

Readings on 1 Peter 1

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby explores the themes of redemption and divine government in his readings on 1 Peter 1.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1

Topics: "Redemption", "Divine Government"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the foundational themes of 1 Peter 1, emphasizing that Peter addresses the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the world, focusing on their redemption and the divine government of God. He explains that while the first epistle lays the groundwork of redemption, it also prepares the saints for suffering and the principles of God's governance, contrasting it with the second epistle which addresses the wicked. Darby highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between the church and the house of God, noting that Peter's teachings are distinct from Paul's emphasis on the body of Christ. He also touches on the significance of being elect according to God's foreknowledge and the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification and obedience.

Transcript

In chapter 1, Peter is laying the foundation, but the subject proper to his epistle does not begin until chapter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you," etc. In both epistles he lays the foundation of redemption, and then he proceeds to unfold the principles of the government of God under which the Jews had been placed. Take, for instance, the passage, "he that will love life, and see good days," or again, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers," that is not redemption for heavenly glory. As far as I have seen, the first epistle is divine government in favour of saints, telling them they will suffer, and so on; and the second epistle is that the same government in respect of the wicked. In chapter I, he speaks first of redemption, and later on, of how judgment begins at the house of God. And it is very instructive as to the order of the revelations and dealings of God. The epistle is addressed to the Jews scattered throughout Pontus, etc. "Sojourners of the dispersion" it really is.

Ques. "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?"

Yes, that is the same. They are converted Jews, Christians, though scattered.

Ques. Was this after the destruction of Jerusalem?

No, before. According to common chronology, Peter was put to death before Jerusalem was destroyed.

Ques. As these saints form part of the church, why are they so addressed?

Peter never says anything about the church as the body, but only as the house; Paul alone speaks of it as the body of Christ, for this was his special ministry. Peter does address them as in their new standing, but it is as individuals in accomplished redemption, not as in the one body united to Christ.

Ques. Does he not speak at the close of the epistle of "the church that is at Babylon"?

I doubt it; "elected" is in the feminine, and there is no word given for "church" at all; many have thought it refers to Peter's wife. Only Paul touches the subject of the body of Christ, and so he alone speaks of the rapture. In John's gospel there is, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself," but nothing more. As regards the house, we find this in the second chapter.

336 Ques. Does it, then, refer to those who had been scattered at the martyrdom of Stephen?

No; I do not know when they were scattered, but they were scattered throughout the world.

Ques. If it is to the scattered Jewish saints, where does the line come in between them and others; it says, "elect"?

They were Christian Jews, converted, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; it took in any quickened soul among the dispersion.

Ques. Then James writes on a larger scale?

Yes. He addresses "the twelve tribes," and he speaks about anyone coming unto their 'synagogue'; it is addressed to a national body, though he singles out those who are believers.

Ques. And he says "twelve tribes," though ten of them were in captivity?

Yes, that is the language of faith. So, too, with Paul: "Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." And Elijah also, at Mount Carmel, takes twelve stones.

Ques. How could the apostle say, "instantly"?

Well, it was so, though they were doing it very ignorantly and badly, just as Paul himself had been doing when he was Saul.

Ques. Were all really honest Jews doing so?

Yes; they might be doing it in a bigoted way, still, they were serving. Just as there may be a church nearby, kept open day and night; it is kept open whatever else may be there beside the truth itself. Peter was specially the minister of the circumcision.

Ques. If we want the whole instruction of Paul and Peter, we should have to read Galatians as well as Peter?

Yes, but I think Colossians is all to the Gentiles. Paul says to them, "Christ in you," i.e., in you Gentiles. The cross had really ended Judaism though it was continuing still, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law"; they were still offering sacrifices, etc., and we see Paul was going on to do as much. What is striking is, that in James we never

have a word about redemption; grace we do find there, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."

337 Ques. James is very puzzling, it is so difficult to make it fit in?

Well, it does fit in pretty close to the conscience if we will only let it. It does not allow will in man at all, only patience. Its general character is practical righteousness, the total destruction of self-will in the Christian, and the renouncing of the world.

Ques. How is that arrived at apart from the cross?

He takes them up where they avowedly are, and he says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," and so on.

Ques. Does James, then, take the cross for granted?

Yes, but we find in his epistle the grace that quickens us. And it is occupied with the question of the putting down of the working of will in every shape.

Ques. Will there be a period at the end when the epistles of Peter will become more applicable?

I dare say it may be so. In James we have positive grace, but it is all the judgment of a man's heart. Peter goes further, for he takes up the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ" applies to both these things.

Ques. Is it the obedience of Jesus Christ instead of the law?

No; I take it that the obedience of Jesus Christ is not merely that there is a rule given, but rather is it, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." There was in Him a whole life which had no spring of action except the will of God, and if there was no will of God, He did nothing. At the beginning the Lord says, as it were, to Satan, 'I am come to live by the word of God.' He could, of course, have turned the stones into bread, but He had not the will of God for doing this, and so He did nothing.

Ques. And we can have that only by virtue of the new nature?

There are two characters of it, obedience such as Christ's, and confiding dependence, or dependent confidence, if you like. "Through sanctification of the Spirit" means that the Holy Ghost has wrought in us to set us apart for these two things.

Ques. Does it refer to election?

Yes. We are elect to these two things, but we are brought into them through "sanctification of the Spirit."

338 Ques. Is it a personal calling?

No; it is, that the Holy Ghost has come and taken man out of the flesh altogether, and put him into this place. And these two things are become, if you please, his life and his death. It is now a different kind of obedience from that of an obedient child; my child wants to run out, and I say to him, 'sit down and do your lesson.' Well, he does so, and that is very pleasant and right. But Christ never obeyed in that way, He never wanted stopping; He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

Ques. In 2 Thessalonians 2, "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" are put together?

It is pretty much the same thing.

Ques. Is it not practical sanctification?

Well, it is, only we must be set apart first. The Holy Ghost comes and sets us apart to God; He sets us apart, out of the flesh, to obedience. It is not so much the fact of the new life, as it is that the word has wrought in me, "Being born again . . . by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Ques. In Hebrews, we have the thought of being sanctified by the blood of the covenant.

That is another aspect of sanctification. But here, the Spirit is the One who brings it into actual operation.

Ques. "By the which will we are sanctified"?

There we have that which sets us apart judicially; but the direct action of God at all times is by the Holy Ghost. So we are born of the Spirit; there is new life communicated, the Holy Ghost giving us a divine mind, bringing that into us, so that our thoughts and feelings are all changed.

Ques. Would it be right to say that we are sanctified by the Spirit in the purpose of God?

I do not know what you mean by the Spirit of God in purpose. It is God's purpose to set us apart by the Spirit. God's purpose is in His own mind; and God gave His Son that through redemption we might be set apart to Him. But all that was whilst we were still sinners. Then the Holy Ghost comes and operates in us, and He sets us actually apart. Sanctification of the Spirit is an actual operation in us. All the operations of God are by the Spirit. We are born of the Spirit, born of the Father in one sense, and the Son quickens whom He will. And the Holy Ghost still goes on, for He takes the word and makes the child grow.

339 Ques. Why is it here, "sprinkling," and not shedding?

Sprinkling is the application of it.

Ques. Is this in opposition to what we had under law?

Well, yes; there was a certain sanctification of Israel to God, but not by the Holy Ghost, and they had the blood of sprinkling in a way, but we are sanctified to the sprinkling of Christ's blood, not to that of the blood of bulls and goats.

Ques. Why does obedience come first?

Because the actual thing to which we are sanctified is the obedience of Christ, but if we are to be before God, it must be by His blood; the sprinkling of blood is for cleansing, and the obedience is His life.

Ques. Would this refer to the sprinkling of blood upon the mercy-seat, or upon the person?

It is general, but persons are more in view here, because the blood, having been put upon the mercy-seat, has made God approachable. It was the LORD's lot without which we could not have this.

Ques. Does not John use a fuller word when he says, "washed"?

He does.

If God had not been glorified as to the question of sin, which is specifically the LORD's lot, we could not have had the sprinkling. The two goats make one Christ. But here, it is the general idea of sprinkled blood; sometimes the blood was sprinkled upon the person, sometimes on the altar to God, but then the individual got the benefit of it.

Ques. When the blood was sprinkled upon all the people, was it not to hold them good under the penalty of death?

That was the legal character of it there, but that is not for us.

Ques. Is this the new covenant here?

No, it is just what it says; we are set apart to obey, and to all the value of Christ's blood; it is a great thing not to bring into a verse what is not in it. Other verses and other truths there are, and we may get clearer light by putting them together, but it is an amazing help to keep clearly before one what a verse gives. There is nothing about the covenant here; the apostle is addressing a set of people, elect, chosen, and set apart unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Sanctification by blood, in Hebrews, refers to Jews, strictly speaking, though we come under it as being in the fatness of the olive tree.

340 Ques. A person could not walk practically in the path of obedience without the sprinkling of the blood?

Oh! no; we should not be set apart to God at all without it. It is in contrast with Judaism, where, as a matter of fact, they were brought through the Red Sea and so separated from Egypt. Here, it is the Holy Ghost who does it, and it is thus a real thing in the soul. In Hebrews, we do not find the sanctification of the Spirit, though holiness is spoken of; they are sanctified by blood, and they are warned not to fall away; where there was faith, they had, of course, the actual value of it all, and where it is individual, it says, "Perfected for ever." It is a great thing to take our verse absolutely and simply; here am I, set apart to have no other will but God's; obedience consists in not having a will of my own, and that is the law of liberty. Just as if I told my child to go off and play in the street, he would be obedient in going off, but he would be doing just what he liked to do. Here, God says, 'I am bringing you out of a sinful world, where the carnal mind is enmity against Me, and I set you apart to Myself, to do My will in the world and nothing else.' And then comes the second blessed thing, namely, the value of Christ's blood.

Ques. In what sense does James speak of the "royal law"?

It is an excellent one; there are three, the law of Moses, the royal law, and the law of liberty.

Ques. Would not the royal law be the law of the kingdom?

No, and yet it would be that of the kingdom, but that is not the reason why he calls it so.

Ques. Is the law of liberty only in connection with the new creation?

Of course not, for the carnal mind is only enmity and disobedience.

"Blessed be the God and Father" (v. 3) is an expression we often find, and Christ is looked at as Son and as Man - "My Father and your Father . . . my God and your God." Then it adds, "Of our Lord Jesus Christ." Lord is another title: "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." And "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." We were in this state of sin and death, and Christ came and took us out of it, so that now we have a lively hope, and therein we find the key to His government

toward us.

"Reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." "Revealed," that is not taking up with theories, but a positive thing from God; the inheritance is kept there for us, whilst we are kept down here by the power of God through faith. God's power keeps us, but it is by keeping our faith, unto a salvation ready to be revealed.

341 Ques. Is, then, the salvation spoken of here, the full accomplishment of all?

Yes.

Ques. "Ready to be revealed," is this the glory?

Yes; it is the full description of the status of a Christian - and he is kept by the power of God through faith. Peter is showing the way of the government of God; there is nothing about advancement in this world.

Ques. You would not be satisfied to leave a believer in this state now, would you?

But I should like him to have all this.

Ques. In "the day dawn" of the second epistle, there is more?

Yes, there is; but Paul was living in the full light of it; here, it is only dawning. Hebrews is very much upon the same ground as Peter, one passage in the epistle describes the whole millennial blessedness from top to bottom, but we do not find "union."

Ques. We get company?

Yes, but 'fellows' is not union.

Ques. We do not reach as high as priesthood in Peter?

That is not Peter's point.

Ques. But we get "brethren" in Hebrews?

If Paul speaks of the Father and of Christ, then he can speak of firstborn among many brethren, but it is individual still. John, too, is always individual, and yet he carries us quite as high, dwelling in God, and God in us, but that is not union with Christ. When we come to union with Christ, we find God raising Christ as man from among the dead, and putting Him at His right hand, and He takes us and puts us into Him there. In Ephesians 1, Christ as Head is looked at as the Man whom God has raised.

Ques. Does Peter answer to wilderness experience?

In measure he does, but "ready to be revealed" is a different thing. Paul's revelation in Colossians is more like Peter, and so it is not the rapture, but, "Then shall ye also appear with him in glory"; "called in one body" and "not holding the Head" we have, but even that is not developed.

342 Ques. Would not Peter here have reference to the Jewish hope by contrast?

Yes, it is the contrast with having Canaan, and all that on earth.

Ques. Then it is not the new birth in verse 3?

Yes, it is; what else is it?

Ques. I understood it to be in contrast with the Jewish hope on earth?

Just so, so it is; here, the inheritance is in heaven; but the difference between this and Ephesians is, that in the latter we are seen sitting in the heavenlies in Christ, i.e., in Christ in glory.

Ques. How could that be a royal priesthood?

Ques. Is it not the highest official dignity here?

Well, yes, as to official dignity, but we are sons.

Ques. Does Peter see that the saints will be in the excellent glory as in the transfiguration?

Well, I suppose he does, he speaks of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled," and so on. The one thing we have not in his epistle, is, union with Christ by the Holy Ghost.

Ques. Would you say that we have eternal life in Peter?

It is not developed in Peter. Nor is there a hint about God's love in Peter, though we find the things that flow from it. God has wrought this, and God has given that, and God keeps us safe and so on, but we never have what we find in Paul and John, "God so loved the world." It is a governed world in view, and also a people for whom redemption has been wrought, the perfect standing of a Christian with an inheritance in heaven and the Holy Ghost come down from heaven.

Ques. Why is that in Peter?

Because that is what God employed him to teach.

Peter presents the facts of our redemption and actual standing, but we do not find Peter saying, "Ye are dead"; he does say, "He that hath suffered in the flesh." Paul speaks of "dead to sin," and he goes right to the root; Peter says, "dead to sins," but that is another thing, it is practice, not root. The moment we are in Christ, we are in a totally new place, where man, looked at as born of Adam, is done with. But Peter gives the whole statement of our relationship to God as redeemed and quickened, and as walking down here with a hope up there. And government then comes in - we are kept by God's power through faith. The rapture is not mentioned, for this is an act of grace, not an act of government. But 2 Peter 1:19, is a most interesting passage, for we have this dark world - Satan's darkness - and this light of God to shew us how all here is going rapidly on to judgment. In Ephesians, we find the most violent contrast conceivable. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour," and then, "Fornication, and all uncleanness, . . . let it not be once named among you." From speaking of our being imitators of God Himself, Paul drops suddenly down to speak of all that is vile in a man.

343 In verses 6 and 7, it is government again, but towards us as walking down here, redeemed, and having this inheritance above. In verse 7, the fruits of these dealings in government with us are yet to come out. It is not with Peter the taking up a poor sinner and putting him in the glory with Christ, for that is not his line.

Ques. What is the salvation of soul?

It is, I think, in contrast with the deliverance that Israel had, soul salvation contrasted with temporal deliverance. Then, in verses 10 and 11, comes an orderly statement. The prophets of old spake both of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories which were to follow; but we stand now between sufferings finished, and glories yet to come. The prophets were foretelling these things; but they had not yet come, and so they searched to see what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, and as they studied thus their own testimonies, it was revealed to them that not unto themselves, but unto us did they minister such things; this is very striking, for so far were they from telling forth the expectations of their own minds, that they had to study their own prophecies to understand them, if possible. But now the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven reports these things to us, things which are yet to be brought unto us, but are reported now.

Ques. Is "the grace that is to be brought unto you," the same as "the grace that should come unto you"?

Yes. It does not state that we have got it, but the glory is reported, and that by the Holy Ghost sent down. Until Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was not, i.e., had not come; but that which distinguishes Christianity is, that the Holy Ghost has come down here. Just as of old, Christ, looked at as coming down here, was not. All this does not go on into Paul's statement, nor into John's. Peter's is complete and perfect in itself.

344 Ques. Christianity and "this salvation" are not the same?

No, we have soul salvation and eternal life, and Christianity makes us wait for them. It is a report now. We are changed, but we have not a single thing excepting life and the Holy Ghost. Of the things that belong to us as being alive, we have nothing but the earnest of the inheritance.

Ques. We have the new nature?

Yes, that is eternal life, and yet, even as to that, in the full purpose of God, the end is everlasting life. God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, He has called us to His own kingdom and glory, but we are not there yet. We are waiting for that. The grace of God has appeared teaching us to wait for the glory; it is all revealed, and we have the life that enjoys it as a revelation, but we have not yet come into the estate.

Ques. Then verses 6-9 are a parenthesis?

Yes; only that when the revelation comes by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, other things are brought in. As the Lord says to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" It was necessary even for the Jews to be born again for their earthly things.

Ques. Is the "last time" a Christian term?

Well, we get, "in the last days." "The world to come" was a Jewish term.

Ques. Is it like John's "last time"?

Well, there we find antichrist; the day of the Lord and the days immediately preceding it are the last time.* Messiah is come, and He is not come; Elias is come and he is not come, and we never see clearly a statement of this kind until we see that. Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing. As yet, He has none of the things that belong to Him.

{*NOTE. - "It is the last time" (John 2:18): "Not exactly the last days, but the season which had the final character that belonged to the dealings of God with this world."

(See "Synopsis" in loco.)}

The moment the Son was here, the Father's name was revealed though they did not understand it. And as soon as the Holy Ghost came down we have the Spirit of adoption, and Christ's place where we are heirs; but all this did not form part of Jewish promises, any more than the church did.

345 The whole state in Peter is different, without going to Paul, because the vail is rent. Present relationship with God is made perfectly clear, by redemption, and the new nature, and the Holy Ghost, too, and that is an immense thing. In this very chapter we read, "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory." Do we mean to say that God gave His Son for us? Then there is perfect love in the heart of God; I believe in God by Christ, and I say, 'Out of the depth of His own heart God would have me with Himself,' and this He has shewn by rending the vail from top to bottom. Certain privileges were not thereby revealed, but, as brought to God, my soul's relationship with Him is revealed. "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end." So we are calling upon the Father as children during the time of our sojourning here, and this is our place of relationship with God during all this present time (vv. 13-17). This is practically where we are.

Ques. "In fear"?

Fear is a very good thing, "Happy is the man that feareth alway," "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Of course, it has nothing to do here with final judgment, Peter does not think of that with fear. But though we are calling on the Father, and His name has been revealed, and the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and the Father is keeping His children, still it is as a holy Father, so let us mind what we are about.

Ques. "Judgeth according to every man's work," is this a present thing?

Quite so; otherwise, "the Father judgeth no man." He then goes to the foundation of it all, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things."

Ques. Why does he bring in silver and gold?

It is the general character of the infinite price with which we have been redeemed, contrasted with poor corruptible things such as silver and gold.

Ques. People sometimes ask how we know it is the last time?

346 We find it from Scripture, as we have seen in John. The Jews understood the term very well. Jude speaks of the corruption of the Church, brought in by false brethren, and John, of their going out from us in apostasy. The two characters of the last days are (1) turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and (2) apostasy or giving it up. This is all going on openly to-day; but then, it crept in. Though the last days are spoken of, and perilous times also, yet the Lord allowed the evil to come out in germ at that time, so that we should have the word of God about it all. Enoch prophesied about them.

Ques. If it were the last time then, does it not shew that time is not now marked?

The moment Christ was rejected, all was closed, except the present time of mercy. As Christians, we do not belong to this world at all.

READING 2

Ques. In verse 21, "Who by him do believe in God," is Christ looked at as the medium through whom we know God?

I suppose so.

Ques. Then we have two things, God is the One who has raised up Christ, and Christ is Lord?

Yes.

Ques. Is He looked at as made Lord?

Yes; but this statement is more general, and the effect is that our faith and hope are in God. I know God through Christ, and this gives a distinct aspect of God altogether. It means that I can trust in God in everything, for I know that God has come in on my behalf. I know the love of God in giving Christ, and I know that all my sins are gone, and that God Himself is my Saviour. He is not here in the character of Judge, nor is it faith in Christ before God; but it is faith in God Himself who has raised Christ from the dead, so that it takes in everything between myself and God, and alters His whole character from that of Judge. I may believe in God as a righteous Judge, and so He is, but that will not save me, though there must be that for salvation.

Ques. Abraham believed God?

Yes, that was believing what God said, and we find various forms of that.

347 Ques. Does the hope connect itself with Christ's glory on high?

Well, not quite so much that; there is the Jewish expression "hope," but hope is often used as confidence, as, "In him shall the Gentiles trust," i.e., hope, and also in, "Hope thou in God." Hope is used as counting on a person; but He will give us glory, too; here, it is the general thought, namely, that we reckon on Him. Believing on Him, and believing in Him are different. 'I believe in God,' is a different thing. Believing on God shews the object and the confidence, that is to say, God is the object of the faith.

Ques. Is not this the Red Sea?

Yes, it raises Christ from the dead.

Ques. There is no knowing God any other way?

Well, only as Creator. I do not know God at all, save as I know Him in Christ.

Ques. When it says, "That know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," is that all one class?

I do not know that.

Ques. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," that is knowing God, is it not?

It is God the Father, not merely God. The other names of God do not give eternal life, but the Father sent the Son that we might live through Him, and that gives eternal life.

We have, then, first, the revelation in Christ, and secondly, the "obeying the truth through the Spirit." This sanctifies the soul. "Unto unfeigned love of the brethren." It is wonderful how the purifying of the soul and love go together. We may get hold of truth, but in man's hand it is always imperfectly so, and badly put together; but "obeying the truth through the Spirit" is quite another thing. Selfishness is at the bottom of sin; the opposite of selfishness is love, and we are purified from the selfishness of sin by divine love. Here, it is love of the brethren, and the love, too, which brings in holiness. We find the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 3:12, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God." Love and holiness are here brought together. A wonderful power has thus come in in Christianity! The apostle adds, "At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." It is not to establish our hearts here, but he is looking at it in all its fulness when Christ comes. It is the power of the hope, too, for he "that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." And therefore, in John 17, it is, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," and also, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." This takes us up into the other world.

348 Ques. "Even as we do toward you," would not that qualify it?

That is the pattern of it, but it is "one toward another," and "toward all." We never find it stated that Christ loved the world, or that God loved the church, because this latter refers to the relationship of Christ and the church, His body and His bride. When it speaks of "love as brethren," it is again the love of relationship.

Ques. Why "unfeigned"?

We do not want feigned love to the brethren, do we? It is just the opposite of that, it is real, not 'putting it on,' as men say. We have here the converse of that which is in Thessalonians. It is the bringing in of divine life, and of the Holy Ghost who is the spring that is in my heart. So it speaks, not about inconsistencies, but of love and of what is God's nature. A wonderful thing it is for us to look at Christ in our pathway down here, and then, in that sense, we could not know any man after the flesh. God is looking for purity and love here. As self is dead, consideration for others reigns in the heart according to God. And the recollectedness of God's presence is the great secret of this. I was struck some time back in seeing that, when the apostle describes in 1 Corinthians 13 what love is, it is all subjective; not one atom of activity do we find in it, but it bears, endures, hopes, and so on, and that is all.

Ques. You would not say love is always subjective?

No; but it is so in 1 Corinthians 13.

Ques. Is "kind," subjective?

Yes; I go and meet you, and you may look very glum at me, but I am kind from a sense of love towards you, what is that but subjective?

Ques. That chapter has sometimes been a kind of disappointment to me, for one finds there what love is not, rather than what it is?

349 You go and live it out, and see if other people will be disappointed!

Activity, of course, is all right too. God gives to us in the blessedness of His nature, He makes us enjoy Himself; but besides that, He gives us a share in the activities of His love. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." He will have these two things together - love and purity, and "fervently" too.

These instructions are drawn from the very depths of God's nature, and thus we have God and grace instead of self. Suppose I am giving way to bad feeling towards someone, well, the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. I ask myself how should I feel if I met that person at the door of heaven just going in. Would it not be nice to meet people here as we shall meet them there? Only, when we have to meet opponents, we must take care that it does not connect itself with anything of feeling as regards the individual. Look at Christ in an agony in Gethsemane. He asked His disciples to tarry, while He went further, but when He comes to them again, He finds them sleeping, yet He only says, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" And He goes back again into His agony; this was His way with them when He was thinking of meeting God in judgment.

Ques. Is it not, "See that ye . . . love," in verse 22?

No, that it is not; it is, "Love one another with a pure heart fervently." "Seeing ye have purified," etc., is the principle of it, let us then have the practice in all its extent! He is looking for fervent love with a pure heart, seeing that we have been brought into this relationship. God is light, and God is love, and having come down in light and love, He wants this divine nature, which has taken root in us, to come out.

Ques. How can "increase and abound" be brought about?

By our keeping nearer to God.

I have often thought that it requires great grace to see a little grace. If we go out in love, it will find some response. At one place, they complained that all was so dreadfully cold, and I could only say, why do you not go out in love and warm the rest?

"Born again," is divine life, for this connection of purity and love is by the Holy Ghost; it is divine love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

Ques. Is "born again" the same thing here as in John 3?

350 It is the same truth, but rather more specific in the passage in John which insists on its being altogether new (anthen), and so makes it more emphatic. Here, it is connected with the word, in John, with the Spirit. In John, too, we have the positive communications of the new life; in Peter, it is the practical effect and working, not the source. It is similar in 1 Peter 4:1, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin," whilst with Paul it is, "he that is dead"; it is the same truth, only the one gives the principle, and the other, the outward practical carrying out of it. As to the Jews, they must be born again.

Ques. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh," does that mean that they will not have a bad heart?

Oh! no.

Ques. Does not the word "born" imply more?

We are born of the Spirit and we receive a new life, but this brings in divine thoughts, so that we are cleansed.

Ques. Then sin remains in them, in Ezekiel 36?

Yes, and so it does in us now. It is a great thing that the word lives, it comes from God in the power of the Holy Ghost, but then it brings in the things it tells about. In John 8:25, the Lord tells the Jews who He is. In the Authorised Version, it reads, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning," but the real force of this is, 'In principle altogether that which I also say to you,' i.e., His word expressed Himself.

And not only does the word live, but it judges also what is in us because it is true.

Ques. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"?

That is another idea; such an one is a new creation, and belongs to an entirely different state of things.

Ques. Is it the same in Galatians 6?

Yes, but it is there more applied to the individual. It is the thing so many will not have. Dr. Bonar openly ridicules the idea of two natures, but "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Methodists always take wrong ground, having no thought of being born again at all, and this has run very much through the whole body of the Evangelical world.

Ques. What is the difference between "new birth," and "new creation"?

New creation takes in everything, new birth is our having a nature that is fit for it. If we take it in its full sense, new creation leaves nothing else.

351 Ques. I am the same man after I am born again?

I do not doubt you are, but you will find some difficulty in saying what the "I" now is. I have a life from Adam that is never mended one atom; but I have also a new life from Christ, which is a totally new thing: "He that hath the Son hath life." Adam had not that life, but I have the life of the second Adam.

Ques. Had not the Old Testament saints eternal life?

That is another question, and we will not hunt the two hares at a time. Adam innocent had not that life one bit more than Adam guilty. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, but Adam was not born of the Spirit. This is a new thing. "That eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." That is the Christ who has become my life through the operation of the word; a totally new thing it is, and one which does change the man.

As to the Old Testament saints, eternal life formed no part of the Old Testament revelation, even supposing that the Old Testament saints had it. Light and incorruptibility have been brought to light by the gospel. Not that they have been brought to existence, but they have been "brought to light." And when He in whom life is, came down and died and rose again, then a totally new thing was brought out. Eternal life is twice found in the Old Testament, but in both the passages it is prophetic of the millennium. And therefore, in the Old Testament, we never get conflict between flesh and Spirit. We find, 'conceived in sin,'

in Psalm 51, but there is no thought of flesh lusting against the Spirit. "I am crucified with Christ:" says the apostle, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and there we find a contradiction twice over, and somebody else put in instead of "I." So again in Romans 7, "What I hate, that do I," and, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," though in the previous verse he had just said that he did do it! All that the Psalmist can say is, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." He takes the ground that if God wash him, he will be whiter than snow. In that passage, it is not a question of washing with the blood of Christ, and what I insist upon is, do not put into a passage what you cannot get out of it. The Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, i.e., those who are dead in sins are quickened, it is not the simple fact of receiving a new life; it is not the way Scripture speaks, to say, 'here is a living man, and I quicken him.'

352 Ques. 'Quickens' refers to both soul and body?

Yes, "quicken your mortal bodies." When we speak about quickening, it is always that of one dead. But "quicken us together with Christ" involves a great deal more. Christ was lying in death, where we were lying, and then was raised, and God has quickened us together with Him, but that is a great deal more than life. A man is changed, but the flesh is never changed. In the history of the flesh, I find it both an outlaw and under law, but it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; again, I find the flesh, with Christ presented to it, and man crucified Him; next, with the Holy Ghost come, and I find this, "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye," and then I see what the flesh was in Paul after he had been caught up to the third heaven and Satan tried to puff him up about it. Dealing with the old nature formed no part of the Old Testament dispensation, though saints were quickened or born again; as regards eternal life, they ought to have this found out, and the Pharisees, as we know, had done so. When the young man came to Christ and asked, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" the Lord, in answer to him, takes up the law upon its own footing, and says, in effect, "this do, and thou shalt live."

Ques. When it says, in John 20:8, "that other disciple . . . saw, and believed," what was it he believed?

That Christ was risen, only, he believed what he saw, but he had no knowledge of the Scriptures that Christ must rise (v. 9); so he saw, and he believed that He had risen. They did not know this by faith in the word of God, but they believed when they saw.

Ques. Mary had more faith than any of them?

Yes.

Ques. Does 1 Peter give us the new place?

No, it only gives us it in hope.

Ques. Some say the seed here is the divine life?

So it is, but it is by the word of God which is the seed of life; in verse 23, we are looked at as born again, but it is instrumentally by this word. This shews us the character and source of the thing, but the instrument is the word, and so the word of God is the seed. It "liveth and abideth for ever." It is a great thing to see that clearly in the word. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The word is the revelation of what is in God, in His nature and character, His love, His ways, in short all that He communicates. And this is what God uses to quicken. In verse 23, "for ever," is left out by the editors.

353 Ques. Is there any difference between logos and rhema?

Logos is the deeper word, and the rhema is the giving of it out. Logos is that which is known in the mind and known by expressing it. I cannot think without having a thought, and logos is used for that and the expression of it, but rhema is the mere utterance, and is that which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Ques. Then what of the expression, "the word of the Lord"?

The word of the Lord is, I suppose, that which is in mediatorial communication, that is all. It is a great thing to see that character in the word, for if here, in this book, I have not an inspired word, the inspiration of God's mind, I have not got it at all.

Ques. Is the Bible the rhema?

It is the rhema written down. And the Lord gives importance to it when He says, "If ye believe not his [Moses'] writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

Ques. Then is it Christ here?

It is not Christ here, but it is Christ written down. In Hebrews 4, we see the two thrown into one. And, again, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live"; so it is God's own mind, of course. In the midst of a world away from God, and which has rejected both God and Christ, there is one thing we have that is of God and from God, and that is the word of God, and that is all. God Himself is here, of course, but the word is the only thing that is of Him. And when everything else has passed away, God's word will remain until it is shewn that everything it said is true.

Ques. "The word of God is living and operative," what is the force of "living" there?

That is the very thing, it is divine; it is not merely a word that I give out, and it passes, but a word that comes out from God which abides, and never changes, and never can change. It comes down into my heart, and shews me everything that is in it. In these days, it is a great thing for saints to carry with them the conviction that the word of God is the word of God, and that not only it can never be broken, but it endures for ever. It is, and it ever will be, the truth; many of the things spoken of old have passed, and many others may pass, but the word of God will be the truth hereafter, just as much then as it is now. As for this world, and infidels and their reasonings, there will not be one atom of them left! Man's "breath goeth forth," and "his thoughts perish."

354 Then, in chapter 2:2, we have another thing, and that is, growing by the word. It is the only thing here with is positively of God. Of course, in one sense, the creation is of God; that will, however, be all burnt up, but that which is of God nourishes. There is a sense, too, in which we are all new-born babes; it is the new life in simplicity and purity that desires the sincere milk of the word, so that whenever I come to the word to get nourishment, I come to it as a new-born babe.

Ques. When he says, "desire," is not that exhortation?

Yes, of course it is.

Ques. What is growing up to salvation?

Peter looks at salvation as ready to be revealed.

Ques. Why, here, "if so be"?

It supposes one has tasted, or else one will not desire. The knowledge of the graciousness of Christ makes us desire to get more and more of it.

In verses 4 and 5, we have the house that Christ builds. It is in contrast with 1 Corinthians 3, where the house is built on the ground of man's responsibility, "according to the grace of God which is given unto me," etc. Man is there viewed as in responsibility building the house. But in Matthew 16, the Lord says, "I will build my church"; that is still going on, and it is not yet built. Here, in Peter, it is not the responsibility of man, but living stones built together. In Ephesians 2 it says, "Groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord," groweth, i.e., it is growing yet. Matthew 16 answers more to Ephesians 2:21, verse 22 being a matter of fact; the one, "groweth unto an holy temple," the other, is a "habitation of God through the Spirit."

Ques. "Judgment must begin at the house of God," is that the broad view of it?

Yes. It is the confounding of these two things together which has brought in all the pretensions of Popery and High Churchism.

355 Ques. Is it ever said of the house of God that it is a body?

A house is not a body, the two ideas are totally different. It is Christ's body and God's house. In Hebrews 3, it is, "Christ as Son over his [God's] house," I believe that the "own" in the Authorised Version ought not to be there. A person may be in the house, and not in the body; wood, hay and stubble will be burnt up, but no member of the body will ever be. People often ask if Christ is precious, but the terms, "elect, precious," give us His character, not our estimate of Him, and they are connected with the chief corner stone.

Ques. "Whereunto also they were appointed"?

So they were; the Jews were appointed to stumble at Christ, that was to be their judgment, but they were not appointed to be disobedient. Judas was not appointed to be a sinner, but, being a sinner, he was appointed to be a betrayer of Christ.

Ques. "The unjust unto the day of judgment"?

That is in this world; there is a day of judgment that comes upon them here in this world.

Ques. "Before of old ordained to this condemnation"?

That is not condemnation as people commonly think; it is to this condemnation. The stone of stumbling was such to the house of Israel.

You see we are all lost to start with; not that I believe in what is called reprobation, I do not, but God brings about His own way. Israel was appointed to stumble, as I have just said, and prophecy had declared that they would do this when Christ came, and then they stumbled upon Him; it was the form that their wickedness took in the purposes of God.

In Romans 9 we have, first, the sovereignty of God, and if He chooses to make vessels for destruction, nobody can say "no" to Him; you cannot help it. Then, in verses 22 and 23, he takes up the ground, "What if God," etc., that is another thing. But when he comes to the good side, God prepares them, when he is on the bad side, God endured the vessels fitted to destruction.

Ques. Does "fitted" mean that they fitted themselves?

He found them fitted, you must not bring in what is not there. He finds things fitted for destruction, and He exercises endurance.

356 Romans 9 is simply absolute sovereignty; people talk about national election there, which is the very thing the apostle is denying. You are the children of Abraham, are you? Very well, then, says the apostle, if you plead that, you must let in the Ishmaelites, for they were of Abraham. But they were slaves! That ground is gone. Then take Esau and Jacob - "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Then come to Israel, but if God had not been merciful, all of them would have been cut off except Moses' own children. God is, then, sovereign and so He can let in the Gentiles as well. It is a smashing argument to the Jews, for they had broken the law, and they could not deny it. Ah! says the Jew, but I have got the unconditional promises, and so I have a right to have them. And the apostle takes up that principle and shews that, in rejecting Christ, they had rejected the promises, too. And then he deals with the question of national election. When I was young, you might have found an infidel or two, but now, one may almost say, people are appointed to infidelity; though they were as bad then as now, one way or another.

Ques. Infidelity is often according to the increase of light?

Yes, very often it is, and the increase of light is often according to the infidelity.

Ques. The infidelity now is like that in our Lord's time?

Yes, the Pharisees are the Puseyites, and one may find as well Nicodemuses and Josephs, or even Nathaniels.

Then, in verses 5 and 9, we have two kinds of priesthood, "holy," and now "royal." The "holy" is a kind of Aaronic priesthood, the "royal," more Melchisedec.

Ques. Does the Aaronic secure the going in and out, and finding pasture?

Going in and out, is liberty. One "fold" is a piece of wickedness in translating, to keep up an established church; it should be "one flock." We find three things there: eternal life, never perish, and saved; going in and out; and, finding pasture. Salvation, liberty, and God's sheep finding. No longer shut up in a fold, they are under the care of the good Shepherd who keeps them safe. So it takes first the image of the Aaronic priesthood. We are the epistles of Christ in our life, and words, and everything.

Ques. What is "the offering up of the Gentiles" in Romans 15:16?

357 I take it to be an allusion to the offering up of the Levites in Numbers 8:11.

Ques. Why, "acceptable . . . by Jesus Christ" (v. 5)?

They could not be so without Him, I cannot carry anything up to God except in Christ's name.

Ques. Is there any analogy between these two priesthoods and Romans 12 and Ephesians 5, the offering our bodies?

We have to offer our bodies, but he is not here speaking of that so much as of praises, and thanksgiving, and adoration. It is the same character as in Hebrews 13, and that is more Aaronic. To shew forth the praises is somewhat Melchisedec. It refers to Exodus 19, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," and it puts these despised believers in the place formerly given to the nation of Israel who will have this place again, by and by.

Ques. How do you apply the wine of Melchisedec?

Melchisedec comes out with the blessing, up and down, and not with intercession, properly speaking, at all. In Hebrews, Paul takes Melchisedec as the mark which was to mark out Christ, but another priesthood there was that offered sacrifices, and so on, viz., that of Aaron.

Ques. Why "out of darkness"?

Darkness is always ignorance of God, and light is the knowledge of God.

Ques. Is such priesthood still going on?

Yes; and we have all the value of Christ's name and acceptance.

Ques. Some brethren think priesthood is advocacy, and presenting our worship?

Some of the brethren are very nice, but I do not think they gain much by such a notion. It is never said that Christ presents our worship, but that in the midst of the assembly He sings praises. Advocacy is a definite thing; priesthood in Hebrews is for grace to help in time of need. But this notion of Christ presenting our worship, as though we could not go in, does not give us the full character of Christian worship at all. It is "the Father seeketh," etc. Scripture does not speak of a priest with a Father. Christ is priest over the house of God, and so we draw near. We know He is there, and so we draw near with boldness. But that is not Father. Worship of the Father is peculiar for the Christian, but there is a tendency to bring worship down merely to Hebrews (there is no Father in Hebrews). "The Father himself loveth you" - one cannot bring in a priest here. In John, we have the obligation and necessity, and it is always Father; so our fellowship is with the Father, and that is the necessity of His nature.

358 Ques. Is not Hebrews 2:12, a present thing?

Yes.

359 READINGS ON THE SEVEN CHURCHES

REVELATION 2 AND 3

READING 1

The first thing to notice is, that the seven churches are "the things which are."

John had seen Christ standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks; chap. 1. Then "the things which are" follow (chapters 2 and 3); from chapter 4 and onwards, we have "the things which shall be hereafter," or after these.

There is the divine character of Christ, and also the ecclesiastical character of Christ. He is seen here in judgment, not in blessing flowing down in gifts and so on. He forms His own judgment of the state of the churches, and He gives promises to overcomers. He is judging their state, with His garment flowing down to the feet, not tucked up to serve.

Another thing to note in connection with this, is, that we have not any directions given by the Spirit of God to guide the church as to what it is to do, save as listening to the judgment of Christ about the church; but that is not direction to the church. We have the express judgment of Christ about the church: "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick," etc.

Ques. What is "seven"?

"Seven" gives the history of all, at distinct periods; it is a general history from the first decay until the final judgment, and the Lord's estimate of this.

We do not find particular directions given as to what people are to do inside the church, but we have His estimate of what the church is doing, and the state of the external profession.

He is a Judge; a divine Person walking on the earth as a Judge and His feet burning with fire. He is saying, you are this, and you are that, and you are the other, but He gives no instructions as to how the church is to act within her borders. Quite true, I may draw some conclusions from it all.

The character of the book is prophetic, not evangelical; we find therein prophetic statements, not exactly New Testament instructions.

Some have said there is no direction to do this or that, but we do get the description of Rome, as a condition to be avoided by the saints of God. The external thing is the professing church, with Jezebel; but by "within," I mean that which comes under the express instruction of the Spirit of God in the place in which the Lord is dealing with it. The assembly is the idea here, and this assembly is the body, and it is also the house; but when God formed the assembly, then, instead of the synagogue being the scene of excommunication and judgment, the church comes in: "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." This holds good irrespectively of the ruin.

360 Those owned as Christians in the assembly, the assembly has to judge, but them that are without, God judges.

Ruin has nothing to do with duty, except as it may incapacitate me, as a matter of fact, from carrying it out. No failure alters the character of responsibility, though the Lord may in mercy say, He will be satisfied, if we will but act up to what we have got. But no direction of Scripture becomes invalid by reason of the state of ruin. The directions touching "tongues" are applicable as much as ever, only we cannot apply them.

As for "putting out," if there is "yourselves," you can "put out from among yourselves."

The moment it is a matter of obedience which can be done, then it must be done. The commandment has not lost its authority.

It was the grand question with the Irvingites; they held that power must come in before obedience. And they said further, that evil must be left alone until the Lord comes back again. I say, no, I must obey always.

We have Christ, then, judging in the midst of the professing church. It may be as well to see a little what the "angels" are. Though the epistles were written to the angels, we have the certainty that the Spirit is speaking to the churches, so that the angel is the vessel of communication.

We find in the body of the epistles, "the rest in Thyatira," "cast some of you," giving the certainty that the assemblies as such are addressed, and I have no doubt that the angel stands as the mystic representative of the church. It might have been one man or half a dozen godly men found amongst them.

The epistles are addressed to those in responsibility among them, whoever they might be. Of course, all are really responsible, and if they failed in it, the candlestick, not the angel, would be taken out of its place; this makes it clear that the church is responsible. In those days it might have been an official elder, but if so, we have the strongest proof that it was not in that way he was the angel, or he would have been called "elder."

361 Ques. Why is the symbol of "stars" used here?

They carry the thought of subordinate authority. People get floundering about from not taking the abstract meaning of symbols; they take the symbol of a white horse, and say it must be Christ, but it is no such thing; or they think the sun must be Christ, but further on in the book we find the sun is scorching people. Christ holds these stars, i.e., these authorities, in His right hand, the hand of power.

Sometimes I have thought the "angels" might have come to John in Patmos as messengers, and that John took them up as a kind of representatives of the churches.

In the first three churches are found the characteristics of Christ that John had already seen. In these, too, the responsibility of the church is viewed in connection with its original position, but not afterwards. When we come to Thyatira, this original position had been already lost.

There are two grounds of judgment: (1) the not maintaining what God had set up at the first, and (2) unfaithfulness as to the hope of meeting the Lord at the end.

The first fault specified is, "Thou hast left thy first love," and so on, in the first three churches. Christ is walking in the midst, and various things are referred to accordingly. Afterwards, none of His original characters is found; but He is still holding His place in the church, and He does not give up His authority. Popery pretends to His place now.

Ques. Why is the title of "Son of God" found in Thyatira?

Because Thyatira has been totally unfaithful, and He is going to cut it off. And so, too, the kingdom is here substituted for the church, the question of "power over the nations" being introduced. That which marks Popery is "Jezebel." Idolatry had been taught before this, but it has now become the state of the church.

Ques. Is not Sardis the result of the operation of the Spirit of God at the Reformation?

Well, yes; when man departs from what God has given, this latter then becomes just what man makes out of it; we never find God judging His own work. Sardis had a name to live, and was dead; that was not the operation of God. First love was God's work, but they had left that, and then formality came in. In the Thessalonians, we find three things, the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope; work, patience, and labour followed faith, hope, and love. Here, however, though everything was going on

outwardly, the spring of power had been lost. Much there was that was excellent, but there was the beginning of decay. The Lord might work, and did work, but still, if the church did not return to its first love, God would cut it off. The church is therefore put upon the responsibility of reformation.

362 Very solemn this! Man in responsibility ought to answer to what God has given him in a certain way. What a failure it is!

In Ephesus, we have the general character of Christ; the two things which constitute this being the seven stars, i.e., authority in His right hand, and His walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks.

The promise to the overcomer is that he should eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. The first Adam-place being lost, he gets the second Adam-place. The church, however corrupt, never loses its responsibility, therefore these are held to be candlesticks still. Rome will be judged as a church, even though it is what it is. Though so much commendation is found here, yet the candlestick is to go.

Ques. Was the Reformation, then, a restoration?

No. There was the setting up of individual salvation and of the authority of the word of God, but the true height of the church was lost. It was corrupted before, and it was lost then, but the Reformation did recover individual salvation and justification by faith, truths which had been totally set aside. In Sardis, there were the things that remained, and there are even now the things that "remain."

Ques. Will Rome absorb the different denominations after the true church has been taken up?

I do not know that it will do so.

Ques. How do you regard the woman riding the beast?

Well, the beast is not everything; the woman - Rome - may govern the kings of the Roman empire, that is all.

Ques. Would you say that Babylon is confined to Rome?

She has her daughters; strictly speaking, it is Rome, she is mother of them all.

Ques. Is there not an effort now to unite the three great professing churches?

Yes, but that does not say they will succeed. Rome still sits as a queen, and her power is growing. You may level up or level down, she will have her way in either case. True, the Lord is allowing infidelity to arise, and this, in measure, is a check to Rome's power. Protestantism has ceased to be a power, and so now it is infidelity that exercises any check, for if we had Romanism unchecked, we should not be allowed to sit here. The Bible has wrought all around us, just where God meant it to work.

363 As for Italy, since the Austrians have been driven out, the Bible is less cared for than it was before. Before this event took place, it was reckoned that there were some fifteen thousand people earnestly reading the Bible, though I do not say these were all converted; but now they have got their way, they do not trouble themselves at all about it. There is not half the interest in the Scriptures that there was when Italy was oppressed. We commonly find more faithfulness where there is persecution.

In Ephesus, the "deeds of the Nicolaitanes" are spoken of, i.e., departure from moral integrity.

Ques. Who were they?

Those who professed a doctrine that allowed them to do wrong - Antinomians - but here, it is their deeds. "Nicolaitanes" is their historical name.

Notice, too, that the overcomer comes after the calling to hear, i.e., the church is addressed before the individual is warned to overcome; but after Thyatira, the overcomer is first separated out from the church, and then comes, "he that hath an ear, let him hear."

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