

Some think the two edges refer to the Old and New Testament ; we shall be content to think that it means thoroughly sharp. Some have suggested that the sharp sword has a double purpose in smiting : (1) smiting to heal ; and this would be analogous to the surgeon's use of a sharp instrument where the sharpness is useful to remove unhealthy growth ; writing to the city of Galen as well as of Æsculapius, this shade of meaning is rendered the more probable ; and, (2) smiting to destroy—such a sword as the executioner would use.

There is the work that is like pruning the branches ; this is the first use. There is also the work of cutting down the useless and fruitless tree that cumbereth the ground.

In both we see the severer aspect of the Son of Man, and we must never forget that He is infinitely stern as well as infinitely kind. He is an exacting Master, and demands our whole-hearted service. He cannot be deceived : His words are true, and the entrance of His word bringeth light. He wieldeth not the sword in vain. Let us ask Him to use the sword to prune us and to cure us, that He may never require to use upon us the sword of His wrath.

III. The body of the particular message to the Church of Pergamos.

We have anticipated a part of this by referring to the seat of Satan being led to this by the consideration of the name Pergamos. We note now that certain four words occur in every one of the seven messages : and they are very serious words for our consideration : " I know thy works."

This is true of us as individuals as well as of churches. Every individual will be known by his works, and will be judged as to whether his faith shall have borne fruit or not ; and every church, whether it be an individual congregation or a national church or the Church Catholic, is known as to its works.

The works of the individual, the works of the church, should be the works of Christ : of Him who went about doing good.

Not only does He know the works—the next words are most suggestive—"and where thou dwellest," He knows not only the results of our life, but also the minutest circumstances of our life ; here, for example, He knows how dire were the surroundings of the faithful in Pergamos ; He knows that persecutions of the fiercest character and temptations of the most alluring nature stood on the one side or the other : to daunt on the one side or to corrupt and deceive them on the other. How the recognition by us of this our Lord's intimate knowledge of us, of our works, of our difficulties and of all our surroundings ought to help us in our own conflicts in our spiritual life! Where we are we have a work to do, and perhaps just there no other one can do that work so well as we.