4. “Nevertheless I have this against thee, that thou leftest thy  
first love.”  
  
 High is the praise given; but higher yet is the  
standard maintained by our Lord. He has blame in  
store for one so commended. His eye is on perfection.  
 The first love both toward Christ and His Church was  
slackened. To begin well is not enough: we must go  
on as we began; yea, and make progress. Christ is  
jealous of our affections.  
 Not force from without, making wide breaches in  
the walls, but the waning brightness of love, gives the  
first symptom of the passing away of the churches  
from being the witness for God.  
 The angel and the Church are thereupon called to  
*repent*. Remarkable word, as addressed to *believers!*  
Five churches out of the seven are thus exhorted;  
Ephesus is called to repent of decaying love; Pergamos,  
of false doctrine permitted; Thyatira, of evil acts;  
Sardis, of unwatchfulness, and institutions falling to  
ruin; while Laodicea is found boasting, at a time when  
her lukewarmness was rendering her loathsome to  
Christ.  
 But the repentance of the *angels*, and of the *churches*  
under their superintendence, is of course very different  
from that demanded of the *world*. The Saviour supposes  
the first parties to be *already renewed by the Spirit,  
and forgiven by His own blood*. But their life, in some  
respects, fell short of His commands: and in these  
things they are enjoined to change their conduct.  
But what if they should not? The threat held out to  
Ephesus is not eternal death; but *the removal of the  
Church from its post of witness for God*.  
 But in the prophetic part, where the world is in  
question, God sends visitations of *wrath*, expecting  
that men should be led by His judgments to repent  
of “murders, idolatries, fornications, sorceries, thefts.”