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*INTER-RELATIONS OF THE SEVEN EPISTLES
OF CHRIST.*

BEFORE entering on the topic with which we propose to deal in this paper,—the relation to one another of the Epistles to the Seven Churches contained in the Apocalypse,—it may be well to make a few general remarks on those arrangements or plans which critics have often thought that they discovered in chapters or books of the Bible. There is a fear on the part of many that the idea of Plan is inconsistent with simplicity of purpose. Principles of arrangement, the existence of which earnest enquirers have been unable to deny, have not unfrequently seemed to them too artificial to be satisfactory. Even while accepting their own conclusions they have shrunk from them, and have thought that they were bound to put them aside whenever it was possible to do so. They have been afraid of yielding to their convictions lest they should destroy the naturalness of the Word of God; lest they should introduce too much of what, in a modern writer, would be conscious design into the unaffected utterances of the sacred penmen; or lest they should even do disparagement to the work of the Spirit by representing Him as availing Himself too largely of those contrivances by which merely human writers endeavour to lend force and artistic beauty to their works. Such a fear is groundless. In the first place, the question, like every other, must be determined by the facts, and by no prepossessions of any kind whatever. In the second place, it is impossible to deny that the Spirit of God, in bestowing his inspiration upon the sacred writers, has, in innumerable instances, used the very instrumentality thus thought to be too human for his purpose. Metaphor, parable, allegory, the tropical sense of words, strophe and antistrophe in the Psalms, the poetical clothing of the most solemn prophecies, the arrangement

even of didactic passages in Epistles upon what are incontestably the principles of Hebrew parallelism—such phenomena, and others of a similar kind, are sufficient to shew that in these, as we might call them, human devices there is nothing inconsistent with simplicity, or with the desire to produce a moral and religious result. If, in proportion to the degree in which we were constrained to acknowledge the existence of these devices in Scripture, we felt at the same time compelled to admit that the Divine element in it was giving way to the human, the effect would be that we should lose the former in exact proportion to the amount of sublimity or pathos, of power or tenderness, by which it was really indicating its presence. Lastly, it ought to be remembered that such artistic arrangements are improperly designated when spoken of as human device or artifice. However strange to us, they were the very mould and fashion of Jewish thought. Precisely in the measure to which the Jewish prophet or poet was impassioned did his language shape itself according to them in their most perfect forms. The form itself had a meaning to him. It was a part of his inspiration to adopt it. Not because he hoped to gain an adventitious element of influence over men did he so speak, but because he could not help it. In doing so he was making a nearer approach to what he recognised as the Divine ideal. He was making use of the only mould adequate to the fashioning of the Divine conceptions with which his breast was filled. Conscientiousness, or rather self-consciousness, there was none. The artificial form was so natural, was so much a part of his whole habit of mind that, when most true to his message and himself, he fell most naturally into it. So far, therefore, from what seems to us an artificial arrangement of a book of Scripture being an argument against the truth of the arrangement, it may be the very reverse. It may be a valuable token of the inspiration of the writer.

It may be a pledge to us of that exalted state of mind in which he wrote. It may be strictly a part of the Divine method. If we work ourselves into the Hebrew mind, and no one will deny that in studying a Hebrew book we ought to do so, it may be full of valuable instruction, and may commend the lessons of the book with a double force. All that we have to beware of is the substitution of our own fancies for the objective phenomena. When we allow ourselves to be simply guided by the latter; when our effort is only to penetrate into all parts of the Divine idea; when we resign ourselves to Him who teaches, not only in Scripture but in nature, by form as well as by substance; when we see that the form is substance, inseparably connected with it, adapted to it as the appropriate vehicle of its expression, we have no need to be afraid of form. Not only is the effort to discover it full of interest, but the form itself, when discovered, may be full of power.

Numerous illustrations of what has been said might easily be given. Several of the Psalms have complicated alphabetic structures, but we shall remind our readers only of Psalm cxix., where eight verses are assigned to each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, and where each of these eight verses begins in the Original with the same letter. Illustrations also abound in particular passages, to say nothing at present of whole books, of the New Testament. One of the most beautiful of these is to be found in the Gospel of St. John (x. 14, 15). Correctly translated it runs as follows :

- a* I am the good shepherd,
- b* And I know mine own,
- c* And mine own know me,
- c* Even as the Father knoweth me,
- b* And I know the Father,
- a* And I lay down my life for the sheep.

Here the lines marked with the same letter of the alphabet

evidently correspond with one another. Another may be taken from the Epistle to the Romans (Chap. ii. 7-10), where we can hardly doubt that the following arrangement is designed.

- a* To them that by patience in well-doing
- b* Seek for glory and honour and incorruption,
- c* Eternal life:
- d* But unto them that are factious,
- e* And obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness,—
- f* Wrath and indignation,
- f* Tribulation and anguish,
- e* Upon every soul of man that worketh evil,
- d* Of the Jew first, and also of the Greek;
- c* But glory and honour and peace
- b* To every man that worketh good,
- a* To the Jew first, and also to the Greek;

the last six lines corresponding in an inverse order with the first six. It is unnecessary to multiply examples. There is here plan, arrangement, to a degree that may be charged by some as artificial. Yet in such cases it is so only in appearance. In reality all is natural. The mind is giving out its contents in artistic arrangements as simply as plants throw themselves out into their forms of beauty. These forms then are no evidence that inspiration in its highest degree does not pervade them. They meet us everywhere in Scripture; and, if they do so even in didactic passages, much more may they be looked for in a book written like the Apocalypse in the noblest spirit of prophetic and poetic enthusiasm.

With these preliminary remarks let us turn to the subject immediately before us, the Epistles of Christ to the Seven Churches of Asia, contained in Chapters ii. and iii. of the Apocalypse. We have to ascertain, if possible, the relation of these Epistles to one another and to the idea embodied in them all.

It will be at once admitted by every competent enquirer that the number seven here employed is to be taken not so much in its numerical as in its sacred force, and that the seven Churches spoken of are not merely the Churches of the seven cities of Asia named, but a representation of the Church of Christ in all countries and in all ages, down to the very end of time. All of these spread themselves out in one great panorama before the eyes of the enraptured Seer; and in the midst of them all, knowing them, caring for them, watching over them, and Himself loved, worshipped, and obeyed, he beholds the Son of Man, the great Priest and King of his people, the first and the last, that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore. The universal Church is before us in the seven individual Churches of these two Chapters. Nor does this view in the slightest degree touch the fact that the particulars enumerated as to the actual condition of each of these Churches are historical. Had this not been the case, the Epistles would have been so constructed that the idea of the writer would have appeared in them much more clearly than it does. It is precisely because he does not create, but because he deals with realities, that it is difficult to determine the principles upon which he passes from one Epistle to another, binding them in all the variety of their parts into a unity. We know that he had other Churches in Asia at his command, and that he could have selected them had they seemed better suited to his purpose. He had also before him many additional particulars connected with each Church, and, again, he could have fixed upon some of these if they had adapted themselves to his aim. But he cannot go further than select. What he deals with is history; what he delineates are facts. He may combine and group; but in no case may he imagine a state of things which did not actually exist.

The general idea then being admitted, that the seven

Churches represent the whole Church, it seems to us that we may spare our readers the trouble of enquiring whether they represent that Church in seven successive chronological periods, from the beginning to the close of the Christian era. If we examine the tables of such periods drawn up by different enquirers, we shall find them so utterly divergent as to prove fatal to the principle upon which they are constructed. No one has been able to prepare a chronological scheme making even an approach to general acceptance. The history of the Church cannot be portioned off into seven successive periods marked by characteristics to which those noted in the seven Epistles correspond. Besides this, the whole idea rests upon that historical interpretation of the Apocalypse which is simply destructive both of the meaning and influence of the book. We may be excused, therefore, if, at least for the present, we let it alone. To the Epistles themselves we turn as they stand before us in the sacred text. What do they themselves intimate of their relation to one another?

1. The seven Epistles are bound together into one whole. This fact has been already alluded to; but, in order to prepare for observations yet to be made in regard to the principles upon which this whole seems to be afterwards subdivided, we shall notice briefly one or two features of the internal structure of these Epistles by which the unity of idea lying at the bottom of them may be proved. In doing so it is unnecessary to dwell upon the consideration that precisely seven Churches should be selected, or to argue that seven is the number for unity in diversity, for unity in that manifoldness of aspect in which it must present itself if it is to be entitled to the name of unity. It is almost equally unnecessary to advert to the well known fact that, with at the utmost one exception, the descriptions of the Saviour prefixed to the several Epistles are taken from the general description of Him contained

in Chapter i. The one exception seems to be Laodicea, and we shall immediately see that it is possible to give a reasonable explanation of the choice made of those attributes of the exalted Lord upon which the Epistle to that Church dwells. Nor need we do more than mention the call to the hearers embraced in each Epistle, which is a call, not to the individual Church alone, but to the Church universal,—“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the *Churches*.” We shall notice only, what has been less dwelt upon than these points, that the description of the Lord given in the first and last Epistles has an obvious application to the Churches addressed, in more than their individual capacity. While each of these Epistles has its own place in the series, it is at the same time treated as the first or the last member of a group which must be regarded as one whole.

Thus to the Church in Ephesus the Saviour describes Himself as “He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (Chap. ii. 1). The description has no more reference to Ephesus than to any other of the Churches named, and no special bond can be pointed out between it and any threatening or promise of that particular Epistle. In like manner to the Church in Laodicea the Saviour describes Himself as “the Amen, the Witness faithful and true, the beginning of the creation of God” (Chap. iii. 14). The first of these appellations is no doubt derived from Isaiah lxxv. 16, where we have twice repeated in the same verse the formula “God Amen”; and the meaning of the name as applied to Jesus is, not that all the Divine promises shall be accomplished by Him, but that He is Himself the fulfilment of every promise made by the Almighty to his people. The second appellation carries us directly to John xviii. 37, where Jesus replies to Pilate’s question in the words, “To this end have I been born,

and to this end have I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." His whole mission is summed up by Him in the idea of witnessing. He is the perfect, the true, the real Witness to eternal truth in its deepest sense, in its widest and most comprehensive range. The third appellation again cannot be limited to the thought of the mere material creation, as if equivalent to the statement that by the Word were all things made. It would thus fail to correspond with the two appellations preceding it, which undoubtedly apply to the work of redemption, while at the same time the addition of the words "of God" would be meaningless or perplexing. Let us add to this that in Chapter i. 5, immediately after Jesus has been called the "faithful Witness," He is described as the "first begotten of the dead," and we shall not be able to resist the conviction that the words before us refer primarily to the new creation, the Christian Church, that redeemed humanity which has its true life in Christ. It is not necessary indeed to exclude the thought of the material creation; but, in so far as it is alluded to, it is only as redeemed, in its final condition of rest and glory, when the new Jerusalem has come down out of heaven, and when the Church's enemies have been cast into the lake of fire (comp. Rom. viii. 21, 22; James i. 18). All the three appellations, it will be observed, have thus a general rather than a specific character. Again, there is no particular connexion between them and the promises or threatenings of the Epistle in which they occur. Elsewhere it is different. In the Epistle to Smyrna the "crown of life" is promised by Him "which was dead and rose to life" (Chap. ii., comp. Verses 8 and 10); in that to Pergamos the threatening "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" is uttered by Him "which hath the sword two-edged, sharp," (Chap. ii., comp. Verses 12 and 16); in that to Thyatira "all the Churches shall know that I

am He that searcheth the reins and hearts" is said by Him who "hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire" (Chap. ii., comp. Verses 18 and 23); in that to Sardis, a Church of proud outward profession, but destitute of spiritual light and life, this deficiency of its state is pointed out by Him who "hath the seven Spirits of God" (Chap. iii., comp. Verse 1, last clause, and Verse 2 with Verse 1); and in that to Philadelphia the gracious intimation "I have given before thee an opened door" is made by Him "that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no one shall shut; and shutteth and no one openeth" (Chap. iii., comp. Verses 7 and 8). In all these cases the connexion between the contents of the Epistle and the aspect in which, in the first words of it, Jesus had presented Himself to the Church, is distinctly traceable. But in the Epistle to Laodicea, as in that to Ephesus, nothing of the kind is to be seen. The description of the Lord is general rather than special. He is the "Amen" of the Divine counsel; He is the "Witness faithful and true," who has left no part untold of the will of Him that sent Him; He is the source and spring of the whole new creation of God. It is no mere fancy when we say, that we have in this a proof that the first and the last Epistles are not simply members of a continuous series the last of which may leave the first long behind it, but that they are binding terms which gather up all the members of the series, and group them into one.

2. While thus bound together into one whole, the seven Epistles are clearly distinguishable into two portions, the first consisting of the first three, the second of the other four. Every enquirer admits this, and we may therefore be justified in passing quickly over the proof usually given, which rests upon the difference of place assigned in the two portions to the call, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the Churches." In the first three this

call comes in as a central part of the Epistle, immediately before the promise to "him that overcometh;" in the last four it closes the Epistle. It may be more interesting to observe that, according to the best attested readings of the Original, another illustration of the division adopted is to be seen in the fact that in the second and third Epistles, those to Smyrna and Pergamos, we do not meet the expression found in all the other Epistles, "I know thy works." The circumstance is at least interesting, and it demands explanation. We can think of no other than this, that in the mind of the writer the first three Epistles were closely associated together, more closely perhaps than even the seven, or the last four, among themselves. The words "I know thy works" occurring in the first Epistle were thus thought to extend their influence over the second and third, much in the same way as the description of the exalted Lord in the same Epistle sent its voice forward, and the description of Him in the Epistle to Laodicea its voice backward, through the rest. At all events these first three Epistles are a special unity; the last four are also like, and like in this respect among others, that the words "I know thy works" open the Lord's address to each of them.

There is still another circumstance to be noted in connexion with the point now under consideration, which we shall notice, however, not so much for the sake of the fresh proof that it affords of what has been said, as for its bearing on the question of the general structure of the Apocalypse. That structure is of vital importance in the interpretation of the book. It is a characteristic of St. John's writings that, when he has one great truth to present to his readers, he does it under different and successive aspects, and that the relation established between these aspects is that of climax. The most striking illustration of this is probably the relation to one another of the three

great series of visions in this book,—the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls. But this peculiarity of structure is not confined to these visions, and among other places where we find it is the series of the Epistles to the Churches. The “Coming” of the Lord is mentioned in each of them except in that to Smyrna, the omission in the latter being perhaps due to the fact that it occurs in the first (Ephesus) and in the last (Pergamos) of the first group of three, and that thus, on principles already indicated, it was not needed in the second (Smyrna). But the mention of it, in the two cases where it does occur, is accompanied by the addition of the words “to thee” (Chap. ii. 5, 16). These words shew that it is not the general and final “Coming” that is in view, but a special “Coming,” one of those more limited judgments, preparatory to the great end of all, in which the Judge of men illustrates the plan of judgment that shall wind up the issues of the present Dispensation. Even here too there is climax. “I come unto thee,” is said to the Church at Ephesus; “I come unto thee quickly,” is said to that at Pergamos.

When we pass to the remaining four Epistles an instructive difference is perceptible. The words “unto thee” are dropped, and we feel that we are in the presence of a “Coming” of a far more general kind than before, one too that rises step by step in character and draws nearer and nearer in time. To the first of the four (Thyatira) it is said, “hold fast until I come” (Chap. ii. 25); to the second (Sardis), “I will come as a thief” (Chap. iii. 3) to the third (Philadelphia), “I come quickly” (Chap. iii. 11); to the fourth (Laodicea), “Behold I stand at the door and knock” (Chap. iii. 20). In each of the two groups the climax at once forces itself on the attention, thus illustrating the unity of thought in each. The difference between the two groups is thus also brought more prominently into view, by the climax in the different aspects

of the one thought which finds in each group its characteristic utterance.

3. We have now to ask what that special light is in which the Church is viewed in each of the two portions of these Epistles. In connexion with this, the light in which the Church is brought before us in the separate Epistles of the whole series will incidentally appear. But, in the meantime, dealing with the two groups as two wholes, we have simply to determine what the common aspect of the Church in each group is. Now there are two aspects of the Church which may be said to pervade the whole Apocalypse,—first, the Church in herself, and secondly, the Church in her contest, her struggle, with the world. It seems as if the same distinction might be traced here. The first three Epistles lead us more particularly to the thought of the Church in herself; the remaining four to the thought of her as she struggles with the world, yields to its influences, is partly faithful and partly unfaithful in the contest, and needs the Second Coming of her Lord in order to her “fulfilment” in Him, and her final and complete victory over her foes.

The very numbers into which the two portions of the seven Epistles are distributed illustrate this. Three is the number of the Divine; four, as shewn in innumerable passages of the Apocalypse, is that of the world. The simple fact that we have a group of three, as distinguished from one of four, Epistles, is sufficient to lead to the impression that, in one way or another the thought of the Divine alone is more closely associated with the former than with the latter.

This impression is confirmed when we look at the Epistles themselves. Let us take the first three, and we shall find that in not one of them is the Church represented as yielding to the influences of the world. No doubt she has evil in her midst, and evil always springs from

a worldly, not a Divine, source. But she is not as yet conscious of what she is doing; she has not yet begun to traffic with the world, to accommodate herself to it, to lust after what it is able to bestow. The great charge against the Church in Ephesus is that she has left her first love. She has passed out of the bright and joyous feelings which marked the time of her espousals to the heavenly Bridegroom; but the evil is from within, and so far in particular as the Nicolaitanes are concerned, she shares the feelings of her Lord, looking upon them with the hatred which they merit. Smyrna is not reproached at all. She is rather an object of the Lord's fervent love, who is preparing trial for her in correspondence with the great law by which He trains his people, "Every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it that it may bear more fruit." Remarks of a similar kind apply to Pergamos. There is no charge against the Church there that she was allowing the world to gain dominion over her. She had certainly persons in her midst who held the teaching of the Nicolaitanes, but the Church is not said to have sanctioned them. On the contrary, though dwelling in the place where Satan had his throne, she had remained true to her Lord, and had been purified in the fire of persecution which had now come, and had raged even unto death. In none of the three cases is the Church perfect, but in none is she really faithless to her trust. She is in danger; she needs purifying by affliction; she is purified by affliction; but she knows that he who will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God, and the enemies of God are her enemies.

When we turn to the second group of the Epistles we at once enter a different atmosphere, and the contrast is rendered more striking by the fact that, in the first of the four, we have the very sins spoken of which have already twice crossed our path, in the Epistles to Ephesus and to

Pergamos. In noticing this we proceed of course upon the supposition that, in the Epistle to Thyatira, Jezebel is not the name of a real, but of a fictitious person, symbolizing the character of a party in the city. Yet not in the city only; this party is also in the Church, and is tolerated by the Church. We must request our readers to notice the text adopted in Chapter ii. 20 by the best critical editors, such as Westcott and Hort, and the effect of which is to make the clause containing mention of Jezebel complete in itself, "thou sufferest," "thou lettest alone," "thou toleratest the woman Jezebel." We must request them also to bear in mind, what seems to have been disregarded by the commentators, that Jezebel was a *heathen princess*, the first heathen queen who had been married by a king of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was therefore peculiarly fitted to represent the influences of the world; and the charge against the first Church of the second group is that she tolerated the world with its heathen thoughts and practices. She knew it to be the world that it was, but notwithstanding this she was content to be at peace, perhaps even to ally herself, with it. The Church at Sardis is not less blameable. There are a few names in her that have not defiled their garments; but the Church as a whole has deeply sinned. She has reproduced the Pharisaic type with which the Gospels have made us acquainted, substituting in the first place the outward for the inward in religion, making a great profession of attention to ordinances instead of living in the spirit and walking in the spirit; and then yielding to the sins of that flesh to which she had thus given the supremacy. Philadelphia, like Smyrna, is not blamed, and it is well that there should be one Church even in the midst of the world of which this can be said. But the point now to be observed is that Philadelphia has been engaged in a struggle with the world. We learn this from Chapter iii. 9,

where the enemies of the Church,—“Jews” they call themselves, the people of God, but “they are not,”—are set before us as vanquished nations coming before the Church’s feet as she sits in the heavenly places, and paying homage to her against whom they had so long but vainly struggled. It is impossible not to see the difference here between this Church and that at Smyrna. There had been “blasphemy” in the latter case, but worse trials were only spoken of as about to come. Here the trials have come, and the Church has risen triumphantly above them. Lastly, no one can mistake the willing identification of herself with the world on the part of the Church at Laodicea. She says that she is “rich,” that she has “gotten her riches,” that she has “need of nothing” (Chap. iii. 17). To refer these words to spiritual self-satisfaction and pride is not only to destroy their own force but the force of Verse 18 immediately following. It is worldly wealth that is in view—a Church whose members have aimed at riches and have gotten them, who are well to do and in easy circumstances, and who have found so much comfort in their worldly goods that they have been gradually becoming blind to the fact that man needs something better and higher for his portion. In all these four Churches, in short, it will be seen that we have an entirely different relation between the Church and the world from that set before us in the first three. There is not simply danger of decay within, and need of trial, or the benefit of trial; there is actual conflict with the world, sometimes it may be a victory over it, at other times a yielding to its influences and an adoption of its spirit.

Attention to the promises to “him that overcometh” in the different Epistles seems to confirm what has been said. There is a marked contrast upon the whole between the tone of these promises as they are given in the two groups of Epistles; and, even where a certain amount of

similarity exists, the promise in the second group will be found to be fuller and richer than in the first. At Ephesus, at Smyrna, and at Pergamos he that "overcometh" is rewarded much as one in a simple and childlike state would be. The first promise made to him is that he shall eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God; the second that he shall not be hurt of the second death; the third that he shall eat of the hidden manna and be like the high priest in the innermost recesses of the sanctuary. All is quiet, appealing to the gentler susceptibilities of the soul, the privileges and enjoyments of a happy child that has not yet known the struggle of life. Not so when we turn to the second group of Epistles. There we at once enter upon rewards conceived in bolder and more manly figures. The first promise now is, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron, as vessels of the potter are they broken to pieces" (Chap. ii. 26, 27). This is the reward of victory upon well fought fields. The warrior who is thus crowned must have braved the strife, and won with difficulty. The second promise is not less marked in its character. He that overcometh shall not simply, as in the case of Smyrna, receive the reward of "not being hurt of the second death"; he shall be "arrayed in white garments," in the glistening robe of the triumphant conqueror, and Jesus will "confess his name before his Father and before his angels" (Chap. iii. 5). The third promise is at least a large extension of that given to Pergamos, for of him that now "overcometh" it is said "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall come no more forth," that is, shall come no more forth to a struggle with the world similar to that in which he has been engaged, "and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down

out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name" (Chap. iii. 12); while the fourth promise has been well described by Dean Plumptre as the very "apotheosis of victory,"—"he that overcometh I will give unto him to sit down with Me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Chap. iii. 21). All the promises of the second group of Epistles, in short, are clearly distinguished in tone and spirit from those of the first group. They presuppose a fiercer struggle, a hotter conflict, and they are therefore full of a more glorious reward.

Such then, it appears to us, is the relation of the Epistles to the Seven Churches among themselves. In endeavouring to determine it, we have simply followed the lines laid down by the sacred writer, and have contented ourselves with dividing the Epistles into their two main groups. We find in them no successive chronological periods, but simply representations of the two leading ideas which we must form of the Church,—as she is in herself; and as she is when, having declined as a whole from her early purity, she makes a compromise with the world, allows it to prevail over her, and sacrifices the future for the present. In the first group of three we have the Church considered in herself. She is full of toil and endurance, in her poverty she is rich, and the troubles of the future she does not fear; she holds fast the name of Christ and openly confesses Him. It is true that seeds of evil are within her which will too soon develop themselves, but this is her Divine character as a whole. She walks with God and hears his voice in her earthly paradise. If discipline is needed, by discipline she is purified. In the second group the evil seed sown by the enemy has sprung up. The Church tolerates the evil around her, makes her league with the world, and yields to its sins; she rallies indeed at times to her new and higher life, *but* she finally submits to the world and is satisfied

with its goods. Even then indeed there are many faithful ones in her midst. As in the Jewish Church there was a "remnant according to the election of grace," so in her there are never wanting those who listen to the Saviour's voice and follow Him. But they are not the Church as a whole; and, as in the days of the Saviour's flesh, they must eventually come out of her that they may follow Him whithersoever He goeth. It is the same sad story indeed which has marked all the previous Dispensations of the Almighty with his people in this world, and which will continue to be acted out until the Second Coming of the Lord. It is the same picture which is afterwards presented to us in this Book of Revelation, when the bride allying herself with the world becomes a harlot, and the Seer hears "another voice out of heaven saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye may have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Chap. xviii. 4).

W. MILLIGAN.

WAS BARNABAS IGNORANT OF JEWISH RITUAL?

IF the authorship of the Epistle of Barnabas were to be decided by external evidence alone, it must be assigned to Joseph of Cyprus, to whom the Apostles gave the name of Barnabas.

Clement of Alexandria, writing towards the close of the second century, more than once unhesitatingly attributes it to him; and this testimony is unanimously confirmed by later Fathers.¹

¹ It is true that Tertullian throws a *primâ facie* doubt on the identity of the Epistle by his passing allusion to the Epistle to the Hebrews as "The Epistle