

[STEM Publishing: The writings of C. H. Mackintosh](#): The Remnant - Past and Present. C. H. Mackintosh.

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It is at once interesting, instructive, and encouraging to trace through Scripture the history of what is called "The Remnant." We may remark at the outset that the fact of there being a remnant proves the failure of the ostensible witness or professing body, whether Jewish or Christian. If all were faithful there would, of course, be no moral ground for a remnant, nothing to distinguish a few from the general body of professors. The remnant, at any time, will be found to consist of those who feel and own the common failure and ruin, and count on God, and cleave to His Word. These are the great characteristic marks of the remnant in every age. We have failed, but God is faithful, and His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

Now in tracing the history of the remnant in Old Testament times we find that the lower down we go in the nation's history, the richer the display of divine grace; and, further, the deeper the moral gloom, the brighter the flashes of individual faith. This is fraught with the most blessed encouragement for every true-hearted child of God and servant of Christ who feels and owns the ruin of the whole professing Church. It is cheering beyond expression for every faithful soul to be assured that, however the Church has failed, it is the privilege of the individual believer to enjoy as full and precious fellowship with God, and pursue as true a path of discipleship as ever was known in the brightest days of the Church's history. Let us turn to Scripture for illustration.

In 2 Chronicles 30 we have a refreshing and encouraging record of a Passover kept in the reign of Hezekiah, when the visible unity of the nation was broken up; and failure and ruin had come in. We do not attempt to quote the whole passage, much as we should like to do so, for it is most precious and soul-stirring. We merely give the closing lines as bearing upon our thesis.

"So there was great joy in Jerusalem: *for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.*" Here then we have a lovely illustration of the grace of God meeting those of His people who owned their failure and sin and took their true place in His presence. Hezekiah and those with him were fully convinced of their low condition, and hence they did not presume to keep the Passover in the first month. They availed themselves of the provision of grace, as recorded in Numbers 9, and kept the feast in the second month. "For a multitude of the people . . . had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the Passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon *every one that prepareth his heart to seek God*, the Lord God of his fathers, though . . . not according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord harkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people" (2 Chr. 30: 18-20).

Here we see divine grace meeting, as it ever does, those who truly confess their failure and weakness. There was no assumption or pretension, no hardness or indifference, no attempt to hide their true condition, no setting up to be all right; no, they took their true place, and cast themselves on that exhaustless grace which never fails to meet a contrite heart.

What was the result? "The children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days *with great gladness*: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord. And Hezekiah spake comfortably [to the heart] unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness"

(2 Chr. 30: 21-23).

Now we may rest assured that all this was most grateful to the heart of Jehovah, God of Israel. True there was weakness, failure, short-coming. Things were not externally what they were in Solomon's day. Doubtless many may have looked upon Hezekiah's acting as presumptuous in convening such an assembly under the circumstances. Indeed, we are told that his touching and beautiful invitation was mocked and laughed to scorn throughout Ephraim, Manasseh, and Zebulun.

Thus it is, alas! too often. The actings of faith are not understood, because the precious grace of God is not understood. But "divers of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun *humbled themselves*, and came to Jerusalem," and they were richly rewarded by coming in for a feast of fat things such as had not been celebrated since the days of Solomon. There is no limit to the blessing which grace has in store for the broken and contrite heart. If all Israel had responded to Hezekiah's touching appeal, they would have shared in the blessing; but they were *unbroken*, and therefore *unblessed*! Let us all remember this; we may rest assured it has a voice and a needed lesson for us. May we hear and learn!

We shall now pass on to the reign of the pious and devoted king Josiah, when the nation was on the very eve of dissolution. Here we have a very striking and beautiful illustration of our thesis. We do not attempt to go into details, having done so elsewhere.

We shall merely quote the few closing lines. "And the children of Israel that were present kept the Passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. *And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept*, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this Passover kept" (2 Chr. 35: 17-19).

What a very remarkable testimony! In Hezekiah's Passover we are carried back to the brilliant reign of Solomon; but here we have something brighter still. And if it be asked what it was that threw such a halo of glory around Josiah's Passover, we believe it was the fact of its being the fruit of holy and reverent obedience to the Word of God in the midst of abounding ruin and corruption, error and confusion. The activities of faith in an obedient and devoted heart were thrown into relief by the dark background of the nation's condition.

All this is full of encouragement and comfort for every true lover of Christ. Many might have thought it very presumptuous of Josiah to pursue such a course at such a moment and under such circumstances; but it was the very reverse of presumption, as we may gather from the blessed message sent to him from the Lord by the mouth of Huldah, the prophetess; "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; *Because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God*, when thou heardest His words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before Me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before Me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord" (2 Chr. 34: 26-27) .

Here we have the moral basis of Josiah's remarkable career; and most assuredly there was nothing savouring of presumption therein. A contrite heart, weeping eyes, and rent garments are not the accompaniments of presumption or self-confidence. No; they are the precious results of the Word of God acting on the heart and conscience and leading to a course of deep-toned personal devotedness, most cheering and edifying to contemplate. Oh, that there were more of it amongst us! Truly the heart longs for it. May the Word of God so tell upon our whole moral being that instead of yielding to the condition of things around us we may live above it and pass through it as witnesses to the eternal reality of the truth of God and the imperishable virtues of the name of Jesus.

But we must pass on from the interesting history of Josiah, and present some further illustrations of our theme. Hardly had that beloved servant of God passed off the scene when every trace of his blessed work was swept away, and the heavy tide of judgment, long held back in the long-suffering mercy of God, rolled over the land. Jerusalem was laid in ruins, its temple burnt to the ground, and all the people who escaped were carried captive to Babylon, there to hang their harps on the willows and weep over the faded light of other days.

But, blessed forever be the God of all grace, He never leaves Himself without a witness; and hence, during the long and dreary period of Babylonish captivity, we find some most striking and beautiful proofs of the statement that the greater the ruin the richer the grace, and the deeper the gloom the brighter the flashes of individual faith. There was then, as there ever is, "a remnant according to the election of grace" — a little band of devoted men who loved the Lord and were true to His Word amid the pollutions and abominations of Babylon, and who were prepared to face the fiery furnace and the lions' den for the truth of God.

The opening chapters of the book of Daniel furnish some magnificent results of individual faith and devotedness. Look, for example, at Daniel 2: 46. Where in the history of the nation of Israel have we aught more striking than what is here recorded? Earth's greatest monarch humbled before a captive exile and giving forth this wonderful testimony: "The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret."

But where did Daniel get the power to reveal the king's secret? Verses 17 and 18 supply the lovely answer: "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret." Here we have a prayer-meeting in Babylon. These dear men were of one heart and one mind. They were one in their purpose to refuse the king's meat and wine. They were resolved, by the grace of God, to tread the holy path of separation, though captive exiles in Babylon; and they got together for prayer, and received an abundant answer.

Can aught be finer than this? What an encouragement to the Lord's beloved people in darkest days to hold fast Christ's Word, and not deny His precious name! Is it not most refreshing and edifying to find amid the dark days of Babylonish captivity a few true-hearted men treading in holy fellowship the path of separation and dependence? They stood for God in the king's palace, and God was with them in the furnace and in the lions' den, and conferred upon them the high privilege of standing before the world as the servants of the Most High God. They refused the king's meat; they would not worship the king's image; they kept God's Word and confessed His name utterly regardless of consequences.

They did not say, "We must go with the times; we must do as others do; there is no need to make ourselves singular; we must outwardly conform to the public worship, the religion of the state, and hold our own private opinions all the same; we are not called to withstand the faith of the nation; being in Babylon, we must conform to Babylon's religion."

Thank God, Daniel and his beloved companions did not adopt this contemptible, time-serving policy. No! and what is more, they did not draw a plea, from the complete wreck of Israel's national polity, for lowering the standard of individual faithfulness. They felt — could not but feel, the ruin. They confessed their sin, and the sin of the nation; they felt that, so far as they were concerned, sackcloth and ashes became them; they would bow down their whole moral being beneath that solemn word, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." All this was, alas, too true; but that was no reason why they should defile themselves with the king's meat, worship the king's image, or give up the worship of

the one true and living God. Ah, *God* was before their eyes, and Him they served and obeyed.

All this is full of the most precious teaching for all the Lord's people at the present moment. There are two special evils which we have to guard against. We must beware of ecclesiastical pretension or boasting in mere church position, without an exercised conscience and the holy fear of God. This is a terrible evil, against which every beloved child of God should most sedulously watch. We must never forget that the professing Church is a hopeless wreck, and that any human effort to restore it is a delusion. We are not called, and hence not qualified, to restore it. The Holy Ghost is nevertheless forming the body of Christ, and hastening its completion for the Lord's return.

But, on the other hand, we are not to draw a plea from the ruin of the church for laxity as to truth, or sluggishness in our personal walk. We are in great danger of this. There is no reason whatever why any child of God, or servant of Christ, should do or sanction what is wrong, or continue for an hour in association with aught that has not for its authority, "Thus saith the Lord." "Let *every one* that nameth the name of the Lord *depart* from iniquity." And what then? Stand alone? Do nothing? Not so, thanks and praise to our ever-gracious God! But "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, *with them* that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" — a heart true to Christ and His interests.

But we must pursue our subject, and ask the reader to turn to Neh. 8. We have been looking at the remnant before the captivity and during the captivity; and now we are called to look at them after the captivity; brought back, by the rich mercy of God, into their own beloved land. We shall not attempt to go into details, but just take one weighty fact in illustration of our special thesis — a fact of immense importance for the whole Church of God at the present moment.

We shall quote a few verses of this lovely Scripture: "So they read in the book in *the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading....* And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, *even to understand the words of the law.* And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month.... And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for *since the days of Joshua the son of Nun* unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner."

This is very striking. Here we find a feeble remnant gathered round the Word of God, holding a reading-meeting, and getting to understand the truth and feel its power on the heart and conscience. And what was the result? Nothing less than the celebration of the feast of tabernacles, which had never been kept since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. Throughout the days of the judges, the days of Samuel the prophet, the days of the kings — even the brilliant days of David and Solomon — the feast of tabernacles had never been celebrated. It was reserved for a feeble company of returned exiles to keep, amid the ruins of Jerusalem, this precious and beautiful festival — the type of Israel's glorious future.

Was this presumption? Nay, it was simple obedience to the Word of God. It was written in the Book — written for them; they acted upon it. "And there was very great gladness." There was no pretension, no setting up to be anything, no boasting, no attempt to hide their true condition; they were a poor, feeble, despised remnant, taking their true place, broken, and contrite, confessing their failure, deeply conscious that it was not with them as it was in the days of Solomon, David, and Joshua. But they heard the Word of God — heard and understood — bowed to its holy authority — kept the feast.

"And there was very great gladness." This surely is another striking and beautiful illustration of our theme, that the greater the ruin, the richer the grace; and the deeper the gloom, the brighter the flashes of individual faith. At all times, and in all places, the contrite and confiding heart is met by unqualified, unbounded grace.

We shall now turn, for a moment, to the last page of Old Testament Scripture — the prophecy of Malachi. Many years have rolled by since the bright days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and we have here a most sorrowful picture of Israel's condition. Alas, alas! "the down grade" has been rapidly trodden. It is the same sad story — "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" Let us quote a few sentences.

"Ye offer polluted bread upon Mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee? In that ye say the table of the Lord is contemptible.... Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for naught. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.... Ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even His meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord" (Mal. 1: 7, 10, 12-13; see also Mal. 3: 5-9).

What a deplorable condition of things! It is simply heart-breaking to contemplate. The public worship of God brought into utter contempt; the ministers of religion working only for hire; venality and corruption in connection with the holy service of God; every form of moral pravity practiced amongst the people. In short, it was a scene of deep moral gloom, depressing beyond expression to all who cared for the Lord's interests.

Yet, even in the midst of this terrible scene, we have a most touching and exquisite illustration of our thesis. As ever, there is a remnant — a beloved company who honoured and loved the Lord, and found in Him their centre, their object, their delight. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord harkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels [My special treasure]; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

How lovely is all this! What a contrast to the general condition of things! We may range through the entire history of the nation, and find nothing like this. Where do we read of "a book of remembrance written before the Lord"? Nowhere; not even amidst the brilliant victories of Joshua and David, or the splendours of Solomon. It may be said there was no need. That is not the point. What we have to ponder is the striking fact that the words and ways of this feeble remnant, in the very midst of abounding wickedness, were so refreshing to the heart of God that He had a book of remembrance written about them. We may safely assert that the communings of these beloved ones were more grateful to the heart of God than the singers and trumpeters in Solomon's day. "They spake often one to another." "They feared the Lord, and thought upon His name." There was individual devotedness, personal attachment; they loved the Lord; and this drew them together.

Nothing can be more lovely. Would there were more of it in our midst! Those dear people were not doing anything very great or showy in man's view; but ah, they loved the Lord, they thought of Him, and their common attachment to Him drew them together to speak of Him; and this gave a charm to their reunions which gratified and refreshed the heart of God! It stood out in bright and beautiful relief from the dark background of hirelingism and heartless routine with which they were surrounded. They were not bound together by certain views or opinions which they held in common, though

doubtless they had their views and opinions; neither were they held together by ritualistic services or ceremonial observances; no, they had something far better and higher than any of these things; they were drawn and knit together by deep-toned personal devotedness to the Lord, and this was agreeable to His heart. He was weary with the whole system of ritualism, but refreshed by the genuine devotedness of a few precious souls who got together as often as they could to speak one to another, and to encourage one another in the Lord.

Would that there were more of this amongst us! We long for it, and our one earnest desire in writing this paper is to promote it. We greatly dread the withering, paralysing influence of mere formalism or religious routine — getting into a groove, and going on day after day, week after week, year after year, in a poor, cold, formal manner, most offensive to the loving heart of our adorable Lord and Saviour, who desires to be surrounded by a company of wholehearted, devoted followers, true to His name, true to His Word, true to one another for His sake, seeking to serve Him in every right way, while ardently looking out for His blessed appearing. May the Spirit of God work mightily in the hearts of all His people, healing, restoring, reviving, and maintaining a faithful company to welcome the heavenly Bridegroom! Let us cry to our gracious God day and night for this.

I am anxious to present two or three illustrations drawn from the precious pages of the New Testament. In the opening of Luke's Gospel we have a lovely picture of a remnant in the midst of a hollow, heartless profession. We listen to the spiritual heart utterances of Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, and Simeon. We read of Anna the prophetess, who spoke of Jesus to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. I remember hearing my beloved and revered old friend J.N.D. [Darby] say in reference to Anna, "I am sure I do not know how she managed to get at them at all, but she did." Yes, she did, because she loved the Lord and loved His dear people, and delighted to find them out and speak of Him. It is just our beloved remnant in Malachi over again. Nothing can be more lovely or refreshing. It was the exquisite and fragrant fruit of deep-toned love to the Lord in contrast with the wearisome forms of dead religiousness.

We shall now pass on to the Epistle of Jude. Here we find apostate Christendom in all its appalling forms of wickedness, just as in Malachi we had apostate Judaism. But our object just now is not apostate Christendom, but the Christian remnant. Thanks and praise to our gracious God, there is always a remnant marked off from the mass of corrupt profession, and characterised by genuine attachment to Christ, to His interests, and to every member of His beloved body.

It is to this remnant that the inspired apostle addresses his solemn and weighty Epistle. It is not to any special assembly, but "To them that are *sanctified* by God the Father, and *preserved* in Jesus Christ, *called: mercy* unto you, and *peace*, and *love*, be multiplied."

Blessed position! Precious portion! "Separated," "preserved," "called" — this is the position. "Mercy," "peace," "love" — this is the portion. And all this made sure to every true-hearted child of God on the face of the earth ere a single word is written about the overwhelming tide of apostasy which was so soon to roll over the whole professing Church.

We repeat, and would emphasise the expression, "to every true-hearted child of God." As in Israel of old, so in the professing Church, the remnant will be found to consist of those who are true to Christ, hold fast His Word in the face of everything, are devoted to His precious interests, and who love His appearing. In a word, it must be a living reality, and not mere church-membership or nominal fellowship here or there, with this or that. Moreover it is not assuming to be, but really being, of the remnant-not the name, but the spiritual power; so the apostle says, "I will know, not the speech . . . but the power." A weighty word for us all.

And now let us turn for a few moments to the precious words of exhortation addressed to the Christian remnant. May the Spirit clothe them with power to our souls!

"But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." They are directed to the Holy Scriptures, and to these alone. It is not to human tradition of any kind; not to the Fathers; not to the decrees of general councils; not to the commandments and doctrines of men; not to any of these, or all put together, which can only bewilder, perplex, and mislead; but to the pure and precious Word of God, that perfect revelation which in His infinite goodness He has put into our hands, and which can make a little child "wise unto salvation" and make a man "*perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto *all good works*" (2 Tim. 3).

The Lord be praised for this unspeakable favour! No human language can set forth the importance of having a divinely settled authority for our path. All we want is to be absolutely and completely governed by it, to have it hidden in our hearts, acting on our consciences, forming our character, governing our conduct *in everything*. To give the Word of God this place is one of the marked characteristics of the Christian remnant. It is not the worthless, baseless formulary, "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." Protestantism is not the Church of God, it is not the Christian remnant.

The Reformation was the result of a blessed work of the Spirit of God; but Protestantism, in all its denominational branches, is what man has made of it. In it human organisation has displaced the living work of the Spirit, and the form of godliness has displaced the power of individual faith. No mere ism, call it what you please, can ever be regarded as the Church of God or the Christian remnant. It is of the very utmost moral importance to see this. The professing Church has utterly failed, its corporate unity is hopelessly gone, just as we see in the history of Israel. But the Christian remnant is made up of all those who truly feel and own the ruin, who are governed by the Word and led by the Spirit, in separation from what is contrary to that Word, to wait for their Lord.

Let us see how all this comes out in Jude's address to the remnant. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Here then we have a loved view of the true Christian remnant and their occupation among themselves. Nothing can be more beautiful. We may be asked, to whom does this charming passage apply? We answer, to those — whoever and wherever they are — addressed in the first verse of the Epistle: "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Nothing can be more simple or more blessed. It is perfectly obvious that these words do not and cannot apply to mere professors; neither can they apply to any ecclesiastical body under the sun. In a word, they apply to the living members of the body of Christ. All such should be found together building up themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keeping themselves in the love of God, and looking out for their Lord.

This is the Christian remnant, just as in Malachi 3 we have the Jewish remnant. Nothing can be more lovely. It is the position in which all true Christians should be found. There is no pretension to setting themselves up to be anything, no attempt to ignore the sad and solemn fact of the utter ruin of the professing Church. It is a Christian remnant in the midst of Christendom's ruins, true to the Person of Christ, true to His Word; knit together in true Christian love — not the love of sect, party, clique, or coterie, but love in the Spirit, love to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; love expressing itself in true devotedness to Christ and His precious interests; and loving ministry to all who belong to Him and seek to reflect Him in all their ways. It is not resting in mere position, regardless of condition

— a terrible snare of the devil — but a healthy union of the two in a life characterised by sound principle and gracious practice; the kingdom of God established in the heart and developing itself in the whole practical career.

Such then is the position, the condition, the practice of the true Christian remnant; and we may rest assured that, where these things are realized and carried out, there will be as rich enjoyment of Christ, as full communion with God, and as bright a testimony to the glorious truth of New Testament Christianity as ever was known in the brightest days of the Church's history. In a word, there will be that which will glorify the name of God, gratify the heart of Christ, and tell with living power on the hearts and consciences of men. May God, in His infinite goodness, give us to see these bright realities in this dark and evil day — a fresh illustration of the soul-stirring fact that the greater the ruin, the richer the grace; the deeper the gloom, the brighter the flashes of individual faith.

Look for a moment at the address to the fourth of the seven churches, as given in the second chapter of Revelation. The church of Thyatira gives us the history of the Church during those long, dreary centuries of the Middle Ages, when gross darkness covered the earth, when poverty — that darkest moral blot — prevailed in the well-known character of Jezebel.

In the address to this assembly we find a marked change, indicated by three plain facts — namely: first, a remnant is for the first time addressed: secondly, the Lord's coming is for the first time introduced; and, thirdly, the hearing ear is no longer looked for in the assembly at large, but in the overcomer. Now these facts prove beyond all question that in Thyatira all hope of corporate restoration is abandoned. "I gave her space to repent . . . and she repented not." The case is hopeless as regards the professing body. But here the remnant is singled out and cheered — not with the hope of a converted world or a restored church but with the bright and blessed hope of the Lord's coming as the bright and morning star. "But unto you I say, the remnant [The word rendered "remnant" in the above passage is *loipois*, and is from the same root as the word "remnant" in Rom 11: 5, which is *limma*. Both are from *leipo*, to leave.] in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine [*didachen* the same root as *didaskein* what Jezebel was doing], and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have hold fast till I come."

Here then we have a deeply interesting view of the Christian remnant. It is not the church restored, but a distinct company clear of Jezebel's teaching and Satan's depths, and going on to the end. It is of the utmost importance that the reader should be clear in reference to the fact that the last four churches run on synchronously to the end. It simplifies the whole subject immensely, and gives us a very definite, practical view of the Christian remnant. There is no mention of a remnant until we get to Thyatira. Then all hope of corporate restoration is given up. This simple fact overturns the church of Rome from its very foundations. It is presented to us as an apostate and idolatrous system, threatened with the judgment of God: and a remnant are addressed who have nothing to do with her. So much for the boasted, universal, infallible church of Rome.

But what of Sardis? Is this the church restored? Nothing of the kind. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and *art dead*." This is not a restored or reformed church, but *threatened* with Christ's coming *as a thief*, instead of being cheered with "the bright and morning star." In a word, it is Protestantism with "a name," but the works "not perfect before God." And what then? The Christian remnant. "*A few names* even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and *they* [He does not say *thou*] shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." We have here a vivid and most striking contrast between dead, cold, nominal profession and a few true-hearted, earnest lovers of Christ — between form and power, death and life.

In the last two assemblies we have the contrast continued, enlarged, and enforced. Philadelphia gives us a most precious picture of a company of true Christians, humble, lowly, feeble, but true to Christ; holding fast His Word, and not denying His name — Christ and His Word treasured in the heart and confessed in the life — a living reality, not a lifeless form. The moral beauty of this is excellent. The very contemplation of it is refreshing and edifying indeed. In short, it is Christ reproduced by the Holy Ghost in a beloved remnant. There is no pretension to be anything, no assumption of great things. Christ is all: His Word, His name, how precious! We seem to have gathered up and concentrated here the lovely moral traits of the various remnants that have come under our notice, brought out in full blow and yielding a fragrant perfume.

Now all this is most grateful to the heart of Christ. It is not a question of great service rendered, mighty works performed, anything striking or splendid in the eyes of men. No; it is something far more precious to the Lord, namely, the deep, calm, thorough appreciation of Himself and His precious Word. This is far more to Him than the most showy services and costly sacrifices. What He looks for is a place in the heart. Without this all is worthless. But the very feeblest breathing of the heart's affections after Himself is most precious.

Let us harken to our adorable Lord as He pours out His loving heart to this dear Philadelphian company — this true Christian remnant. "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept *My word*, and hast not denied *My name*. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan" — those who take their stand on the boasted ground of traditional religion — "which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that *I have loved thee*" — precious, blessed fact, the basis and guarantee of all, for time and eternity! — "Because thou hast kept the word of *My patience* [not *My power*], I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (*tous katoikountas*), those finding their home on the earth, in contrast to those whose citizenship is in Heaven).

The Lord Christ most graciously pledges Himself to keep His beloved assembly from the terrible hour of trial that is coming upon this whole scene. He will have His heavenly people with Himself in their heavenly home ere a single seal is opened, a trumpet sounded, or a vial poured out. All praise to His name for this bright, blessed, tranquillising, joyful hope! May we live in the power of it while we wait for the full fruition!

But we must quote the remainder of this most exquisite address, so full of comfort and consolation. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of *My God*, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of *My God*, and the name of the city of *My God*, new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from *My God*: and *My new name*."

Nothing can exceed the grace that shines in all this. Jehovah spoke gracious words to His beloved remnant in the days of Malachi. "*They shall be Mine . . . in that day when I make up My jewels*; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all *the proud*, yea, and all that *do wickedly*, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that" — what? That have done great things, made great

sacrifices, made a great profession, had a great name? No; but — "*fear My name* shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3: 17 — Mal. 4: 3).

There are points of similarity and points of contrast in the Jewish and Christian remnants which we cannot go into just now, inasmuch as our object in referring to both is to illustrate our special theme, namely, that in darkest days we find a devoted remnant dear to the heart of God, the heart of Christ, and who are addressed in the most tender and endearing terms, comforted by the most precious assurances, and cheered by the brightest hopes. This we believe to be the special subject laid upon the heart to present to the whole Church of God, for the purpose of encouraging every member of the beloved body of Christ on the face of the earth to stand apart from all that is contrary to His mind as revealed in His Word, and to be found in the position, attitude and spirit of the true Christian remnant, waiting for the coming of our beloved Lord.

One point marks the distinction between the two remnants in the clearest way. It is this: the Jewish remnant is cheered by the hope of the Sun of righteousness; whereas to the Christian remnant is granted the far higher, brighter and sweeter privilege of looking out for the bright and morning Star. A little child can understand the difference between these two things. The morning star appears in the heavens long before the sun rises; and in like manner the Church will meet her Lord as "the bright and morning Star" before the beams of the Sun of righteousness fall in healing power on the God-fearing remnant of Israel.

And now a word, in conclusion, as to Laodicea. Nothing can be more vivid or striking than the contrast between it and Philadelphia in every respect. We have here the last phase of the professing Christian body. It is just about to be spewed out as something insufferably nauseous to Christ. It is not a question of gross immorality. It may to man's eye present a very respectable appearance; but to the heart of Christ its condition is most repulsive. It is characterised by lukewarmness and indifference. "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 spew thee out of My mouth."

How awfully solemn to find the professing Church in such a condition! And to think how soon we pass from the attractions of Philadelphia — so grateful to the heart of Christ, so refreshing to His spirit — to the withering atmosphere of Laodicea, where there is not a single redeeming feature! We have heartless indifference as to Christ and His interests, combined with the most deplorable self-congratulation. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and *have need of nothing*; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

How solemn is all this! People boasting of their riches, and of their having need of nothing, and Christ outside. They have lost the sense of divine righteousness, symbolised by "gold," and practical human righteousness, as symbolised by "white raiment," and yet full of themselves and their doings — the very reverse of the dear Philadelphian company. There, He reproves nothing; here, He commends nothing. There, Christ is all; here, He is actually outside, and the Church is all. In a word, it is perfectly appalling to contemplate. We are just at the close. We have got to the last solemn phase of the Church as God's witness on the earth.

Yet even here, in the face of this most deplorable condition of things, the infinite grace and

changeless love of the heart of Christ shine out in all their undimmed lustre. He is outside; this tells what the Church is. But He is knocking, calling, waiting: this tells what He is, eternal and universal homage to His name! "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." The gold, the white raiment and the eyesalve are offered. Love has various offices to discharge, various characters in which to clothe itself; but it is the same love still — "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever," even though it has to "rebuke and chasten." Here His attitude and His action speak volumes, both as to the Church and as to Himself. "Behold, 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*."

[Here it is not to the outside sinner, but to the professing Church the Lord makes this most solemn and weighty appeal. It is not Christ knocking at the door of the sinner's heart is true as that is also), but at the door of those in the professing Church. How telling! how suggestive! Oh, may professing Christians ponder it!]

In the church of Sardis the remnant is spoken of as "a few names"; in Laodicea there is an "if" as to one; but even if there be a single hearing ear, if there be one to open the door, that one is assured of the high privilege, the immense favour, of supping with Christ — of having that precious one as Guest and Host. "I with him, and he with Me." When the corporate witness has reached the very lowest point, individual faithfulness is rewarded with intimate fellowship with the heart of Christ. Such is the infinite and everlasting love of our beloved Saviour and Lord. Oh, who would not trust Him and praise Him and love Him and serve Him?

And now, beloved Christian reader, in taking leave of you, I would earnestly and affectionately entreat you to join in petition to our ever-gracious God to stir up the hearts of His beloved people all over the world to seek a more pronounced, whole-hearted, devoted discipleship; to turn away from everything contrary to His Word; to be true to His Word and to His name in this dark and evil day; and thus realize the truth, which has passed before us in this paper, that *the greater the ruin, the richer the grace; the deeper the gloom, the brighter the outshining of individual faith*.

P.S. — I feel I must not let this paper go forth without adding a word on the immense importance of keeping up a full, clear, earnest gospel testimony. "Do the work of an evangelist" is a charge given by the beloved apostle from his prison at Rome to his dear son Timothy, in view of the total ruin of the professing Church; and truly the circumstances under which these words were penned impart a touching interest to them. Come what may, Timothy was to continue to announce the glad tidings of God's salvation. He might be tempted to give up in despair, and say, "All is going to pieces, people will not listen to the gospel" — "will not endure sound doctrine."

Faith says, "No; we must never give up. God's gospel must be preached to every creature under heaven. And even though men reject it, God is glorified and His heart is refreshed by the precious message of His love being told out in the ears of perishing sinners." We would encourage the heart of every beloved evangelist on the face of the earth by reminding him that however the Church has failed as God's witness to the world, yet the precious gospel tells out what He is to every poor, broken-hearted, bankrupt sinner who will only trust Him. The thought of this has cheered us during forty-eight years of evangelistic work, when the condition of the Church was heart-breaking to contemplate.

In speaking of the work of an evangelist, we must not confine it to public halls and rooms, which, of course, demand a distinct gift from the Head of the Church. We believe it is the sweet privilege of every child of God to be in a condition of soul to tell the glad tidings to individual souls in private life; and we must confess we long to see more of this. It matters not what our position in life or sphere of action may be, we should earnestly and prayerfully seek the salvation of those with whom we come in

contact. If we fail in this, we are not in communion with the heart of God and the mind of Christ. In the Gospels and Acts we see a great deal of this lovely individual work. "Philip findeth Nathanael."
"Andrew first findeth his own brother Simon."

We want more of this earnest, beautiful, personal work in private. It is refreshing to the heart of God. We are apt to get into a groove and rest satisfied with asking people to come to public halls and rooms — all right and good in its place, and most important. We would not pen a line to detract from the value of this service; but at the same time we cannot help feeling our sad deficiency in loving, personal dealing with souls. But this requires nearness to God in our inward life; which may well cause serious searching of our hearts before God, for it is the root of our deficiency.

May the gracious Lord stir up the hearts of all His beloved people to a more lively interest in the blessed work of evangelization, at home and abroad, in public and in private!