

Chapter 2

He is commanded to write diuers things to the Churches of Ephefus, Smyrna, Pergamus, and Thyatira: praifing them that had not admitted the doctrine of the Heretikes called Nicolaita, 22. and calling others by threats vnto penance: 26. and promifing reward to him that manfully ouercometh.

And ^ato the Angel of the Church of Ephefus write: Thus faith he which ^holdeth the feuen ftarres in his right hand, which walketh in the middes of the feuen Candlesticks of gold: ² I know ^hthy workes and labour, and thy patience: & that thou canft not beare euil men & haft tried them which fay themfelues to be Apoftles, and are not, and haft found them liars: ³ and thou haft patience, and haft borne for my name, and haft not fainted. ⁴ But I haue againft thee a few things, becaufe ^bthou haft left thy firft charitie. ⁵ Be mindful therfore from whence thou art fallē: and doe penance, and doe the firft workes. But if not: I come to thee, & ^hwil moue thy candlefticke out of this place, vnleffe thou doe penance. ⁶ But this thou haft, ^hbecaufe thou hateft the facts ^hof the Nicolaites, which I alfo hate. ⁷ He that hath an eare, let him heare what the Spirit faith to the Churches: To him that ouercometh, I wil giue to eate of the tree of life, which is in the Paradife of my God.

⁸ And to the Angel of the Church of Smyrna write:
Apo. 1, 17. Thus faith the Firft and the Laft, who was dead, and liueth: ⁹ I know thy tribulation and thy ^cpouertie, but thou art rich: and thou art blaſphemed of them that fay

^a That which before he willed him to write to the church he now willeth to be written to the Angels or Bishops of the fame only. Where we fee, it is al one, to the Church, & to the Head or Gouvernour thereof.

^b By this we fee is plainly refuted that which fome heretikes hold, that a man once in grace or charitie cā neuer fal from it.

^c This Church repreſenteth the ſtate of thē that are ſpoiled of their goods, emprifoned, & manifoldly afflicted for the Catho. faith.

themselves to be Iewes and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Feare none of these things which thou shalt suffer. Behold the Diuel wil send some of you into prison that you may be tried: and you shall haue tribulation ten daies. Be thou faithful vntil death: and I wil giue thee ^{a)}the crowne of life. ¹¹ He that hath an eare, let him heare what the Spirit saith to the Churches: He that shall ouercome, shall not be hurt of the ^{b)}second death.

¹² And to the Angel of the Church of Pergamus write: Thus saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ I know where thou dwellest, where the seate of Satan is: and thou holdest my name, and hast not denied my faith. And in those daies Antipas my faithful witnesse, who was slain among you, ^{c)}where Satan dwelleth. ¹⁴ But I haue against thee a few things: because thou hast there, them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac ^{d)}to cast a scandal before the children of Israel, to eate and commit fornication: ¹⁵ so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites. ¹⁶ In like manner doe penance. If not: I wil come to thee quickly, and wil fight against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷ He that hath an eare, let him heare what the Spirit saith to the Churches: To him that ouer commeth I wil giue the hidden manna, and wil giue him a white counter, and in the counter, a new name written, which no man knoweth, but he that receiueth it.

¹⁸ And to the Angel of the Church of Thyatira write: Thus saith the Sonne of God, which hath eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like to latten. ¹⁹ I know thy ^{d)}workes, and faith, and thy charitie, and ministration, and thy patience and thy last workes more then the former. ²⁰ But I haue against thee a few things: because

*Nu. 24, 14.
25, 2.*

ψῆφον calculū.

^a The fingular reward of Martyrdom.

^b The death of the body is the first death: the death of the soule, the second which Martyrs are surest to escape of all men.

^c The special residence of Satan is where the faithful are persecuted for Christes truth. Where not to deny the Cath. faith for feare, is much here commended.

^d None of these are any thing worth without the other.

3. *Reg. 18.* thou permitteſt ¶the woman Iezabel, who calleth her ſelf a Propheteffe, to teach, and to feduce my feruants to fornicate, and to eate of things ſacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gaue her a time that ſhe might doe penãce & ¶ſhe wil not repēt frō her fornication. ²² Behold I wil caſt her into a bed: and ¶they that cōmit aduoutrie with her, ſhal be in very great tribulation, vnleſſe they doe penãce frō their workes: ²³ and her childrẽ I wil kil with death, & al the Churches ſhal know that I am he that ſearcheth the reines & harts & I wil giue to euery one of you ^{a)}according to his workes. ²⁴ But I ſay to you and the reſt which are at Thyatira, whoſoeuer haue not depths this doctrine, which haue not knowen the ‘depth’ of Satan, as they ſay, I wil not caſt vpon you another weight. ²⁵ Yet that which you haue, hold til I come. ²⁶ And he that ſhal ouercome and keep my workes vnto the end, ¶I *Pf. 2, 9.* wil giue him power ouer the Nations, ²⁷ and he ſhal rule them with a rod of yron, and as the veſſel of a potter ſhal they be broken, ²⁸ ^{b)}as I alſo haue receiued of my Father: and I wil giue him the morning ſtarre. ²⁹ He that hath an eare, let him heare what the Spirit ſaith to the Churches.

ANNOTATIONS

1 Holdeth the feuen.) Much to be obſerued, that Chriſt hath ſuch care ouer the Church and the Biſhops thereof, that he is ſaid here to beare them vp in his right hand, & to walk in the middes of them: no doubt to vphold and preferue them and to guide them in al truth.

Chriſts care of his Church.

2 Thy workes, labour, patience, &c.) Things required in a Biſhop. Firſt, good workes, and great patience in tribulation. Next zeale and ſharp diſcipline toward offenders is here commended in them. Thirdly, wiſedom and diligence in trial of falſe Apoſtles & Preachers comming in ſheep-skinnes: where is

Special vertues required in a Biſhop.

^a Who ſeeth not here that good workes deferue ſaluation, as il workes damnation: and that it is not faith alone that God rewardeth, but that faith which worketh by charitie.

^b This great priuiledge of Saints riſeth of the power and preeminence of Chriſt, which his Father gaue him according to his humanitie; and therefore to deny it to Saints, is to deny it to Chriſt himſelf.

fignified the watchful prouidence that ought to be in them, that Heretikes enter not into their flocks.

5 Wil moue.) Note that the caufe why God taketh the truth from certaine countries, and remoueth their Bishops or Churches into captiuitie or defolation, is the finne of the Prelates and people. And that is the caufe (no doubt) that Chrifft hath taken away our golden candlefticke, that is, our Church in England. God grant vs to remember our fal, to doe penance and the former workes of charitie which our firft Bishops and Church were notable and renowned for.

Sinne is the caufe that God taketh the Catho. faith from countries.

6 Becaufe thou hateft.) We fee here that of al things, Chriftian people (fpecially Bishops) should haue great zeale againft Heretikes and hate them, that is their wicked doctrine & conditions, euen as God hateth them. For which only zeale, our Lord faith here that he beareth with fome Churches and Prelates, and faueth them from perishing.

Zeale againft Heretikes.

6 Of the Nicolaites.) Heretikes haue their callings of certaine perfons, as is noted at large *Act. 11, 26*. These had their name of Nicolas, one of the 7. firft Deacons that were chosen *Act. 6*. Who is thought to haue taught cōmunitie of women or wiues, & that it was lawful to eate of meates offered to idols. Which later point is fuch a thing, as if one should hold it lawful to receiue the bread or wine of the new Communion, which is a kind of *Idolothyta*, that is, *idolatrous meates*. For though fuch creatures be good by creation, yet they be made execrable by profane bleffings of Heretikes or Idolaters. And concerning the name of Nicolaites giuen here by our Lord himself to thofe Heretikes, it is a very paterne & marke vnto the faithful for euer, what kind of men they should be that should be called after the like fort, Arians, Macedonians, Nestorians, Lutherans, Zwinglians, &c. See S. Hierom *cont. Lu. in fine*.

Nicolaites the firft Heretikes fo called, as a paterne of Arians, Lutherāns, and the like peculiar callings.

li. 4. *Antiq. c. 6.*

14 To caft a scandal.) Iosephus writeth that when Balaam could not curfe God's people, nor otherwife any them, he taught Balac a way how to ouerthrow them: to wit, by presenting vnto them their Heathen women very beautiful, and delicate dishes of meate offered to Belphegor: that fo being tempted they might fal to heathenish manners and difplease God. To which craftie counfel of Balaam the Apoftle refembleth Heretikes fraud, who by offering of libertie of meate, women, Church goods, breach of vows, and fuch other licentious allurements caufe many moe to fal, then by their preaching.

Balaam ouercōming God's people by perfuafion of lecherie and bellicheere, was a type of Heretikes.

2. *Pet. 2, 15.*
Iuda v. 11.

20 The woman Iezabel.) He warneth Bishops to be zealous and ftout againft falfe Prophets and Heretikes of what fort foeuer, by alluding couertly to the example of holy Elias, that in zeale killed 450. falfe prophets of Iezabel, and fpared not Achab nor Iezabel themfelues, but told them to their faces that they troubled Ifrael, that is, the faithful people of God. And whether there were any fuch great woman then, a furtherer and promotour of the

Zeale againft Heretikes.

3. *Reg. 18.*

Achab and Iezabel.

Nicolaites, whom the Prophet should here meane, it is hard to fay.

21 She wil not repent.) See free-wil here moft plainely, and that God is not the proper caufe of obduration or impenitence, but man himfelf only. Our Lord giueth finners fo long life, fpecially to expect their amendement: but Iezabel (to whom the Apofle here alludeth) would neuer repent.

Free-wil.

God is not au-
thour of euil.

22 They that commit aduoutrie with her.) Such as communicate with Heretikes, shal be damned (alas) with them. For, not only fuch as were in their harts of Iezabels religion, or inwardly beleueed in Baal, but fuch as externally for feare worshipped him (which the Scriptures cal, bowing of their knees to Baal) are culpable. As now many bow their knees to the Communion, that bow not their harts.

They that com-
municate with
Heretikes, shal
be damned with
them.

3. Reg. 19.
v. 18. Ro. 12.

26 I wil giue him power.) Obferue that not only Angels haue power and regiment ouer Countries vnder God, but now for the honour of Chrifts humane nature, and for his minifterie in the world, the Saints deceafed alfo, being in heauen, haue gouernement ouer men and Prouinces, and therfore haue to doe with our affaires in the world. Which is againft the Heretikes of thefe daies, that to take away our praiers to Saints, would fpoile them of many foueraigne dignities, wherein the Scriptures make them equal with Angels.

Saints alfo are Pa-
trones, not only
Angels.