

first who came knocking at her gates with the message of Christ were some disciples of John the Baptist. Then came Apollos, "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures," and after him came Paul, whose burning zeal soon threw the whole city into an uproar. But that uproar produced good results. Many people deserted the temple; many brought their magical books together to a public place and burned them; the spirit of inquiry was abroad as the disputing went on daily in the school of one Tyrannus, and so from mouth to mouth amongst all classes of people, from the chief magistrate down to those who worked hard for their daily bread, there was felt gradually the power of Christianity.

Here it was that St. Paul left Timothy as the first bishop or "angel" of the Church of Ephesus, and here it was that St. John himself preached the words of Christ. It is pre-eminently the city of St. John. It is said that he died there and there also was buried.

At a very early period—before St. John was past the prime of life—persecutions swooped down upon the Christians. The beloved disciple himself was banished to a dreary island in the Grecian Archipelago.

There he saw his wonderful vision of things which are and things which are to be. There he saw the Lord Himself, his beloved Master, with seven gems glittering like stars in his right hand, and surrounded by seven lights which St. John calls "candlesticks," but which in reality represented the seven churches of Asia.

And to Ephesus the first message was sent. The "angel" of this Church was probably Timothy; and it may be noticed that each ruler is held to be a type of his people. It was the case then as it is now. As the heads of the Church are, so you will find the Church herself. When the priests were worldly the Church was worldly; when the priests were cruel, the Church was cruel; when the priests were noble workers for God the Church was bright and Christlike. So much depends upon the ministers of God for what the Church is or ought to be, that the prayer of all should ever be that she may always be governed by faithful and true pastors.

But what was this message that was sent to the Church of Ephesus? Though brief, it is pertinent throughout. First, there is a word of praise, "I know thy *works* and thy *labour* and thy *patience*, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not."

Here there are good characteristics for any Church—works, labour, patience, hatred of evil and anxiety for purity of doctrine.

Eighteen hundred years ago this message was conveyed by slow means from dreary Patmos to luxurious Ephesus, and to-day its words come to us. They come to us as congregations. They come to us as individuals.

And first as to the words of praise. What

Churches, what congregations are there who have a right to expect the commendation of God? What has their work been? Has it been simply to cultivate selfishness in their own worship, or has it been along the line of trying to reach the hearts of those who have not yet known God? Have they been careful to weed out from their midst those whose lives bring scandal upon the fair name of Christianity? Is it right that discipline should have become almost a dead letter amongst us? We can not judge, it is true, of a man's heart; but we can judge of his external actions, and those guilty of presumptuous sins or scandalous deeds should not be allowed to have the privileges of full membership in the Church.

Ephesus was praised (i) because it could not bear those that were evil, (ii) because it tried those who said they were apostles and were not.

And we, at the present time, live in an age of veneering. Many things in our midst say they are what they are not. A cheap metal is dipped in a very thin solution which is made to shine and to pass for what it is not—a silver vessel! Slender sticks of timber crossed by equally slender scantling are boarded up with rough boards and then bricked over with one row of bricks, and this passes for what it is not—a brick house.

Things bought in the days of our grandfathers lasted a lifetime, now they are worn out almost as soon as they are purchased. It is because they are unreal; they pretend to be what they are not.

And to a greater or less extent it is so with Christianity. Many people take upon themselves the office and work of the ministry who can shew no real authority for it further than their own word. There ought to be a better test than that. There are too many now-a-days who "say they are apostles and are not."

But even in the matter of Church membership are there not in our midst too many who have but a mere veneering of religion, just enough to save appearances and nothing more? Rub off the little show of Sunday religion and what is left? Too many people have two lives—the Sunday life and the week-day life—and they are very different one from the other. Are not these people who say they are religious and are not?

Looking again at the message sent to the angel of the Church at Ephesus we find another note of praise sounded in this—"This thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."

These Nicolaitanes, whoever or whatever they were, were a great source of trouble to the primitive Church. The angel of the Church at Ephesus hated them. There are some dreamy Christians who dislike the word hate used in any sense; yet surely we are to hate sin. Could God say of all, "You hate the wicked whom I also hate"—at least, which is the true meaning, that you hate their ways and will turn from them, however