

My brethren, this is a most glorious fact regarded in itself; but when we turn to the Church it is on the contrary, as appalling! For alas! alas! the worldliness, the indifference, the divisions, the bitterness of the modern Church are, methinks, equally unfit to succeed the day of Pentecost, or to usher in that of Judgment! And yet, we repeat, heaven has nothing more to impart in order to our holiness, these are the "last days." Stay, there is one thing more which love has in store, it is to send forth the angel of chastisement, or to unchain the great adversary; that amidst the wailings of our bereaved hearts, the conflicts of fierce temptations or fires of persecution, a present Saviour and a sanctifying Comforter,—the blessed heritage of these "last days,"—may be once more understood and lived for!

If, then, it be the fact that we are living in those same "last days" which commenced with the Apostolic age, and that ours is indeed God's *last*, His best and greatest dispensation to man, that of Christ and the Holy Spirit conjoined, it is evident that we, the Church of the present day, ought to be imbued with that same holiness which distinguished the primitive disciples, and which will mark the faithful who shall be living on the earth when the last trumpet sounds; our dispensation is the *same*, why should not our love and purity be the *same*. Alas! that they are not so! Let me invite you then to unite with me in humiliation and prayer of heart, while I endeavour to show,—

I. Wherein we live below our dispensation, and are inferior in vital godliness to those who, in earlier days, lived under the same; and,—

II. Enquire to what we must attribute this difference.

I. We have no wish to depreciate the Church of our own times, it is indeed no pleasure to do so. We know that in the most primitive days offences were not wanting; there were false brethren, heresies, lovers of the world, yea, Apostles had to complain of a Diotrephes, a Demas, an Alexander; we look not for perfection here; there will be stains even upon the garments of the Heavenly Bride while she remains upon earth; the tares and the wheat cannot be entirely separated until the great harvest comes. But still, brethren, it were only a grievous deception of our own souls to deny that we are not what our fathers were, even to a comparatively late period, in love and zeal; nor in fact what we expect our descendants