



THE
SEVEN
CHURCHES
OF
ASIA



ROBERT MURRAY McCHEYNE







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OF
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CHRISTIAN
HERITAGE





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EXPOSITION 1

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest





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the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Rev. 2:1-7).

In the second and third chapters of the Revelation are written Seven Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia; and they are sweet, because they show us not only what the mind of Christ *was*, but what *it is*, now that He is in glory.

The gospels are very sweet, because they show us what the mind of Christ was in the days of His flesh, when He tabernacled with men upon earth; but *these* are sweet, because they show us that Jesus is the same when standing at the right hand of the Father, as when He stood by the Sea of Galilee; that He is the same now while holding the reins of the universe, as when He stood by His disciples, and, blessing them, said, 'Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.'

This epistle is to the Church of Ephesus, the chief of the churches of Asia – the church to which Paul went twice-where he remained for three years – and where he left Timothy. Let us see.





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In what character Christ is mentioned here.

He is said to be holding the seven stars in His right hand, and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. First, he holdeth the seven stars in His right hand; these stars are His ministers. Now, the right hand is the place of power; ministers only shine as long as they are in the hand of Christ. People now look too much to ministers; they expect to get wisdom from them; but we are not put up to be between you and Christ. As I have told you before, the only use of the pole was to hold up the brazen serpent. No one thought of looking at the pole: so are we here to hold up Christ in the sight of you all; we are to give testimony to the truth; we are witnesses for Christ; we are to hold up Jesus before you, and before ourselves too: so that we shall disappear, and nothing shall be seen but Christ. The star of Bethlehem led the wise men, and stood over the place where the young child lay; so are we to be the star, to lead you to the place where the young child lies. The morning star goes out when the sun appears, and many stars go out when the soul has been led to the Sun.

And, second, 'Jesus walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.' He walketh in the midst of the churches; He is in this church this night. 'Go ye into all the world.' What, Lord!





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Shall we go in among these wicked people? Shall we leave Thee, and go into that dazzling, into that cruel world? Yes, but 'lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' This is what Christ said upon earth, but perhaps He does not say this now. Yes, He walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks when on earth, and He walketh in the midst of them still. Jesus walketh in the midst of believers; they are the candlesticks; they were once of cast metal, but, united to Christ, they become gold, pure gold. What little Samuel did, was to walk among the candlesticks, and see that they were kept burning: so doth Christ; He walketh in the midst of believers, to preserve them, to see that they burn, to pour in fresh oil, to give the Holy Spirit. If you were to put a lamp in a place where there was no air, it would go out; and yet, how is it that believers are kept in this world? It takes all the power of God to do it; it takes all power, in heaven and in earth; but He is able, and He will do it. They would soon grow dim but He will keep them burning.



What Christ says in the praise of Ephesus.

'I know thy works.' It is Jesus that knows them. Now, does this make you quake – does it make you fear – does it make you tremble from head to foot, to think that the eye of Christ is upon





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you, that He says, I know thy works? Why should it? Because when Jesus says to you, I know thy sin; you should say to Him, I know Thy sufferings. When He says to you, I know all thy wants, that thou hast many; then you should say to Him, I know Thy fullness. When He says to you, I know that thou hast got little strength; then say you to Him, I know that Thou hast got all strength – that Thou art all-mighty. When He says to you, I know thy folly; then say you to Him, I know Thy wisdom – what treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Thee. When He says unto you, I know what darkness is in thee; then say you to Him, I know what light is in Thee. For what does David say in the 139th Psalm?



O LORD, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether;

and then rejoicing he says:

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there





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be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

But then Jesus knows your good works too; He knows every cup of water given for His sake; He knows every throb of love in your bosom for Himself – every act of affection to His people, to the brethren. Every believer feels that his own works are nothing, and it is right that he should feel so; every believer looks upon them in this way, because he feels there is so much vileness in everything he does – such a mixture of motives. For instance, if you were to be kind to a stranger, you may have in doing so but one grain of love to Christ, and a hundred grains of other feelings; perhaps love of praise, or a desire to be thought well of. Now I will tell you what Christ does; He sprinkles the hundred grains with His own blood, He forgets them all, and treasures up the one grain of love to Himself, and says unto you, ‘I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience.’

The second thing Christ says in their praise is, ‘Thou canst not bear them which are evil.’ This is a sure mark of a Christian; they cannot bear them which are evil: they say, ‘Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.’ Now, if I were to look around at a Christian here and there,





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I would find that they feel this; but I would like to see more of it, a great deal more. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord;' for there can never be friendship between Christ and the world. Not that you must not walk on the same streets with them; but if ye have to live in Sodom, be like Lot, who vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds; but be ye rather like Abraham, and dwell in the land of Hebron. You are quite a different people from the world; 'ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people;' you have a different birth, ye are born from above; you have a different education, ye are taught of God; you are on a different journey, you are travelling towards Zion; you have different resting places from the world, you rest by the wells of salvation; you have a different deathbed, you say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' and you have a different home.

Notice now the third thing Christ says of them: 'Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.' It is said that in the latter days many shall rise up saying they are Christ; *that day is nearer than some of you think*. Now are there not many false apostles in our day? Are there not some who try to deceive and lead away many? Try them





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by 'the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' If you bid them believe what they say, on their own word, believe it not; try them by the Word. The Bereans were more noble, they searched to see whether or not these things were so; be ye noble, with their nobility.

Now, let us see the fourth thing Christ says in their praise: 'And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.' It is far easier to do than to suffer; it is far easier to be a Whitfield, to preach from land's end to land's end, than to lie on a bed of sickness. We have much to make us faint, to make us sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the midst of us: and mostly all of you have sorrows; some of you have sorrows that you never breathed beyond your own bosom, even sorrows without a name; and some of you have sorrows that you tell from kindred to kindred breast – you have sorrows, because your children care for none of these things, or because those who are dear to you are on beds of sickness. But we must not faint or grow weary, we must bear. Resignation is a very sweet grace: it can only be cultivated here. The believer has two kinds of graces – he has purity and resignation; God has purity, but God can have no resignation, for He has all sovereignty,





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He is all-mighty. Yet resignation to God's will is a very sweet grace; it is a flower that grows on the earth – it will not bloom yonder. It is much easier to go about a whole lifetime preaching, to preach night and day, than to be patient under sickness. There are many saints who suffered much upon earth, now shining the brightest in glory; just because they glorified God more than others by their patient submission.

Let us see what Jesus blames them for.

He says, 'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' *Somewhat* is not in the original – it should not be there at all. We would think by this, it is some little thing. It should be, I *have* against thee, or, I have *this* against thee, that thou hast left thy first love. Now, do you know what it is to have been in an agony, when awakened by God – to have seen your corruptions? And do you remember what you felt when you saw an unveiled Christ – when you saw first a crucified Christ? Do you remember when your sins accused you, and when you said, *Behold, my Surety, who shall condemn?*

When a beloved friend was ill, and when his bosom heaved, and his eye flashed, do you remember what gladness filled your breast at the first signs of returning health; when the





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eye became clearer, and the breast beat more quietly? And do you remember, too, what you felt when lying in the darkness of the night, and saying, Would God it were morning; when the first streak of light burst in upon you, with what gladness it filled your breast? And do you remember when first you were introduced to Christ – when first you entered into the presence of God – when you were enabled to say, He *is mine*? You had often heard of Him before; but do you remember the time when first you could say, ‘My Beloved is mine’? What a burning love you had then in your breast! – do you remember the leap of joy that came into your bosom? This was *first love*, this was *the love of espousals*; and this is what you have left. Do you not remember sacraments, when you had a greater glow of love in your bosom to Christ, in the anticipation of them, than you have of our approaching sacrament?

I do not know, but I believe (I speak of my own parish, for I know it best) that there is no word I could find in the Bible, that I could address to you, that would be more applicable to most of you than this, and this is what Jesus is saying unto you this night, ‘I have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.’ It is not a man that has this against you, it is not I who have this against you, it is *Christ*; it is





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He who suffered for your sake; it is He who was crucified, who died on the cross, who left His home for your sake; it is *Jesus* that has this against you; and He is saying unto you, Was I such a small object of love, that ye could only love me for one night, that ye could not watch with me one hour, that ye grew weary of loving me so soon?

And I think I may apply this to the unconverted here; for although you never had the first love, still there are many among you who were much more anxious than you are now. Is hell less dreadful than when you were first awakened? Is it not worth while that you should be awakened again? There are many among you who have fled out of Sodom, but who have never entered Zoar.

And now, let us see *what will be the punishment of those who have left their first love.* 'Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.'

Christ says that you are to remember from whence you have fallen. You were once built upon the corner stone – Oh how you have fallen! You were once as a red-hot coal – Oh how cold you have got! You once had more





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zeal for the cause of Christ. Oh how you have fallen! And whilst you sit and think of this, you are to repent and do the first works. What! Must I be converted again? Yes, you must be converted again, or else Christ will come quickly. You see He is to lose no time about it; so I pray you repent quickly, or else Christ will remove thy candlestick. Oh! How dreadful are the punishments of Christ! He may take away your minister; and He may also take away the light of His word. You see how it was with Jonah; for the sake of one backsliding soul a whole sea was put in motion. So may God, for the sake of some backsliding soul, remove your candlestick out of its place. O Lord, give me suffering; give me sickness, give me poverty, give me anything, give me death itself; but do not remove Thy light from me, for then I shall get dark and lifeless!

And, lastly, let us see what is said in the seventh verse, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' And so we are fighting, we are in a warfare, and I know there are some of you who are struggling, struggling hard, and you are overcoming. Well, then, you shall eat of the tree of life; you shall eat of Christ, who is in the midst of the paradise of God. May this prove a happy sacrament to many of you if





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we ever see it, if our candlestick be not removed
before then! May it be a sacrament that shall be
unto you the renewal of your first love!

