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## The Cities of the Seven Churches.

### SOME PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS.

BY THE REV. M. LINTON SMITH, 'M.A.

#### I. SMYRNA AND THYATIRA.

IT was my good fortune in the summer of 1907 to have the opportunity of a somewhat prolonged tour in Asia Minor, that land which tempts the explorer with so many half-hidden traces of ancient civilizations, keys wherewith to open and reveal the mysteries of more than one chamber in the palace of human history; that land which as the meeting-place of East and West was ever receiving and passing on the impulses which came to it from either hand; that land which was the home of the great process of translating the thought of the East into the terms of the West, and which was therefore the cradle of many of the early developments of our own faith. It was in the University of Tarsus and the market-place of Ephesus that the Apostle of the Gentiles learnt sympathy with those to whom he was specially sent; it was in Ephesus that the Galilean fisherman, the Jewish Apostle, the Hebrew seer, St. John, was equipped for his task as evangelist and letter-writer; it was in the province of Asia that the organization of the Church first took the form of the monarchical episcopate which has in all subsequent ages been the heritage of her direct descendants.

In the course of my journey I was able to visit more or less cursorily the sites of those seven cities, the Churches of which are addressed in the opening chapters of the Revelation; and in these articles I want to set before my readers some of the impressions which were left upon my mind by these visits.

With Smyrna as a starting-point—the only obvious one at the present day for the traveller from the West—they fall naturally into two groups, the northern one, consisting of Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, all lying on or near the line of the Smyrna-Cassaba Prolongement Railway.

which follows the Valley of the Hermus, and roughly coincides in its direction with the older trade route, known as the Royal Road ; and Ephesus and Laodicea (with its companion cities, Hierapolis and Colossæ), the southern group, lying upon the line up the valleys of the Mæander and Lycus to Dineir (Apamea Cibotus), the modern equivalent of the southern road, most frequented in apostolic times, from the Cilician gates to the ports of the Ægean.

The approach to Smyrna by sea is one of great beauty ; the rich red soil of the northern end of Chios, and of the peninsula which guards the entrance of the Smyrnæan gulf, the fresh and vivid green which in the spring clothes the steep hillsides down to the water's edge, and the numerous villages gleaming white in the brilliant sunshine upon the slopes, make a strong and effective contrast to the barren and rocky coasts of Greece, left but a few hours behind. On the other side no land is visible for a while ; but as the vessel swings southward Sipylus appears dimly blue on the left, and soon, nearer at hand, glistening heaps of salt seem to rise out of the sea, the flat shore on which they lie being still unseen ; the mountains on the south grow lower, and as we turn eastward again the gulf is seen to end in the low plain between Sipylus and Tmolus, the last spur of which range is crowned with the Pagus, the acropolis of the city, whose buildings climb its slopes, their mass of white walls and red roofs broken by large groves of cypress, the gloomy foliage of which seems fit adornment of the graveyards in which they stand. The harbour is alive with traffic, steam-ferries pass and repass, the flags of all nations are seen upon the shipping, and in a few moments you have landed in " Giaour Ismir," infidel Smyrna, as its Moslem conquerors term it, the last hold of Christendom against Islam in Asia. The appearance of the city has changed much since the days of Polycarp. The bazaars now stand on what was then the inner harbour ; the Frank quarter stretches north-east along the head of the gulf far beyond the limits of the ancient town ; the diadem of towers with which its walls crowned the summit of the hills has mainly disappeared,

and the colonnaded streets and noble buildings of a rich Græco-Roman city have been replaced by the narrow and crooked lanes and white-washed mosques and churches of a Levantine port. But though the glories of ancient Smyrna have long ago been destroyed, and their fragments lie buried beneath the houses of the modern town, yet there remains much to stimulate thought and fire imagination: the relations between sea and land have not materially changed through the centuries; the sheltered waters of the gulf, unchoked by the silt of some turbid river, like so many another harbour of the coast, still bear to its quays fleets of coasting and sea-going vessels, which invite the traffic of the interior. In spite of the fact that two lines of railway find their terminus in the city, a large proportion of its land-borne trade still enters, carried on the backs of mule and camel, across the Caravan Bridge, with its Greek foundations; and still, during the heats of summer, the cool "Imbat" or sea-breeze blows daily up the gulf, dashing its wavelets into spray across the crowded quays, and rendering life tolerable at sea-level.

But it is not only as you look seawards that you realize the forces which went to make the city. Climb the steep ascent to the Pagus, and as you stand on some ruined Byzantine tower with its Greek substructure of well-hewn stone, you look around you and see the converging lines of the land routes—the coast road now followed by the railway round the seaward end of Sipylus northwards; the open valley stretching invitingly eastwards between Sipylus and Tmolus towards that great avenue to the interior, the Hermus Valley; and, as you turn south, the narrow gorge that runs almost at your feet, leading another line of rail across the intervening hills to the valley of the Cayster and Ephesus. And the other great route of the country seawards is not wholly out of sight, for over the hog-back of Messogis, bounding the Cayster Valley on the south, you get glimpses of summits still farther away, with a great gulf between them and the nearer range, the gulf of the Mæander Valley, from the fourth century downwards the main avenue of communication between East and West.

And not only do the unchanged natural features, which made the place, recall the past. West from the Pagus but a quarter of a mile, on a slightly lower level at the foot of a steep knoll, lie the shapeless remains of that stadium in which the Christian onlookers, scattered among the crowd, believed that they heard a voice from heaven bidding their aged Bishop be strong and play the man, a voice which had its answer in Polycarp's noble confession and nobler death ; and down at sea-level, though all remains of antiquity are buried below the surface, the curving lines of the streets in the bazaars recall the shape of that inner harbour, now filled in, which was the scene of the heroic defence of the Knights of St. John against Timerlane in 1402—the scene, too, of the barbarous conqueror's savage vengeance.

And as you stroll along its streets and alleys, you are bewildered by a variety of type and dress and colouring, unsurpassed by any town in the Levant. Neither the bazaars of Cairo nor the streets of Jerusalem present such a medley of race and costume as do the quays and lanes of Smyrna ; the quick-witted Greek makes the life of his slower governors as burdensome and as profitable as was the life of the proconsul of Asia in the first century ; the Jews still herd together in their ghetto, aloof and despised, but sharing nowadays with the Armenian the unpopularity of the too-successful trader ; while the peasants from the interior, uncouth and undemonstrative, gape and stare at the wonders of civilization, as their Mysian and Lydian and Phrygian and Carian forefathers must have done in the age of the planting of the Christian Church. Smyrna still deserves the title which Professor Ramsay has applied to it—the City of Life.

Thyatira stands in marked contrast to its neighbours in the group of cities which we are considering ; in itself perhaps the least important of the seven, it seems to owe its place among them to the fact that it is a good distributing centre for the surrounding district. Taking train at Smyrna, you crawl first round the eastern end of the Smyrnæan Gulf, and then round the

western end of Mount Sipylus, up the Hermus Valley to Manisa (Magnesia ad Sipylum); changing there, you cross by a branch line northwards a broad and fertile plain, dissected by various streams which run into a northern tributary of the Hermus—streams which, when the winter rains fall heavily in the hills on either hand, overflow their banks, marking the land with broad bands of devastation; while away over the eastern hills rises the snow-clad range of Dindymus, one of the sacred mountains of Phrygia. But gradually the hills draw in on either hand, and at the apex of the plain you have just crossed lies Ak-Hissar, the representative of Thyatira. It is situated in a broad and open vale, in a position which offers little opportunity for defence against a foe. But more or less obviously there open through the hills three passes, besides the plain by which you have approached: behind the range which bounds that plain on the east lies an easy road past the Gygean lake to Sardis; north-east a less obvious opening carries a road into the valley of the Macestus, offering direct communication with Cyzicus and the Propontis; while the railway turns north-west, almost at right angles to its previous direction, to climb sharply up a low neck which blocks the passage into a tributary valley of the Caicus, and so to Pergamum. It was these passes which made Thyatira a trading and, for a short period of its history, a frontier town; a low mound covered with cypresses marks the site of the Acropolis, important as the border fortress between the Seleucid and Attalid realms, falling first to the one and then to the other as the balance of power changed. It has no marked features to distinguish it from any other Anatolian town of like size: white houses and minarets rise from the gardens which surround them; a strip of dusty white road bordered with telegraph-poles leads up from the station, at which one train a day maintains communication with the outside world. The remains of antiquity are scanty, and it seems at first sight as though there were no link with the Thyatira of the New Testament; yet that is supplied by one of the chief industries of the place, the manufacture of carpets, which are dyed the well-

known Turkey red with the madder-root which grows in the neighbourhood; and we are reminded that it was a purple-seller of Thyatira, Lydia, who was the first-fruits of Europe to the Gospel. But the bronze-workers, whose trade was another staple of the place in the first century, and who seem to have supplied the writer of the Apocalypse with the characteristic figures of the letter to this Church, have completely disappeared, and with them the other trades, the organization of which in guilds seems to have formed the basis of the city's constitution.



## The Pentateuch and Ancient Law.

BY THE REV. LAWRENCE DEWHURST, M.A.

THERE seems to be one point of view—viz., that of modern jurisprudence—which has not received the attention it has deserved from those who have written on the subject of the “Higher Criticism,” especially when dealing with the Pentateuch. Have the theories of modern jurisprudence anything to say with regard to the date of the Pentateuch? Certainly they will not tell us when or how it was compiled, or how many writers there were; but what these theories will enable us to do is to say approximately to what period in the history of the nation its laws, statutes, and customs belong. The religion of Israel has been compared with that of other nations, and from that comparison conclusions have been drawn and the relative age of ceremonies has been determined. These conclusions have had their influence in the determination of the date of passages, and perhaps of books, of the Old Testament. Yet it is much to be desired when there are two sets of factors for the determination of any question both should be allowed their full value. But so far as I know this has not been done by the Higher Critics in the case of the Jewish Law. Those theories which modern jurists have, with great care and painstaking effort, put together have not been studied, nor has any weight