who has studied well that volume will not take up captious objections to the opinions of men, some of whom conversed with the apostles in person, others with their disciples, and others were familiar with a tradition which as yet was full and incorrupt. Nor will he who has weighed the characters of Peter, Paul and John, be niggardly in his veneration for such men as Ignatius, Polycarp and Justin Martyr, men who, after a life of incessant labour in the Lord, were witnesses to his truth in that particular sense of the word, which is denoted by the term Martyr. Will he charge with carnal bigotry, or with erroneous doctrine, those teachers who bore the brunt of the conversion of the world to Christ? Those who hungered, and thirsted, and watched, that he might be filled and sleep? Will he withhold a filial reverence from these Fathers of the Church into which he has so blissfully succeeded? Assuredly he will acknowledge that the disciples of the Apostles were worthy of their masters, and that the disciples of those disciples did not do discredit to their instructors.

It is not only delightful, but instructive, to be taken out of the beaten track of life; and on this account, the long neglect shown to the biography of the ancient church is much to be regretted. Our views have been narrow, our standard low. The biography of our own times is comparatively but the tale of one of our own village, which presents us with familiar occurrences, with common-place situations, and however useful in illustrating what we already know, in-

* From Evans's 'Biography of the Early Church';—introduction to a series of Sketches of the Lives of the Fathers, which are in the course of preparation for the ensuing volume of 'The Church.'

† The spirit of Jortin's remarks on Ecclesiastical History cannot be too severely condemned. The flippant and heartless sneer of Voltaire ill accord with the character of a Christian Divine, and the unfeeling banter of Gibbon should not have found a precedent in the work of a Boylian lecturer.

forms us of little indeed which we do not know. We look at the church as through a loop-hole, which ever presents the same confined view. But the biography of ancient times admits us at once to the whole view, to the mighty tumult of the main ocean of events of which we before saw but the few last waves dying quietly against the shore. It is the tale of a character the influence of which has pervaded the whole Church, the history of which opens new and commanding views, new and instructive varieties of the Christian's situation. As the chemist finds out each component element of a mineral, by subjecting it to numerous and various tests, so do we detect the principles of the human heart by a similar experience of its condition under novel and diversified circumstances. At the same time the breadth of view presented, and the imposing figure which the characters exhibit, being stripped by time of all mean and vulgar detail of daily life, and seen but in their bold outlines, while they sharpen our moral discernment, create also a loftiness of feeling.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.*

No. VIII. LAODICEA.

Strikingly contrasted with the Church of Philadelphia, that of Laodicea is presented to our notice, as lying under the merited displeasure of Him, who describes himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God." Even the other Churches, apostate as many of them were, still contained in their number some who were approved of by the Most High; who, amidst the surrounding darkness, walked "as children of light;" and, amidst errors of the most pernicious character and tendency, maintained the truth. Sardis, for instance, was accused of having a name to live, but being, in fact, dead; still were there a few names to be found there which had "not defiled their garments," and to whom the gracious language was addressed,—“And they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” But no exception is made in the case of Laodicea: the whole of the members of that Church are addressed as having exposed themselves to the strongest and most deserved censure.

Two faults in the character of the Laodiceans are especially noticed: the first, lukewarmness in the cause of God; the second, spiritual blindness as to their actual condition. The accusation is brought against them, that they were neither "cold nor hot;" that is, that their state was one of listlessness and indifference to the subject of religion. They are not described as being vehemently opposed to the truth, or of being notoriously profligate in their conduct: and from hence may be learned the fearful lesson, that there is a state of apathy and unconcern on subjects of vital moment which is regarded by the Most High as no less culpable than open rebellion against his authority. It may not, indeed, be so glaring in the sight of men, or so pernicious in its effects upon the good order of society; but it will unquestionably expose us to his righteous displeasure, who would have us zealously for the furtherance of his honour, and anxious to surrender the whole heart to his service. The Laodiceans, moreover, were labouring under spiritual blindness as to their actual condition; and this caused them to regard their religious state as one of the most perfect safety. They do not appear to have been under any apprehension as to their being found wanting in the sight of God. Their language was that of self-congratulation, that they were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; and they would probably have been most grievously offended had their deficiencies been candidly pointed out. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

With reference to these two especial faults of character, the Laodiceans are warned in this epistle. They are assured, that on account of their lukewarmness God will reject them; and they are counselled to go to the Saviour for that righteousness which they foolishly supposed they already possessed, and to receive from his fulness for the supply of their manifold wants. They were poor; the Saviour was enabled to make them rich in spiritual blessings and in spiritual attainments: they were naked, destitute of any covering of human merit; the Saviour would clothe them with the garments of salvation: they were blind; he who could open the bodily eye, as he sojourned in this world of sorrow, was now able and willing to pour celestial light on the spiritually dark. There was not a want, in fact, which Jesus could not supply, a malady which he could not heal, a blessing which he could not bestow; and the freeness with which he would bestow these benefits was beautifully expressed by himself,—“Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

And these rebukes were dictated by a spirit of love; not in anger, but in compassion. They were designed to arouse the Laodiceans from their state of spiritual listlessness, and to incline them to seek for the various gifts which he would bestow, of which the least was the gift of repentance. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.” For the willingness of the Saviour to receive those who come unto him, and his anxiety to induce the careless and indifferent to come, is strikingly set forth in the declaration, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” How expressive is this of his long-suffering and patience? “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.” I will take possession of his heart; I will treat him as an associate, a friend, a brother; I will forget all his former perverseness, all his opposition, all his apathy and unconcern. “And to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.” He shall not only be permitted to dwell, but to reign in glory: he shall be a partaker of my triumphs, a sharer of my vic-

* From the Church of England Magazine.—Concluded.

tories, an inheritor with me of the dignities of the heavenly kingdom; he shall be an heir of God, and a joint-heir with myself of that ineffable blessedness, which, through eternity, shall fill the courts of the Jerusalem above. Such was the gracious, such the condescending language of the faithful and true witness, to the members of this Church.

Laodicea (now called by the Turks Eski-hissar, or the Old Castle,) was a large city in the province of Phrygia Magna, on the Lycus, and was originally a very insignificant place. It was at first called Diospolis, then Rhoads; but after being enlarged by Antiochus II., king of Syria, it was called Laodicea, in honour of his wife Laodice. The state of the Christian Church there, when the epistle was addressed to it by "the faithful and true Witness," was probably very different from what it was in St. Paul's time; for that apostle mentions it in his epistle to the Colossians, and in such a way as to lead us to suppose that it was not in a lukewarm state,—“I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them that are at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh” (ii. 1). And again,—“When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.” It has been a matter of dispute amongst commentators, whether the apostle Paul himself carried the Gospel to Laodicea; and, from the above quotations from the epistle to the Colossians, whether he had written an especial epistle to the Laodiceans, which is no longer extant; but the more common opinion is, that he refers to some other of his epistles which have not come down to us.

Laodicea suffered much from earthquakes; but after a considerable period it was a city of opulence and importance, though inland. It was possessed by the Turks about the year 1097; and after a series of revolutions in its history, having been taken and retaken, it fell under the Turkish power about the middle of the thirteenth century.

Dr. Smith's account of Laodicea (1671) describes the city “as now utterly desolated, and without any inhabitants, except wolves, and jackals, and foxes; but the ruins shew sufficiently what it has been formerly; the three theatres and the circus adding much to the stateliness of it, and arguing its greatness.” The volcanic nature of the soil is thus described by Dr. Chandler: “The hill of Laodicea, it is probable, was originally an eruption; for it consists of dry, impalpable soil, porous, with small cavities, resembling the bore of a pipe, as may be seen on the sites which are bare. It resounded beneath our horses' feet. The stones are mostly masses of pebbles, or of gravel consolidated, and as light as pumice-stone. We had occasion to dig, and found the earth as hard as any cement.”

Mr. Arundell, with Mr. Hartley, visited the ruins of Laodicea, and speaks of them as presenting a scene of utter desolation. “Innumerable sarcophagi,” he says, “as at Hierapolis, first attracted our attention, and then a theatre. A camel-driver undertook to be our conductor, but it was only to shew us a multitude of excavations lately made by the Turks of the neighbouring villages for the sake of the stone. In some of considerable depth we saw the finest sculptured fragments,—a proof that the larger part of the ancient city,—whether by earthquake or other causes, is buried much below the present surface. As the evening was closing in, we could only pass hastily along the ruins of some remains of a very large building, where Memet was waiting with our horses. This building, of which we could not understand the original designation, overlooked the large amphitheatre, then occupied by Turcoman huts and tents.... In the morning, while the horses were preparing, I walked up the side of a hill, which commands an extensive view. The village (Eski-hissar, inhabited wholly by Turks,) and its flat-roofed houses and trees lay on the right; behind them a ridge of hills, over which rose mountains capped with snow; in front, separated only by a narrow vale, in which is the amphitheatre, called by Smith the 'circus,' on a long ridge, lie the ruins of Laodicea.”

And such is now the once opulent and flourishing Laodicea, presenting not merely a spectacle of the decay of earthly grandeur, but setting forth the inevitable destruction of those who are rejected of God, who will not listen to the warning voice calling to repentance, who will not take heed to the knocking of the Redeemer at the door of the hardened heart. The waste places of Laodicea, like those of the lady of kingdoms, the imperious Babylon, are now full of doleful creatures. The voice of prayer and praise has there ceased to be heard.

“It is an old observation, that the country about the Meander, the soil being light and friable, and full of salts generating inflammable matter, was undermined by fire and water. Hence it abounded in hot springs, which, after passing under ground from the reservoirs, appeared on the mountain, or were found bubbling up in the plain or in the mud of the river; and hence it was subject to frequent earthquakes; the nitrous vapour compressed in the cavities, and sublimed by heat or fermentation, bursting its prison with loud explosions, agitating the atmosphere, and shaking the earth and waters with a violence as extensive as destructive; and hence, moreover, the pestilential grottoes, which had subterraneous communications with each other, derived their noisome effluvia; and serving as smaller vents to these furnaces or hollows, were regarded as apertures of hell, as passages for deadly fumes rising up from the realms of Pluto. One or more of these mountains, perhaps, has burned; and it may be suspected, that the surface of the country, Laodicea in particular, has, in some places, been formed from its own bowels.” To a country such as this, how awfully appropriate is the message of the Apocalypse: “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.”

And may not a most instructive lesson be learned and a solemn warning taken, from the fate of the deserted Laodicea. Her Church had no zeal for the furtherance of the

glory of God. A spirit of apathy paralysed every exertion; and this, with a spirit of self-sufficiency, led to her overthrow. And may it not fairly be adduced against many professing Christians at the present day, that they are in a lukewarm and self-satisfied state; that the flame of holy ardour, which should burn so brightly, seems scarcely to be kindled; and that there is no just appreciation of the rich mercy of God to the perishing sinner, so fully testified in the gift of his only-begotten Son? With the vast majority of professing Christians, it is to be feared that religion is a very secondary concern. They are willing enough to admit its importance; they do not wish to call in question its divine origin; but they are far more afraid of enthusiasm than of lukewarmness: and though they have no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and readily speak of him as their Saviour, they yet do not obey the strong exhortation in the text, “I charge thee to buy of me,” because they do not feel the absolute destitution of their situation. And this is the case too, even after repeated warnings. The Saviour has been knocking at the door of their hearts. He has been calling for admittance, but in vain; a cold formality is substituted for vital godliness; a round of external observances supplies the surrender of the inner man to God: and though there may be the profession of Christianity on the lips, there is not the cordial reception of the saving doctrines of Christianity in the heart. Now this appears to have been the precise condition of those of Laodicea. For it must be again noticed, that no accusation of heresy or ungodliness is brought against that Church. There is, indeed, often, in the minds of professing Christians, a resting satisfied with their freedom from crimes of deep dye, and a whispering to themselves of peace, even “while there is no peace,” because there is a regularity of outward conduct, and the voice of man may be unable to bring against them the charge of having transgressed the bounds of the most scrupulous decorum: but “thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting,” may be the fearful declaration of Almighty Wisdom to many a self-satisfied sinner; nay, it is God's language to every self-satisfied sinner; for no man will ever be satisfied with himself who knows any thing of the spiritual requirements of the Divine law, and his own repeated transgressions.

And let us beware, lest, on account of our departure from the faith, our lukewarmness in the cause of God, our negligence in improving the manifold spiritual privileges we enjoy as members of the Protestant Church of England, the Almighty may deem it fit to set us forth to the world as monuments of his righteous displeasure. With reference to this momentous subject, I cannot speak more energetically or forcibly than in the language of Bishop Horsley:—

“The promise of perpetual stability is to the Church catholic: it affords no security to any particular Church, if her faith or her works should not be found perfect before God. The time shall never be when a true Church of God shall not be somewhere subsisting on the earth; but any individual Church, if she fall from her first love, may sink in ruins. Of this, history furnishes but too abundant proof in the examples of Churches, once illustrious, planted by the apostles, and watered by the blood of the first saints and martyrs, which are now no more. Where are now the seven Churches of Asia, whose praise is in the apocalypse? Where shall we now find the successors of those earliest arch-bishops, once stars in the Son of Man's right hand? Where are those boasted seals of Paul's apostleship, the churches of Corinth and Philippi? Where are the churches of Jerusalem and Alexandria? . . . Let us not defraud ourselves of the benefit of the dreadful example, by the miserable subterfuge of a rash judgment upon our neighbours, and an invidious comparison of their deservings with our own. Let us not place a vain confidence in the purer worship, the better discipline, and the sounder faith, which for two centuries and a half we have enjoyed. These are not our merits; they are God's gifts: and the security we may derive from them will depend upon the use we make of them. Let us not abate, let us rather add to our zeal. . . . The time may come sooner than we think, when it shall be said, Where is now the Church of England?”

“The time, indeed, shall never be when a true Church of God shall not be somewhere subsisting on earth.” nay, the Scriptures distinctly declare, that the period shall arrive when this true Church shall enclose within its pale the whole race of men who shall then tread the earth's surface. How strikingly are the perpetuity and extent of the kingdom of the Redeemer set forth by the Psalmist! “His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.” Animating and encouraging are such statements. They lead us to the contemplation of a day of infinitely more glorious light than has yet dawned upon the world; to a state of peace and security which has never yet been experienced on earth by the saints of God—that day when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise on all nations with healing in his wings; when the Gentiles shall come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. We should look forward with the eye of faith, convinced that it will assuredly arrive, though our eyes may, ere then, be closed in the darkness of the sepulchre; and that, in the beautiful language of prophecy, “the trees of the wood shall rejoice before the Lord,” though our ears may not listen to their melody. It is not simply our duty, but our privilege, to hasten that day; even now we may discern its dawning, and exult at the cheering prospect that the Gospel of the grace of God shall ultimately be proclaimed to all nations, who shall cordially receive and obey the truth.

Ought not each individual to ask himself the solemn question, What have I done for the furtherance of the glory of the Redeemer, and the extension of his kingdom? What have I done to emancipate my fellow-sinners from the thralldom of Satan, the bondage of ignorance, and the darkness of heathen superstition? What have I done to open, amidst the land of draught, a fountain, whence the weary and heavy-laden may refresh themselves? May not the charge